

Kundry and the Jewish Voice: Anti-Semitism and Musical Transcendence in Wagner's *Parsifal*

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For Angela Maraventano

Kundry, the only female character in Richard Wagner's last opera, *Parsifal* (1882), is also the only character to make an overwhelming impression on us with the raw power and extreme versatility of her singing voice. The most arresting vocal gesture of the opera, for example, comes from her mouth at the work's epicenter in the middle of Act II (example 1). As a preternatural calm descends over the sonic landscape,¹ grounded by the distant but ponderous tread of the timpani in mm. 1175–77, we are transported outside the time and place of the opera to a remote primal scene: Golgotha, the site of Christ's crucifixion.² In mm. 1177–78, a theme swells up in the orchestra that we have come to associate with the Holy Grail and its original contents, the blood of the suffering Christ (see example 26 for the complete theme). Kundry now hesitantly sings—"I saw . . . Him . . . Him"—and the revelation of "His" identity in mm. 1179–80 is aligned precisely with a dissonant, paroxysmal orchestral idea heard here for only the second time in the opera.³ The strings' hairpin crescendo and spasmodic triplet figure, convulsing onto the leaden harmony on the third beat of the bar,⁴ suggest the dense throbbing of Christ's imponderable, intractable pain. The Grail theme picks up where it left off in m. 1181, and as it dies away, Kundry begins to re-enact her shocking response to the sight of Christ on the cross: she laughed.⁵ Her bold ridicule of Christ is "voiced" not only by the orchestral music that betrays her laughter, but also by her singing voice. First, tonally-ambiguous triplet chords ripple in the woodwinds in mm. 1181–82, building in intensity until the precipitous descending melodic motif that usually signifies Kundry's caustic laughter bursts forth irrepressibly in the first violins. In mm. 1182–83, the laughter motif tumbles headlong onto what we now hear as the dominant in D minor, clarifying the winds' earlier tonal function and setting up the extraordinary vocal outburst that follows. Now, in the middle of m. 1183, Kundry suddenly hits a high B \natural on the first syllable of the word "laughed [*lach-te*]," ushered in by the flutes and given an extra punch by the bassoons, horns, and a violent string pizzicato. The B \natural , a formidable feat for any dramatic mezzo, is also the highest sung note

Current Musicology

Example 1: Act II, mm. 1175–83.

1175 **KUNDRY.**
quält! Ich sah I saw

1175 **Sehr langsam und feierlich.** *ausdrucksvoll*
pp timpani *pp*
sehr leise, über schwer

1179
Ihn — Him Etwas beschleunigend.
Ihn — Him

1179
p *sf* *p*

1182
und *vn. I* lach - te: laughed:
and *fl.*

1182
cresc. *sf*
d: ii⁶₅ V⁶₅... b⁹ P. vii⁶₅

in the opera.⁶ If that weren't stunning enough, Kundry's B \natural brazenly exceeds the B \flat called for by the reigning D-minor tonality.⁷ The glaring major-mode brightness of the high note adds an extra dose of impudence and brash mockery to Kundry's shriek of laughter. She ends the word unaccompanied on a low C \sharp , opening up a yawning vocal chasm that reverberates acoustically and psychologically in the vast silence that follows.⁸ This voice, Kundry's voice, is clearly a force to be reckoned with.

A bit of dramatic context can help us appreciate the full impact and importance of this moment in *Parsifal*. Shortly after the curtain rises on Act I, Kundry hurtles onto the stage like a wild animal, with her coarse robe and unkempt black hair, in order to deliver comforting balsam to Amfortas, the mortally wounded king of the knights of Montsalvat who preserve the Holy Grail. After Amfortas had been seduced by “a terribly beautiful woman [*ein furchtbar schönes Weib*],” he dropped the Holy Spear that once pierced Christ’s flesh. Klingsor, a former knight turned evil sorcerer, seized the Spear and stabbed Amfortas with it. Now the king languishes with the unending pain of a wound that perpetually reminds him of his sin and prevents him from fulfilling his duty to uncover the Grail during Communion, the ritual that gives eternal life to the knights of his order. We will discover that Kundry was Amfortas’s temptress (acting partly as Klingsor’s reluctant slave), although at the moment this is hardly imaginable, given Kundry’s ungainly manner, disheveled appearance, and guttural musical utterances. Two squires express suspicion of Kundry, but their aged mentor Gurnemanz explains to them how Kundry has always been of inestimable help to the knights as messenger and servant, perhaps “for the atonement of sin from a former life [*zu büssen Schuld aus früh’rem Leben*].” A young and thoughtless hunter, whose name we will later learn is Parsifal, arrives on the scene after killing an innocent swan, earning the grim reproach of the knights. Pressed by them for his life story, Parsifal can remember very little of it, and so he is justifiably surprised when Kundry jogs his memory by singing of the early death of his father and his subsequent wandering. Kundry also reveals that Parsifal’s mother has since died, unbeknownst to him; in shock and horror, Parsifal lunges at her throat, as if to cut off her voice.

As the scene shifts to the knights’ temple, Kundry slinks away, not to be seen or heard from again until Act II. Here, she first struggles with Klingsor in his magic castle, unwilling yet ultimately fated to obey his command to seduce and corrupt Parsifal, who may be the “pure fool [*reine Thor*],” prophesied to Amfortas in a celestial vision, that will finally bring redemption to Montsalvat. The seduction and its aftermath occupy the majority of Act II, once Parsifal finds his way to Klingsor’s enchanted flower garden and encounters a woman of luxuriant and enticing beauty whom we know to be Kundry, even though Parsifal does not recognize her.⁹ Kundry successfully fuses Parsifal’s maternal longing with his burgeoning sexual awareness, drawing him into a kiss. But this kiss suddenly makes Parsifal aware of the meaning of Amfortas’s wound, and so he rejects Kundry and the sin she invites. It is at this point that Kundry takes center stage to unfold her *own* engrossing narrative of curse and possible redemption: she had laughed at Christ, condemning her to an eternity of restless wandering in search of

Him. With her monstrous laughter, the mystery that has shrouded Kundry's identity, behavior, and motivation is powerfully revealed. In its wake, the grief of the knights of Montsalvat seems like sanctimonious whining—unlike them, Kundry actually beheld Christ, and she has suffered for it for eons. Her gripping vocal explosion simultaneously unmasks her authentic self and tears a hole in the phantasmal fabric that holds Montsalvat together.

After Parsifal retakes the spear from Klingsor and brings about the destruction of the sorcerer's magic realm at the end of Act II, he calls upon Kundry to follow him into Act III and back to Montsalvat, where he will restore Amfortas to physical and spiritual health: "You know where you can find me again [*Du weißt, wo du mich wiederfinden kannst!*]" Yet while Kundry does join him there in body, she does not bring her singing voice along. Now in a penitent's robes, pale and exhausted, Kundry sings only once, toward the beginning of the act, even though she is on stage for the rest of the opera. To a perplexed Gurnemanz who has just roused her from a death-like sleep, Kundry haltingly whispers, "to serve...to serve [*dienen...dienen*]," as if to account for her unusual silence (example 2). That vocal silence persists, even as she is baptized by Parsifal, and even as she collapses in death in the opera's final transfigurative moments, just after the Montsalvat community chorally celebrates the long-awaited healing of Amfortas's wound with the opera's last words: "redemption for the redeemer [*Erlösung dem Erlöser!*]"

Kundry's vocal disappearance is one of the most striking aspects of *Parsifal*, and it calls for interpretation. Many critics have risen to this call, yielding a wide spectrum of thought-provoking explanations that invoke various historical, philosophical, psychoanalytic, aesthetic, sexual, and religious dimensions of Wagnerian ideology. This is no surprise, given the multi-layered complexity of the character of Kundry and the extraordinarily dense and polysemic dramatic content of *Parsifal*, an opera which gestated in Wagner's mind over the course of almost forty years. What *is* surprising, considering the issue at hand, is that until quite recently critics have rarely delved into the music of *Parsifal* in order to flesh out their claims. The implication is that the mere presence or absence of Kundry's vocal line is the only salient aspect of the music that needs to be addressed in any attempt to elucidate the meaning of what happens to her in Act III. But the fact that Kundry stops singing in Act III does not mean that her "voice"—here defined as her overall operatic subjectivity—ceases to exist. Kundry's voice, housed not only in her throat but also in the musical material that she sings and that surrounds her discourse in the orchestra, survives substantially beyond the collapse of Klingsor's realm, and *this* voice needs to be considered carefully if we are to understand the significance of Kundry's fate.¹⁰

Example 2: Act III, mm. 129–37.

129 (Kundry slowly bends her head:)

vc.

p *fp*

133 at length she utters hoarsely and brokenly:)

KUNDRY.

Die-nen, die-nen.
To serve, to serve.
Mässig bewegt.

p *più p* *pp* *sf*

In this article, I will trace the development and manipulation of Kundry’s “voice” across Acts II and III in order to shed some new light on one particularly problematic element of Wagnerian ideology embedded in *Parsifal*: anti-Semitism. Over the years, many have argued over the possible anti-Semitic intentions of *Parsifal*, a ritualistic “stage-consecrating festival play [*Bühnenweihfestspiel*]” depicting an insular community of Christians who purify themselves of a corrupting element that aims to infiltrate and destroy their society through deception.¹¹ Both Klingsor and Kundry have sometimes been interpreted as the stereotypically “Jewish” characters in the opera as well.¹² In focusing on Kundry, my concern is not principally with the surface features that code her as “Jewish,” nor is it with her putatively duplicitous playacting, although it will be crucial to my argument to examine how Kundry seduces Parsifal through such playacting and how Parsifal ultimately sees through the ruse. Rather, I want to show how Kundry’s “voice” is used and abused in the opera to help make possible a kind of transcendence that resonates deeply with the aspirations of nineteenth-century German revolutionary thought, articulated most forcefully by Wagner in his 1850 essay, “Jewry in Music [*Das Judentum in der Musik*],” a pseudonymous article written for the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* which Wagner reprinted in an updated form under his own name in 1869. In the anti-Semitic logic of the German revolutionary tradition, every progressive achievement of

modern society requires an evil and reactionary Jewish obstacle that must be routed out and overcome. Just as this tradition fabricated “the Jew” in order to have something to vanquish on its way to utopia, Wagner develops a powerful and destabilizing voice for Kundry in Act II only to squelch it deliberately and repeatedly in Act III, after it slides into the orchestra. Kundry is overcome not simply because she has two measly measures to sing, but rather because her “voice” becomes the stepping stone upon which the music of Act III conspicuously treads in order to elevate itself toward the sonic redemption of Montsalvat.

After considering several recent critical evaluations of Kundry and her eventual silencing and death, I will explore some pertinent aspects of Wagner’s anti-Semitic ideology in order to set up a close reading of what happens to Kundry’s voice in Acts II and III. Even beyond her last vocal utterance, Kundry’s “voice” remains, although its potency is subjugated and channeled into the work of a transfigurative redemption whose blinding musical sublimity moves us at the same time that it requires complicity with its deep-seated anti-Semitic agenda. Finally, in an epilogue, I will suggest another view of Kundry’s voice, inspired by a different facet of Wagner’s thought, that may help us understand more fully why anti-Semitism and transcendence are so inextricably and uncomfortably linked in *Parsifal*, both musically and dramaturgically: the voice of an animal.

The Problem of Kundry’s Silence

Kundry became a particular fascination for scholars in the first half of the 1990s, and the hermeneutical challenge she poses, especially with regard to her vanishing voice, continues to elicit an enormous amount of critical reflection. We can start with Barry Emslie (1991), who argues that Kundry’s plight is that of the paradigmatic nineteenth-century operatic woman, saddled with the contradictory burden of fulfilling both a narrative and a symbolic function. She must be the dangerous *femme fatale* who creates the opportunity for risky masculine pleasure with a formidable, plot-moving voice, but she must also be the static emblem of a patriarchal bourgeois ideology that celebrates female repentance and servitude. Thus, while Kundry’s seduction, kiss, and subsequent pleading with Parsifal generate most of the opera’s dramatic tension (and all of Parsifal’s mature experience with women), Parsifal’s definitive rejection of Kundry empties her out as a full operatic character. As Parsifal takes the moral high ground, Kundry becomes a mute symbol of his virtue, her voice no longer required (or desired) for the oratorio-like pageantry of redemption that takes place in Act III. In Act II Parsifal uses Kundry and her agency to achieve self-actualization; by Act III he has used her up entirely.

For Michel Poizat (1992), Kundry's voice constitutes the most compelling approximation of the Vocal Object in all of opera.¹³ A core concept of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, the Vocal Object is the human cry in all its sheer materiality. When a baby first cries out because of some inner disturbance, the sound of its cry has no meaning. But once its mother answers the cry by providing satisfaction, that cry becomes a demand and acquires a linguistic function. As a result, the satisfaction (or *jouissance*) associated with that first, primal cry that preceded signification can never be regained (99–103). Henceforth, for the human subject, “a quest for the [Vocal O]bject is set in motion, a search for lost phonic materiality, now dissolved behind signification” (103). Identifying with the human voice in its pure resonance beyond speech provides the subject with momentary sensations of achieving this quest to regain the Vocal Object, and for Poizat, Kundry gives the opera-goer (and the other characters of *Parsifal*) plenty of opportunities to feel this sensation: “[Kundry] represents in its purest form that image of The Woman ever present in opera, the privileged medium of The Voice in its purest embodiment as [Vocal O]bject. It therefore comes as no surprise that her vocal score calls for cry, plaint, moan, and then the silence to which the entire third act confines her despite her continued presence on stage” (194). This is “no surprise” because silence and the pure cry are related to one another as the two vocal phenomena furthest removed from speech, which turns vocal sound into a vessel of meaning (90). Aside from Kundry's musically unnotated cries, the extreme vocal writing of Kundry's singing line in Act II constitutes “a literal unheard-of paroxysm that leaves the listener no option but flight, refusal, or the emotional collapse that signals the onset of *jouissance*” (91). Poizat therefore concludes that “[o]nly silence can follow the paroxysmal cries of this finale [of Act II?] . . . Exit the word: enter silence [in Act III], and, in silence, death” (199).

Jean-Jacques Nattiez (1993, chap. 7) does not think of Kundry as Woman juxtaposed against Man, nor as the Vocal Object, synonymous with Woman, juxtaposed against the male fantasies that make them synonymous (see Poizat 1992:155–58), but rather as the opera's chief representative of sexual difference itself, juxtaposed against a utopian androgyny that annuls desire altogether. In Wagner's late writings, Nattiez observes, sexual difference is intimately tied up with racial difference, since it is monogamous marriage that both enables the divided sexes to reunite in loving union and safeguards the purity of a race. Overcoming one form of difference helps to overcome the other. Kundry, then, helps to realize these aspirations in *Parsifal*: “In dying, [the promiscuous, non-Aryan] Kundry symbolically destroys the element of femininity and the absence of racial purity that she embodies and that threaten to corrupt the purity and sanctity of the new Christ” (171).

Current Musicology

Although Nattiez does not comment directly on Kundry's falling silent in Act III, we might extrapolate that this is a sanctifying gesture as well; without the fracturing voice of difference in the air, Parsifal is free to redeem the world as "the symbolic embodiment of an angelic androgyny, proclaiming a new civilization and culture" (170).

Michael Steinberg (1996) hears the power of subjectivity and modernity in Kundry's voice, a power that unsettled Wagner deeply. In Steinberg's account, *Parsifal's* principal project is to stop the unfolding of history fueled by the decadence of modernity. Kundry's desirous, feminizing subjectivity threatens to sweep Montsalvat into the fatal onward trajectory of history, but once Parsifal locks Kundry out of the homosocial community of the Grail knights by rejecting her advances, her voice loses its effectual potency, and she is effectively silenced as history is locked into eternity. If, as Steinberg claims, "Amfortas's wound is the condition of modernity"—that is, social change brought about by the demands of "mobile subjectivity"—and if "modernity equals subjectivity equals the human, bodily voice" that cries out for all of this (177), then the conclusion of *Parsifal* heals the wound and the knights of Montsalvat insofar as it suppresses Kundry's voice, allowing history to ossify into stasis.

For Elisabeth Bronfen (1996), Kundry's voice is the site of a different illness: hysteria. Citing Nietzsche's analysis of hysteria in *The Case of Wagner* (1888), Bronfen explains that for the late-nineteenth century, (female) hysterics exhibited the "protean ability to take on many roles even as these are self-consciously presented as simulations, deceptions of what is true" (148). The hysteric's frenzied performances are attempts to screen a primal trauma, a "psychic gap" (155)—in Kundry's case, her laughter at Christ and His piercing, cursing gaze—that can never be fully and truthfully regained and healed in representation. Yet the very artificiality of the hysteric's performances exposes the constructed, contingent nature of the paternal fantasies sustained by them. In *Parsifal*, the hysteric's critique comes out most forcefully in Kundry's laughter, which is the ultimate vocal extension of her hysteria—a "strange mixture of mockery and knowledge," as Bronfen puts it. Kundry's silence in Act III, therefore, may signal that she has given in to the psychotic delusions of the men around her who perform their ceremony of salvation as though it were the real thing. On the other hand, by remaining silent Kundry continues her critique, since she is the only character not acting in bad faith. She realizes that "[Parsifal] cannot fulfill her desire [and end her curse] because it is an impossible one to fulfill, because one can never return to the scene of trauma" (160). Thus, Bronfen seems to say, the stunning vocal silence (indicative of "psychic gap") that follows Kundry's primal laughter at Christ in m. 1183 of Act II is writ large across the whole of Act III, a constant reminder of the traumatic kernel of reality that cannot be accessed by representation.

Considered as a whole, the work of these five authors forms an intriguing composite picture of Kundry that suggests various interpretations of her silence in Act III. The Kundry of Act II is a dynamic, empowered agent who cunningly asserts sexual difference, subjectivity, desire, the historical impulse, and even the primal force of vocal sound itself against a hermetic and delusional patriarchy that seeks to neutralize or ignore these disruptive elements. In Act III, Kundry is hollowed out and made impotent in the face of the inexorable fantasy of redemption surrounding her, falling into a puzzling silence that indicates either a total complicity with that fantasy or a stubborn critique of it from within.

However, as stimulating as these readings of Kundry may be, none of them actually delves into the musico-textual substance of *Parsifal*. Given these authors' broad ideological concerns, the simple fact of Kundry's vocal disappearance is perhaps sufficient to justify their overall claims. But to the extent that these authors assert that the muting of Kundry's singing voice indicates the total effacement of her subjective presence, they simplify matters, overlooking much musical and dramaturgical detail that might enrich their interpretations. In fact, that subjective presence—the music associated with Kundry in Act II—is manipulated and reappropriated in Act III, becoming an *object* for use by the other characters. Kundry's singing voice merely vanishes, but her "voice" appears over and over again, now reconfigured as an instrument of Parsifal's redemption of the world (itself ultimately a lie, according to Steinberg and Bronfen).

I would suggest, in fact, that what happens to Kundry's voice is even more insidious than these authors would lead us to believe. Not only is Kundry robbed of self-expression, but the robbers enjoy the fruits of their plunder before her very eyes. By overlooking or underplaying the specific details of the transmutation of Kundry's musical presence—the way in which her voice rises to its full sonic and expressive capacity in Act II before it is forced to take refuge in the orchestra in Act III—these authors risk reducing the musical and dramatic sophistication of Kundry's plight to an obvious musical feature that can be addressed neatly by a socio-historical or psychological formula.

Some more recent considerations of Kundry, in contrast, have wrestled substantially with the music of *Parsifal*, ultimately yielding more acute insights into the ramifications of her vocal silence in Act III. Carolyn Abbate (2001) directly confronts the lack of any discussion of *Parsifal's* music in various earlier commentaries on Kundry (including those of Emslie, Nattiez and Bronfen); with tongue slightly in cheek, Abbate surmises that "one cannot imagine that music has not been assimilated" into these commentaries, given their undeniable strengths (108–10). But her main concern is in fact an irrepressible sense of dislocation between *Parsifal's* music and stage

action that may enable such commentaries in the first place. For Abbate, *Parsifal*'s "[m]usic and all the rest [i.e., its dramatic and ideological content, with all its questionable implications] are together even as the music intermittently repels itself from the rest[.]" The result is "*Parsifal*'s grave condition of contingency and separation . . . [The opera's] music goes off and yet is frequently looking toward traveling companions, across distances that attenuate relationships to greater and lesser degrees" (116).¹⁴ Kundry therefore figures prominently in her discussion, since she encapsulates so many Wagnerian fixations and bugaboos¹⁵—i.e., "all the rest"—and yet has practically nothing to sing in Act III.

Abbate's discussion of the moment of Kundry's death toward the very end of the opera illustrates her point most vividly. The death on stage—Kundry merely "sinks . . . lifeless to the ground [*sinkt . . . entseelt zu Boden*]" as the knights receive Parsifal's benediction—occurs at the same time as an unnerving A-minor distension in the orchestra disrupts a seemingly endless, hypnotic sequential progression whose momentum has almost run out by the time we reach D \flat major (see example 28). If we insist that *Parsifal*'s music is linked to its stage action, then the A-minor chord must indicate Kundry's death and all it entails. Abbate quotes Nike Wagner here: "[T]he sacrifice of Kundry . . . recalls the terror that had to be survived, the evil that had to be exorcised" in order to "find ourselves outside history, in a pure state: the terminal state" of "euphoric deadness." In fact, by highlighting the A-minor disturbance, Abbate undermines Nike Wagner's own view that Kundry's death is marked "only discreetly and schematically" (cited in Abbate 2001:139). But what if the music has detached itself from the plot entirely by this point? In that case, Abbate says,

[M]aybe [the A-minor moment] is registering something else entirely, the listener's position within another world: the one constructed by music. The A-minor "shudder" measures how deeply that listener has been drawn into a web of sound, how deeply, therefore, he or she assimilates the narrowest and most disquieting fantasies of the stage action that unfolds in step with it and remains unprovoked by anything else that spills out. (141)

It appears that, for Abbate, the silencing of Kundry's voice is one of the things that enables Wagner's music to gradually transfix the listener completely on its own terms, such that this listener will then uncritically absorb whatever the dramatic content may suggest. And yet Kundry's "voice" returns, even if only as an utterly remote, submerged call from a source no longer identifiable, prodding the listener into "the briefest act of mourning, a shudder that wakes a sleeper from dreams of falling, right before he or she falls asleep for good" (141).¹⁶

Mary Ann Smart (2004) also shares the view that in Act III Wagner's music overrides Kundry's subjectivity and commandeers the listener's psychological autonomy. But Smart's critical commitments lie elsewhere, in the specific relationship between music and physical gesture in nineteenth-century opera. According to Smart, Wagner's theory of physical gesture as an active force in the creation of a complete operatic character, articulated most famously in *Opera and Drama* (1851), was contradicted by his actual practice: "For Wagner the close matching of music to movement conveys not physical vitality or charisma, as in Auber or Verdi, but instead indicates that a character is half-conscious, in a state verging on trance" (179). Smart points to Kundry's mad dash onto the stage in Act I which is graphically demonstrated in the orchestra by her characteristic motif (the "caustic laughter" motif identified in example 1). The aggressive outburst of the motif—a "purely orchestral explosion" (193)—suggests that Kundry is "physically driven by her music," rather than an agent who motivates her own music (195).¹⁷ This reveals that Kundry is trapped in the physical reality of her body, and for Wagner this was a defective spiritual condition. In the first part of Act III, on the other hand, Kundry carries water to Gurnemanz to the accompaniment of shimmering, syncopated music in the strings that intimates the ravishingly lovely "Good Friday music" to be heard later on, just after Parsifal baptizes her. Smart observes in this moment of water-carrying that "[Kundry's] apparently effortless, disembodied movements leave no trace on the orchestral fabric," in contrast to her frenzied entrance in Act I (200). Kundry's vocal silence in Act III is therefore part of her saving grace:

It is precisely by silencing Kundry and by failing to register her body musically that Wagner aims to grant her purification and redemption: we are meant to hear the breaking apart of the previously synchronized music and gesture, together with the loss of voice, as ushering her into some new spiritual realm. Reduction to an ethereal being who appears to glide through space—who is, in effect, relieved of her body altogether—is, for Wagner in this late phase, equivalent to redemption. (201)

For Smart, this redemption is troubling because "the musical content that fills the void left by [Kundry's] absent body leaves no room for independent thought," either by Kundry or by the audience. Kundry loses "the power to stir the orchestra into motion around her," and as a result we in the audience "become puppets of a relentlessly referential [leitmotivic] discourse that erodes and interprets the present moment of dramatic experience" (204). I will suggest that Kundry's body *does* rouse the orchestra into action at one critical place in Act III, as she struggles to regain her "voice," in both senses of the term. However, in line with Smart's overall reading of Act III, the attempt ultimately fails, even though traces of Kundry's "voice" will return later on.

Wagner's suspicion of the body in theatrical representation is also the focal point for our most recent Kundry analyst, Matthew Wilson Smith (2007), who identifies Wagner's encounter with Schopenhauer's philosophy as the source of this suspicion. After reading Schopenhauer, Smith argues, Wagner felt that music "does what gesture cannot: it takes us directly to the heart of that which gesture more clumsily attempts to capture. Blinding our vision of the body, music shows us the body in its innermost form" (9). Smith looks at Kundry's laughter in Acts I and II in order to demonstrate how Wagner's attempt to transcend the body in *Parsifal* ironically turns back on itself in Act III. At a pivotal moment in Act I, the stage directions have Kundry laugh at Parsifal, but it is the orchestra that sounds her laughter motif. Here "music gives us Kundry's bodily gestures in their innermost form." In Act II, on the other hand, Kundry *sings* her laughter, and "in a fashion that unifies vocal and orchestral lines" (15). This occurs not only in the passage I have given as example 1, but also later in the act, as Kundry derides the fallen Amfortas by singing the laughter motif itself. Now "the outrageously gestural Kundry . . . erupts, taking the orchestra with her" as the "vocal body" returns to the opera with a vengeance (16). In Act III, of course, Kundry becomes silent, and Smith accepts Smart's verdict on the non-gestural music that surrounds her humble actions. The Schopenhauerian version of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* is saved by eliminating Kundry's threatening "corporeal theatricality" (19). However, in a return-of-the-repressed moment, musico-theatrical hysterics resurface toward the end of Act III, when the knights press Amfortas to reveal the Grail with "mob-like desperation" and Amfortas himself tears his clothes (revealing his body) and barks out a delirious "Ha!" to the accompaniment of a jagged descending unison line in the orchestra similar to Kundry's laughter motif (20–21). Smith therefore sees the distinctive attributes of Kundry's Act II voice surviving into Act III after all, in the throats and orchestral music of the knights themselves. Kundry's gestural, embodied voice cannot be evaded, as Wagner undermines his own Schopenhauerian aesthetics from within.

These last three authors see Wagner's ultimate goal in *Parsifal* as the musical captivation of the audience. By overwhelming us with a deluge of intricate leitmotivic discourse, spellbinding orchestral textures, and mesmerizing harmonic patterns, Wagner undermines our capacity to reflect on what is actually happening in the drama; instead, he would have us swallow it whole. Kundry is there to resist this agenda by doing everything it aesthetically despises, but she is also there so that she can fall silent, be baptized, and die, as Wagner exorcises the very demons she has invoked. Nonetheless, Kundry's presence—her "voice"—continues to protest against *Parsifal* even into Act III, either by momentarily severing the "narcotic daisy

chain” of harmonies that Abbate hears strewn across the end of the opera (2001:141) or by infecting the mode of operatic expression of her oppressors with her own supposed hysteria, as Smith argues. (For her part, Smart does not appear to hear any sort of protest from Kundry in Act III.)

My own analysis of Kundry as she appears in Acts II and III will complement and extend these arguments, but it will focus its hermeneutic energies upon one particular item in the constellation of Wagnerian anxieties. All of the authors I have discussed so far have already aligned Kundry with many of these anxieties, including the *femme fatale*, the division of the sexes, decadent modernity, the perilous force of history, the emptiness of representation, the human body, and Woman in the large. But there is another interpretive dimension of Kundry’s problematic persona, addressed to varying degrees by Nattiez, Steinberg, Abbate and Smith,¹⁸ that is of paramount importance in this putatively Christian opera: Kundry as Jew.

The “Problem” of Kundry’s Jewishness

Kundry’s curse aligns her with Ahasverus, the Wandering Jew of legend who refused to comfort Christ on His way to the cross and was similarly fated to roam the earth forever in search of redemption.¹⁹ In Klingsor’s incantatory speech meant to summon Kundry from her slumber at the beginning of Act II (mm. 107–29), it is revealed that in one of her previous incarnations Kundry was Herodias, the heartless queen partly responsible for the death of John the Baptist and hence a “religious villainess” and “hate figure for Christians,” according to Anthony Winterbourne (2003:62). Klingsor also calls Kundry a “Rose of Hell [*Höllenne*],” putting her in direct opposition to the Virgin Mary—the Rose of Heaven (Winterbourne 2003:63). This name also emphasizes the sinful and threatening nature of Kundry’s “foreign enticing fragrance,” a sickly, ersatz sweetness that has “won over the defenses of many a Grail knight” (Weiner 1995:239–40).²⁰

Leaving aside for a moment the possible anti-Semitic implications of these monikers, Kundry also demonstrates through her actions many of the features associated with Jews in anti-Semitic writings of the period, including those of Wagner.²¹ She is a sexual predator who threatens to corrupt the chaste holiness (and pure blood) of the Grail knights, and yet her very femininity (especially in association with Klingsor’s *effeminacy*) also codes her as a Jew, in contrast to the noble, stoic masculinity that surrounds her. Her lovelessness and lack of compassion are revealed in her callous, hysterical laughter at the knights and especially at Christ.²² To the overall extent that Kundry exhibits hysterical attributes, in fact, she also reveals her Jewishness; hysteria was considered, among other things, a disease to which Jews were

Current Musicology

particularly susceptible (Gilman 1993:402–36). Marc Weiner argues that the exoticism and “Oriental overtones” (1995:242) that Kundry exudes grant her a disturbing (if, in this case, alluring) Eastern Otherness which Wagner also associated with the Jew in some of his writings (1995:241–47). Kundry tells us that the balsam she brings to Amfortas in Act I is from Arabia, and her costuming in Act II, according to the stage directions, is “of an almost Arabian style [*annähernd arabischen Stiles*].”²³ Kundry’s charms, however, are false, generated by occult magic and motivated by self-interest. For the anti-Semite, her ubiquity and timelessness would have symbolized the stubborn persistence of the Jews throughout history, a perpetual thorn in the side of the Christian European tradition. Perhaps this is why Klingsor also calls her “the nameless one [*Namenlose*]” in his speech; no one name can capture someone who has existed in various forms essentially since the beginning of time.

In the same vein, Wagner himself once associated Kundry with Eve. In a letter to his patron King Ludwig II of September 7, 1865, Wagner tried to explain the meaning of Kundry’s kiss with an analogy:

You know, of course, about the serpent of Eden, and its alluring promise: “you will be like God, conscious of good and evil.” Adam and Eve became “conscious.” They became “aware of sin.” Mankind has to atone for this awareness in disgrace and misery, until it is redeemed through Christ, who took the sin of mankind upon himself . . . Adam—Eve : Christ. How would it be if we put it to you like this: “Anfortas—Kundry : Parsival?” (Geck and Voss:19–20)²⁴

This connection to Eve may explain yet another name that Klingsor hurls at Kundry: “primal she-devil [*Urteufelin*].” Just as original sin, passed from Eve to Adam, can only be redeemed by Christ, so must Kundry ultimately take the blame for Amfortas’s suffering, and this is suffering only Parsifal can effectively alleviate. In Wagner’s analogy, Kundry is not just any temptress, but rather the first temptress in recorded history, and a specifically Old Testament one at that.

The locus classicus of Wagner’s anti-Semitic ideology and aesthetics is the *Judentum* essay of 1850/69.²⁵ Many of his comments about Jews and their relationship to Christian European culture correspond strikingly well to Kundry’s own situation and manner(s) of expression in *Parsifal*. For Wagner, the European individual’s fundamental, essential response to the Jew, despite all of the European’s liberal inclusionary intentions, is a feeling of “involuntary repulsion” and “instinctual disgust, [a feeling] which we nonetheless clearly realize is stronger and more overpowering than our deliberate eagerness to let go of it” (1911, vol. 5:67).²⁶ For the whole of Act I, the squires find Kundry similarly repulsive, calling her a “wild beast [*wildes Thier*]” and a brewer of “magic potions [*Zaubersaft*].” No matter how much

the well-meaning Gurnemanz (representing the liberal, tolerant perspective) gently reproaches the squires for their attitude, they cannot help but keep a wary distance: “But she hates us; how balefully she looks at us from over there! She’s a heathen, a sorceress [*Doch hasst sie uns; sieh’ nur wie hämisch dort nach uns sie blickt! Eine Heidin ist’s, ein Zauberweib*].” To a certain extent, Gurnemanz condones their behavior and reassures them: “You do not nourish her, she never approaches you, she has nothing in common with you [*Ihr nährt sie nicht, sie naht euch nie, nichts hat sie mit euch gemein*].” Again this directly echoes Wagner’s *Judentum* essay:

The Jew . . . initially catches our attention in everyday life with his outward appearance, which, no matter what European nationality we belong to, has something of an unpleasant foreignness to that nationality: involuntarily we wish to have nothing in common with a man who looks like that. (69)²⁷

Kundry is always an outsider to the Montsalvat community throughout the whole of *Parsifal*—an obvious point, perhaps, given her sex, but for that reason an overlooked point that says a lot about why she is in the opera in the first place.

In Kundry’s defense, Gurnemanz mentions her thankless service to the knights as their unfailing messenger, and when Parsifal attacks Kundry later on in Act I for telling him that his mother is dead, Gurnemanz has to reproach *him* as well: “What has this woman done to you? She has spoken truthfully; for Kundry never lies, although she has seen much [*Was that dir das Weib? Es sagte wahr; denn nie lügt Kundry, doch sah’ sie viel*].” Kundry may never lie, but in order to stay under the radar and get what she wants in Act I and the first half of Act II, she also refrains from disclosing the whole truth about herself and what she has seen. This is precisely what permits Gurnemanz to trust her, and it is why Wagner did not trust Jews:

The Jew never gets excited in a mutual exchange of feelings *with* us, [but] rather [gets excited] *at* us, only in the particular self-serving interest of his vanity or his advantage; this [self-serving quality] gives to such excitement a character of ridiculousness, primarily because of the disfigured expression of his manner of speaking, and awakens everything in us except sympathy for the speaker’s interests. (72, emphasis added)²⁸

Kundry’s “manner of speaking” is certainly “disfigured” in Act I, but it is not “ridiculous” or laughable (Wagner’s word in the essay is *Lächerlichen*), and this is especially true in Act II. She also earns our deep sympathy as the opera progresses, a point to which I shall return. Nevertheless, her hysterical agitation and manipulative duplicity in Acts I and II betray her pernicious outsider status, and for Wagner all these things were tightly linked to the figure of the Jew.

What was most important to Wagner in the *Judentum* essay, however, and what I believe is most relevant to understanding why Kundry and her voice are handled as they are in Acts II and III, was his passionate belief that,

[W]e can now regard the [Jew]'s appeal for emancipation as nothing other than extraordinarily naïve, since it is rather *we* who see ourselves transplanted into the necessity of fighting for emancipation from the Jews. Given the current state of things in this world, the Jew is really already more than emancipated: he rules, and [he] will rule as long as money remains the power before which all our efforts lose their force. (68)²⁹

In his 1992 book *Wagner: Race and Revolution*, Paul Lawrence Rose connects Wagner's call for society's emancipation from the Jews to the most elevated aspirations of German revolutionary thought. Within this predominant strain of nineteenth-century German political ideology, all the ills of the modern German state were distilled in the stereotypical figure of the Jew: the rules of money and exchange (as Wagner noted in the previous quote from the *Judentum* essay), self-interest, property, crass materialism, loveless marriage, and intellectualism, to name a few. (Much of this resonates well with the work of the Wagner critics I considered earlier; Kundry the Jew is also the Kundry of decadent modernity, difference, and the threateningly exotic.) Above all, the Jew was the quintessence of unfreedom; with his unthinking obedience to an inscrutable Old Testament God, he typified the blind adherence to dogma that the German revolutionaries abhorred.³⁰ According to Rose, this philosophical tradition dates back to Kant and Fichte, for whom "[t]he Jews represented, not only in theory but in real life, precisely that enslavement of the human spirit from which the German Revolution promised redemption" (7). If society could precipitate out the offending Jewish element within its ranks and cast it aside, then liberation would be at hand. This sets up a curious dialectic between race and revolution in which the Jew consistently provided the necessary negative antipode against which the revolutionary mission could positively define itself. In a word, "the Jew" was created in order to be triumphantly eliminated.

Slavoj Žižek analyzes this process in Wagner's works in terms of the composer's conflicted relationship with modernity:

Wagner's attitude to modernity is not simply negative but much more ambiguous: he wants to enjoy its fruits, while avoiding its disintegrative effects—in short, Wagner wants to have his cake and eat it. For that reason, he needs a Jew: so that, first, modernity—this abstract, impersonal process—is given a human face, is identified with concrete, palpable features; then, in a second move, by rejecting the Jew who gives body to all that is disintegrated in modernity, we can retain its fruits. (1996:218)

In *Parsifal*, the “human face” of modernity is Kundry. She not only “gives body” to modernity, but voice as well, in all its “disintegrated,” troubled complexity. For Wagner, such a voice must be heard as fully as possible, if only so that the maximum benefit can be derived from its silencing. Again from the *Judentum* essay: “[I]t must...become clear to us what we hate in that [Jewish] being [*Wesen*]; what we then understand clearly, we can stand up against; indeed, already through its naked exposure we may hope that the demon can be routed from the field” (69).³¹ Wagner’s use of the word *Wesen* (being, essence, nature) demonstrates that he did not confine the scourge of Jewry to actual Jews. Rather, Jewry was the malignant element of contemporary life and art in general—“[J]ewry is the evil conscience of our modern civilization” (85)³²—one which required brutal honesty and soul-searching to successfully uproot, even for the non-Jew. “Whoever shrinks from this labor, whoever turns away from this investigation . . ., even him we now classify under the category of ‘Jews in Music’” (84).³³ Jewry had seized upon the enervated body of contemporary music, infecting it now like a “teeming life-mass of worms [*wimmelnde Viellebigkeit von Würmern*]” (84), much as Kundry, I would argue, seduced and corrupted a king (Amfortas) who was already susceptible to such erotic temptations. The worms bear a family resemblance to the wound.

But how can the wound be healed, the worms expunged? For Wagner, the cure was *Untergang*, “going under.” In the final passage of the *Judentum* essay, Wagner praised the writer Ludwig Börne, one of the luminaries of the Young Germany literary movement of the 1830s, who had converted from Judaism to Lutheranism in 1818. In his essay “The Wandering Jew” (1821), Börne excoriated the money-obsessed “Jewishness [*Judentümlichkeit*]” of European culture at large and looked forward to the day when Jews would renounce their Judaism and all that it implied, transforming society in the process (see Rose 1992:17). Wagner saw Börne as an exemplary figure in this regard, and in his panegyric to Börne’s accomplishment, he offered a recipe for the Jew’s “redemption [*Erlösung*]”:

From his isolated position as a Jew, [Börne] walked out among us seeking redemption: he did not find it and had to realize that he would only be able to find it with *our redemption* too, into *authentic men* [*wahrhaften Menschen*]. For [the Jew] to become [such a] man conjointly with us, however, means first and foremost for the Jew as much as: ceasing to be a Jew. *Börne* did this. Yet [it is] precisely *Börne* [who] also teaches [us] that this redemption cannot be achieved in comfort and dispassionately cold complacency, but rather that it costs sweat, misery, anxieties and the depths of suffering and pain, as it [costs] us. Without looking back, take part in this work of redemption that causes us to be born again through self-an-

Current Musicology

nihilation [*durch Selbstvernichtung wiedergebärende Erlösungswerke*], then we will be as one and undivided! But keep in mind that your redemption from the curse that weighs upon you can be but one: the redemption of Ahasverus—*going under* [Untergang]! (85)³⁴

The Wandering Jew and his “redemption” again remind us of Kundry and *Parsifal*, but what exactly did Wagner mean by *Untergang*? When Wagner published the revamped *Judentum* essay again in 1869, he framed it with a lengthy expansion and explanation of its main ideas, under the heading “Clarifications of [my essay] ‘Jewry in Music’ [*Aufklärungen über das Judentum in der Musik*].”³⁵ At the end of these “clarifications,” he wondered what the ultimate remedy for the cultural crisis posed by the Jews should be:

Whether the downfall of our culture could be stopped through a forcible casting-out of the corrosive foreign element, I am unable to assess, because forces must be available for this purpose of whose existence I am unaware. (1911, vol. 8:259)³⁶

Such language suggests banishment and extirpation of the Jews, a literal *Untergang* that brings thoughts of the “final solution” disturbingly to the present-day reader’s mind. But Wagner immediately followed these ruminations with a more optimistic vision of integration:

On the other hand, should this element be assimilated with us in such a way that, conjointly with us, it brings us toward the maturation of the higher development of our noble human nature, then it is apparent that [it is] not the concealing of the difficulties of this assimilation, but rather only the most open revealing of the same that can be conducive to this. (259–60)³⁷

As in the final paragraph of the *Judentum* essay itself, Wagner advocated complete and unfiltered acceptance of the evil of Jewry for the effective assimilation of this “corrosive foreign element,” and nothing tempered the grim reality that such redemption could only be earned through extreme toil and suffering. Indeed, Wagner wrote, “I am certainly of the opinion that all that oppresses the true German essence [*Wesen*] from that quarter [i.e., Jewish society] weighs upon insightful and sensitive Jews themselves in an even more dreadful manner” (258).³⁸ Hopefully, Wagner surmised, his essay “would be able to strengthen [his enemies—i.e., Jews and Jew-sympathizers who assailed him because of his beliefs] in their own battle for true emancipation [*zum eigenen Kampfe für ihre wahre Emanzipation stärken könne*]” (259). Perhaps it was the hard-fought *Untergang* of “Jewry” within every German soul, especially souls of Jews like Börne, that Wagner

was hoping to inspire. However, we might also recall that by 1869 Wagner was fully under the spell of Schopenhauer's philosophy, implying another perspective on the notion of *Untergang*. Especially given Wagner's related remarks about being "born again through self-annihilation," *Untergang* may imply a general Buddhistic renunciation of desire, a purging of the Will.

In Act III of *Parsifal*, Kundry suffers all three of these *Untergangen*, in reverse order. First, her powerful singing voice, suffused with desire and pain, is washed out and nullified; in its place we see a body delivered of inner conflict (at least for the *most* part, I should stress). Smart's comment about Kundry's "[r]eduction to an ethereal being who appears to glide through space" describes her Schopenhauerian transformation particularly well. Next, Kundry is baptized by Parsifal, who calls upon her to "believe in the Redeemer [*glaub' an den Erlöser*]." In contrast to her generally placid state earlier in the act, Kundry now "seems to weep violently [*scheint heftig zu weinen*]," according to the stage directions. (We will investigate this moment much more deeply later on.) Kundry's conversion to the Christian faith elicits shudders of tears and agony in her; redemption has clearly "cost [her the] sweat, misery, anxieties, and all the depths of suffering and pain" mentioned in the conclusion of Wagner's *Judentum* essay. Finally, Kundry demonstrates *Untergang* in its most non-metaphorical sense: she dies. But all of these things are required for the redemption of Montsalvat, and vice versa. As Wagner wrote, it was only with the redemption of European culture at large that the Jew would gain his (or her) own redemption—a paradoxical situation from which Kundry is unable to escape.

All of this bears directly on the music of *Parsifal* and the role of Kundry's voice in making that music as overwhelming and totalizing an experience as it is. In particular, I think that the intimate connection between anti-Semitism and social transformation betrayed in the writings of Wagner and the German revolutionary movement as a whole may help to explain why Kundry and her music reappear as they do in Act III. The Jewish implications of Kundry's character, explored at length above and most assertively established by her laughter at Christ, mark her as the source of corruption that must be transcended if the knights of Montsalvat are to find a specifically Christian and Germanic redemption. Without Kundry, in fact, there can be no such redemption, because there would be nothing to be redeemed from. Kundry may be vocally silent in Act III, but her music and her body are repeatedly called forth so that they may be transcended, enabling some of the most resplendent moments of the score to unfold. Just as "the Jew" was created in order to be triumphantly eliminated, Kundry's voice is recreated in the orchestra, despite (or because of?) her vocal silence, only to be demonstratively and repeatedly effaced by the music of Montsalvat's redemption.

Current Musicology

Example 3: Act II, mm. 736–49

736 *Sehr zurückhaltend.*
KUNDRY.

Par-Par- (He wants to

PARSIFAL.
Lasst ab! Ihr fangt mich nicht!
Let go! You won't catch me!

f *ff dim.*
Sehr zurückhaltend.

740 **KUNDRY.** *Immer etwas langsamer werdend.*
-sifal! si - fal! Wei - le!
flee, and then he hears Kundry's voice coming from the flowery grove, and stands still in surprise.)
Immer etwas langsamer werdend.

ten. *piü p*

745 **PARSIFAL.** *(Kundry gradually becomes visible.)* *Sehr langsam u. gedehnt.*
Par - si - fal? So nannte träu - mend mich einst die Mut - ter.
Parsifal? Thus did my mother once call me in a dream.

ten. *piü p* *ppp* *pp*
Sehr langsam u. gedehnt.

P. *P.* *P.*
d: ii⁶₅ *B: V¹³₇* *G: I*

Much of the beauty of redemption in Act III is necessarily purchased at Kundry's expense, just as the utopian dreams of the German revolutionaries necessarily revolved around an imaginary Jewish enemy. What is even more troubling about the case of Kundry, however, is that, unlike "the Jew," Kundry is not a mythical invention, a distant symbolic repository of socio-cultural insecurities, but rather a fully fleshed-out operatic character with a highly developed voice (in both senses of the term). Kundry's powerful narrative of confession in Act II elicits our genuine sympathy because of its sudden

frankness, urgency, and authority. But precisely because we come to care for her as an individual in Act II, we are also guilty of condoning the abuse that she suffers every time her “voice” is manipulated to propel the process of redemption forward in Act III. It is now time to listen to that voice as it winds its way through these two acts of *Parsifal*.

The *Aufgang* and *Untergang* of Kundry’s Voice: How Wagner Creates and “Solves” the “Problem”

After her protracted dialogue with Klingsor at the beginning of Act II, Kundry subsides with the rest of his magic castle to allow a garden of Flower Maidens to bloom. Their mission is to ensnare Parsifal and lure him into a sexual transgression, but as their attempted erotic strangulation reaches its height, Kundry and her voice arrestingly break out again in m. 739 (example 3). Lost in the floral overgrowth, Kundry is a voice without body, bringing the action to a halt by calling out Parsifal’s name—as yet unmentioned in the opera—to the second half of the “prophecy” motif.³⁹ In the beginning of Act I, Amfortas sings the complete version of this motif to the words, “becoming aware through compassion . . . the pure fool [*durch Mitleid wissend . . . der reine Thor*],” reciting the unsolved riddle he heard during his vision. Here in Act II, we now discover that Kundry is the holder of much privileged information. By replacing the ambiguous text of the second half of the motif with Parsifal’s name, Kundry solves the riddle and reveals that Parsifal is in fact “the pure fool” of the prophecy. Shortly, in mm. 788–94, Kundry will elucidate the riddle more definitively by restoring the motif’s original harmonic context and offering an etymological dissection of Parsifal’s name (see example 4; mm. 790–91 and mm. 793–94 give a transposed version of the complete original form of the motif).⁴⁰ Kundry is not only able to tell Parsifal what the two parts of his name signify, but in mm. 795–800 (not given in the example) she also explains that “Parsifal” had been his father Gamuret’s dying word to his mother Herzeleide (literally, “heart-of-suffering”) as the infant was gestating in Herzeleide’s womb.

After Kundry first sings Parsifal’s name in mm. 739–41 (again, see example 3), Parsifal listens as if dumbstruck, sings his own name to the last three notes of the prophecy motif (mm. 745–46) and recovers the distant memory of when he had heard that sound before (“Thus did my mother once call me in a dream [*So nannte träumend mich einst die Mutter*]”). Similarly, the harmony of mm. 741–47 gradually comes into focus as well; diminished and half-diminished seventh chords are magically reinterpreted above changing bass notes in the same way that the prophecy motif gradually takes on a different resonance with its new text (see the analytical annota-

Current Musicology

Example 4: Act II, mm. 786–94.

786 **KUNDRY.**
 [Sehr langsam] Dich -
You

PARSIFAL. (*still standing at a distance*)
 Rie - fest du mich Na - men - lo - sen?
 You called to me, to one who has no name?

786 *pp*

789 **KUNDRY.**
 nannt' ich thör'-ger Rei - ner, "Fal - par - si," dich
 I called, foolish pure one, "Falparsifal," you

792
 rei - nen Tho - ren: "Par - si - fal."
 pure fool: "Parsifal."

792 *pp*

tions in example 3). In m. 749, on the word “Mutter,” memory and clarity are finally achieved with a pristine open-position G-major sonority in the strings, whose tremolos come to an end here as well. All the while, Kundry is slowly emerging into view, as though she were the mother Parsifal had been waiting for. She goes on to welcome him in G major, not quite as his mother, but as the only one who can tell Parsifal what he has been longing to know about his mother.

Example 5: Act II, mm. 757–69.

757 **KUNDRY.**
 Ihr kin-di-schen Buh-len, wei-chet von ihm;
You childish paramours, move away from him;

Schr ruhig.
pp

761
 früh wcl-ken-de Blu-men, nicht euch ward er zum
flowers soon to be wilting, he was not sent here

dolce
pp
 3 3 3
 P. +

765
 Spie-le be-stelit. Geht heim, pffe-get der
to play with you. Go home, care for your wounded.

piu p
 5 5 6
 ausdrucks-voll

767
 Wun-den, ein-sam er-harrt euch man-cher Held.
many a hero waits for you in solitude.

ausdrucks-voll
 3 3
p

The maternal authority of Kundry's voice, ensured by these musical and historical connections to Herzeleide, can blend effortlessly into seductive sensuality, as her next utterance shows (example 5). G major becomes the site of Kundry's attempt to manipulate Parsifal's memories and emotions. Here Kundry is addressing the Flower Maidens with her words, enacting another motherly gesture by sending them off to bed (that is, to the beds

Current Musicology

Example 6: Act II, mm. 509–13.

509 **Flower Maiden Ib.**
So willst du uns wohl nicht
[Lebhaft] So you really don't want to strike us?

511 **Flower Maiden Ib.**
schla gen?
Flower Maiden Iib.
Willst uns nicht schla gen?
You don't want to strike us?

PARSIFAL.
Das möcht' ich nicht.
I don't want to.

P.

of their wounded heroes), but her music anticipates that of the narrative discourse soon to follow, in which she beguilingly informs Parsifal of the heartbreaking effect that his negligence toward his mother had wrought. At the start of this passage in m. 757, the open-position G-major sonority of m. 749 alternates with a kind of whole-tone neighbor chord, rocking back and forth in the manner of a cozy Biedermeier lullaby. The gentle chromaticism and winding scalar voice leading of the ensuing *Muttermusik* subtly evolve into the Flower Maidens' alluring sounds. Notice, for example, the affinity between the music of "welkende Blumen" and "ward er zum Spiele," indicated by the brackets in mm. 762–65 of example 5. The diatonic contour of the first phrase, smoothly doubled by the first violins, becomes the chromatic line of the second phrase, with frilly ornamentation in the second violins that

expands the sonic sensuality of Kundry's singing voice. In m. 765, the first violins let Kundry's flowery melodic vine spool itself out even further, beyond the end of her sung line. Mm. 764–68 repeatedly invoke the characteristic harmonic progression of the Flower Maidens themselves, with its distinctive chromatic voice exchange (see example 6 for the Maidens' music). At the end of the passage, Kundry's laughter motif erupts in the first violins in mm. 768–69, slowed down into a coy chuckle in this context but recognizable nonetheless. It is as though Kundry is putting on the accent of a soothing mother for the benefit of her Flower Maidens (and with Parsifal in earshot), while her native manner of expression—that of a magic seductress, in league with the Flower Maidens—occasionally presses to the surface.

The crucial point, however, is that while we in the audience can hear the shifting inflections of Kundry's voice, Parsifal cannot. In all his "pure foolishness," Parsifal cannot distinguish between the different kinds of feminine discourse being thrown at him, and so he takes them all in together as a fascinating but confusing *mélange*. More specifically, what Parsifal is not yet able to discern is that Kundry is guilty of committing one of the classic *faux pas* of Wagnerian Jews, a phenomenon we might call "bad mimesis." Marc Weiner (1996) and David Levin (1996) have identified the theoretical expostulation of this phenomenon in Wagner's writings and connected its actual practice to Wagner's depiction of the fiendish dwarf Mime in *Siegfried* and the bumbling pedant Beckmesser in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* respectively.⁴¹ For Wagner, the Jew was the exponent of a coarse realism (an extension, of course, of his decadent modernity) that mistook external form for inner content. In order to make himself understood as an artist, the Jew might imitate the surface features of the natural, authentic *Volk* with whom he hopes to ingratiate himself, but his work will always appear strange to them, since he can never truly access the ideal that lies behind their transcendental mode of expression. As Wagner put it in the *Judentum* essay, "upon hearing Jewish talk, our attention involuntarily dwells more on the repellent *How*, than on the *What* contained therein" (1911, vol. 5:71).⁴²

Weiner's best example of bad mimesis is the scene in Act I of *Siegfried* in which Mime aims to trick the hero of the opera's title into drinking a sleeping potion. Mime hopes to distract Siegfried by flattering the boy with what he himself calls "intimate deceit-speech [*traulichem Truggerede*]." If Mime succeeds, he can kill Siegfried and steal the hoard of gold that the boy has wrested from the dragon Fafner. With suspiciously saccharine musical rhetoric, Mime approaches Siegfried with the drink, but his words are what give the game away. Although he sings with a prettified lilt and affects a kindly physical demeanor, Mime simultaneously makes admissions such as "I only want to chop off the boy's head [*Ich will dem Kind nur den Kopf*

Current Musicology

Example 7: Act II, mm. 823–43.

823 **KUNDRY.**

viel er-sah. Ich sah das Kind an sei-ner Mut-ter Brust, sein
[I have come from far away, where I saw much.] Sehr mässig und ruhig. *I saw the child upon its mother's breast,*

829
 er - stes Lal - len lacht mir noch im Ohr; das Leid im Her-zen, wie
its first babbles still laugh in my ear; with suffering in her heart,

834
 lach-te da auch Her-ze - lei - de, als ih - ren Schmer - zen zujauch - zte...
how Herzleide still laughed, as this feast for her eyes

838
 ih - rer Au - gen Wei - de. Ge - bet - tet sanft auf wei - chen Moo - sen,
cheered away her pain. Gently couched upon soft mosses.

835

p dolce *poco cresc.* *mf*

p *piu p* *dolce*

abhau'n]!” Sign and signified fail to correspond, and Siegfried saves himself by exposing the (Jewish) deception. Mime’s mimesis (pun intended) is “bad” in both senses of the term: it is defectively carried out and viciously intended. While Kundry does not semiotically err as obviously as Mime, she does let slip some musical signs that undermine the beneficent credibility of her words. We can perceive these moments of semiotic dissonance, but Parsifal is still deaf to them.

Example 8: Act II, mm. 855–58.

855 KUNDRY.

Thau der Mut - ter - thrä - - - nen. Nur
 855 [the hot] dew of a mother's tears. Etwas belebend.

p *più p* *p* *ausdrucksvoll*

P. †

Thus the sectional formality and relatively conventional musical language of what happens next—Kundry’s lengthy narrative about Herzeleide’s motherhood, suffering, and death—might impress us as insincere and manipulative. But for Parsifal, Kundry’s tale about his mother is deeply engrossing, inspiring profound regret and yearning.⁴³ To the contemporary listener, the music of Kundry’s narrative may have sounded faintly like a grand-opera aria. Its opening section (example 7) begins in m. 825 with the same lullaby chords from mm. 757ff (see example 5). This section maintains a fairly persistent G-major tonal center and initially unfolds in three discrete three-measure phrases (mm. 825–33) whose melodies each begin one step higher than that of the previous phrase. It modulates deliberately, with an almost Classical purity, to the dominant in mm. 837–39, and immediately thereafter it rounds itself off with a half cadence on the dominant of G in m. 839 before returning to the original lullaby material in the next bar, kicking off a new section. Similarly strong formal articulations follow: the full cadence (if elided) in the tonic in mm. 857–58 (example 8), the solid approach to a D-major cadence in mm. 892–94 that elides into a G-major cadence in m. 895, itself resolved deceptively into E♭ major and the onset of new thematic material in m. 896 (example 9), and the humble close in D major to conclude the narrative in mm. 913–15, sentimentalized by the turn figure in m. 912 that leads to the appoggiatura climax of the phrase in m. 913. Even a touch of modal mixture (the inner-voice B♭) is thrown in to tug just a little more firmly at the heartstrings (example 10).⁴⁴ Like the fawning melodic style of the Flower Maidens’ big musical number, worthy of operetta (example 11), the cloying chromaticism of Kundry’s tale also adds a touch of cheapness (in the context of Wagner’s otherwise more radical use of chromaticism in *Parsifal*) that hints at Meyerbeer and the decadent Jewish culture, the vain striving for effect, that Wagner associated with him (R. Wagner 1911, vol. 5:81–83).

Current Musicology

Example 9: Act II, mm. 892–98.

892 **KUNDRY.**
 ward dir es wohl gar beim Küssen bang?
 ...did you really become afraid of kissing?

892 *dim.* *p* *p*

895 Wieder etwas mehr zurückhaltend. Doch, ihr
 Yet you

895 *p* *sf* *3* *P.*

897 Wehe du nicht vernahmst, nicht ihrer Schmerzen
 did not perceive her woe, nor [the rages] of her pain.

897 *p* *Erwas belebend.* *p*

+ *sf* *3* *P.* *+*

In fact, we already know that another crafty stage magician is behind this devious discourse: Klingsor. Earlier in Act II, having subdued Kundry into carrying out his plans, Klingsor exclaims, “Haha! I know the magic well which always binds you again to my service [*Haha! Den Zauber wusst’ ich wohl, der immer dich wieder zum Dienst mir gesellt!*]” His words are accompanied at first in mm. 394–95 by two bars of music directly associated with Herzeleide (see example 12). This same motif appeared in Act I as Parsifal spoke of his past (mm. 904–7) and specifically of his mother (mm. 937–40). The motif has also been a recurrent component of Kundry’s Herzeleide narrative in Act II. In mm. 832–33 she sings it to show that the literal meaning of Herzeleide’s name is no accident, and in mm. 835–36 the orchestra develops it as Kundry sings of Herzeleide’s pain [*Schmerzen*] (see example 7). Kundry concludes

Example 10: Act II, mm. 910–15.

910 KUNDRY.

warb: ihr brach das Leid das Herz, und
 [she] courted [a quiet death]: suffering broke her heart, and

Sehr langsam.

910

913

Her-ze-lei-de starb.
 Herzeleide died.

913

Bewegter, doch nicht schnell. 3

pp *p molto cresc.*

her narrative with yet more wordplay on Herzeleide’s name—“suffering broke her heart, and Heart-of-Suffering died [ihr brach das Leid das Herz, und Herzeleide starb]”—and in mm. 910–12 we hear Herzeleide’s motif again in the orchestra (see example 10). When Klingsor sings above the motif in mm. 394–95 (again, see example 12), it ultimately loses itself into the sorcerer’s swirling magic motif in mm. 396ff. Remembering this earlier invocation of magic, we may regard Kundry’s use of the Herzeleide motif in her narrative as cunning and calculated. Even as she apes the language of Parsifal’s mother at Klingsor’s behest, the voice of the (Jewish) Other still gives itself away. We must also remember, of course, that Kundry *did* witness what she narrates; as Gurnemanz said, Kundry never lies. But it is Kundry’s musical delivery of this information, her “voice,” that leads us to regard her as a suspicious Other. (Ultimately, this Other’s voice will also turn out to be a construction; for now it is one of Kundry’s convincing poses.)

In the approach to her kiss, Kundry takes advantage of the musical manipulation that she has wrought thus far, concocting a thick, intoxicating brew of motifs that ultimately overwhelms Parsifal at the same time as it appears fairly transparent to us (example 13). As Kundry elaborately invites Parsifal to heal his guilty pain by fulfilling his mother’s wishes in romantic

Current Musicology

Example 11: Act II, mm. 567–70.

567 Flower Maiden Chorus I.

Komm! — Komm! — Hol - der Kna - be!
Come! — Come! — Dear boy!

Komm! — Komm! — Hol - der Kna - be!
Come! — Come! — Dear boy!

Komm! — Komm! — Hol - der Kna - be!
Come! — Come! — Dear boy!

567 Leicht bewegt.
pp

love, her scornful laughter motif sometimes bubbles up to the surface of the orchestral texture—see the clarinet in m. 960, the flute in m. 966 (revealing the source of Kundry’s broader vocal melody in the same bar), and the first violins’ cascade at the end of m. 971. Kundry’s own magic motif (m. 967) flows into a passionately pulsating development of Herzeleide’s music that signifies the promise of joyous family reunion (mm. 968–71). Earlier, the orchestra had played Herzeleide’s music with similar passion as Kundry sang of her warm embrace of her child. But this climactic moment ended abruptly in m. 892 (see example 9) as Kundry chided Parsifal for denying his mother the intimacy she fervently desired: “did you really become afraid of kissing [*ward dir es wohl gar beim Küssen bang*]?” Now, in mm. 971–72, this momentum collapses back into Kundry’s magic motif, leading ultimately to the end of the seduction.

To seal her success, Kundry stokes the fire of Parsifal’s regret by reminding him of his negligence toward his mother. In mm. 978–80, Kundry sings the rueful appoggiatura motif first introduced in mm. 895–98 after the chiding mentioned above (again, see example 9—“Yet you did not perceive her woe [*Doch, ihr Wehe du nicht vernahm’st*]”). With the very same motif, Kundry now offers Parsifal a chance to rewrite history by accepting her kiss “as the final greeting of a mother’s blessing [*als Muttersegen’s letzten Gruss*].” Kundry skillfully weaves together the elements of an Oedipal guilt

Example 12: Act II, mm. 389–400.

389 KLINGSOR.

Wie? Schon am Werk?
What now? Already at work?

389

p *f*

P. 6 12 6 ♯

393

Ha-ha! Den Zau - ber wusst'ich wohl, —
Ha-ha! I know the magic well,

393 *bewegt.*

dim. *p* *p*

397

der im-mer dich wie - der zum Dienst mir ge - sellt!
which always binds you again to my service!

397 *piu p*

P. ♯

trip with the thrilling sexuality of her magic, moving steadily and seamlessly from motif to motif. We can see (that is, hear) the individual strands in the treacherous tapestry, but Parsifal is simply enveloped by it.

With the kiss, of course, Parsifal learns of the sinful desire that lies behind Amfortas's wound, comes to realize the meaning of the Christian ritual he had witnessed in Act I, and accepts his mission to redeem the

Current Musicology

Example 13: Act II, mm. 956–983.

956 **KUNDRY.** (*Kundry, still reclining, bends over Parsifal's head, gently touches his forehead, and winds her arm confusingly around his neck.*)

Be-kennt - niss wird Schuld in Reu e

956 *Sehr ruhig.*

960 en - den, Er-kennt - niss in Sinn die Thor - heit

960 *cl.* knowledge will turn foolishness into sense.

964 wenden. Die Lie - be - ler - ne ken - nen,

964 *Nicht eilen!* Learn to know the love,

967 die Ga - muret um schloss, als Her - ze - le - id's Ent -

967 that embraced Ganuwet, Beliebt, when Herzeleide's

knights of Montsalvat and the king whom they serve. What I want to focus on here is the way that Parsifal's newfound knowledge gives him the ability to unravel the tapestry of Kundry's bad mimesis. As Parsifal's flood of understanding subsides for a moment, Kundry tries to refocus his attention on her as his beloved (example 14, mm. 1094–99). But Parsifal immediately sees through her maneuver. As Kundry caressingly entwines herself around

Example 13 continued.

970 KUNDRY.
 bren-nen ihn sen - gend ü-ber - floss! Wieder etwas Die
scorching passion flowed over him! zurückhaltend. *She*

973
 Leib und Le-ben einst dir ge - ge - ben, der Tod und Thor - heit wei - chen
who once gave you body and life, to whom death and foolishness must yield.

976
 muss, sie beat dir heut' als Mut - ter -
she offers you today, Gedehnt. as the final

979
 se gen's letzten Gruss der Lie - be er - sten Kuss!
greeting of a mother's blessing, love's first kiss!
 Immer langsamer. *ersterbend* Sehr langsam. *pp*

The musical score consists of four systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is two sharps (D major). The tempo and dynamics change throughout the piece, with markings such as *pp*, *più p*, *pp*, *Immer langsamer*, and *Sehr langsam*. The piano accompaniment features complex textures, including triplets and sixteenth-note patterns. The vocal line is in a soprano range and includes both German and English lyrics. The score ends with a *pp* marking and the instruction *u.c. P.*

him, reenacting the seductive physical gestures she made during her original approach to the kiss, Parsifal stares intently at her and observes what we might anachronistically call a video replay of that event (example 14, mm. 1099–1116; see also the stage directions in mm. 1095ff). As Parsifal describes Kundry's actions in the manner of a play-by-play announcer, we hear a miniature version of the earlier musical texture from Kundry's buildup to the

Current Musicology

Example 14: Act II, mm. 1094–1116.

1094 KUNDRY. (*Parsifal, still in a bent-over position, gazes fixedly at Kundry, who during the following, bends over him and performs the curescing movements that he describes in the following passage.*)

Ge - lob - ter Held! ent-flich dem Wahn! Blick' auf, sei hold der Hul - din
 Promised hero! Escape from madness! Look up, be kind to your beloved's approach!
 Sehr langsam.

1099 Nah'n! _____

PARSIFAL.

Ja! Die-se Stimme! So rief sie
 Yes! This voice! Like this she called to him:
 sehr ausdrucks-voll cl.

1099 Solo violin *f*

1102 ihm; und diesen Blick, deutlich er-kenn' ich ihn, auch die-sen,
 and this look, I clearly recognize it, this one too.

1102 Solo violin *pp*

1105 der ihm so fried - los lach - te; die Lip - pe. ja so
 that laughed at him so restlessly: The lips, yes, they

1105 cl. *pp*

kiss, seen in example 13.⁴⁵ There, a plush carpet of steadily pulsating string chords supported Kundry's broad singing line; the interspersed flare-ups of her laughter motif were only momentary distractions, and Parsifal was not even aware of them. Here, a solo violin and clarinet trade off syrupy flights of Kundry's laughter above a jerky, nervous accompaniment in the muted upper strings.⁴⁶ Through the speakers of his transcendental television, then,

Example 14 continued.

1107
 zuck - te sie ihm, so neig - te sich der Nack - en, so hob sich kühn das
 quivered for him, like this she bent her neck, like this she boldly raised her head;
 Solo violin (sehr gefühlvoll.) *cresc.*

1109
 Haupt; so flat - ter - ten lachend die Lock - en, so schlang um den
 like this she laughingly fluttered her tresses, like this she entwined her
 leidenschaftlich *pp*

1111
 Hals sich der Arm so schmeichelte weich die Wan - ge: mit al - ler Schmerzen Qual
 arm around his neck, like this she caressed his cheeks; in league with all torture and pain.
p *sfp*

1113
 — im Bun - de, das Heil der See - le ent - küsst - te ihm der Mund!
 her mouth kissed away the salvation of his soul! *Belebt!*

p *cresc.* *piu* *f*
sfp *P.*

Parsifal hears a tinny reproduction of Kundry's earlier musical discourse, reduced from a perplexing and engulfing din of motifs to its barest, "truest" essentials. The replay shows that Kundry's seduction was really much ado about nothing. The tenderness of her physical gestures in example 14 does not match the frenetic emptiness of her music, which consists of nothing but her laughter motif, developed from time to time into mawkishly sweet roulades.

Current Musicology

Example 15: Act II, mm. 1142–50.

1142 KUNDRY.
Seit For
vn. 1
ausdrucksvoll
f
ff
1147
E - wig kei - ten har - re ich deiner,
eternity I've waited for you,
p
sfp
p
P.

Having seen Kundry for what she “really” is—a cackling witch playing the part of a comforting mother and passionate lover—Parsifal is horrified and wants to cast her away. He turns off the replay in mm. 1120–22 (after the end of example 14) with a telling choice of words: “Corrupter! Get away from me [*Verderberin! Weiche von mir!*]” Bad mimesis, the source of Jewish artistic corruption, had almost managed to ensure Parsifal’s spiritual corruption as well, and like any genuine member of the German *Volk*, he is repulsed by the spectacle. Indeed, the feverish, maudlin hyperactivity of example 14 is perhaps the most superficially “Jewish” music in *Parsifal*, in the terms set by Wagner’s *Judentum* essay; it is “an unbearably contorted yakking” which “by no means ever rises to the arousal of a higher, more heartwarming passion” (1911, vol. 5:71),⁴⁷ much as “parrots imitate human words and speaking in their squawking, but likewise without expression and genuine emotion” (75).⁴⁸

Now if Parsifal has deconstructed Kundry entirely, Act II could come to a close forthwith. The problem of Kundry has been solved—her duplicitous voice has been exposed as such and rendered harmless—and Parsifal ought to go on and defeat Klingsor. But there is more to Kundry than what

Parsifal has seen and heard so far. At this point, Kundry sheds the voice of the seductive Other and finally lets her own story be heard, beginning in m. 1146 (see example 15). Right before she launches into that story (“For eternity I’ve waited for you . . . [*Seit Ewigkeiten harre ich deiner . . .*]”), we hear the music that Parsifal had just associated with Kundry’s bad mimesis; compare mm. 1099–1100 in example 14 with mm. 1142–46 in example 15. In the latter passage, *all* the first violins play the melody, which has now been rhythmically expanded, increasing its acoustic heft and substance. The violins play “expressively [*ausdrucksvoll*]” and with two enormous crescendos to *forte* (m. 1143) and *fortissimo* (m. 1146), while the orchestra lays into the two accompanying chords with a heavier scoring, ironing out their previous agitation. With the volume turned up this high, the speakers of Parsifal’s transcendental television glow white-hot and explode. Kundry breaks through the screen and grabs us by the shoulders, insisting on the immediacy and authenticity of her musical persona. She will not be written off as an ineffectual construction, a mere illusion resulting from a semiotic sleight-of-hand—she is real.⁴⁹

Because of this conspicuous dropping of pretense, Kundry’s jaw-dropping account of how she laughed at Christ (example 1) can have a direct impact on us, and the force of this impact will continue to be felt throughout Act III. The immediate continuation of this scene is given in example 16. Here Kundry tells us of her encounter with Christ’s gaze which set in motion the curse that has plagued her ever since. The entire scene is framed by ominous timpani triplets (recall mm. 1175–76 of example 1 and see mm. 1189–90 of example 16). These same sounds punctuated the former Grail king Titurel’s first utterance in Act I, when he beseeched his son Amfortas to reveal the Grail in a stark but urgent off-stage bass voice accompanied by nothing but these sporadic drumbeats. The aura of the paternal voice, with all its distant, archaic authority, is now transferred to Christ himself and, by extension, to Kundry’s remembrance of him.⁵⁰ After Kundry startles us by confessing and re-enacting her primal laughter (followed by Bronfen’s “psychic gap” in sound), the orchestra creeps back in with the music of Christ’s gaze in mm. 1184–89. This begins as a stretched-out variation on the circle-of-fifths chromaticism associated with Amfortas’s pain (mm. 1184–first half of 1186), but now this music is specifically connected with a direct encounter with Christ, and Kundry is the one who makes this possible.

Kundry is the only character to have actually received Christ’s gaze, even if in condemnation. Only she has heard His music and understood its meaning. This is the music we hear in mm. 1186–88, music that seems to stop time: a languorous turn figure lands on C# minor, *subito più piano*, breaking the circle-of-fifths sequence and unfolding into its own distinc-

Current Musicology

Example 16: Act II, mm. 1184–91.

1184 KUNDRY.

Wieder sehr langsam.

da traf mich
then upon me fell

1184 *p* *piu p*

1188 sein Blick!
His gaze!

1188 *pp*

timpani

pp ³

tive phrase before trailing out into A minor on a single strand of melody in mm. 1189ff. We have heard this music a few times before, during Act I; by connecting some of those moments together, we can see why Kundry's invocation of this music in Act II is special. The music first appears in the Prelude to Act I (see example 22, mm. 99–100), following several instances of the Spear motif (see the “ausdrucksvoll” melodic lines in mm. 95–98) which each decay chromatically, much as the blood of Amfortas and Christ seeped from their bodies after being struck by the Spear. In a letter to King Ludwig II dated November 12, 1880, Wagner apparently connected mm. 99–100 to our hopes for Amfortas's salvation: “will the suffering of his soul that eats away at him become redemption [*wird seinem nagenden Seelenleiden Erlösung werden*]?” But without Wagner's letter in front of us, we are hardly likely to attach such a concrete significance to mm. 99–100. Indeed, Wagner wrote that after we hear the music shown in example 22, “we are prepared for Amfortas [*auf Amfortas... sind wir vorbereitet*]” and his struggle, implying that the music is not meant specifically to depict them at this point (Geck and Voss 1970:46).⁵¹

The second time we hear this music is during the orchestral interlude in Act I that accompanies the scene change from the forest surrounding Montsalvat to the knights' temple itself. In mm. 1123–26, we hear Amfortas's circle-of-fifths pain music, but at full blast with the entire orchestra playing *fortissimo*, "preparing" us again for the actual scene of Amfortas's suffering we will witness later in the act. The pain music subsides dynamically and registrally into material that virtually duplicates example 16 in mm. 1127–29.⁵² Now, however, the continuation of the turn figure (m. 1187 of example 16) is fragmented and sequenced upward in the violins in small but irregular intervals, and the whole string ensemble churns in dense chromatic polyphony. This wrenching development finally claws its way into mm. 1134ff, where Amfortas's pain music breaks out again in the full orchestra. The connection of example 16's music to Amfortas is made stronger here, but at this point it may only connote some lower level of pain, a momentary respite that can be overtaken by the full anguish of the wound at any moment. In fact, according to William Kinderman, Wagner was not even planning to include this developmental section at all, until it became clear that the scene change would take more time than expected. Only then did Wagner reluctantly insert this passage, although as Kinderman has argued, it does make possible the powerful resurgence of Amfortas's pain music (1995b:150–55).

Once the scene has changed, we see the knights of Montsalvat gathered for Communion. In m. 1207, we hear mm. 1187–88 of example 16 compressed into one bar, as the knights sing of how Christ suffered "with a thousand pains, how once his blood flowed [*mit tausend Schmerzen, wie einst sein Blut geflossen*]" in order to save the souls of mankind. This begins to grant dramatic meaning to the passage, and not the meaning we might have expected. In Amfortas's tortured monologue to the knights later in Act I, we finally hear example 16's music (again, *without* the turn figure) situated repeatedly within a lexical context (see example 17).⁵³ In mm. 1369–75, the orchestra wails away with Amfortas's pain music, and in between the outbreaks of pain (mm. 1369 and 1372), we hear the music of example 16, specifically mm. 1187–88—the same music that was agonizingly fragmented and sequenced in the passage from the Act I orchestral interlude discussed above. Now, however, Amfortas's words clarify to whom that music and its mollifying effect truly belong: Christ. Singing of his wound in example 17, Amfortas notes that he had been assaulted by the same spear "that there [on Golgotha] inflicted the wound upon the Redeemer, out of which the Divine One wept with tears of blood on behalf of mankind's shame in compassion's holy yearning [*der dort dem Erlöser die Wunde stach, aus der mit blut'gen*

Current Musicology

Example 17: Act I, mm. 1369–75.

1369 AMFORTAS.

der dort dem Er-lö-ser die Wun-de stach, aus
that there inflicted the wound upon the Redeemer, out

1369 Gedchnt und breit. *f* *p* *dim*

1371 der mit blut-gen Thrä-nen der Gött-li-che weint' ob der
of which the Divine One wept with tears of blood on behalf

1371 *piu p* *f* *p*

1373 Mensch-heit Schmach in Mit-leid's hei-li-gem Sehnen,
of Mankind's shame in compassion's holy yearning, Wieder belebend.

1373 *dim.* *pp* *p*

Thränen der Göttliche weint' ob der Menschheit Schmach in Mitleid's heiligem Sehnen].” Mm. 1187–88 of example 16, as they appear here in Amfortas’s monologue, ultimately represent Christ’s saving pity. Amfortas conflates himself with Christ here at the same time as he longs for the healing salvation that Christ suffered for on the cross. But this moment of fantasy cannot last; Amfortas is not Christ, and only the “pure fool” who learns compassion (because of Kundry) can save him.

Because of Amfortas’s monologue, we now know that this music signifies Christ’s pitying love for mankind.⁵⁴ But nothing has prepared us for Kundry’s primal scene in Act II (examples 1 and 16), where this music appears, as it were, in its original historical context.⁵⁵ The breathtaking harmonic and

dynamic shift on the downbeat of m. 1187, as though Christ catches Kundry's eye precisely at that moment; the prolonged unwinding of the turn figure in m. 1186 (missing entirely from Amfortas's monologue), undisturbed by any other musical activity and thereby commanding our complete attention; the sense of looking through a window onto the past, created by the frame of the timpani's isolated, gloomy beating and the slow-motion effect of the entire scene: all these things grant a weighty authenticity and legitimacy to mm. 1186–88 that the previous incarnations of this music never approach. Most importantly, Kundry, not Amfortas, reveals herself in this moment to be the opera's most direct connection to Christ and the music of His gaze. This music, unlike her dissembling seduction music, cannot be deconstructed or unmasked. It becomes a critical element of her musical persona—from now on, this music is *her* cross to bear.

But how will Kundry achieve redemption? One of the principal musical manifestations of redemption in *Parsifal* is melodic transfiguration: a melody that consistently appears in a frustrated form ultimately flourishes into something more elaborate and substantial that audibly overcomes the frustration. (We will observe such transfiguration in Act III.) After Kundry's primal scene finally dissipates, she sings of her wretched condition, in which she must "look for Him from world to world, in order to encounter Him again [*such' . . . ihn von Welt zu Welt, ihm wieder zu begegnen*]" and end her curse (example 18). As she sings, the music of Christ's gaze is sequenced upward in the orchestra by major thirds, starting on harmonies of C minor in m. 1198, E minor in m. 1201 and A \flat minor in m. 1204. The tune, with its characteristic turn figure, is seeking some melodic outlet, some fuller continuation or completion, but it searches in vain, plunging desperately in mm. 1206–7 into fragmentation and the downward spiral of a circle of fifths before collapsing in C minor in m. 1208. It is as though Christ had stuck this melodic fragment in Kundry's head, and she is cursed to have it echoing there forever, always in this frustratingly laconic form.⁵⁶

Soon Kundry reverts to her hysteric's voice, vacillating between terrible laughter and erotic pleading, and Parsifal can write her off again as the victim of petty earthly desire. Her singing voice, however, will not be nudged off the stage without a fight. Kundry sings a high B three more times in Act II. The first of these occurs in mm. 1356–57, in the context of a bitterly sarcastic diatribe against Parsifal: "So it was my kiss that gave you such penetrating vision into the world? Then let my embraces, full of love, win godliness for you."⁵⁷ On the first syllable of "godliness," Kundry launches into a high B that lasts for five long beats. Her brutal vocal blast suggests that she has no respect for Parsifal's supposedly divine mission.⁵⁸ In m. 1405, another high B pops out at the peak of a prolonged section of Kundry's laughter; this is the passage that Smith was talking about when he noted the "eruption" of "the outrageously gestural Kundry" in Act II. Finally, in the very last phrase we

Current Musicology

Example 18: Act II, mm. 1194–1208.

1194 **KUNDRY.** Nun Now

sehr leidenschaftlich *sf* *poco rall.* *accel.* *Ziemlich bewegt.* *ff* *fp*

1199 such' ich ihn von Welt zu
I look for Him from world to world.

1202 Welt. ihm wie - der zu be - geg - nen.
in order to encounter him again.

1205 *Belebend* *Sehr leidenschaftlich beschleunigend.* *piu cresc.* *ff* *dim.*

hear her sing in Act II (mm. 1483–85), Kundry ends on a high B, sentencing Parsifal to the same endless wandering she has had to suffer for eons as Klingsor appears with the Spear.

Klingsor is soon dispatched and the Spear recovered for Montsalvat, but the primal scene that defined Kundry's authentic voice will not be forgotten. In fact, it *needs* to be addressed in Act III, so that Parsifal can “redeem the Redeemer,” in the language of the opera's last words. Parsifal can only effect this redemption through Kundry, since the music of the Passion (mm. 1179–80 of example 1) and of Christ's compassionate, saving gaze belong to her.

Example 19: Act III, mm. 38–60.

38 [Sehr langsam] el. (Gurnemanz, aged into an old man.)
 timpani *p* dolce *più p*

43 dressed as a hermit wearing only the tunic of the Grail Knights, steps out of the hut and listens.)
pp *pp*

48 GURNEMANZ.
 Von dort her kam das Stöh-nen. So jam - mer - vollklagt kein Wild.
 From over there the groaning came. No beast would moan so wretchedly.

52 und ge wiss garnicht am hei-lig-sten Mor - gen heut'.
 and certainly not on this holiest of mornings.
pp ausdrucks-voll

56 (Dull groaning of Kundry's voice.) Mich dünkt, ich ken-ne die-sen Kla - ge - ruf.
 I think I recognize that lamenting cry. Belobend.
dim. *pp* *cresc.* *sf* *p* *mf*

As the curtain rises on Act III, however, we gradually discover that Kundry can no longer occupy her music with any subjective power. Motifs associated with her continue to course through the orchestral fabric (see example 19), including the Flower Maidens' chromatic voice-exchange motif (mm. 39–44, led by the clarinet) and her own magic motif (mm. 45–48) as well as Klingsor's (mm. 48–51). Unfortunately, Kundry is unable

Current Musicology

Example 20: Act III, mm. 80–110.

80 GURNEMANZ.

Diess-mal hielt ich sie wohl für todt:
This time I truly thought she was dead:

83 doch war's ihr Stöh-nen, was ich ver-nahm?
yet was it her groans that I heard?

83 *Sehr langsam, poco rit.*

ausdrucksvoll *ppp*

88 *Allmählich etwas belebend.*

vc. *p* *mit bewegtem Ausdruck* *p* *P.*

92 *ppp* *poco accel.*

96 *(At last life seems to awaken in her.)* *dolce* *ppp* *dim.* *P.* *P.*

(or unwilling, as Bronfen would claim) to harness them into the service of self-expression by using her singing voice. The only sound to come from her mouth is a non-musical groaning (actually voiced on stage in mm. 57–58) that jarringly alienates her from the orchestral texture. Gurnemanz has heard this groaning and tries to awaken her to life with the promise of spring, but his attempt fails. “This time I truly thought she was dead [*Diessmal hielt ich*

Example 20 continued.

100 (She awakens fully ---) *pp dolce*

104 as she opens her eyes --- *poco cresc.*

107 she lets out a cry.) *Schnell.* *Etwas langsamer.* *sf*

sie wohl für todt],” he exclaims in mm. 80–82, and on the word “dead” in m. 82, a ceremonious pizzicato figure in the contrabasses appears (see example 20) which will recur at the moment of Kundry’s baptism. He then wonders in mm. 83–84 if he had not been mistaken after all: “yet was it her groans that I heard [*doch war’s ihr Stöhnen, was ich vernahm*]?” Gurnemanz is very aware of the sound of Kundry’s voice (as opposed to the sound of her music in the orchestra, which is giving away her sullied history). It compels him to look for her on stage as a living physical presence that must be reckoned with. But unless Kundry resumes her flexible singing voice to become a musical subject again, Gurnemanz will not be able to understand her as such.

In the cello recitative that follows (again, see example 20, starting in m. 88), I think we hear Kundry’s voice—her proto-singing voice, as it were—struggling to break out into subjective expression again. The cellos are surrounded by motivic intimations of Gurnemanz’s music in praise of Good Friday from moments before (see example 19, mm. 53–55; it recurs in mm. 87–88, 90–91, 93–94, 96–97, and 100–1), as well as echoes of the Flower Maidens’ chromatic laments (see mm. 97–99 and 101–3). Yet the cellos play in a fluidly expressive, motivically free *parlando* whose melodic richness is not bound to any of the symbolic musical codes that the opera has established thus far. In his article on *Parsifal*, Steinberg points to a similar display of melodic individuality in Wagner’s *Götterdämmerung*; in Act II, with the words “Bright steel! Holy weapon! [*Helle Wehr! Heilige Waffe!*],” Brünnhilde silences her husband Siegfried, who is not owing up to his

betrayal of her, by seizing his sword and singing outside the range of the opera's motivic repertoire. As Steinberg states, "Brünnhilde easily controls the motivic language and achieves subjectivity and lyricism by liberating herself from the burden of leitmotivic submission" (1996:163–64). The merits of Steinberg's specific musical observation are debatable, but the interpretive notion is intriguing. In Act III of *Parsifal*, the cello line of mm. 88–105 promises Kundry a similar liberation, if only she would *sing* it, over and against the semantically and musically fixed motifs that are mere objects in the absence of her subjectivizing voice.

At the climax of this passage, however, an old leitmotivic habit tragically locks back into place. As Kundry finally opens her eyes in m. 104, she thinks she is having a holy vision; the "Dresden Amen," a conventional liturgical melody that signifies general holiness in *Parsifal*, appears in mm. 104–6, as it did when Kundry hallucinated Christ's benevolent gaze, ending her curse, shortly after her primal scene in Act II (mm. 1216–20). But now as then, the fantasy of redemption crumbles with the eruption of Kundry's laughter motif in the orchestra in mm. 107ff, and where we might expect her to sing, Kundry releases another wordless cry. Kundry's subjective voice cannot pierce through the encrusted shell of leitmotivic objects that congeal around her. In the music that follows, the flexible cello line gradually expires, replaced by the music of Kundry's servitude from Act I (see example 2 for the final stage of the expiration). Shut off from vocal access to her music (or perhaps unwilling to access it, as the case may be), Kundry yields it entirely to the orchestra, so that, as she says in mm. 136–37, it may be of "service" to Gurnemanz and Parsifal, enabling their own realizations of redemption. Here is Kundry's first *Untergang*; her voice permanently "goes under" into the orchestra, beneath the floorboards of Bayreuth, leaving the air unperturbed by the penetrating and problematizing sound of her singing.

The most stunning example of Kundry's "service" takes place during her second *Untergang*—her baptism, setting in motion the music of the so-called Good Friday Spell (example 21). Parsifal's first redemptive act in Act III is to bring Kundry into the fold of Christian believers to the accompaniment of the solemn processional music of Montsalvat (mm. 615–22). Soon this baptism will give rise to the redemption of the entire natural world. First, however, Kundry's connection to Christ must be invoked, since without it, this redemption would be an empty gesture. Moreover, Kundry's baptism cannot be an instant celebration, but instead must "cost sweat, misery, anxieties, and the depths of suffering and pain," as Wagner put it in the *Judentum* essay. In mm. 621–22, as Kundry continues to "weep violently," the processional music seizes up on an augmented triad, and all motion ceases. In mm. 623–25, we hear the pizzicato motif associated with Kundry's subjective death (example 20, mm. 82–83), followed by the music of Christ's

Example 21: Act III, mm. 615–39.

615 (Kundry sinks her head deeply to the ground; she seems to weep violently.)

621 *Sehr langsam, ausdrucksvoll*

pizzicato *pp*

(Parsifal turns around and gazes in gentle rapture upon field and forest, which are now glowing in the morning light.)

626 *Sehr ruhig, ohne Dehnung, sehr zart und ausdrucksvoll*

631

635

pitiful gaze from Act II (example 16, mm. 1186–87), again with its hallmark turn figure and the heart-stopping drop to *pianissimo* (although now the harmonic transition across the bar into m. 625 is much smoother). What exactly is going on here? The music of Christ's gaze may signify that Kundry is finally being delivered from her curse, that Christ is finally bestowing His mercy upon her with His gaze. On the other hand, this is also the music that set Kundry's curse in motion, and Christ is actually nowhere to be seen.

For some clarification, we might turn to Cosima Wagner's diary entry from February 3, 1879. That evening, Richard was working on *Parsifal* in his study when he suddenly felt the need to share something with his wife:

“[I] came up to tell you that the entry of the timpani drum in G is the most beautiful thing I have ever composed.” I accompanied him below [to his study], he played for me Parsifal’s anointment by Titurel with its wonderful canon [here Cosima is mistaken; Gurnemanz anoints Parsifal, since Titurel is dead] and Kundry’s baptism with the timpani drum’s sound of annihilation [*Vernichtungsklang*]; “Annihilation of the entire being, of every earthly wish,” says R[ichard]. (C. Wagner 1976–77, vol. 2:303)⁵⁹

Apparently Wagner decided not to let the timpani have the *Vernichtungsklang* figure on G after all; in example 21, mm. 623–24, only the cellos and basses pluck the figure. In any case, the mention of “annihilation” in connection with this figure and this dramatic situation reminds us of the *Judentum* essay, but from the Schopenhauerian perspective, as Wagner’s final comment suggests. The musico-dramatic scenario here perfectly executes Wagner’s prescription for the Jew’s “work of redemption that causes us to be born again through *self-annihilation*” (my emphasis). Kundry empties herself of “every earthly wish,” every sensual desire from Act II, and in place of her agitated, convulsive, “Jewish” movements and musical utterances, we now see and hear (in the form of the solemn *Vernichtungsklang*) a Kundry who has achieved “calm”—that is, the Schopenhauerian calm Wagner speaks of in the *Judentum* essay, so hard for Jewish composers to achieve in their works: “true, noble calm is nothing other than passion placated by resignation” (R. Wagner 1911:78).⁶⁰ Perhaps this music signifies the *Untergang* of Kundry’s Will.

Other evidence, however, points in a different direction. In the sixth volume of his biography of Wagner (1911), Carl Friedrich Glasenapp recalled a rehearsal of *Parsifal* that he had attended in which Wagner felt compelled to walk onto the stage and physically coerce Marianne Brandt (the soprano portraying Kundry) into executing *his* vision of how Kundry’s baptism should be staged:

[W]ith the most passionate good intentions, [Brandt] did not embrace the appropriate amenability [in rehearsal], but rather constructed her own image of the portrayal of the character of Kundry completely from the get-go, according to which she lay on the ground like a wild animal, as it were, in the first act, but in the third, as a converted Christian, even after the reception of her baptism[,] absolutely only wanted to “kneel,” [and] owing to this biased prejudice, there was practically a battle, in the moment of her [i.e., Kundry’s, not Brandt’s] distressed collapse, for the already exhausted and irritable master [i.e., Wagner], who had to bring the resistant [Brandt] into the prostrate position with force, her face toward the ground, while the music kept going,—a physical and moral effort that could probably have been spared him! (Geck and Voss 1970:61)⁶¹

Far from the “true, noble calm of passion placated by resignation,” Kundry’s *Vernichtung* is here described as a “distressed collapse,” a collapse Wagner had to enforce by vigorously shoving Brandt’s recalcitrant body and face onto the floor. From the physical, visual standpoint, this suggests more than just a spiritual annihilation of “the Self” within the soul, but rather a total annihilation of Kundry *tout court*; if she is lying completely vertically on the ground, no one can see her. This, of course, grants the audience a more unimpeded vision of the spring meadow that will soon sparkle in transfigured splendor as a result of this baptism (to be discussed shortly). In true German revolutionary fashion, Kundry’s body is the obstacle that must be knocked down (or, in this case, pressed down) so that the redemption of the world can come to pass. In contrast to the selfless philosophizing of Richard and Cosima’s cozy conversation of February 3, 1879, the unpleasant rehearsal fiasco that Glasenapp observed recalls Wagner’s comments in the 1869 “Clarifications” to the *Judentum* essay about the “forcible casting-out of the corrosive foreign element.” Kundry’s *Untergang* may be more sinister after all.

Moreover, if Kundry is truly the comprehending recipient of Christ’s pitying, merciful gaze here, then why does she fall to the ground in a quivering heap, sob uncontrollably, and become totally unseen? Wagner’s dramaturgy suggests instead that this is a terrible moment for her, calling up the deepest dregs of her pain, bringing her face to face with the moment of her greatest shame.⁶² Her body seems to say, “I *don’t* believe, I *still* suffer Christ’s gaze as a piercing, hounding curse.” In the end, it will never be possible to determine precisely which *Untergang* or *Vernichtung* Kundry is meant to experience at this moment.

I would suggest, in fact, that this interpretive dilemma reveals the ultimate dialectical nature of Wagner’s concept of the Jews’ *Untergang*: its uplifting elements are dependent on its destructive elements and vice versa. By considering how Kundry’s “voice” is used in Act III, we may gain a more productive view of the matter. Returning to example 21, we recall that the music that marks the moment of her conversion (mm. 624–26) is also *her* music, the music of Christ’s gaze to which she holds the most authentic claim. Kundry initially responded to this music by obsessively seeking to realize its melodic potential (example 18); spinning the figure into a more long-breathed melody would be tantamount to atoning for her sin and achieving redemption. But the radiantly orchestrated melody of the Good Friday Spell that follows here—all the more beautiful for rising from the ashes of Christ’s suffering, brought to us by Kundry—redeems a different motif. Bathed in the scintillating afterglow of a \flat VI deceptive resolution leading into B/C major (mm. 625–26), the melody’s first four notes (F \sharp -G \sharp -A \sharp -B in mm. 627–30)

Current Musicology

Example 22: Act I, mm. 95–100.

95 [Sehr langsam]
dim. *p* *ausdrucksvoll* *p* *ausdrucksvoll*

97 *dim.* *molto cresc.* *ausdrucksvoll*

99 *Etwas gedehnt.* *f* *dim.* *p*

derive from the first four notes of the Spear motif; as I mentioned earlier, this motif's basic form usually leads to a painful chromatic descent, possibly enacting the thrust of the spear and the subsequent bleeding of the wound it inflicts (example 22). Now that rising tetrachord keeps ascending, higher and higher, as it blossoms into the first full-fledged melody of the entire opera (example 21, mm. 627–39). The pain of the Passion is overcome, but at Kundry's personal expense. She supplies the musical object of Christ's gaze, but the beauty of the pearl that results from this irritating sand is not meant for her eyes. Indeed, while Kundry lies face down on the ground, the stage directions indicate that Parsifal "turns around and gazes in gentle rapture upon forest and field, which are now glowing in the morning light [*wendet sich um und blickt mit sanfter Entzückung auf Wald und Wiese, welche jetzt im Vormittagslichte leuchten*]." While Parsifal inhabits this wondrous music with his singing voice, in complete ignorance of Kundry, the latter weeps in silence. She has lost the ability to take any kind of personal joy in the spectacle, because she is no longer a vocal subject. Her voice has "gone under" so that it can be an instrument of Montsalvat's redemption. She has been used.⁶³

The music of Christ's gaze as well as the material relating to Christ's suffering on the cross that Kundry introduced in Act II (example 1) continue to be used throughout the Good Friday Spell in much the same way, engendering other moments of transcendence by reminding us of the painful musical place from which we have come—or rather, from which Kundry has come, so that we may reap the benefit. The material once tightly linked to her musical voice now becomes a catalyst that can restart the process of redemption at any moment, since redemption must always have something to overcome. In mm. 666–74, Parsifal bemoans the sorrow of Good Friday: “Oh sorrow, that day of greatest pain! There, I believe, all that blossoms and breathes, lives and is reborn, should only mourn, alas!, and weep [*Oh Wehe, des Höchsten Schmerzentags! Da sollte wähn' ich, was da blüht, was athmet, lebt und wiederlebt, nur trauern, ach! und weinen.*]” He sings above the very same music (at the same pitch level) that accompanied Kundry's primal encounter with Christ: “Ich sah . . . Ihn . . . Ihn” (example 1, mm. 1177–81). But after the orchestra dies away in a murky B minor onto a lone B♭ in m. 674, the Good Friday melody rises again from this low point, now in D major, as Gurnemanz replies, “Behold, it is not so [*Du sieh'st, das ist nicht so*]” (mm. 673–78). Without Kundry's witness of the Passion, without her musical observation of Christ's agony, this gesture of redemption would be impossible. And again, in mm. 687–88, the Passion music returns in the midst of another development toward the outburst of the Good Friday melody.⁶⁴

The last time Kundry's voice kickstarts the process of redemption is given as example 23. Parsifal recalls the Flower Maidens (and, by extension, the Kundry of Act II) in mm. 770–73, to the accompaniment of their twisting chromatic motif. In mm. 773–76, however, we hear the music of Christ's Passion, and Parsifal wonders, “do they yearn for redemption today [*ob heut' sie nach Erlösung schmachten?*]” The music of Christ's gaze follows in mm. 777–78, but it has been smoothed over: the turn figure is simplified, the harmony resolves deceptively to G♭ major on the downbeat of m. 778 instead of continuing to fall down the circle of fifths, and this G♭-major harmony persists into m. 779 (written as F♯ major), washed out into a ninth chord which slides chromatically through mm. 780–81 into D major and the onset, once again, of the Good Friday melody in all its splendor. Parsifal has completely absorbed Kundry's voice and made it his own. The Passion music and the music of Christ's gaze (minus its *Vernichtungsklang*) are commandingly strung together as though they had nothing to do with Kundry. When Parsifal sings, “do they yearn for redemption today?” in mm. 774–77, he essentially presents the Passion music to Kundry as though she had never heard it before. In mm. 778–80, Parsifal does acknowledge that the gaze

Current Musicology

Example 23: Act III, mm. 770–89.

770 PARSIFAL.

Ich sah' sie wel-ken, die einst mir lach-ten: ob
I saw them wither, they that once laughed at me:

775 *rallent.*
 heut' sie nach Er - lö - sung schmachten? Auch dei - ne Thrä -
do they yearn for redemption today? sehr zögernd Your tears, too, have

775 *rallent.* *Sehr langsam.*
più p *pp*

780
 - ne ward zum Se - gens - thau - e: du wei - nest,
become a dew of benediction: you're crying.
 780 *Im Hauptzeitmass, ohne Dehnung.* *sehr zart.*
ppp *pp*

785 P. † P. † P. †
 sieh', — es lacht — die Au - e!
behold, the meadow laughs!

785 *pp*
 P. †

music has something to do with her tears, but this music melts into the Good Friday melody so fluidly that we barely make the connection. Ultimately, all of this functions as “the dew of benediction [Segensthaue]” that moistens the transfigured spring landscape. “You’re crying,” Parsifal sings in mm. 783–88, “[and] behold, the meadow laughs [du weinest, sieh’, es lacht die Aue]!” The implication is not that Kundry should stop crying so that she can behold

Example 24: Act III, mm. 1035–49.

(Amfortas' face shines with holy rapture, he staggers, as though overcome with emotion; Gurnemanz supports him.)

1035 *Etwas bewegter, aber sehr ruhig.*

p 3 3 3 3 3 3

vc.

P. sehr ausdrucksvoll

1038 **PARSIFAL.**

Sei heil, ent - sün - digt und ent - sühnt!
Be healed, freed of sin and forgiven!

1038 *p* *fr. horn.*

P. + *P.* +

1042

Denn ich ver - wal - te nun dein Amt. Ge -
For I shall carry out your office.

1042 *p* *zart und ausdrucksvoll* *poco cresc.*

P. *bsn. + bass cl.* *P.* +

1047

seg - net sei dein Lei - den,
Blessed be your suffering.

1047 *p* *dim.* *poco cresc.*

vc. *P.* + *P.* + *P.* +

the meadow, but rather that her tears are precisely what enable the meadow to laugh. Like the Jew in the nineteenth-century anti-Semitic imagination, Kundry is stripped of her musical subjectivity so that her authentic voice can be frozen into an object that Parsifal manipulates to achieve his revolutionary ends. Her music becomes a foe that can be vanquished again and again in the regenerative process of redemption, allowing Parsifal to become, in

Current Musicology

Example 25: Act III, mm. 1061–64.

1061 PARSIFAL.
Den heil' gen Speer, ich
The sacred spear, I
1061 *fp* *tpt.* *ausdrucksvoll*
1063 bring' ihn euch zu - rüick!
return it to you!
1063 *p*
P. P. P.

Wagner's words (as quoted in his wife's diary), "completely human [*ganz Mensch*]" at this moment (C. Wagner 1976-77, vol. 2:318), or in the language of the *Judentum* essay, an "authentic man."⁶⁵ By the time we get to example 23, Kundry's voice has almost completely yielded itself to this process; we only dimly feel its original traces in Kundry's prior experience.

As I mentioned earlier, however, redemption in *Parsifal* also comes in the form of melodic transfiguration. We have already seen how the Good Friday melody itself is born as a melodic redemption of the pessimistic, melancholy ending of the Spear motif. The music of Christ's gaze, the small but momentous snippet of melody that Kundry heard during her primal scene and that she obsessed over in an effort to find its completion or resolution, is not transfigured like this. In fact, after example 23, we virtually never hear this music again; it has done its work.⁶⁶ But what about Kundry's victim, Amfortas, and *his* melody? In a way, Amfortas is Kundry's metaphysical twin; Wagner gives the music of Christ's gaze to both of them, although if Kundry's voicing of this music in Act II corresponds

Example 26: Act I, mm. 1–3.

The musical score for Example 26, Act I, mm. 1–3, is presented in a single system. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The time signature is 4/4, and the key signature is one flat (A major). The tempo/mood markings are "Schr langsam." and "sehr ausdrucksvoll". The first measure begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic, and the third measure begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The melody is written in the treble clef, starting on a half rest in the first measure, then moving to a quarter note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5. The bass clef staff is empty throughout the three measures.

to the actual phenomenon, then Amfortas's use of it in Act I is the worn photograph of that original event. Yet Amfortas is the one whose leitmotif achieves the salvation of unfolding into a broad melody (example 24).⁶⁷ After Parsifal touches him with the Spear and heals his wound, the rocky rhythm of the motif (evident in m. 1035) initiates a flowing four-bar phrase in the cellos that stays entirely within one key (A major) and ends clearly on a half cadence (mm. 1035–38)—this is Amfortas's musical peroration. The horns follow with the same noble phrase in F major (mm. 1039–42), before the rest of the orchestra starts to develop the new phrase in sinuous, undulating lines worthy of a Liszt symphonic poem (mm. 1043ff). Even if Amfortas physically “staggers” around the stage as “Gurnemanz supports him,” the orchestra reveals his renewed spiritual condition; at *that* level, he can stride confidently without any stagger whatsoever.

The last moment of melodic transfiguration in *Parsifal* occurs immediately after Amfortas is healed (see example 25). In mm. 1061–64, Parsifal comes to the center of the stage and declares, “The sacred Spear, I return it to you [*Den heil'gen Speer, ich bring' ihn euch zurück!*]” The result of this holy reunion of Spear and Grail is the redemption of the Grail melody (see example 26 for the original melody). Throughout the opera, this melody strives upward to the tonic (A♭ in example 26) only to descend into a minor key (C minor in example 26). In mm. 1063–64, however, the musical situation is adjusted so that a solo trumpet can now surpass the melody's upper limit, moving to D♭ in m. 1064 and into G♭ major, eliminating the minor mode from the theme. (The original Grail melody, in A♭ major, is transfigured again in just this way immediately after Parsifal reveals the Grail for Communion; see mm. 1092–94.)⁶⁸ The Grail melody's transformation may imply that Christ Himself has been redeemed from corruption; some critics have read this as a sign of *Parsifal*'s proto-fascist, anti-Semitic aims.⁶⁹ Regardless of where one stands on that debate, the final words of the opera, “redemption for the redeemer [*Erlösung dem Erlöser!*]” are sung by the knights and the heavenly voices that inhabit the temple's dome to

Current Musicology

Example 27: Act III, mm. 1109–11.

1109 **KNIGHTS.**

Er - lö - sung dem Er - lö - - - ser!
Redemption for the redeemer!

Er - lö - sung dem Er -
Redemption for the [redeemer!]

Er - lö - sung dem Er -
Redemption for the [redeemer!]

1109

3
sempre *p*

P. P. P.

the tune of the transfigured Grail melody (see example 27). From here on out, in fact, orchestra and chorus weave Abbate's "narcotic daisy chain" of celestial harmonies, and the opera ends with one last transfigured version of the Grail melody in A \flat major, bringing the opera full circle to the key it began in while curing it of its melodic ills.

The only thing that disrupts this avalanche of redemption is Kundry's final *Untergang*: her physical death (see example 28). It is here, I would argue, that we witness the ultimate sublimation of Kundry's voice and can best observe how deeply and indissolubly anti-Semitism and musical transcendence are connected to each other in *Parsifal*. Abbate suggests that the shudder of A minor within the context of D \flat major in example 28 is like "an alarm" that reminds us, one final time, of the potentially noxious fictions we may be absorbing by succumbing so completely to Wagner's enchanting music (141). For her, it is more interesting to consider this moment as somehow detached from the drama because of the spellbinding momentum of the music. Debussy's famous comment that *Parsifal* "is one of the most beautiful edifices in sound ever raised to the eternal glory of music," combined with his utter disdain for the opera's plot and characters, suggests that for him the dramaturgy of *Parsifal* was a dispensable nuisance; Abbate mines Debussy's notion and yields extraordinary interpretive riches in the process.

Example 28: Act III, mm. 1123–25.

[Sehr langsam und feierlich]

(Kundry, with her gaze uplifted [to Parsifal], sinks slowly lifeless to the ground. Amfortas and Gurnemanz kneel in homage before Parsifal, who waves the Grail in blessing over the worshipping Knighthood.) ww. + brass

1123

The musical score for Example 28, Act III, mm. 1123–25, is written for piano and harp. The tempo is marked "Sehr langsam und feierlich". The score begins with a piano introduction (P. 3 harp) and a string section (str.). The piano part features a series of chords in the right hand and a melodic line in the left hand. The harp part is a simple accompaniment. The score includes dynamic markings: "cresc." (crescendo), "f" (forte), "dim." (diminuendo), and "p" (piano). There are also performance instructions: "str." (string), "P. 3 harp", and "P." (piano).

But what if we *reattach* the A-minor moment to Kundry, in light of what has happened to her (Jewish) voice? This is not in fact the first time that we have heard this music. The shift from $D\flat$ major to A minor and back again, this drop of a major third and into the minor mode, has already appeared throughout *Parsifal* with some regularity. In his recent article on Wagner’s use of the chorus in *Parsifal*, Ryan Minor (2005) labels this harmonic shift the “Entseelung” progression (28), in simple reference to Wagner’s stage directions, which indicate that Kundry is “de-souled [*entseelt*]” at this moment (in example 28, this word is translated as “lifeless”). But as Kundry dies, Parsifal is also waving the Grail around the knights’ temple, bestowing its holiness upon the gathered faithful. Minor considers a series of passages from throughout *Parsifal* which demonstrate that “[t]he ‘Entseelung’ progression is consistently employed to convey a sense of the Grail space’s sanctity” (31).⁷⁰ A passage that Minor does not mention may best demonstrate this sanctity (see example 29). At the end of Act I, after the knights have finally taken Communion, Wagner’s stage directions state that Amfortas sets the Grail down, and it glows as the squires put it back in its shrine. The orchestra glows as well with two broad “Entseelung” progressions connected by the “Dresden Amen.” One occurs between chords of G major and $E\flat$ major and minor (mm. 1480–81). The $E\flat$ -minor chord replaces the $E\flat$ -major chord in its alternation with the G-major chord. It is also punctuated with an accent, emphasizing the striking modal shift at the heart of the “Entseelung” progression in its usual form. The other one occurs between chords of $D\flat$ major and A minor (mm. 1483–84), the very same chords as the final “Entseelung” that marks Kundry’s death and Parsifal’s final blessing.

But how can this chromatic shudder connote sanctity? Indeed, theorists such as Richard Cohn have heard the “Entseelung” progression in *Parsifal* in terms of the uncanny: “The progression effaces the border between reality and appearance [in the way it destabilizes our assumptions about major and

Current Musicology

Example 29: Act I, mm. 1480–84.

The musical score for Example 29, Act I, mm. 1480–84, is presented in two systems. The first system, starting at measure 1480, shows a piano accompaniment with a series of minor triads. The dynamics are marked *p*. The second system, starting at measure 1482, continues the progression with similar triads, marked *p* and *più p*. The notation includes treble and bass clefs, a key signature of two flats, and a 4/4 time signature. The triads are indicated by 'P.' and a cross symbol below the notes.

minor triads], between death and life. And it is exactly such effacements that are the mark of the uncanny, as it was theorized in contemporaneous psychoanalytic writings” (2006:232). For all the wonder and amazement elicited by this mystifying progression, there is an equal amount of terror and awe. It is too forbidding, too disquieting to suggest that we should sweep Kundry’s death into this moment of “sanctity” without further interrogation.

If we take a look at another instance of the “Entseelung” progression, one that *should* provide us with a scene of unmitigated reverence, we discover instead that sanctity, in *Parsifal*, is not a pure and simple affair. In Act II, after he has rejected Kundry’s kiss and begins to recall his experience of the Montsalvat temple from Act I, Parsifal revisits the moment when he “stared, stupefied [*dumpf*], at the holy chalice [*Es starrt der Blick dumpf auf das Heilsgefäss*]” (example 30). The orchestra registers Parsifal’s *Dumpfheit*—dullness, hollowness, dumbfounded stupefaction—with two swollen “Entseelung” progressions in the winds. Or rather, those progressions inspire *Dumpfheit* in Parsifal. Either way, the mystery of the Grail does not exactly warm his heart, and the consistency of this progression throughout *Parsifal* as a musical corollary to the Grail’s holy power suggests that sanctity and terror are inseparable.⁷¹

In fact, this is precisely what Wagner said about the final “Entseelung” progression to his wife, as we read in her diary entry from January 13, 1882:

Example 30: Act II, mm. 1050–53.

1050 PARSIFAL. (*eerily quiet.*)

Es starrt der Blick dumpf auf das Heils-ge-fäss:
Langsam. / I stare, stupefied, at the holy chalice.

1050

p *pp* *pp*

P. + P.

[Richard] told me that the A-minor chord (where Kundry sinks down) would make an impression on me; [he said] it was the horror of sanctity [*der Schrecken der Heiligkeit*] that emanates from there [i.e., from the chord]. It must be played [by the winds and brass—Wagner’s word is *geblasen*] very beautifully. (C. Wagner 1976–77, vol. 2:872)⁷²

For the revolutionary anti-Semite, sanctity, redemption, and transcendence are predicated upon horror, menace, and terror, because the former can only come to pass by triumphing over something else, something awful. The horror the revolutionary anti-Semite felt before the Jew, the menace he perceived in the Jew’s infestation of his society, the terror of what might happen if this threat were left unchecked: all this provided the necessary awfulness against which he could lead the charge of redemption. Similarly, the beauty of the “Entseelung” progression derives from the ugliness and evil it simultaneously evokes and transfigures. I have argued that Kundry’s “voice” is substantially, if obviously not entirely, the voice of “the Jew.” Here, it presses up from below one last time in the orchestra’s A-minor chord, raising the coffin lid of the Bayreuth floorboards just a tad before sinking back down forever, never to be heard from again. The sinking down of her body completes the process of visual elimination that began at her baptism, so gruesomely enforced by Wagner at the rehearsal Glasenapp observed. Musically, the “Entseelung” progression is not even related to her voice, but the disturbance it creates amid the sequence of plagal cadences that end the work is enough to remind us of the impact of her voice. Now, that voice has been submerged completely, with no traces left of its sung form or its musical material. Its final gesture reveals the paradoxical relationship between empathy and revulsion at the heart of revolutionary anti-Semitism. This disconcerting relationship is also at the heart of *Parsifal*, in the way the opera treats Kundry’s voice; it is the very mechanism that generates *Parsifal*’s stifling beauty.

Epilogue: Compassion and Cruelty; or, Kundry and the Voice of the Animal

Unlike the other “Jewish” characters in Wagner’s oeuvre such as Mime and Beckmesser, Kundry is not a flatly repugnant or malignant figure; ultimately, we are not meant to despise her. One of the central keywords of *Parsifal* is *Mitleid*, or compassion (literally “suffering-with”), and Kundry elicits our genuine compassion at least as much as any other character in the opera. She may have inflicted Amfortas’s wound and attempted a treacherous seduction of Parsifal, but in both cases she was acting as the unwilling servant of a vengeful master (the unredeemable Klingsor) and, more significantly, as the victim of a primordial curse. Kundry’s derisive laughter is the scourge of the opera, but it is also an old, regrettable habit that she finds impossible to break despite her best efforts. Many of the harmful, insensitive or simply bizarre things that Kundry does are framed as the involuntary behaviors of a being internally ruled by powerful psychological forces beyond her active control. Thus, Kundry’s baptism and rapturous death in Act III might be seen as final compassionate gestures on her behalf, comprising a muted happy ending for her, literally and figuratively, after all the suffering she has endured. Such gestures may explain why the Nazis banned performances of *Parsifal* during World War II, even though the opera seems to be such a blatant “allegory of the Judaization of Christianity and of Germany—and of purifying redemption,” as Rose asserts (1992:166). Robert R. Gibson points out that *Parsifal* presents us with “compassion, disarmament and pacifism as played out in an enclosed, all-male, sacred society” (1999:87) whose monastic qualities would have carried totally unacceptable associations of homosexuality during the Third Reich (83–86). Add to this *Parsifal*’s lack of a female National Socialist “role model”—Herzeleide “has deliberately shielded [her son] from all knowledge of military life,” and Kundry is an “undesirable” who is never “set against [any] character types who [exude] healthy, positive qualities[,] character types who would ultimately triumph and crush their decadent opponents” (83)—and the unsuitability of *Parsifal* as a piece of Fascist and pro-Aryan wartime propaganda becomes clear.⁷³ Wagner’s treatment of Kundry, it appears, was too humane for the Nazis.

This curious twist in *Parsifal*’s reception history does not wash away the torturous anti-Semitic dialectic essential to the opera, however. In fact, it only helps to clarify yet another facet of this dialectic and another side to Kundry that has rarely been explored in depth. I say that Wagner treated Kundry “humanely” because, at a certain level, Kundry is less than human: she is an animal. In Act I, the second squire heralds her entrance into the opera by calling out to the others, “look there, [it’s] the wild rider [*Seht dort*,

die wilde Reiterin!” The squires and knights observe that Kundry’s horse has a flowing mane, and as the horse and rider approach the onstage world, we hear that the horse “crawls... along the ground. With its mane it brushes the moss [*kriecht... am Boden hin. Mit den Mähnen fegt sie das Moos*].” Finally, just before Kundry appears, the second knight conflates the horse with its rider in describing Kundry’s dismount: “Now the wild one [the woman or the animal?] leaps off [*Da schwingt sich die Wilde herab*].” Once Kundry rushes onto the scene and becomes visible, her conflation with the horse is complete; as the stage directions state, she has “black hair that flutters in loose braids, a deep reddish-brown complexion, piercing black eyes, sometimes wildly sparkling, more often deathly rigid and motionless [*schwarzes in losen Zöpfen flatterndes Haar, tiefbraun-röthliche Gesichtsfarbe, stechende schwarze Augen, zuweilen wild aufblitzend, öfters wie todesstarr und unbeweglich*].” (Figure 1, a documentary photograph of Kundry in Act I from the original staging of *Parsifal*, demonstrates some of these features, although it gives us Kundry at her least animal-like moment; Parsifal has just fainted, and out of concern Kundry brings water to him in a horn.) Immediately after her entrance, Kundry throws herself onto a nearby grassy bank and stays there, prostrate, for most of Act I, with her head in her hands or resting on one of her arms that she splays across the ground. From time to time she casts wary, darting glances at the others, sometimes hiding her face in her hair to avert their attentions.⁷⁴ When Amfortas asks who has brought him the vial of healing balsam for his bath, Gurnemanz calls for Kundry as though she were a shy but trusty pet: “There the wild woman lies. Up, Kundry! Come [*Dort liegt’s das wilde Weib. Auf, Kundry! Komm!*]” Kundry refuses to do so, and moments later she barks out a rejection of Amfortas’s gratitude while writhing restlessly on the ground: “[Give] no thanks! Ha, ha! How will that help? No thanks! Go, go—into the bath [*Nicht Dank! Ha, ha! Was wird es helfen! Nicht Dank! Fort, fort—in’s Bad!*]” After Amfortas is carried away, the third squire says to Kundry what the audience must be thinking about her: “Hey! You there! What are you doing lying there like a wild animal [*He! Du da! Was liegst du dort wie ein wildes Thier?*]” In a stunningly ironic gesture that comprises her only fully “human” utterance during the entire act, Kundry responds with the tune of the “Dresden Amen” and the words: “Aren’t animals holy here [*Sind die Thiere hier nicht heilig?*]”⁷⁵ Normally in Act I, Kundry’s statements are sporadic and fragmentary like the ones cited above, her vocal line broken into spasmodic bursts. Even her vocal delivery was to be raw and guttural, hovering somewhere between song, speech and sheer animal utterance.⁷⁶ Throughout the opera, the stage directions often command her to let out various non-linguistic wails, cries, screams, moans, and cackles. Following Poizat, we might interpret these as eruptions

Current Musicology

Figure 1: Original Bayreuth production photograph of Marianne Brandt as Kundry in Act I of *Parsifal* (Geck and Voss 1970:250).



of the Vocal Object into the acoustic texture of the opera, but babies are not the only creatures who make vocal sound without symbolic function in response to an inner disturbance. The instinctual character of Kundry's vocal outcries is apparent even when she *does* sing words, because these words are often nothing but unreflective labels for what she is feeling or desiring.

Kundry's vocal line is full of isolated gestures on words like "rest [*Ruhe*]," "sleep [*Schlafen*]," "horror [*Grausen*]," "madness [*Wahnsinn*]," "rage [*Wut*]," "misery [*Jammer*]," "death [*Tod*]," "yearning [*Sehnen*]" and "woe [*Wehe*]," not to mention the pure exclamations "Ach!" and "Oh!" that often surround these words, forming an intermediary zone between melodic singing and the inarticulate groaning of an animal.

Another one of Kundry's characteristic behaviors points to her animal nature as well: she hibernates. In Act I, Gurnemanz tells us that Titurel first found Kundry sleeping in the undergrowth of the forests of Montsalvat, "stiff, lifeless, as though dead [*erstarrt, leblos, wie todt*]," and this is always how the knights find her after she has been absent from their realm for any significant period of time. In Act II Klingsor summons Kundry from another deep sleep in order to carry out his nefarious plans, chiding her in the process for the time she spends with the knights: "[with them] you let yourself be regarded as a beast [*wie ein Vieh du dich halten lässt*]!" Kundry awakens slowly and gradually; her first words, the stage directions tell us, are delivered "hoarsely and fragmentarily, as though in the midst of an attempt to regain [the ability of] speech again [*rauh und abgebrochen, wie im Versuche, wieder Sprache zu gewinnen*]." And at the beginning of Act III, Gurnemanz finds Kundry once again after a long dormancy. After hearing her dull moaning, he looks for her with these words: "No beast would cry out so pitifully, and certainly not today, on the holiest of mornings [*So jammervoll klagt kein Wild, und gewiss gar nicht am heiligsten Morgen heut*]" (see example 19, mm. 48–54). It is Good Friday, and even the animals are reverently quiet—except for Kundry, who demonstrates her animal nature even more vividly by disturbing this peace. In fact, after locating Kundry in the tangle of bushes, Gurnemanz rouses her into consciousness as though she were quite literally a hibernating animal: "Up! Kundry! Up! Winter has fled, and spring is here! Awaken! Awaken to spring [*Auf! Kundry! Auf! Der Winter floh, und Lenz ist da! Erwache! Erwache dem Lenz*]!" This time, however, Kundry does not regain the ability to speak. As in Act I, she again serves the knights—"as a beast," Klingsor would say—but now that beast is tamed, with no trace left of her ferocious bark or bite.

Throughout his life, Wagner nurtured a tremendous compassion for animals; he is one of the most famous vegetarians of the nineteenth century. He expressed this compassion in prose many times, especially in the essays "Against Vivisection" (1879) and "Religion and Art" (1880–81), written during the period of the composition of *Parsifal*'s music.⁷⁷ Wagner's concern for the plight of animals comes directly to the fore several times during *Parsifal*, perhaps most strikingly after Parsifal kills the swan and the knights bring him before Gurnemanz for judgment. Gurnemanz shames Parsifal

into realizing the senseless violence of his deed by showing him the swan's mangled carcass: "Here—take a look!—here is where you struck it: now its blood is still congealing, its wings hang down weakly; its snowy feathers are darkly stained,—its eyes [are] broken, do you see its gaze [*Hier—schau' her!—hier traf'st du ihn: da starrt noch das Blut, matt hängen die Flügel; das Schneegefieder dunkel befleckt,—gebrochen das Aug', siehst du den Blick?*]" In painful remorse, Parsifal breaks his bow and throws away his arrows, never to harm an innocent animal again.

I want to conclude this essay by considering how Wagner's staunch belief in the ethical treatment of animals related to his equally steadfast belief that the redemption of European culture could only come from the eradication of "Jewry." This relationship might help us understand how and why Kundry and her voice are simultaneously the objects of such pity and such vilification throughout *Parsifal*. During the late 1850s, Wagner began to research the Parsifal legend in earnest, and in his correspondence with Mathilde Wesendonck from that time, we can see his ideas for the dramatic content of the opera coming into focus. Wesendonck was a young married woman who served nonetheless as Wagner's muse and confidante; their passionate epistolary relationship eventually led to the demise of Wagner's first marriage. In a letter to Wesendonck from October 1, 1858 (actually a diary entry addressed to Wesendonck and ultimately intended for her to read), Wagner ruminated at length on the concept of compassion [*Mitleid*], and in light of the argument of the present essay, his remarks are stunning. The letter begins with a disturbing anecdote of violence against animals:

Recently my gaze turned from the street into the shop of a poultry butcher; I was absentmindedly looking over the piled-up goods, neatly and appetizingly arranged, as, while one [of the butchers] off to the side was occupied with plucking a chicken, another [butcher] reached into a cage right then, grabbed a living chicken and ripped off its head. The ghastly scream of the animal, and [its] pitiful, weaker wailing during the struggle, penetrated my soul with horror. — Since then, I have not been able to get rid of this impression again, [which I have] already experienced so often [before]. (R. Wagner 1914: 101)⁷⁸

This tale of the gruesome death of a bird brings the swan scene from *Parsifal* immediately to mind. One is tempted to suggest that life may have influenced art here, but if we succumb to that temptation, then perhaps the greater significance of this passage is its focus on the chicken's *voice*. The chicken's "wailing" and its "scream" of agony in dying are what "penetrated [Wagner's] soul with horror," and they continued to resonate in his head long after the event. The moaning and groaning of Kundry's voice in Act I of *Parsifal*, the desperate raging, vehemence and volatility of that voice in the latter part of Act II: might all of this have been the artistic amplification

of the anguished chicken's discordant screeching from Wagner's own primal scene of horror? Indeed, this screeching inspired such a pang of sympathy in Wagner that it caused him to reflect on the role of compassion in his life, both at the personal *and* artistic levels:

[E]verything moves me seriously only insofar as it awakens in me a sense of common feeling [*Mitgefühl*, literally "feeling-with"], that is: compassion [*Mit-leid*]. I recognize this compassion in myself as the strongest trait of my moral being, and this is probably also the source of my art. (102)⁷⁹

Compassion is what Kundry begs for at the end of Act II ("Have compassion for me [*Mitleid mit mir!*!"), just before Parsifal rejects her for the last time, and compassion is what Kundry will finally receive in Act III. But this compassion and the redemption it enables are predicated upon her animal nature, as Wagner already knew in 1858. Here is another passage from the letter:

[I]t has become clear to me why I can have even more compassion for lower natures [i.e. animals] than for higher [ones, i.e. humans]. A higher nature is what it is precisely because it is lifted up through its own suffering to the heights of resignation, or has in itself the capacity for this uplifting and nurtures it. [Such a nature] is immediately close to me, is like me, and with it I achieve a feeling of mutual joy [*Mitfreude*, literally "joy-with"]. As a result, I essentially have less compassion [*Mitleid*] for people than for animals. In [animals] I see the capacity for uplifting above suffering, for resignation and its deep, divine calm, completely denied. If they come to suffer, as happens when they are tortured [*durch Gequältwerden*], then I see with my own, torture-filled despair precisely just that absolute suffering without redemption, without every higher purpose, with freedom [from this suffering granted] only through death, [a death which] consequently confirms that it would have been better if they had never come into being in the first place. If this suffering is therefore to have a purpose, then this [comes about] solely through the awakening of compassion in a person, who thus takes in the failed existence of the animal and becomes the redeemer of the world, because he recognizes the error of all existence in general. (This meaning will finally become clear to you from the third act of *Parsifal*, [in the scene] on the morning of Good Friday). (103–4)⁸⁰

In Wagner's account, animals suffer with no possibility of redemption [*Erlösung*] because they have no self-consciousness, no ability to reflect upon their circumstances which might lead to the transcendent peace of Schopenhauerian resignation. Only death can grant the animal a release from their perpetual, blind suffering. The higher function of this wretched phenomenon, however, is to provide the human being with an opportunity for compassion. By "suffering with" the animal, the human being absorbs that suffering into himself and uses it as more fodder for his own process of

Current Musicology

resignation. He adopts and then rises above the animal's senseless suffering on behalf of the animal, and because that suffering now has some ultimate significance, the world as a whole is redeemed. In *Parsifal's* Good Friday scene, Parsifal is the human being who redeems the world in this fashion, and Kundry is the tortured animal, lacking in self-awareness, whose hopeless suffering enables him to accomplish this mission. In mm. 705–56 of Act III, some moments after Kundry's baptism, Gurnemanz explains the procedure in detail:

They [i.e. the animals] cannot see Him on the cross: therefore they look up to redeemed man; [man] feels himself free from the burden and horror of sin, pure and healed through God's sacrifice of love: stalk and flower in the meadows now observe this, that today man's feet do not crush them, but rather, just as God with heavenly patience had pity for [man] and suffered for him, today man in pious grace also conserves [the flowers] with soft steps. Every creature is thankful for this, each that blooms and soon dies away, for nature, freed of sin, today obtains its day of innocence.⁸¹

We recall that, at the beginning of this speech, Kundry is still lying face down on the ground, sobbing and twitching uncontrollably after her baptism. Records of the first two performances of *Parsifal* from 1882 (see note 39) indicate that at Gurnemanz's words, "therefore they look up to redeemed man," Kundry lifted up her head, looked at Parsifal and then gazed toward heaven, her hands folded in prayer.⁸² (All of this is conflated in figure 2, another documentary photograph from the first production of *Parsifal*; in this image, Parsifal baptizes Kundry, Gurnemanz marvels at the beauty of redeemed nature around him, and Kundry kneels in prayer and looks to the sky, even though all three of these things happen at different times during the actual opera.) In light of Wagner's 1858 letter to Wesendonck and Gurnemanz's own words, this dramatic gesture marks Kundry indelibly (but not exclusively) as an animal (or flower, if we recall her Act II persona) whose redemption is always secondhand, filtered through the compassionate intervention of mankind. Kundry's "Entseelung" at the end of the opera might consequently be seen as a merciful, "humane" euthanasia of sorts; as Wagner wrote in 1858, death was the animal's only avenue to freedom from suffering, even if its suffering formed part of mankind's redemption of the world.

But terms such as compassion, resignation and redemption are already familiar to us from our consideration of Wagner's *Judentum* essay of 1850/69. In the anti-Semitic context, these terms take on an entirely different resonance. In fact, further inspection of the *Judentum* essay reveals that, for Wagner, Jews and animals are both less than human in their own ways. First of all, it is impossible for the Jew of Wagner's essay to belong to a true community, and his use of language reflects that:

Figure 2: Original Bayreuth production photograph of Therese Malten as Kundry, Heinrich Gudehus as Parsifal, and Gustave Siehr as Gurnemanz in Act III of *Parsifal* (Geck and Voss 1970:254).



A language, [in] its expression and its development, is not the work of individuals, but rather of a historical community: only he who is raised unconsciously in this community can also take part in its creations. The Jew, however, stands outside such a community, alone with his Jehova in [his] fragmented, groundless tribe[.] (R. Wagner 1911, vol. 5:70–71)⁸³

Current Musicology

As a result, the Jew can only express himself linguistically and artistically through external imitation (as with the parrot I cited earlier) but can never “truly poetize in speech or create artworks [*wirklich redend dichten oder Kunstwerke schaffen*]” (71). This is because the Jew does not share bonds of genuine fellow feeling with the community:

When we hear a Jew talk, all lack of purely-human [*rein menschlichen*] expression in his speech unconsciously wounds us: the cold indifference of the curious ‘blabber’ in it rises by no means to the arousal of a higher, more heartwarming passion. (71)⁸⁴

Wagner surmises that “in communal matters amongst themselves, and particularly in the family setting where purely-human emotion [readily] comes forth, even Jews may give expression to their feelings [*bei gemeinschaftlichen Anliegenheiten untereinander, und namentlich da, wo in der Familie die rein menschliche Empfindung zum Durchbruche kommt, gewiß auch Juden ihren Gefühlen einen Ausdruck zu geben vermögen*],” but this is not Wagner’s concern, since none of this pertains to the Jew’s relationship to the *Volk*, the authentic “historical community” of the (European/German) people (72). The “more high-minded [*vornehmere*]” Jew who tries to communicate artistically or otherwise with the *Volk* is therefore misguided, not only because he lacks the “deepest, most soulful sympathy with a great community that strives along with him [*die tiefste, seelenvollste Sympathie mit einer großen, gleichstrebenden Gemeinsamkeit*],” but because he has broken himself off from his own community as well (74). Wagner goes on:

The true poet, regardless of the medium in which he poetizes, always takes his inspiration only from a faithful, loving observation of spontaneous life, of this life that appears to him only among the *Volk*. Now where does the educated Jew find this *Volk*? [Surely it is] impossible [for him to find it] on the foundation of the society in which he plays his artist’s role? If he has any kind of connection with this society, this is only with that ex-crescence from it which has been completely removed from its authentic, healthy stem; this connection is rather a thoroughly loveless [one], and this lovelessness must become apparent to him when he climbs down to the foundation of this society to gain nourishment for his artistic activity: not only does everything become stranger and more incomprehensible to him, but the involuntary aversion of the *Volk* towards him confronts him here with the most injurious nakedness[.] (75–76)⁸⁵

The Jew, Wagner concludes, has never had “a life with content that could produce art: a content, a universally valid, human content cannot be taken from this life even now by the [Jew] who searches for it [*ein Leben von kunstfähigem Gehalte: ein Gehalt, ein allgemeingiltiger menschlicher Gehalt ist*”

diesem auch jetzt vom Suchenden nicht zu entnehmen]” (76). Like the animal, the Jew of Wagner’s imagination is incapable of true compassion (that is, a loving connection with others), exists outside the “purely human” realm of “authentic men” that surrounds him, communicates by agitatedly imitating what he hears, revealing at once his subhuman status and inability to achieve the heights of resignation, and lives a life devoid of “human content,” a life that can therefore never be transfigured by art. Only *Untergang* may redeem the Jew, but as we have seen, this *Untergang* can take many different forms, and some of them intertwine with Wagner’s judgment of animal life, leading to many uncomfortable questions and comparisons. Wagner’s prescription for the Jew’s redemption is for him to cease to be a Jew, but can an animal cease to be an animal? Is death the only respite from the Jew’s impossible situation, as it is for the animal? If the Jew cannot possibly be a target of the people’s compassion, then how can the animal’s suffering enable mankind’s redemption of the world through this same compassion? Ultimately, the animal and the Jew are both “of service” to humanity at large – in both cases, Wagner asserted, *our* redemption is intimately linked to *their* redemption – yet Wagner’s overall conception of service and redemption is like the head of Janus. One face compassionately smiles at the animal world; the other face scowls in horror at the Jew.

It is not surprising, therefore, that in his letter to Mathilde Wesendonck from 1858, Wagner immediately followed his discourse on compassion for animal suffering (and its connection to the third act of *Parsifal*) with a scathing attack against human beings who failed to feel such compassion:

However, when I see in a person this capacity for the redemption of the world through compassion left to spoil, undeveloped and even deliberately uncultivated, [it] makes me even now so revolted by [such] a person, and weakens my compassion for him to the point of a complete lack of feeling for his hardship. He has in his hardship the path to redemption, [a path] which is closed off just to the animal; if he doesn’t recognize this, but rather he desires to keep [the path] absolutely obstructed, then in contrast I feel I must open this door wide open for him, and I can go to the point of cruelty in order to to make him conscious of the hardship of his suffering. Nothing leaves me colder than the complaint of the Philistine about his disturbed comfort: here every compassion [*Mitleid*] becomes complicity in a misdeed [*Mitschuld*, literally “guilt-with”]. Because it is in my nature to unsettle [others] out of [their] ignoble condition, I thus feel here only the urge to sting, in order to make them feel the great suffering of life! (R. Wagner 1914:104–5)⁸⁶

The self-satisfied Philistine, walled off from the pain of life by his riches and insensitive to the essence of existence, is also the figure of the Jew, who symbolized everything about society that Wagner hated. Contemplating

such a figure brought Wagner to thoughts of cruelty, precisely in order to awaken the object of his cruelty to compassion. Two years later, in 1860, Wagner is writing to Wesendonck again to tell her about the fascinating character he has created in *Parsifal*, a “wondrously wild Grail messenger [fabelhaft wilde Gralsbotin]” in the first act who becomes the “temptress of the second act [verführerischen Weibe des zweiten Aktes]” (see note 9). The wild messenger elicits our *Mitleid*, while the temptress’s task is to seduce Parsifal into *Mitschuld*. And yet it is not as simple as that: in truth, the animal and the Jew in Kundry are maddeningly simultaneous most of the time, especially towards the end of Act II, when Kundry’s voice is at the height of its power. The animal and the Jew are as inextricably linked in the character of Kundry as Wagner’s moments of musical transcendence in *Parsifal* are dependent upon overcoming and transforming Kundry’s voice. That voice is subjected to both compassion and cruelty; in *Parsifal*, it appears that one cannot be had without the other.

Notes

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1. A visual aura may also have descended over the stage landscape at this moment. In Felix Mottl’s edition of the piano-vocal score of *Parsifal*, there is an indication, attributed to Wagner, that reads, “The whole scene [becomes] mysteriously veiled [*Die ganze Stelle geheimnisvoll verschleiert*]” (Wagner 1986:395). All translations in this article are my own; as a reference in translating passages from Wagner’s essay “Jewry in Music [*Das Judentum in der Musik*],” I consulted William Ashton Ellis’s English edition (R. Wagner 1995:75–122).

2. Heinrich Porges and Julius Kniese, two of Wagner’s assistants for the rehearsals of the first productions of *Parsifal* at Bayreuth, also recorded some of Wagner’s verbal performance indications during the rehearsal process in their piano-vocal scores. These indications are tabulated in Geck and Voss 1970:165–228. According to the indications Porges recorded for this scene, Kundry’s behavior reinforced the effect of temporal and physical dislocation from the rest of the opera. At first, in the moments just before this scene, Kundry confuses Parsifal, the opera’s hero and the only other character on stage at this moment, with Christ Himself. In mm. 1175ff, this hallucination gives way to Kundry’s own internal vision of Golgatha, as she “looks either up to the sky or down to the ground, only never out into the audience [*man sieht entweder in den Himmel oder auf die Erde, nur nie ins Publikum*].” In m. 1177, Kundry steps forward and looks at the floor, and in the next bar, as she sings, we witness “Kundry’s vision; deeply bent over; everything must be as though from an eerie distance, as though sounding through a veil [*Kundry’s Vision; tiefgebeugt; muß alles wie aus schauerlicher Ferne, wie durch einen Schleier erklingen*].” In this measure in Kniese’s score, we read: “as though looking back across thousands of years [*wie über Jahrtausende zurückblickend*].” Finally, in m. 1179, Porges’s score reads: “Here she becomes completely engrossed, as though in a dream [*Hier wird sie ganz entrückt, wie im Traum*]” (206).

3. The first appearance of this music occurs in Act I, mm. 592–93. Gurnemanz, an aged knight, is in the process of explaining how the members of his order received the Holy Grail from which Christ drank at the Last Supper. During these two measures, Gurnemanz states that this was “also” the Grail “into which His divine blood flowed [as He was] on the cross [*darein am Kreuz sein göttlich Blut auch floss*].” He then goes on to discuss other related matters pertinent to the opera, including the Spear that pierced Christ’s flesh (to be discussed later). What separates this moment from the music’s appearance at this point in Act II is its relatively weak intensity; mm. 592–93 of Act I form just one element of a long narrative with many diverse elements, whereas mm. 1179–80 of Act II produce a staggering revelation in conjunction with Kundry’s words and the overall isolation of the scene. Moreover, when we hear this progression in Act II, at least an hour or two has passed since our one and only exposure to it in Act I. Finally, because Kundry was actually present at Golgatha, her invocation of Christ’s suffering has a greater ring of authenticity to it than that of any other character in the opera. This is an important point to which I shall repeatedly return.

4. This chord could be vii-half-diminished-seventh in E minor, alternating with V (another dominant-function chord) above a destabilizing F[#] pedal point and momentarily displaced by the G in the melody on beat 2. Or, if B is taken as tonic (with the timpani’s F[#] as dominant pedal), one might hear the chord as a *sui generis* chromatic neighbor sonority to the tonic triad, inflected by the Neapolitan (the C₃). Since E minor is clearly (if briefly) implied in the first half of m. 1181, we might favor the former interpretation retrospectively. Either way, the specific dissonance and intervallic content of this harmonic progression are what catch the ear here, linking it to the dramatic content.

5. There seem to be two views about exactly when Kundry laughed at Christ. Some critics assume that this occurred while Christ was carrying the Cross through Jerusalem, while others assume that this occurred during the Crucifixion itself. To my knowledge, Wagner never clarified the matter; for this article, I have decided to take the second view.

6. Kundry also sings a high B at three later moments in Act II: mm. 1356–57, 1405, and 1485. All three moments are significant and will be discussed briefly in the analytical portion of this article.

7. Given that we are in D minor, the chord on the third beat of m. 1183 should be a fully-diminished seventh chord (vii-fully-diminished-6/5); instead, it is only half-diminished, implying the major mode (vii-half-diminished-6/5).

8. In his study of the sketches for *Parsifal*, William Kinderman (1995a:92) demonstrates that Wagner had Kundry’s Act II vocal scream of laughter in mind very early in the compositional process; in fact, it was closely tied to Kundry’s laughter motif. In a sketch that Kinderman links to Cosima Wagner’s diary entry of September 27, 1877, Wagner wrote a large vocal interval (G5 to E4, a tenth) on one staff for Kundry’s “lachte,” and on the staff below, he filled in that interval with a descending figure primarily composed of eighth notes and based roughly on a diminished-seventh chord. Kundry’s laughter motif, heard so often in Act I, and her vocal scream of laughter at Christ here in Act II, were thus conceived simultaneously as extensions of the same phenomenon.

9. In the beginning stages of Wagner’s work on the *Parsifal* libretto, there were two principal female characters, one for Acts I and III and another for Act II; the character we now know as Kundry was essentially split into two separate women. In a letter to Mathilde Wesendonck from early August 1860, Wagner revealed that he had overcome a great stumbling block in his creation of the drama by fusing the two characters into one: “Have I already told you that the wondrously wild Grail messenger shall be one and the same being as the temptress of the second act? Since this occurred to me, almost everything about this material has become

Current Musicology

clear to me [*Sagte ich Ihnen schon einmal, daß die fabelhaft wilde Gralsbotin ein und dasselbe Wesen mit dem verführerischen Weibe des zweiten Aktes sein soll? Seitdem mir dies aufgegangen, ist mir fast alles an diesem Stoffe klar geworden*]" (Wagner 1914:286). For further details on Kundry's gradual assembly as a single character from various elements of Wolfram von Eschenbach's medieval epic poem *Parzival*, see Beckett 1981:7–13.

10. In this sense I am simply using a rudimentary definition of the concept of "voice" as it has been developed in musicology over the past four decades. The concept was first formulated by Edward T. Cone (1974), was revitalized and substantially critiqued by Carolyn Abbate (1992), and has since been historicized and developed further by Lydia Goehr (1998, chap. 3) and Gary Tomlinson (1999). Moreover, Wagner himself seems to have had a similar view of the orchestra's role in "voicing" *Kundry's* subjectivity in particular. In her diary on August 28, 1878, Wagner's wife Cosima reported the following: "After dinner R[ichard] shared with me how he had a melody that pleased him greatly but was too broad for Kundry's words; he [said he] then came up with the idea of writing [new] verses [for her], but then a countermelody suddenly appeared to him, and thus he had what he wanted. The orchestra would receive the broad melody, which would express the condition of her soul, while she [would receive] the theme [based on] her hasty words [*Nach Tisch teilt R. mit, wie er eine Melodie gehabt, die ihm sehr gefallen, zu breit aber gewesen sei für die Worte Kundry's; er sei dann auf den Gedanken gekommen, Verse zu dichten, plötzlich aber sei ihm eine Contre-Melodie angekommen, und so habe er, was er wolle. Das Orchester bekäme die breite Melodie, welche den Zustand ihrer Seele ausdrücke, während sie das Thema ihrer hastigen Worte*]" (C. Wagner 1976–77, vol. 2:166). Given the location of this anecdote within Cosima's diary, the musical passage in question most likely occurs during the latter part of Act II, after Kundry kisses Parsifal; Cosima's diary entries for September refer to this section of Act II, and Wagner signed off on Act II on September 30 (see Geck and Voss 1970:34). Unfortunately, it is impossible to specify exactly which passage Cosima had in mind. In fact, the passage may not have made it into the opera at all. Incidentally, I am by no means implying that this is the *only* way Wagner conceived of the relationship between the orchestra and his characters' singing voices. However, the description given in Cosima's diary articulates *one* such relationship, and since the Kundry of Act II of *Parsifal* is its focus, the description warrants consideration here.

11. For a particularly strident interpretation of *Parsifal* along these lines, see Zelinsky 1978 and 1982. For an equally heated response to Zelinsky's arguments, see Dahlhaus 1984.

12. For readings of Klingsor as "Jewish," see Rose 1992:163–64 and 166, and Weiner 1995:183–93 and 247–50. Kundry's "Jewishness" will be addressed later on in this article.

13. Poizat's book *The Angel's Cry* appeared first in French in 1986; however, it entered the mainstream of Anglo-American scholarship only with its translation in 1992.

14. It is therefore important to note that Abbate persistently complicates the matter of the relationship between music and "the rest" in her essay, and quite rightfully. For example, in analyzing a passage from Act III (see example 23 of this article), she explains that "[*Parsifal's*] music would not have come into being without this plot and these words and these stage actions. Wagner still composed measure to measure, according to precepts of correspondence he had articulated decades earlier." Her analysis—not unlike the sort of analysis I will be pursuing in the next section of this article—confirms that, in *Parsifal*, "[c]ertain [of Wagner's compositional] techniques have not changed much since the 1850s" (114).

15. Abbate enriches our understanding of one of these fixations with particular insight: Kundry as the conflation of all womankind. Abbate demonstrates how the male characters of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* persistently confuse the separate identities of the various female characters and references that populate the opera—Venus the divine courtesan and evening

star, Elisabeth the dutiful betrothed virgin, Holda the goddess of spring, and the Virgin Mary. “Men have been granted the blinding insight that Venus is identical to the spring, the star, and the virgin, and after that the move to Kundry was easy. All this is worth some concern” (116–18).

16. In an earlier essay (1996), Abbate analyzes this moment in somewhat more concrete terms vis-à-vis the plot, or plots, of *Parsifal*: “This orchestral expression of mourning (the A-minor bar), if brief, is unsettling not the least because the gesture pulls us away from all that Christian myth-making (visual and musical) at the end of the evening. It pulls us back into the inescapability of time. Thus Kundry is, within the Grail world, a principle of the historical against the mythical—so the orchestral *memento mori*. Through Kundry the *Parsifal* plot is subject to a historicizing principle, so that one could even speak of two conflicting *Parsifal* plots, the Grail-knights’ *Bühnenweihfestspiel*, which impresses one as circular and eternally continuous, and the tragic-ironic Kundry tale, that reaches an absolute narrative close” (292). This view complements my own reading of Kundry’s musical and dramatic treatment across Acts II and III, to be presented in the third section of this article.

17. Like Bronfen, in fact, Smart sees in Kundry a manifestation of the nineteenth-century female hysteric, although her diagnosis is based more substantially on musical observation: “Hysterics are often verbally incapacitated, but their bodies speak for them through tremors and spasms—an impression Wagner’s music encourages by its tight shadowing of Kundry’s movements in the first act” (196).

18. See Nattiez 1993:167–72, Steinberg 1996:164–66 and 171–77, Abbate 2001:109, 114–15, 122–23 and 138, and Smith 2007:11–12 and 19.

19. Wagner himself connected Kundry to the Wandering Jew in his first prose sketch for *Parsifal* from 1865: “Kundry lives an immeasurably long life by means of continually varying reincarnations, as a consequence of an ancient malediction [she uttered] which damned her, much like the ‘Wandering Jew,’ to inflict the suffering of love’s enticement upon men in ever-changing guises [*Kundry lebt ein unermessliches Leben unter stets wechselnden Wiedergeburt, in Folge einer uralten Verwünschung, die sie, ähnlich dem ‘ewigen Juden,’ dazu verdammt, in neuen Gestalten das Leiden der Liebesverführung über die Männer zu bringen*]” (Geck and Voss 1970:72). Anthony Winterbourne argues that the figure of the Wandering Jew in the late-nineteenth century had come to stand for humanity’s suffering at large and not for anything specifically anti-Semitic. Winterbourne’s overriding concern is to demonstrate Kundry’s heathen essence; his view of Kundry as a pagan problematizes accusations against *Parsifal* as anti-Semitic because, in his reading, Kundry is not necessarily “Jewish,” but rather simply non-Christian (2003:71–77). However, notwithstanding the merits and productive contribution of Winterbourne’s book, I would agree with Marc Weiner, who explains in the 1997 postscript to his book on anti-Semitism in Wagner’s operas (1995) that “[t]he understanding of [Wagner’s dramatic] figures as constructed out of a host of anti-Semitic stereotypes does not cancel out, exclude, or take the place of, but coexists alongside [other] meanings[,]” because “Wagner’s music dramas [are] complex and multi-layered aesthetic and ideologically motivated accomplishments” (356). Hence, I would not throw the (admittedly filthy) baby out with the bath water here; the Wandering Jew may have been *more* than a Jew by the end of the nineteenth century, but he was still a Jew, and given the welter of evidence of Wagner’s passionate and enduring anti-Semitic worldview, I would suggest that this is a layer to the myth we should not ignore when contemplating Kundry.

20. Carolyn Abbate has suggested that one might pause to consider the possibility that Klingsor’s laundry list of Kundry’s previous identities is “metaphorical, or just plain name-calling” (personal communication). The laundry list also includes “primal she-devil [*Urteufelin*]” (which I will interpret momentarily as a reference to Eve), Gundryggia (a Valkyrie whom

Wagner called a “weaver of wars [*Strikerin des Krieges*]” —see C. Wagner, vol. 2:1037), and, to top it all off, “nameless one [*Namenlose*].” Anthony Winterbourne, however, implies that Klingsor’s list furthers the notion of Kundry as a stand-in for all women: “With Herodias at the beginning and Gundryggia at the end, Wagner encapsulates an entire catalogue of legends about women” (2003:64). Winterbourne’s observation, in fact, supports Abbate’s own claims on this issue; see note 15.

21. In making the following assertions about the “Jewishness” of Kundry, I am relying principally on Marc Weiner (1995) and Paul Lawrence Rose (1992) for information about facets of German anti-Semitism in the nineteenth century.

22. Schopenhauer would have condemned these outbursts of *Schadenfreude*, “the worst trait in human nature” whose “delight in mischief is diabolical, and its taunts . . . the laughter of hell” (2007:19–20). For Schopenhauer, the laughter of *Schadenfreude* was “fiendish and diabolical,” “an infallible sign of a thoroughly bad heart . . . , profound moral worthlessness . . . , [and] an inclination to a sheer and undisguised malignant joy” (2005:135). His language fits Kundry uncannily well, and given Wagner’s abiding sympathy for the philosopher and the general agreement of their anti-Semitic ideologies, the fit may not be a coincidence.

23. In the “compilation [*Zusammenstellung*]” of observations and comments on the first stagings of *Parsifal* in 1882 and 1883, stemming from various eyewitness sources and transcribed most likely by Cosima Wagner in accordance with her husband’s views, it is noted that in Kundry’s costuming in Act II, “above all, everything modern is to be avoided here—such as a tightly-fastened waist, a train, high heels, little curls on her forehead . . . Kundry’s beauty is mysterious (‘a terribly beautiful woman,’ says Gurnemanz), and so she may in no way remind us of contemporary life [*Hier muß vor allem alles Moderne – wie festanschließende Taille, Schleppe, hohe Hacken, Löckchen auf der Stirne – vermieden werden . . . Die Schönheit Kundrys ist geheimnisvoll (‘ein furchtbar schönes Weib’ sagt Gurnemanz), sie darf also in keiner Weise an das jetzige Leben erinnern]*” (Geck and Voss 1970:160). For more on the philological status of the *Zusammenstellung*, see Geck and Voss 1970:164.

24. “Die Schlange des Paradieses kennen Sie ja, und ihre lockende Verheißung: ‘eritis sicut Deus, scientes bonum et malum.’ Adam und Eva wurden ‘wissend.’ Sie wurden ‘der Sünde sich bewußt.’ An diesem Bewußtsein hatte das Menschengeschlecht zu büßen in Schmach und Elend, bis es durch Christus erlöst ward, der die Sünde der Menschheit auf sich nahm . . . Adam—Eva: Christus.—Wie wäre es, wenn wir zu ihnen stellen:—‘Anfortas—Kundry: Parzival?’” It should be noted that the very next sentence in the letter is: “Yet with great caution [*Doch mit großer Behutsamkeit!*]” However, Wagner’s “caution” appears to be directed toward the comparison of Parsifal with Christ, as the next few sentences reveal: “The kiss which causes Anfortas to fall into sin awakens in Parsifal the full awareness of that sin, not however as his own, but rather that of the miserably suffering one [i.e., Amfortas] whose laments he only dully sensed before. But now the reason for them has clearly arisen with his own fellow feeling [*Mitgefühl*] of the sin: with lightning speed he said to himself, as it were, ‘ah! That is the poison which is causing him to waste away, whose misery I did not understand until now’ [*Der Kuß, der Anfortas der Sünde verfallen läßt, er weckt in Parzival das volle Bewußtsein jener Sünde, nicht aber als die seinige, sondern die des jammervoll Leidenden, dessen Klagen er zuvor nur dumpf empfand, davon ihm nun aber, am eigenen Mitgefühl der Sünde, der Grund hell aufging: mit Blitzzesschnelle sagte er sich gleichsam: ‘ach! Das ist das Gift, an welchem Jener siecht, dessen Jammer ich bisher nicht verstand’]*!” (Geck and Voss:20). Eleven years later, in fact, Wagner definitively *rejected* the notion that Parsifal was meant to be seen as a Christ figure. In her diary entry for October 21, 1878, Cosima Wagner recorded that her husband did not agree with his acolyte Hans von Wolzogen, who “called Parsifal an image of the Savior [*Parsifal ein Abbild des Heilandes nennt*].” Richard felt that Wolzogen “had gone too far [*zu*

weit ging],” replying that “with [Parsifal] I was absolutely not thinking of the Savior’ [*Ich habe an den Heiland dabei gar nicht gedacht*]” (C. Wagner 1976–77, vol. 2:205).

25. I have taken all quotes from the 1869 version of the essay. Even though the essay was originally written in 1850, Wagner’s 1869 revision and republication of the essay without hiding behind a pen name show how much he still believed in it. The revisions also reflect Wagner’s engagement with the philosophy of Schopenhauer, and this engagement plays a significant role in *Parsifal* as well. See also note 35.

26. “*unwillkürlich Abstoßende*”; “instinktmäßige Abneigung . . . von welcher wir doch deutlich erkennen, daß sie stärker und überwiegender ist, als unser bewußter Eifer, dieser Abneigung uns zu entleidigen.”

27. “Der Jude . . . fällt uns im gemeinen Leben zunächst durch seine äußere Erscheinung auf, die, gleichviel welcher europäischen Nationalität wir angehören, etwas dieser Nationalität unangenehm Fremdartiges hat: wir wünschen unwillkürlich mit einem so aussehenden Menschen nichts gemein zu haben.”

28. “Nie erregt sich der Jude im gemeinsamen Austausch der Empfindungen mit uns, sondern, uns gegenüber, nur im ganz besonderen egoistischen Interesse seiner Eitelkeit oder seines Vorteiles, was solcher Erregtheit, bei dem entstellenden Ausdrucke seiner Sprechweise überhaupt, dann immer den Charakter des Lächerlichen gibt, und uns alles, nur nicht Sympathie für des Redenden Interesse zu erwecken vermag.”

29. “[W]ir können nun die Bitte dieses Königs [in the previous sentence Wagner used the word “king” in a pun to refer to the Jew] um Emanzipierung nicht anders als ungemein naiv finden, da *wir* vielmehr uns in die Notwendigkeit versetzt sehen, um Emanzipierung von den Juden zu kämpfen. Der Jude ist nach dem gegenwärtigen Stande der Dinge dieser Welt wirklich bereits mehr als emanzipiert: er herrscht, und wird so lange herrschen, als das Geld die Macht bleibt, vor welcher all’ unser Tun und Treiben seine Kraft verliert.”

30. Needless to say, this anti-Semitic worldview is riddled with contradictions. How can the “intellectualism” of the Jew be reconciled with his “unthinking” devotion to law?

31. “. . . muß es uns . . . deutlich werden, was wir an jenem Wesen hassen; was wir dann bestimmt kennen, dem können wir die Spitze bieten; ja schon durch seine nackte Aufdeckung dürfen wir hoffen, den Dämon aus dem Felde zu schlagen[.]”

32. “. . . das Judentum das üble Gewissen unsrer modernen Zivilisation ist.”

33. “Wer diese Mühe scheut, wer sich von dieser Erforschung abwendet . . . , den eben begreifen wir jetzt mit unter der Kategorie der ‘Judenschaft in der Musik.’”

34. “Aus seiner Sonderstellung als Jude trat er Erlösung suchend unter uns: er fand sie nicht und mußte sich bewußt werden, daß er sie nur mit auch *unsrer Erlösung zu wahrhaften Menschen* finden können würde. Gemeinschaftlich mit uns Mensch werden, heißt für den Juden aber zu allernächst soviel als: aufhören, Jude zu sein. *Börne* hatte dies erfüllt. Aber gerade *Börne* lehrt auch, wie diese Erlösung nicht in Behagen und gleichgültig kalter Bequemlichkeit erreicht werden kann, sondern daß sie, wie uns, Schweiß, Not, Ängste und Fülle des Leidens und Schmerzes kostet. Nehmt rücksichtslos an diesem, durch Selbstvernichtung wiedergebärenden Erlösungswerke teil, so sind wir einig und ununterschieden! Aber bedenkt, daß nur eines eure Erlösung von dem auf euch lastenden Fluche sein kann: die Erlösung *Ahasvers,—der Untergang!*”

35. These “clarifications” were published in the form of a letter to Wagner’s longtime friend and supporter Marie Muchanoff, suggesting to the reader that it was Muchanoff’s concerns about Wagner’s supposedly frustrated career that motivated him to republish the essay (see R. Wagner 1911:238–39). Cosima Wagner’s diaries, however, reveal that her husband took on the revamping and amplification of the essay with an assiduous zeal that was entirely

Current Musicology

self-generated; the impetus from Muchanoff to resuscitate the essay appears to have been extremely tangential at best (see C. Wagner 1976–77, vol. 1:22–23, 27–29, 40–41).

36. “Ob der Verfall unsrer Kultur durch eine gewaltsame Auswerfung des zersetzenden fremden Elementes aufgehalten werden könne, vermag ich nicht zu beurteilen, weil hierzu Kräfte gehören müßten, deren Vorhandensein mir unbekannt ist.”

37. “Soll dagegen dieses Element uns in der Weise assimiliert werden, daß es mit uns gemeinschaftlich der höheren Ausbildung unsrer edleren menschlichen Anlagen zureife, so ist es ersichtlich, daß nicht die Verdeckung der Schwierigkeiten dieser Assimilation, sondern nur die offenste Aufdeckung derselben hierzu förderlich sein kann.”

38. “Gewiß bin ich auch der Meinung, daß alles, was das eigentliche deutsche Wesen von dorthier bedrückt, in noch viel schrecklicherem Maße auf dem geist- und herzvollen Juden selbst lastet.”

39. During the first two performances of *Parsifal* on July 26 and 27, 1882, the singer Anton Schittenhelm took detailed “notes of recollection [*Erinnerungsblätter*]” concerning the precise staging of the opera. These notes are reprinted in Geck and Voss 1970:139–55. Concerning Kundry’s entrance in the middle of Act II, Schittenhelm remarks: “Kundry, lying on a grassy bank, in luxuriant, fantastical dress, is gradually made visible to the public. She is slowly advanced forward from [behind] the second curtain [*Kundry, auf einer Rasenbank liegend, in reichem Phantasiekostüme, wird allmählich dem Publikum sichtbar. Sie wird langsam aus der 2. Kulisse geschoben*]” (148). Kniese’s score reports that Kundry can be seen in m. 748, just before the G-major bar: “two flower props which kept Kundry hidden go up. [Kundry is] here visible [*zwei Blumendekorationen, die Kundry verdeckt hielten, gehen nach oben. [Kundry] hier sichtbar*]” (Geck and Voss 1970:198). Porges’s notes suggest that it is only the audience who can (or at least should) see Kundry at this point, since in m. 758 he wrote, “*Parsifal cannot see Kundry [Parsifal darf nicht auf Kundry sehen]*” (198).

40. According to Schittenhelm, it is only just before this passage that Kundry becomes *fully* visible to Parsifal *and* the audience. Parsifal has been looking frequently toward the general area of the second curtain from which Kundry’s voice seems to be emanating (see note 39), but now, with the removal of one last rosebush, Kundry’s body and voice are both revealed in their entirety. See Geck and Voss 1970:148. At this moment in the score, Porges wrote that “*Parsifal turns himself toward [the place] where the voice is coming from [Parsifal wendet sich dahin, woher die Stimme gekommen war]*” in m. 784, and Kniese wrote that Kundry is bathed in an “electric light [*elektrisches Licht*]” starting in m. 788, just as she begins to sing directly to Parsifal—see example 4 (Geck and Voss 1970:199).

41. While Weiner (1996) and Levin (1996) are the two critics who have most thoroughly and directly investigated this dimension of Wagner’s musical expression of anti-Semitism, neither of them actually uses the term “bad mimesis” or “false mimesis” in the articles I have cited. Carolyn Abbate, however, quotes the term “false mimesis” in direct reference to Weiner and Levin (2001:122), and Matthew Wilson Smith mentions “‘bad’ mimesis” in relation to Mime (2007:21), although the critic he invokes is Martin Puchner (2002), and Puchner actually uses the term “false mimesis” to describe Mime’s theatrical behavior (51). To make matters more complicated, Adorno and Horkheimer used the term “false projection” (interchangeable with “false mimesis” for some of their later critics) to describe the behavior of the anti-Semite himself in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1994). As opposed to “true mimesis,” which aims to make the inner world imitate the outer world, false projection forces the outer world to conform to the inner world, which explains how the anti-Semite’s neuroses become displaced onto the figure of the Jew (187–200). Be it “false mimesis” or

“bad mimesis,” this concept is now common currency among Wagner scholars, and I take no credit for revealing its substance or giving it its name.

42. “. . . bei dessen Aufhörung unsre Aufmerksamkeit unwillkürlich mehr bei diesem widerlichen *Wie*, als bei dem darin enthaltenen *Was* der jüdischen Rede verweilt.”

43. Schittenhelm noted that Parsifal followed Kundry’s narrative with “tense concentration [*gespannter Aufmerksamkeit*],” and with each new turn of the tale, Parsifal’s physical movements betrayed his spontaneous and sincere emotional reaction to what he was hearing (Geck and Voss 1970:149).

44. For another reading of Kundry’s narrative as “well-behaved aria” (6) that focuses on the sense of pastness that this behavior creates, see McClatchie 1997. With regard to the formally repetitive aspect of Kundry’s narrative, Carolyn Abbate’s comment that “[a]fter a certain point (about 1850), th[e] particular absurdity [of exact formal recurrence] would be practiced only by the worst of Wagner’s people” is somewhat apt (2001:122), although the narrative is not nearly as “absurd” as some of the examples Abbate mentions. The main point for our purposes is that this kind of “empty formalism” was associated in Wagner’s mind with “Jewish music . . . and artistic incapacity” (122).

45. The *Zusammenstellung* calls precisely for this effect: “It would be desirable above all that this whole place [involving Kundry’s] bending toward Parsifal, caressing [him] and entwining [herself] around his neck could be executed more freely and naturally, and especially that Kundry has done what Parsifal later describes *before* [he describes it] and as though completely involuntarily [*Es wäre überhaupt zu wünschen, daß diese ganze Stelle der Neigung zu Parsifal, der Liebkosung und der Umhalsung, freier und natürlicher ausgeführt werden könnte, und namentlich, daß Kundry immer vorher und wie ganz unwillkürlich, das getan hätte, was nachher Parsifal beschreibt*]” (Geck and Voss 1970:160).

46. According to Cosima’s diary entry for September 28, 1881, it would appear that Wagner originally gave these melodic passages to the clarinet alone, opting later to involve a solo violin: “[Richard] worked during the morning and afternoon and shared with us how he employed a solo violin instead of a clarinet at [the words]: ‘thus she shook her tresses’ [*Er arbeitet Vor- und Nachmittag und teilt uns mit, wie er anstatt der Klarinette ein Violin-Solo angebracht habe bei: “so schüttelte sie die Locken”*]” (C. Wagner 1976–77, vol. 2: 800). Cosima gets the words wrong; the passage in question (mm. 1109–10 in example 14) actually reads: “like this she laughingly fluttered her tresses [*so flatterten lachend die Locken*].” But Wagner’s orchestrational decision is telling. Instead of having the clarinet take this particularly convoluted arabesque, which would have been more consistent with the orchestration of the previous passage (from before the kiss), he gives it to the solo violin, with its thinner tone and greater potential for treacly, sentimental vibrato.

47. “unerträglich verwirrten Geplappers”; “steigert sich bei keiner Veranlassung zur Erregtheit höherer, herzdurchglühter Leidenschaft.”

48. “. . . wie Papageien menschliche Wörter und Reden nachpapeln, aber ebenso ohne Ausdruck und wirkliche Empfindung[.]”

49. In fact, the revelation of Kundry’s raw, heart-rending voice (and “voice”) in the second part of Act II was one of the major interpretative stipulations of the *Zusammenstellung* of 1882–83: “It is to be remarked that Kundry’s first scene with Parsifal should be sung without truly large dramatic accents. Kundry here is irresistibly attractive, divinely charming, thoroughly ingratiating, even in this melancholy imparting of information [e.g. about Herzeleide’s death]. Only in the second part of her scene with Parsifal may the violent dramatic accents emerge [*Es ist zu bemerken, daß der erste Teil von Kundrys Szene mit Parsifal ohne eigentliche große dramatische Akzente gesungen werden soll. Kundry ist hier unwiderstehlich anziehend, göttlich anmutig, durchaus einschmeichelnd, auch in dieser wehmütigen Mitteilung. Erst im*

Current Musicology

zweiten Teil ihrer Szene mit Parsifal dürfen die heftigen dramatischen Akzente hervortreten]" (Geck and Voss 1970:159).

50. Wagner seems to have wanted a preternaturally forbidding sound from the timpani to surround this section of Act II. Cosima reported the following anecdote in her diary on October 3, 1881: "[Richard] asked my father [i.e. Franz Liszt] whether he had used the timpani beneath the pitch F, [and] my father said: No, it doesn't sound good, but R[ichard] said: He would do it anyway, and in my ear [he] said the place in which he used it: 'I saw Him—Him' [er...frägt mein Vater, ob er die Pauke unter F gebraucht hätte, mein Vater sagt, Nein, es klänge nicht gut, R. aber sagt: Er würde es doch tun, und mir sagt er in's Ohr die Stelle, für welche er es gebraucht: "ich sah ihn—ihn"]" (C. Wagner 1976–77, vol. 2:803).

51. Wagner's gloss on example 22 as a whole reads thus: "For him, who—[with] dreadful remorse in his heart—had to immerse himself in the divinely punishing sight of the glowing Grail, for Amfortas, the sinful keeper of the sanctuary, are we prepared: will the suffering of his soul that eats away at him become redemption [Auf ihn, der—furchtbare Reue im Herzen—in den göttlich strafenden Anblick des erglühenden Grales sich versenken mußte, auf Amfortas, den sündigen Hüter des Heiligtumes, sind wir vorbereitet: wird seinem nagenden Seelenleiden Erlösung werden]?" (Geck and Voss 1970:46). We should also consider Richard's remark to Cosima, as recorded in her diary on October 31, 1878, that "[m]y preludes must all be elemental, not dramatic like the Leonore Overture [of Beethoven], because then the drama [itself] is superfluous [Meine Vorspiele müssen alle elementarisch sein, nicht dramatisch wie die Leonore-Overtüre, denn dann ist das Drama überflüssig]" (C. Wagner 1976–77, vol. 2:214).

52. The music of m. 1125 to the second beat of m. 1126 is also the same as mm. 1187–88 of example 16.

53. We also hear a very brief reference to the passage earlier during this monologue in m. 1337. Amfortas sings a long note here on the word "Him [Ihm]," referring to Christ, the only possible guarantor of his unsatisfied yearning for salvation.

54. This explains why the music recurs later on in Act I as Amfortas consecrates the bread and wine for Communion (mm. 1474–77, including the turn figure) and again as the knights solemnly march out of the hall (mm. 1605–6).

55. Earlier in Act II (mm. 187–88), Kundry did have a brief taste of this music shortly after Klingsor awakens her. The word she sings in m. 187—"Yearning [Sehnen]!"—hints at her innermost thoughts, only to be revealed later on during her tale of confession. In m. 188, the music is soon twisted beyond recognition, and Klingsor cuts her off in mm. 188–90 with a taunt that shows how little he understands about Kundry's "yearning": "Ha, ha! [you yearn] for the chaste knights there [Ha, ha! dort nach den keuschen Rittern]?" Parsifal also sings along with a small reference to the idea in mm. 1062–64 of Act II, after he has kissed Kundry. As he sings, "I heard there the voice of the Redeemer [Des Heiland's Klage da vernehme ich]," we hear the descending thirds and turn figure essential to the idea. Parsifal is now realizing what he heard in Act I during Amfortas's monologue and the knights' Communion, but this epiphany does not prevent Kundry from powerfully seizing this music for herself later on in Act II. After Kundry's confession, anyone else's invocation of this music in *Parsifal* reeks faintly of bad faith.

56. Carolyn Abbate (2001) makes the observation that Kundry's vocal line here bears a strong similarity to certain segments of the Pilgrims' music from the overture to Wagner's *Tannhäuser*. In Act I, Scene 3 of *Tannhäuser*, the words to this melody (in Abbate's translation) are: "Ah, the burden of sin presses heavily upon me, I cannot bear it any longer! . . . Therefore I want neither peace nor rest, and gladly choose to toil and to be tormented." For Abbate, this implies that Kundry goes not only "from world to world" in search of Christ,

but also from opera to opera within Wagner's oeuvre. "[T]he line [about going "from world to world"] suggests that her quest has dragged her to places not even Klingsor knows about, places outside the opera she otherwise inhabits" (142). I hear Kundry's "voice" more broadly here, extended into the orchestra, and Abbate is ultimately more concerned with the phenomenon of "metempsychosis"—the passage of a soul (or, to the point, the essence of an operatic character or a particular musical figure) throughout an eternity of incarnations (or operas)—in Wagner's work. Still, with regard to my own concerns, Kundry's connection to the *Tannhäuser* pilgrims reinforces the deep historical roots of her quest.

57. "So war es mein Kuss, der welthellsichtig dich machte? Mein volles Liebes Umfängen lässt dich dann Gottheit erlangen."

58. Porges's score contains a gloss on this high note that gives it a slightly less ironic (although no less extreme) significance: "the monstrous, ecstatic change. Kundry says: 'Embrace me completely, then you yourself will be God! Redeem the world, [but] let me pass away in misery! I am happier *with* this wound in my heart than without it' [*die ungeheure, ekstatische Wendung. Kundry sagt: 'Umfange mich ganz, dann bist du Gott selbst! Erlöse die Welt, mich laß vergehn in Jammer! Mit dieser Wunde im Herzen bin ich glücklicher als ohne sie'*]" (Geck and Voss 1970:209). Kundry is mocking Parsifal at the same time as she is inviting him to indulge her desire completely, come what may.

59. "[I]ch komme herauf, um dir zu sagen, daß der Eintritt der g-Pauke das Schönste ist, was ich je gemacht habe.' Ich begleite ihn hinunter, er spielt mir die Salbung Parsifal's durch Titulrel mit dem wunderbaren Kanon und die Taufe von Kundry mit dem Vernichtungsklang der Pauke; 'Vernichtung des ganzen Wesens, jedes irdischen Wunsches,' sagt R."

60 "[W]ahre, edle Ruhe ist nichts andres, als die durch Resignation beschwichtigte Leidenschaft." In the 1850 version of the essay, this passage had no such Schopenhauerian overtones; it defined calm as "the pleasure of the satisfaction of true and noble passion [*der Genuss der Sättigung wahrer und edler Leidenschaft*]." See William Ashton Ellis's comment in R. Wagner 1995:93.

61. "[W]eil die letztere [i.e., Brandt] mit dem leidenschaftlichsten guten Willen nicht die entsprechende Fügsamkeit verband, vielmehr sich von Hause aus ein beliebiges Bild von der Darstellung des Charakters der Kundry fertig zurechtgelegt hatte, nach welchem sie im ersten Akt, gleichsam als wildes Tier, am Bogen liegen, im dritten aber, als bekehrte Christin, auch nach Empfang der Taufe durchaus nur 'knien' wollte, aus welcher befangenen Voreingenommenheit heraus es im Moment ihres erschütterten Zusammensinkens geradezu einen Kampf für den, ohnehin schwer ermüdeten und gereizten Meister gab, der die Widerstrebende mit Gewalt in die liegende Stellung, das Gesicht zu Boden, bringen mußte, während die Musik weiterging,—eine körperliche und moralische Anstrengung, die ihm wohl hätte erspart bleiben können!"

62. In m. 624 of Kniese's score (see example 21), the word "Remorse-Music [*Reuemusik*]" appears in quotation marks, suggesting that Wagner himself coined the term in connection with this music. Porges's score labels this same measure as the "central moment for Kundry [*Hauptmoment für Kundry*]." See Geck and Voss 1970:221.

63. Carolyn Abbate (2001) also regards the moments of transcendence in the third act of *Parsifal* as dependent upon the awareness of a darker force, but she makes the point in broader terms (without sacrificing analytical acumen). For her, transcendence and darkness are related as inverse forms of what she calls "primal music"—"music [that arises] as if from a mystical onstage presence, and not from the orchestra pit" (127), or, as she puts it elsewhere, music that strikes us as "sounds barred from representational grasp," creating "an illusion of noumenal sound" (134). Abbate focuses on a passage from later in Act III

Current Musicology

in which the “Dresden Amen” opens out onto the Good Friday Spell melody, but in such a way as though the Dresden motif “had gotten into a witness protection program” and is now “newborn with an innocent past,” no longer belabored by its previous semantic associations (128). The music now radiates as though from its own transcendental space and not from Wagner’s musical mind or even the theatrical stage itself. But Abbate also postulates the existence of “negative primal music,” such as we hear at the end of the knights’ funeral procession for Titurel in the second half of Act III. Here, onstage singing and the “panharmonic instrumental clangor” of tolling onstage bells become terrifying noise as the keys of B \flat minor and E minor collide against one another in a moment of “reverberation that seems to contain every note every imagined, all at once and almost louder than one can bear” (136). Again we hear something from its own transcendental space, but one of “horror,” revealing that “the laughing meadows [of the Good Friday Spell] are predicated upon the wretched existence of something whose name is undisclosed. It is what makes the laughing meadows so astonishingly beautiful” (137).

64. This is the passage that Abbate (2001) discusses in depth with regard to the transformation of the “Dresden Amen” motif; see note 63.

65. The entire quote from Cosima’s diary reads thus: “Before dinner [Richard] came up to me, spoke of ‘*the Elegy*’ and that he wanted to play it for me, he did indeed play it for me, this singular elegy, the process in Parsifal’s soul in which he once again ‘is a complete man’ before he becomes king [*Vor dem Abendbrot kommt er zu mir herauf, spricht mir von ‘der Elegie’ und daß er sie mir spielen wollte, er spielt sie mir auch, diese einzige Elegie, den Vorgang in Parsifal’s Seele, wo er noch ein Mal ‘ganz Mensch ist,’ bevor er König wird*]” (318)! In connecting the “elegy” to this particular moment in the third act, I am following Carl Friedrich Glasenapp’s account of the Good Friday music in the sixth volume of his biography of Wagner from 1911, in which he quotes this passage from Cosima’s diary; see Geck and Voss 1970:39 for Glasenapp’s comments.

66. I say “virtually” because of one fleeting moment in Act III that occurs after Parsifal has healed Amfortas with the Spear (mm. 1077–81). In this passage, the gaze music begins in the violins, its turn converted into a trill, and in the second half of m. 1079 the continuation of the gaze music briefly recovers the same pitch-specific configuration of the second half of m. 1188 from Kundry’s primal scene in Act II (see example 16). Here, however, the music does not end with an alienated single melodic line in A minor, but rather swerves into a sumptuous A \flat major, itself overtaken in the next bar as the orchestra moves on to other matters. Parsifal is singing here of the blood that coats the Spear, which now is full “of yearning for its kindred source, which flows there in the Grail’s waves [of blood] [*in Sehnsucht nach dem verwandten Quelle, der dort fließt in des Grales Welle*].” Again, Kundry’s voice has been completely appropriated here, if it is even perceptible at all; the reference to the gaze music is fleeting at best, and to the extent that this music now finds redemption in the shift to A \flat major, it is a redemption wholly associated with Christ and the Grail, and it only lasts for one measure. If anything, the reference to Kundry’s primal scene shows that her mockery of Christ and its consequences are somehow part of the meaning of the Grail itself, and this only reinforces the inextricable link between anti-Semitism and transcendence that suffuses *Parsifal*’s music and dramaturgy.

67. For the first instance of this motif, see Act I, mm. 238–39.

68. Ryan Minor (2005) makes the same point with regard to this passage. He also connects the Grail melody’s transformation to the Dresden Amen: “Christian ritual (communion) and communal expression (the Amen motif) have been joined” (6). (The Grail melody is used to sing Communion in Act I.)

69. See, for example, Zelinsky 1982:98–106.

70. Minor also argues that the “Entseelung” progression itself is derived from Kundry’s sorcery motif (see example 14, mm. 972-73 and 974-75, for two instances of the motif), although now the modalities of the two chords are inverted. “The ‘Entseelung’ [progression] appropriates properties of the sorcery motif (the major-third drop and the upper-neighbour motion) and re-forms them into the magic sanctity of the Grail” (31). Taking Minor’s observation in a different direction, I would suggest that this musical connection indicates the paradoxical *commonality* between Kundry’s evil attributes and the Grail’s sanctity rather than a progressive transformation of the former into the latter.

71. In a letter to Mathilde Wesendonck of May 30, 1859, Wagner commented on Amfortas’s particular situation in precisely these terms. For Amfortas, the Grail bestowed tranquil salvation at the same time as it inspired fearsome awe and anguish. These two dimensions of the Grail were intimately interwoven with one another. Here is the passage from Wagner’s letter; I have highlighted the phrases which bring this paradox to the fore most strongly: “*What a terrible significance Amfortas’s relationship to this wondrous chalice has now acquired; [Amfortas], lacerated with the same wound, which a paramour’s spear inflicted upon him during a passionate amorous adventure – for his sole refreshment he must yearn for the blessing of the blood that once flowed from the Savior’s very same spear wound as [He] languished on the cross, renouncing the world, reedeming the world, suffering for the world! Blood for blood, wound for wound – but here [vs.] there, what a chasm between this blood [and] this wound! [Amfortas,] completely spellbound, all adoration, all rapture in the wondrous presence of the cup, which reddens with a gentle, ecstatic gleam, [as] new life pours through him – and [yet] death cannot approach him! He lives, lives anew, and more terribly than ever the unholy wound sings him, his wound! Ardent prayer itself becomes torture to him! Where is the end, where [is] redemption? The suffering of mankind through all eternity! – In the madness of despair, might he want to turn completely away from the Grail, shutting his eyes before it? He would like to do this in order to die. But – he himself, he was assigned the post of protector of the Grail; and a blind external power did not command him to this [post] – no! because he was so noble, because no one understood the wonder of the Grail as deeply and inwardly as he, how now his whole soul still endlessly yearns again and again for the sight [of the Grail] which annihilates him in his ardent prayer, heavenly salvation granted with eternal damnation [Welche furchtbare Bedeutung gewinnt nun hier das Verhältniß des Anfortas zu diesem Wunderkelch; er, mit derselben Wunde behaftet, die ihm der Speer eines Nebenbuhlers in einem leidenschaftlichen Liebesabenteuer geschlagen, – er muß zu seiner einzigen Labung sich nach dem Segen des Blutes sehnen, das einst aus der gleichen Speerwunde des Heilands floß, als dieser, weltentsagend, weltlösend, weltleidend am Kreuze schmachtete! Blut um Blut, Wunde um Wunde – aber hier und dort, welche Kluft zwischen diesem Blute, dieser Wunde! Ganz hingerissen, ganz Anbetung, ganz Entzückung bei der wundervollen Nähe der Schale, die im sanften, wonnigen Glanze sich rötet, gießt sich neues Leben durch ihn aus – und der Tod kann ihm nicht nahen! Er lebt, lebt von neuem, und furchtbarer als je brennt die unselige Wunde ihm auf, seine Wunde! Die Andacht wird ihm selbst zur Qual! Wo ist Ende, wo Erlösung? Leiden der Menschheit in alle Ewigkeit fort! – Wollte er im Wahnsinn der Verzweiflung sich gänzlich von Gral abwenden, sein Auge vor ihm schließen? Er möchte es, um sterben zu können. Aber – er selbst, er ward zum Hüter des Grales bestellt; und nicht eine blinde äußere Macht bestellte ihn dazu, – nein! weil er so würdig war, weil keiner wie er tief und innig das Wunder des Grales erkannt, wie noch jetzt seine ganze Seele endlich immer wieder nach dem Anblicke drängt, der ihn in Anbetung vernichtet, himmlisches Heil mit ewiger Verdammnis gewährt]” (R. Wagner 1914:191–92)!*

72. “Mir sagt er, der a moll Akkord (wo Kundry zusammensinkt) würde mir Eindruck machen; es sei der Schrecken der Heiligkeit, der da ausstrahle. Er müsse sehr schön geblasen werden.”

Current Musicology

73. For more interpretation of the Nazi wartime ban of performances of *Parsifal*, see Abbate 2001:114–15, who in turn invokes Saul Friedlander on this issue (2000).

74. See Schittenhelm's notes for Act I in Geck and Voss 1970:140–1.

75. See also Steinberg 1996:176–77.

76. The *Zusammenstellung* provides much evidence for this type of vocal delivery. Concerning Act I, it states that “places such as ‘I am tired,’ ‘go to your bath,’ [and] ‘the evil ones’ should not exactly be spoken, even though the words certainly must especially stand out; the sound [of the singing voice], however, must always be perceptible [*Stellen wie: “ich bin müde,” “fort in’s Bad,” “die Bösen,” nicht geradezu gesprochen würden, wenn auch gewiß die Worte besonders hervortreten müssen; der Tonklang muß aber immer vernehmbar sein*]” (Geck and Voss 1970:156). Moreover, “[w]ith Kundry, everything in the first act is hasty, passionate, abruptly natural [*Alles bei Kundry im ersten Akt ist hastig, leidenschaftlich, jäh ursprünglich*]” (157). The phrase “abruptly natural” suggests Kundry’s animal nature most vividly; she is a creature of the wild who responds instantaneously and instinctively to changes in her environment. Wagner’s correspondence also suggests that he was looking for a certain rawness in Kundry’s vocal tone. On May 17, 1881, he wrote to Ludwig II that “even [Amalie] Materna [one of the singers portraying Kundry in the first run of *Parsifal*]... has shrunk back from entrusting the deep melancholic accents of an accursed primal woman to her bright, cutting voice [*selbst die Materna... davor zurückgeschreckt hat, ihrer hellen, spitzen Stimme die tief schwermütigen Akzente jenes verwünschten Urweibes anzuvertrauen*]” (Geck and Voss 1970:49). Again on June 19, Wagner complained to his patron that none of the other singers he had worked with before would suffice for Kundry, since “they have no deep tones, which are essential to the demonic character of this woman [*sie haben keine tiefen Töne, die dem dämonischen Charakter dieses Weibes unerlässlich sind*]” (50). To encourage Materna in this regard, he wrote to her on March 31, 1882: “Really, don’t be afraid of the low places: nowhere do these [places] call for power at all – they must almost sound toneless: In the third act of [*Die Walküre*]... you showed us how beautifully even these depths are at your disposal – one really does everything with the soul [i.e. not with the voice per se] [*vor den tiefen Stellen fürchten Sie sich doch ja nicht: diese erfordern nirgends Stärke – sie müssen fast tonlos klingen: Im 3ten Akt der Walküre... haben Sie uns gezeigt, wie schön auch diese Tiefe Ihnen zu Gebote steht – mit dem Gemüte macht man eben Alles*]” (57).

77. The first of these essays was actually published under the title “Open Letter to Mr. Ernst von Weber, Author of the Essay: The Torture Chamber of Science [*Offenes Schreiben an Herrn Ernst von Weber, Verfasser der Schrift: ‘Die Folterkammern der Wissenschaft’*].”

78. “Vor kurzem fiel mein Blick von der Straße in den Laden eines Geflügelhändlers; gedankenlos übersah ich die aufgeschichtete, sauber und appetitlich hergerichtete Ware, als, während seitwärts einer damit beschäftigt war, ein Huhn zu rupfen, ein anderer soeben in einen Käfig griff, ein lebendes Huhn erfaßte und ihm den Kopf abriß. Der gräßliche Schrei des Tieres, und das klägliche, schwächere Jammern während der Bewältigung, drang mit Entsetzen in meine Seele. – Ich bin diesen so oft schon erlebten Eindruck seitdem nicht wieder losgeworden.”

79. “[A]lles mich ernst nur insofern berührt, als es mir Mitgefühl, das ist: Mit-Leiden, erweckt. Diese Mitleiden erkenne ich in mir als stärksten Zug meines moralischen Wesens, und vermutlich ist dieser auch der Quell meiner Kunst.”

80 “Ich bin mir...darüber klar geworden, warum ich mit niedrigeren Naturen sogar mehr Mitleiden haben kann, als mit höheren. Die höhere Natur ist, was sie ist, eben dadurch, daß sie durch das eigene Leiden zur Höhe der Resignation erhoben wird, oder zu dieser Erhebung die Anlagen in sich hat, und sie pflegt. Sie steht mir unmittelbar nah, ist mir gleich, und mit ihr gelange ich zur Mitfreude. Deshalb habe ich, im Grunde genommen, mit Menschen

weniger Mitleiden, als mit Tieren. Diesen sehe ich die Anlage zur Erhebung über das Leiden, zur Resignation und ihrer tiefen, göttlichen Beruhigung, gänzlich versagt. Kommen sie daher, wie dies durch Gequältwerden geschieht, in den Fall des Leidens, so sehe ich mit eigener, qualvoller Verzweiflung eben nur das absolute, erlösungslose Leiden, ohne jeden höheren Zweck, mit der einzigen Befreiung durch den Tod, somit durch die Bekräftigung dessen, es sei besser gewesen, wenn es gar nicht erst zum Dasein gelangt wäre. Wenn daher dieses Leiden einen Zweck haben kann, so ist dies einzig durch Erweckung des Mitleidens im Menschen, der dadurch das verfehlte Dasein des Tieres in sich aufnimmt, und zum Erlöser der Welt wird, indem er überhaupt den Irrtum alles Daseins erkennt. (Diese Bedeutung wird Dir einmal aus dem dritten Akte des Parzival, am Karfreitagmorgen, klar werden.)”

81. “Ihn selbst am Kreuze kann sie nicht erschauen: da blickt sie zum erlös’ten Menschen auf; der fühlt sich frei von Sündenlast und Grauen, durch Gottes Liebesopfer rein und heil: das merkt nun Halm und Blume auf den Auen, dass heut’ des Menschen Fuss sie nicht zertritt, doch wohl, wie Gott mit himmlischer Geduld sich sein erbarmt’ und für ihn litt, der Mensch auch heut’ in frommer Huld sie schon mit sanftem Schritt. Das dankt dann alle Kreatur, was all’ da blüht und bald erstirbt, da die entsündigte Natur heut’ ihren Unschuldstag erwirbt.”

82. See Schittenhelm’s notes in Geck and Voss 1970:153.

83. “Eine Sprache, ihr Ausdruck und ihre Fortbildung, ist nicht das Werk Einzelner, sondern einer geschichtlichen Gemeinsamkeit: nur wer unbewußt in dieser Gemeinsamkeit aufgewachsen ist, nimmt auch an ihren Schöpfungen Teil. Der Jude stand aber außerhalb einer solchen Gemeinsamkeit, einsam mit seinem Jehova in einem zersplitterten, bodenlosen Volksstamme[.]”

84. “Hören wir einen Juden sprechen, so verletzt uns unbewußt aller Mangel rein menschlichen Ausdruckes in seiner Rede: die kalte Gleichgültigkeit des eigentümlichen ‘Gelabbers’ in ihr steigert sich bei keiner Veranlassung zur Erregtheit höherer, herzdurchglühter Leidenschaft.”

85. “Der wahre Dichter, gleichviel in welcher Kunstart er dichte, gewinnt seine Anregung immer nur noch aus der getreuen, liebevollen Anschauung des unwillkürlichen Lebens, dieses Lebens, das sich ihm nur im Volke zur Erscheinung bringt. Wo findet der gebildete Jude nun dieses Volk? Unmöglich auf dem Boden der Gesellschaft, in welcher er seine Künstlerrolle spielt? Hat er irgend einen Zusammenhang mit dieser Gesellschaft, so ist dies eben nur mit jenem, von ihrem wirklichen, gesunden Stamme gänzlich losgelösten Auswuchse derselben; dieser Zusammenhang ist aber ein durchaus liebloser, und diese Lieblosigkeit muß ihm immer offener werden, wenn er, um Nahrung für sein künstlerisches Schaffen zu gewinnen, auf den Boden dieser Gesellschaft hinabsteigt: nicht nur wird ihm hier alles fremder und unverständlicher, sondern der unwillkürliche Widerwille des Volkes gegen ihn tritt ihm hier mit verletzender Nacktheit entgegen[.]”

86. “Diese Anlage zur Welterlösung durch das Mitleiden im Menschen, aber unentwickelt, und recht geflissentlich unausgebildet verkommen zu sehen, macht mir nun eben den Menschen so widerwärtig, und schwächt mein Mitleiden mit ihm bis zur gänzlichen Empfindungslosigkeit gegen seine Not. Er hat in seiner Not den Weg zur Erlösung, der eben dem Tiere verschlossen ist; erkennt er diesen nicht, sondern will er sich ihn durchaus versperrt halten, so drängt es mich dagegen, ihm diese Türe gerade recht weit aufzuschlagen, und ich kann bis zur Grausamkeit gehen, ihm die Not des Leidens zum Bewußtsein zu bringen. Nichts läßt mich kälter, als die Klage des Philisters über sein gestörtes Behagen: hier wäre jedes Mitleid Mitschuld. Wie es meine ganze Natur mit sich bringt, aus dem gemeinen Zustande aufzuregen, so drängt es mich auch hier nur zu stacheln, um das große Leid des Lebens zu fühlen zu geben!”

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