'Wie hell grüßt uns heute der Herr!': hexatonic poles and mystical transformation in the Act I Grail scene of Wagner's Parsifal

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‘Wie hell grüßt uns heute der Herr!’: Hexatonic Poles and Mystical Transformation in the Act I Grail Scene of Wagner’s *Parsifal*

This article scrutinizes the dramatic and symbolical function of hexatonic pole progressions within the Act I Grail scene of Wagner’s *Parsifal*. The notion of a hexatonic pole was introduced by Richard Cohn, and the progression it denotes forms a clear example of the transgressive, transformational harmony so central to much Neo-Riemannian analysis. In this article, a Neo-Riemannian approach to musical syntax is combined with a more traditional outlook on harmony. This outlook takes the circle of fifths as its fundament, and interprets tonal developments within this system from the viewpoint of *Tonartencharakteristik* and tonal symbolism of light and dark. The analysis shows how the musical and scenic design of the Grail ceremony articulates a distinction between an earthly and supernatural realm, that are reconciled after the revelation of the Grail. This reconciliation is effectuated through harmony, when initial tonal inhibitions are eventually transgressed and overcome by hexatonic pole progressions.

The harmonic language of Wagner’s mature works (such as *Tristan*, *Der Ring* and *Parsifal*) resides somewhere at the borders of conventional functional tonality. Although most harmonic events are still firmly rooted in this functional-tonal system, some form anomalies that have inspired post-tonal or atonal analytical frameworks.

The most important present-day framework providing alternatives to functional-tonal interpretations is Neo-Riemannian Theory, as developed by David Lewin, Richard Cohn and others. This approach has proven successful in explaining chord progressions no longer understandable from a tonal perspective. It also offers new perspectives on proximity within tonal space that differ significantly from traditional models such as the circle of fifths. When distance within tonal space is not measured in steps through the circle of fifths, but rather by counting shared tones among chords, seemingly distant chord relations can turn out to be rather close indeed. This new conception of ‘proximity by shared common tones’ resulted partly from a re-evaluation of several nineteenth-century harmonic treatises that were formerly either neglected or understood differently. During the nineteenth century, these innovative, often third-based harmonic theories coexisted with more traditional fifth-based ones, in a similar way that nineteenth-century composers both used transgressive chromatic harmony and a more traditional diatonic language. In order to understand the logic of unconventional chromatic progressions in nineteenth-century music, Neo-Riemannian approaches, as well as the nineteenth-century theories that inspired them, are extremely useful.

An explication of compositional syntax, however, does not in all cases suffice to understand the dramatic function and meaning of transgressive harmonic events. In the case of Wagner’s *Parsifal*, a notion of tonal proximity based on the circle of fifths forms a necessary complement to Neo-Riemannian interpretations. It enables us to grasp the import of unconventional harmonic events within the work, as they function against the...
background of a symbolical cyclical alternation of light and darkness. I will demonstrate this by focusing on the dramatic and symbolical function of a characteristic harmonic progression within the Act I Grail ceremony.

The Hexatonic Pole as a Transgressive Harmonic Relation
Richard Cohn calls the progression in Figure 1 a ‘hexatonic pole’. He defines this as ‘a progression (in either direction) between a major and a minor triad that features semitonal motion in each of the three upper voices.’ In Parsifal, the harmonic relation most prominently occurs as a pendulum-like movement, often between D♭ major and A minor. The hexatonic pole forms a typical progression at the borders of tonality, on the one hand seeming to be a ‘distorted’ dominant relation (because of the omnipresence of leading tones), but on the other hand sounding relatively plagal due to the tonic-submediant pendulum: if we disregard voice leading, the chords form an enharmonically spelled major-third relation.

Figure 1
The hexatonic pole.

Ryan Minor pragmatically labels the progression as the ‘Entseelung’ chords, related to Kundry’s redemption at the end of the work. At the same time, he acknowledges that ‘subsequent appearances of the “Entseelung” chords solidify their association not only with Kundry’s redemption at Parsifal’s hands, but in fact the very sanctity of Monsalvat and all that its space contains.’ Perhaps the expression ‘not only’ is still too modest, since the coincidence of Kundry’s death and the occurrence of the progression at the end of the work has little significance when we regard other appearances of the motif at solemn dramatic moments related to the sacred. The exceptional character of the chord succession has furthermore given rise to divergent extra-musical descriptions, varying from ‘supernaturally strange’ (Kurth), ‘magical’ (Youens), ‘occluding daylight’ (Adorno) and ‘depicting a paradox’ (Dahlhaus) to ‘symbolizing the Freudian unheimlich’ (Cohn). These characterizations fit in two categories, and illuminate two key aspects of Parsifal. On the one hand, Dahlhaus and Cohn both connect the chord progression to ambivalent experiences. On the other, the qualities Kurth, Youens and Adorno attribute to the progression all resonate with the Grail ceremony, in which a communion with the supernatural is realized through a magical act in which daylight is temporarily occluded and makes way for celestial light.

The Dramatic Conflict in Parsifal and the Grail Ceremony as a Symbolical Act
To understand the Grail scene’s significance within the music-dramatic whole, a concise summary of the drama’s main points is helpful. The Grail society functions as the guardian of the crucified savior’s spiritual heritage, amongst other things by cherishing

and celebrating two relics related to his crucifixion, the Holy Grail and Spear. Grail king Amfortas lost the Spear while fighting Klingsor, the malicious sorcerer who threatens the chastity of the Grail knights. This loss, together with the profane use of a sacred object, has tainted the prosperity of the Grail realm. Amfortas’s reluctance to reveal the Grail – due to the pains that this revelation imposes on his incurable spear-wound – and the fact that no community member is capable of retrieving the Spear create an impasse. Since the redeemer is not worshipped properly, he cannot perform his redemptive task, and the society cannot prosper. Amfortas has received a prophecy that a ‘pure fool’ will come to redeem him, and in the end, Parsifal will turn out to be the one who ends the impasse by recapturing the Spear.

The longing for reconciliation between society and redeemer – i.e., between the earthly and the divine – is the key concept of the entire drama, and it is played out on a small scale within the Act I Grail ceremony. Therefore, this religious ritual can be seen as a model clenching the dramatic conflict and foreshadowing the eventual outcome of the drama.

The Scenic and Musical Design of the Act I Grail Ceremony
The ceremony, in which the spirit of the redeemer is made present through the revelation of the Grail, is modeled after the ritual of the Eucharist. In Wagner’s stage directions, a distinction is made between visible, earthly knights on stage, and invisible ensembles above and underneath the stage. These invisible ensembles symbolize the supernatural and function as spokesmen of divine messages. The visible and invisible ensembles form a vertical structure both in architectonic and in pitch space, because their spatial position corresponds to their vocal register. Within this structure, vertical traffic takes place through consecutive entries of ensembles (Figure 2). This motion suggests the longing for communion with the divine that motivates the ritual.

Figure 2
Vertical structure of ensembles.

Invisible

Upper half: Knaben (soprano/alto) and solo alto

Dome / Cupola

Bottom half: Jünglinge (alto/tenor)

Visible

Parsifal, Gurnemanz, Amfortas and Grail knights (bass/tenor)

Stage

Invisible

Orchestra + Titurel (bass)

Underneath Stage

5 Titurel factually sings from behind the scenery, but according to Wagner’s score, his voice sounds ‘wie aus einem Grabe heraufdringend’, suggesting that dramatically, it is meant to be perceived as coming from a level lower than the stage.
Apart from their varying degrees of visibility, the divine and earthly ensembles are also differentiated in musical character. First, the invisible ensembles sound ‘muffled’, due to their position behind the scenery and far removed from the auditorium, as well as the androgynous blending of voice-types. This muffled sound quality enhances their otherworldly appearance. Second, the divine and earthly ensembles are distinguished motivically. The invisible choirs simply repeat Grail-related leitmotifs introduced in the Prelude to Act I. In contrast, the knights sing melodies that are only loosely based on Grail leitmotifs and that clearly differ in musical character. Their rhythm is more straightforward and pronounced, and thus exceptional within the static, slow-paced music of the Grail world.

The third, and in my view most important, distinction concerns the scene’s tonal design. The earthly and supernatural ensembles reside in different regions within the circle of fifths, far removed from each other. The invisible ensembles chiefly reside in a region centered around Ab major, C minor and F minor, the key centers of the Prelude. These keys, and especially Ab major, are clearly associated with the Grail realm. The knights generally take as their starting point keys neighboring C major, but although they can move towards other tonal regions as well, they have no access to the keys associated with the Grail.

**Tonartencharakteristik and Wagner’s Symbolism of Light and Darkness**

To understand the symbolical importance of this juxtaposition of tonal regions, we must reflect on Wagner’s use of keys, and his indebtedness to contemporary theories on **Tonartencharakteristik**. Although this discipline has an esoteric image and is no longer prominent in current serious music analytical discourse, it nevertheless forms a cultural heritage conserved and discussed in many nineteenth-century theoretical treatises. There is reason to believe that nineteenth-century composers were aware of these traditions, and to varying extents worked with these associations.

In my research, I have benefited from the work of Wolfgang Auhagen, who approaches **Tonartencharakteristik** not as a matter of faith, but rather as a historical phenomenon with repercussions in compositional practice. Auhagen’s extensive critical survey gives an idea of the state of knowledge concerning these theories in nineteenth-century Germany, and shows how common and widespread they were. The fact that most music-theoretical texts featured sections on key character makes it probable that Wagner was familiar with the phenomenon. Wagner once referred to **Tonartencharakteristik** in a letter to his friend Theodor Uhlig of May 1852, dismissing the possibility of an inherent

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6 In a diary entry of 26 September 1877, Cosima Wagner recorded her husband’s objective in creating these choirs: ‘Um aber das Seelische der Worte Christus’, das Losgelöste von jeder Materie zu verwirklichen, will er eine Mischung von Stimmen bringen, ... es muß nicht Mann, nicht Weib, Neutrum im höchsten Sinne des Wortes sein.’ Richard Wagner, Werke, Schriften und Briefe. Cosimas Tagebücher Band I, ed. Sven Friedrich, Berlin: Digitale Bibliothek, Directmedia Publishing, 2004, 1071.

7 Egon Voss refers to Ab major as ‘Die Tonart nicht nur des ganzen Werkes ..., sondern auch die Tonart der Gralswelt, die Tonart der drei zentralen Gralsmotive: Abendmahls-, Gral- und Glaubens-Motiv’ (‘Wagner und kein Ende.’ Betrachtungen und Studien, Zürich: Atlantis, 1996, 227). The two supporting keys in which these Grail motifs also resound during the prelude are C minor and F minor.


9 Alexander L. Ringer also presumes this, specifically regarding Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart’s famous account on the phenomenon: ‘Undoubtedly Richard Wagner, like most musicians of his time, was fully conversant with Schubart’s ideas. His own consistently text-motivated key choices suggest, at any rate, that its lessons were by no means lost on him.’ (‘Richard Wagner and the Language of Feeling’, in *Wagner in Retrospect: A Centennial Reappraisal*, ed. Leroy R. Shaw, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987, 39.)
character of individual keys as ‘eine Chimäre, … ein Dogma…. Dagegen werden an den Instrumenten, und endlich an der menschlichen Stimme mit dem Worte, die Tonarten … erst charakteristisch.’

One could interpret this as a sign that Wagner was skeptical about Tonartencharakteristik. However, what the composer seems to express is that keys only obtain extra-musical meaning in a synergetic process that involves instrumentation as well. Instrumentation is always needed to emphasize the character traditionally attributed to keys. A clear example of this is the muffled sound quality of the invisible ensembles, which contributes to their otherworldly appearance. Through this ‘instrumentation’, the choirs sonically support the theoretical supernatural associations of the keys in which they sing.

As mentioned earlier, the earthly knights reside mainly in a tonal realm centered on C major, whereas the invisible ensembles dwell in a space around A♭ major. Several theories have similar ideas about these two tonal regions. In three seminal nineteenth-century texts on the phenomenon – C.F.D. Schubart’s Charakteristik der Töne (1784-1785, publ. 1806), Robert Schumann’s Charakteristik der Tonleitern und Tonarten (1835) and Hugo Riemann’s Charakter der Tonarten (1882) – we find a common denominator: all authors connect keys around C major with neutrality or normality, whereas keys with many flats have exceptional, unusual qualities; mystical, uncanny, dark and/or veiled. Furthermore, the association of C major with light is perhaps the most common key character of all, exemplified by Haydn’s sudden blazing C major chord in Die Schöpfung after the words ‘Und es ward Licht’ and E.T.A. Hoffmann’s similar interpretation of the return to C major in his famous review of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony. These characterizations all refer to an antagonism between light and darkness, as articulated by A.B. Marx in 1863: ‘Wie Licht und Schatten, Tag und Nacht, Wärme und Kälte, so stehen die beiden Seiten der tonischen (Tonarten-)Entwicklung einander gegenüber.

This antagonism seems to govern several of Wagner’s tonal designs as well. One can discern correspondences between works, in the case of A♭ major most notably between Tristan and Parsifal. Within the Tristan Act II love duet, A♭ major functions as a relatively

11 That synergy is crucial to the above statement is underlined by the fact that Wagner writes on the same page: ‘Wer in einem Urtheil über meine Musik die Harmonie von der Instrumentation trennt, thut mir ein eben so großes Unrecht, wie der, der meine Musik von meiner Dichtung, meinen Gesang vom Worte trennt!’ Ibid., 386.
15 Adolf Bernard Marx, Gluck und die Oper, Leipzig: Janke, 1863; quoted after Auhagen 1983, 262.
stable ‘island’ within the ever-moving chromatic sea that characterizes the opera in general. Here the key symbolizes night, in which everyday normality can temporarily be overcome, and where love turns into a transcendental, cosmic experience. Within the ‘Liebesmahl’ in Act I of Parsifal, the key obtains a similar, transcendental significance. Furthermore, like in Tristan, daylight, often associated with the key of C major, vanishes, in order to make possible a beam of celestial light during the revelation of the Grail.

Light and Darkness within the Tonal Design of the Grail Scene

The tonal design of the Grail scene can be understood as a structure containing three domains on the circle of fifths. I have characterized these domains as a knights’ realm centered around C major (left triangle in Figure 3), a Grail realm around Ab major (right triangle), and a domain of aspirations, around Eb major (bottom quadrangle). The invisible choirs have a predilection for the Grail realm (and for keys with many flats in general), but they can move freely towards other regions within the circle of fifths as well. The knights depart from their tonal realm, and try to break through to the Grail realm. This tonal urge seems to reflect the knights’ religious desire for communion with the divine. However, their attempts to reach the tonal Grail realm are generally unsuccessful. In most instances, they will reach Eb major, the domain of aspirations and the dominant of Ab major, but ultimately the tonal trajectory is deflected.

Figure 3
Tonal domains in the Grail scene.

In Tristan, the contrast between the normal reality of court life and the transcendental realm are symbolized through the antagonism of light and darkness. When the ship arrives in Cornwall at the end of Act I, the protagonists re-enter court society and suddenly awake from their narcotic dream. The C major chorus ‘Heil! Heil! Heil! König Marke Heil!’ underlines the tragic return to normality.
The main reason for their failure is the dominant- and minor-third-based direction of their harmonic endeavors. Within the tonal symbolism of *Parsifal*, the distinction between authentic and plagal cadences is crucial. In Wagner’s general musical dramaturgy, dominant-based harmonic tension seems to represent the strivings of the Schopenhauerian ‘Will’, for instance in *Tristan*. The release of tension, and the catharsis that comes with it, is expressed by the plagal cadence, or Erlösungsschluss with which nearly all Wagner’s mature music dramas conclude. Whereas dominant-based progressions seem to underline the vanity of resistance against the inevitable course of things, plagal harmony achieves, or at least signals the solution of the dramatic problem. It is fruitful to understand the tonal design of the scene against this background.

If we considered this image of the circle of fifths as, say, a city map, and wanted to get from the knights’ realm to the Grail realm as quickly as possible, probably all of us would take the apparent shortest route, counterclockwise. However, in *Parsifal*, the more effective way to modulate is in fact clockwise – in other words: through plagal motion. The knights swim against the stream, and of course cannot succeed in doing so. Their music reaches out for $A\flat$ major via its dominant $E\flat$ major, but tries in vain. This system, in which plagal harmony seems the natural way to go, highly corresponds to an interpretation of the circle of fifths by the early twentieth-century anthroposophist music theorist Herrmann Beckh. In his system, explicitly modeled upon Wagner’s key choices, the clockwise movement through the circle of fifths reflects the natural cyclical alternation of light and darkness. This idea is derived from the traditional notion that a key sounds brighter when it has more sharps, and darker when it has more flats. Both C (zero sharps, zero flats) as well as $F\#$/G$b$ major (respectively six sharps or six flats, depending on enharmonic spelling) form a kind of equinox, after which the ascendancy of light over darkness shifts, or vice versa.

This view can help us to understand the situation within the Grail ceremony. The ‘occlusion’ of daylight in order to make way for a celestial light that emanates from the darkness is the knights’ main objective in the ritual, but, since they choose a counterproductive strategy, they cannot bring it about themselves. It will turn out that neither authentic cadences nor minor-third shifts (another favored strategy of the knights) do the trick; instead, major-third modulations, particularly the peculiar hexatonic pole relation, are necessary to clear the way for a plagal solution.

This music-dramatic technique, using a musical inhibition to emphasize an impossibility within the story, is not unique in *Parsifal*. In fact, the Prelude to Act I starts with such an inhibition, that, as will turn out, is intimately related to the tonal inhibition we have ascertained in the Grail scene, both dramatically as well as musically. In the Prelude, the range of the ‘Liebesmahl’ motif is restricted to an octave, and cannot transcend the high $A\flat$. Instead, the melody moves back downward to present the ‘Schmerzensfigur’ or ‘Wunde’ submotif. At three significant moments, the motif exceeds this octave range, signaling Parsifal’s retrieval of the Holy Spear and the redemption of the Grail society.

When this transgression takes place for the first time, in C major during the climax of the Grail ceremony (Act I, mm. 1478-1480, after the words ‘wie hell grüßt uns heute der Herr!’), it functions as a prophecy of the redemption to come. It is significant that this melodic transgression directly precedes the hexatonic pole progression that will temporarily suspend the tonal inhibition during the Grail service. With a similar, prophetic connotation, the range of the melody is transgressed once more in $F\#$ major (Act III, mm. 17 A similar claim is made in Gary Tomlinson, *Metaphysical Song: An Essay on Opera*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999, 108.

18 I here argue from the viewpoint that the Ring is one piece that only fully resolves at the end of *Götterdämmerung*.

332-334, preceding ‘O Gnade! Höchstes Heil!’) when Gurnemanz realizes that Parsifal has brought back the Holy Spear. The same progression eventually occurs in the Grail key of Ab major (Act III, mm. 1092-1094, after ‘Enthüllet den Gral, öffnet den Schrein!’) when the title hero shows the relic during the final Grail ceremony. Lewin observes a similar inhibition in Amfortas’s deflected attempts to reach D minor – associated with death – through dominant-based harmony, whereas aiming for a plagal cadence in Ab major would enhance his chances of being redeemed.20

Tonal Developments within the Scene
The exposition of the three choruses highlights their respective musical characters and tonal behavior. In the knights’ chorus ‘Zum letzten Liebesmahle’ (Act I, mm. 1168-1198), the music leaves C major to move towards Eb major through a modulatory trajectory consisting exclusively of minor-third relations (see the dotted line in Figure 4). The sequence of ‘Wer guter Tat’ in Gb major works further into the region of flats, but overshoots the Grail realm. And soon afterwards, the music turns back to the knights’ realm to end in C major.21

Figure 4
Tonal trajectory of the knights’ chorus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Tonal development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Zum letzten Liebesmahle...”</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Gleich ob zum letzten Male...”</td>
<td>C - a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Wer guter Tat sich freut”</td>
<td>Eb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Ihm wird das Mal erneut”</td>
<td>Gb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“der Labung soll uns nahn”</td>
<td>A - C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21 I interpret the cadence pattern of ‘Wer guter Tat’ and ‘Ihm wird’ as a I–V, whereas one can also consider these patterns as IV–I progressions in Bb major and Db major respectively. Within the context of my analysis this does not make a big difference, since the Grail realm would not have been reached in that interpretation either.
After the return to C major, the invisible choirs of ‘Jünglinge’ and ‘Knaben’ follow (Act I, mm. 1205-1241). Their free-floating melodies are exact repetitions of leitmotifs associated with the Grail and create a two-part polyphony that contrasts to the march-like knights’ chorus in unison. Furthermore, they mainly dwell in the bottom right half of the circle of fifths, dominated by keys with flats and associated with darkness and the Grail. The ‘Jünglinge’ chorus moves from Eb minor to Eb major through a series of chromatic sequences, and Eb is transformed into a dominant seventh-chord preparing the ‘Knaben’ chorus in Ab major.

The second time the three choirs contribute to the ceremony, the musical distinction between the visible and invisible voices has decreased. In mm. 1405-1412, The ‘Jünglinge’ and ‘Knaben’ respond to Amfortas’s plea for release from his office with the ‘TorenSpruch’. At the plagal ending in D major, the knights join in to provide harmonic support as well as a coda. For the first time during the ceremony, visible and invisible voices sound simultaneously in a common musical idiom. However, the knights soon resume their original, straightforward rhythm, and cadence in Eb major, emphasizing their desire for revelation of the Grail (Ab major). During the preparation of the revelation (mm. 1422-1440), the move from Eb major to Ab major is not achieved directly through an authentic cadence, but by the elimination of φ as tonal center. In these measures, φ functions alternatingly as component of a diminished seventh-chord on c (mm. 1423-24 and 1430-31) and a half-diminished seventh-chord on φ (1425-28). This is followed by a succession of descending major thirds (Ab minor, E minor, C minor), ending on Ab major with an f under-third (see the dotted line in Figure 5).
At this point, the potential of harmonic major-third shifts as a tool to reach $A^b$ major becomes clear, even though the trajectory takes quite some steps. However, after the revelation of the Grail and the emanation of otherworldly light from the dome, a direct contact between the knights’ realm and the Grail realm is established, in a peculiar chord sequence (see the dotted line in Figure 6) that contains two hexatonic poles after Titurel’s words: ‘Heilige Wonne, wie hell grüßt uns heute der Herr!’ In this section (mm. 1480-1485), the music first moves from $G$ major – at the heart of the knights’ realm – towards $E^b$ major, the common domain of aspirations. Although this is a major-third shift, its dominant-based, counterclockwise movement towards the Grail realm makes it unsuccessful. The music bounces back, but now, finally, a new strategy is chosen: $G$ major moves to its hexatonic pole $E^b$ minor. This marks a giant leap in the subdominant direction. Its success is further underscored by a cadence in $D^b$ major, which brings the knights a step closer to their tonal goal. $A^b$ major could have been reached easily through another plagal cadence, but instead $D^b$ major moves towards its hexatonic pole $A$ minor. With this second hexatonic progression, the former tonal breakthrough, from left to right, is answered with a similar move from right to left penetrating right into the heart of the knights’ realm. A pendulum brings the music back to $D^b$ major, and finally, the key of $A^b$ major is reached.

After this harmonic event, the distinction between both realms is temporarily overcome during Supper, when visible and invisible ensembles sing identical melodies in identical keys, culminating in the collective ‘Selig in Glauben und Liebe’ in $A^b$ major in mm. 1563-
Harmonic transformation – a key concept in the Neo-Riemannian tradition – here gains a programmatic meaning, in the sense that transgressive chord progressions realize the mystical transformation within the staged celebration of the Eucharist.

Conclusion
In the Grail ceremony, a relatively conventional harmonic language is ‘perturbed’, to use Cohn’s phrase, at solemn moments by the unconventional, transgressive, transformational harmonic events that are at the heart of much Neo-Riemannian analysis. At these moments, a harmonic framework based on the circle of fifths, intimately connected to traditional notions of Tonartencharakteristik, is clearly pushed to its limits. Nevertheless, I do believe that the symbolical meaning of this transgressive harmony can best be interpreted from the framework that it seeks to overthrow.

Even if all harmony can perhaps be understood as transformational, some harmonies are clearly more transformational than others. With this, I not only mean that unusual progressions require Neo-Riemannian explanation more than common ones. I also believe one must observe that these transgressive harmonies are often related to transformations

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within the action itself, and serve dramatic purposes. One way of understanding these transformations is through the tonal symbolism of light and darkness. Similar to Wagner’s use of traditional and advanced harmonic languages to dramatic purposes, I believe that we as music scholars should simultaneously use traditional and advanced analytical approaches when interpreting his works. Hopefully this article can serve as an example of this method.

23 Another example is the ‘Tarnhelm’-motif in Das Rheingold and Götterdämmerung, signaling the helmet’s potential to render its wearer invisible or transform him into another creature.