Richard Wagner's Political Ecology

By

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Abstract

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Central to this dissertation is the theory of "breathable" music that composer and political revolutionary Richard Wagner introduces in his little-known essay, "Art and Climate" (1850). Musing on the relationship of art to politics, he suggests that his operatic spectacles would not follow contemporary artistic conventions and standards, but would instead embody the climate of the primeval German forest and cultivate primeval, Teutonic values in bourgeois audiences. This project explores the origins of this idea in period writings on climatic determinism—the theory that climate embeds difference into our genetic material—and examines how Wagner animated it in the theater through dramas that connect nature with identity and stagings that simulated specific climates for listeners, a form of indoor climate control I link to period greenhouse design, physiological thought, and atmospheric science. In demonstrating the primacy of climatic thought to Wagner's social aesthetic paradigm and practices, this project implicates Wagnerian artistry as prefiguring later ideologies of sound, space, and spectatorship that locate social, cultural, and even bodily transformation in audiovisual engagement.

Dedicated to Justin

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Chapter 1

Richard Wagner's Ecological Network: Wagnerian Drama between Art and Climate

"The poet's thought hovered in the air,
Like a human-outlined cloud that spread its shadow over
Bodily earth-life to which it evermore looked down."

—Richard Wagner (1850)[1]

On 2 November 1933, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche presented her brother's walking stick as a gift.[2] Nietzsche had been a keen walker, and being outdoors meant connecting with German national, political, and cultural identity, all of which he understood as emanating from nature. In his "Seven Seals"—the third part of his *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883)—the philosopher wrote:

> It is our habit to think outdoors: walking, leaping, climbing, dancing, preferably on lonely mountains or near the sea where even the trails become thoughtful. Our first questions are about the value of a book, of a human being, of a musical composition: can they walk? Even more, can they dance? […] We become birds through the arts of dance and song. If ever I spread tranquil skies over myself and soared on my own wings into my own skies; if I swam playfully in the deep light-distances and the bird-wisdom of my freedom came—but bird-wisdom speaks thusly: 'Behold! There is no above, no below! Throw yourself around, out, back, you who are light! Sing! Speak no more!'[3]

Nietzsche's walking stick stood for the social consequences of the philosopher's meandering, during which he understood the metaphysical connections among Germany, its people, its environment, and—according to *Zarathustra*—its art.[4] Walking and being outdoors, then, was a political act, as was offering the walking stick as a gift. That day,

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[1] Cited according to Richard Wagner, *Sämtliche Schriften und Dichtungen Richard Wagner* [*SSD*], vol. 3 (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1912-14). All translations adapted from William Ashton Ellis' translations of Wagner's prose writings. Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 107; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, Vol. 1, trans. Ellis (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Trübner, 1892), 137.

[2] Carol Diethe, *Nietzsche's Sister and the Will to Power* (Urbana Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 151.

[3] Salim Kernal, ed., *Nietzsche, Philosophy and the Arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 311.

[4] Kernal, *Nietzsche, Philosophy and the Arts*, 311.

Nietzsche's walking stick became the property of Adolf Hitler, along with a copy of the petition her husband (Bernhard Förster) had sent Otto von Bismarck in 1880 requesting the elimination of the German Jews.[5]

Nietzsche was far from alone in linking nature, art, and German identity (nor was his sister in pressing nature into service for anti-Semitic thought). Throughout the nineteenth century, Germany's relationship to nature shifted under the weight of scientific innovation, the systemization of natural research under the *Reichstag*, fascination with the relationship of senses to subjectivity (in and out of nature), and sustained interest in natural philosophy. Grand questions about the "meaning" of life and its building-blocks, the relationship of God to human history, and the "natural" and "climatic" determination of human physical and psychological traits were on the minds of many German intellectuals, including Richard Wagner.

Wagner's writings on climate have been read as marginal to his artistic projects, when they have been read at all. But I shall suggest in this chapter that Romantic discourses of nature and climate formed the foundation of Wagner's artistic project of social reform and, in particular, his fantasies of transformative spectatorship. These philosophical and political theoretical traditions—epitomized by the idea that German cultural, social, and physiological identity is borne from the northern, Teutonic forest and climate—underwrote his pursuit of "climatic" spectacle that might condition spectators, in both body and mind, to participate in the Teutonic social order he imagined.[6]

Access to that social order was not for all, however. Although many in the early twentieth century read Wagner's treatment of nature in his writings and dramas as evidence of his liberal advocacy for animal rights and environmental protection, the composer's attitude to nature was infused with discriminatory undertones. At the end of this chapter, I show that Wagner earned an eco-critical legacy as early as the 1890s. "Green" stagings of his *Ring* cycle are relatively common today—most famous among them Pierre Boulez and Patrice Chéreau's "apocalyptic" 1976 *Ring*—but, like their late nineteenth-century predecessors, gloss over the prejudicial undertones of the Wagnerian artistic project and the discourses that informed it, an oversight programmatic to "eco-musicological" treatments of Western art music more generally.[7] I suggest that, when those discursive subtexts are accounted for, the question of what Wagner (or even Western music more broadly) can "do" for ecological thought today broadens to envelop those social tensions as central to environmentalism today as they were to Romantic discourses of nature.

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[5] Diethe, *Nietzsche's Sister and the Will to Power*, 151.

[6] On Romantic discourses of nature and culture, see especially Jeffrey Wilson, *The German Forest: Nature, Identity, and the Contestation of a National Symphony, 1871-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

[7] On "green" stagings, see Thomas Grey, "Wagner's 'Ring' as Eco-Parable," *Cambridge Companion to 'The Ring'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). On "eco-musicology," see Alexander Rehding, "Eco-Musicology Between Apocalypse and Nostalgia," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 64/2 (Summer 2011): 409-11 and "Eco-Musicology," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, Vol. 127/2 (2002): 305-20; and Aaron Allen, "Prospects and Problems for Ecomusicology in Confronting a Crisis of Culture," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 64/2 (Summer 2011): 414-24.

Constructing the Wagnerian Eco-Sphere: Wagner, Nature, and Art

Environmentalism in Western culture has "always been epitomized by critical perspectives on how nature and politics interact," and by intellectual trends in the social sciences and humanities; environmental processes are, after all, under constant assault by urban and social development.[8] This process of assessment and reassessment of the ways that we mediate our world and it mediates us has produced a range of "ecological worldviews," which sociologist John Meyer has grouped into two broad paradigms: eco-political "dualism" based on the conviction that the idea that humanity and nature are completely divorced from each other and eco-political "derivation," which holds that political operations are completely derived from conceptions of nature.[9] Recent discourses of Western bio-politics generally adopt a "dualistic" ideology of nature: Bruno Latour has criticized the "modern" mentality in which nature, science, and politics are treated separately as "relative reference points that moderns use to differentiate intermediaries, some of which are called 'natural' and the others 'social.'"[10] In the nineteenth century, I would suggest, Romantic discourses of nature were often perpetuated by "derivative" ecological thinkers—Wagner among them.[11]

While Wagner frequently touches on nature in his writings, he addresses nature and its relationship to aesthetic experience at length in three essays: "The Artwork of the Future" (1850), its sequel "Art and Climate" (1850), and the "Open Letter to Ernst von Weber" (1879) on the ethics of animal testing. As I read these essays in conjunction with proto-ecological discourses that were influential during the period, I want to probe the utility of the concepts of nature and climate for Wagnerian aesthetics and theories of theatrical and social reform. What were the politics of the composer's claims that his spectacles channeled nature and climate in manipulating spectatorial consciousness?

Wagner's "ecological worldview" drew on a range of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theories and models for envisioning interplay among nature, art, and humanity, including early treatments of these topics by Aristotle; the *Naturphilosophie* of Friedrich Hölderlin, Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling, and Johann Gottfried von Herder; climatic

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[8] John M. Meyer, *Political Nature: Environmentalism and the Interpretation of Western Thought* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001). Environmental theory is full of dichotomies, including, but not limited to the "derivative" vs. "dualism" worldviews. Other dichotomies include "shallow" vs. "deep ecology," "environmentalism" vs. "social ecology," "light green" vs. "dark Green," and "anthropocentrism" vs. "eco-centrism" (Meyer, 22). Such dichotomies would likely not have been seen as problematic, polemical, or contradictory to nineteenth-century ecological thinkers. For a more recent assessment of how well existing ecological rhetoric has served ecocriticism and environmental activism, see Timothy Morton, *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

[9] Meyer, *Political Nature*, 38.

[10] Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 85.

[11] Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 85.

determinism; and early environmentalism.[12] All of these intellectual traditions left traces on Wagner's writings on nature; but Wagner went far beyond the vision articulated in these precursors to formulate a nature-bound aesthetic that he hoped would revolutionize his spectators' bodies and minds to transform German culture. If his interlocutors' theories were mostly "just" theories, the composer envisioned animating those ideas by injecting them into his work of art that would provide spectators a new, *völkisch* sensorium and Teutonic consciousness acquired through aesthetic immersion.

The basis of Wagnerian eco-aesthetics is the conviction that the ideal *polis* is derived from nature, or, as Meyer has put it, that "nature serves as the normative principle from which social and political order is derived."[13] The notion that the human consciousness and social structures flow from natural principles originated with Aristotle, and was taken up and elaborated by a panoply of Romantic and pre-Romantic thinkers, including Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling, Carl Kielmeyer, Henrik Steffens, Karl Windischmann, and Adam von Eschenmeyer.[14] As literary historian Paul Gordon explains, for the early Romantics, "nature begins as unconsciousness and ends as consciousness" in the body of the human subject.[15] Wagner makes a similar claim in both "Art and Climate" and "The Artwork of the Future," writing that the "highest grade" of all "organic creations" is "conscience-gifted Man."[16] He goes on to insist that "consciousness [is] reached through learning the distinction between himself and nature," not by allowing climatic conditions—its "leading strings," as he puts it—to control mankind.[17] Teutonic beings were, by definition, already capable of self-reflection, so although their consciousness had emerged from nature, it was not under the control of natural forces; inverting Aristotelian catharsis, he also suggests that practiced resistance of pernicious climates—like those of the warm south—would strengthen Teutonic resolve.[18]

The flow of nature into the human body and mind was what made German art possible, Wagner argues, and true artistic inspiration was possible only when the artist was inhabited by "natural" consciousness:[19]

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[12] Overviews of these intellectual historical fields include Thomas Lekan and Thomas Zeller, ed., *Germany's Nature: Cultural Landscapes and Environmental History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005); Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York, NY: Vintage, 1995); and David Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature: Water, Landscape, and the Making of Modern Germany* (New York, NY: Norton & Co., 2007).

[13] Meyer, *Political Nature*, 36, 111.

[14] Iain Hamilton Grant, *Philosophies of Nature after Schelling* (London: Continuum, 2006), ix.

[15] Paul Gordon, *Art as the Absolute: Art's Relation to Metaphysics in Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel and Schopenhauer* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2015), 107.

[16] Wagner, "Kunst und Klima," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 208; trans. in Wagner, "Art and Climate," *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, Vol. 1, 252.

[17] Wagner, "Kunst und Klima," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 208; trans. in Wagner, "Art and Climate," 252.

[18] Wagner, "Kunst und Klima," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 208; trans. in Wagner, "Art and Climate," 252.

[19] Wagner, "Kunst und Klima," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 208; trans. in Wagner, "Art and Climate," 252.

> In this blessed conjunction [between man and nature] shall we first attain the artist's true creative force. […] This brotherhood of Artist-Men will mold its works of art in unison with, in complement and rounding-off of Mother Nature […] marching forward towards a common pact with common Nature—as towards the utmost fullness of man's being.[20]

This model of artistic creation was advanced, with variations, by a number of Wagner's predecessors, including Friedrich Schlegel who claimed that "art is a product of man's own self-conscious reflection of the universe."[21] Friedrich Schelling seemed to prefigure Wagner's thought even more closely when he argued that "only art" could reveal that the "unconscious, non-purposive intellect" of nature is identical to "our own conscious and purposive thought."[22] According to these writers, artists had privileged access to the spirit of nature and could, as Schlegel explains, create aesthetic experiences that facilitated rarified communion between nature and humanity:

> The truly creative and energetic man is one who is passive and in accordance with nature; he does not obey the arbitrary rules of reason or man, but succumbs instead to divine inspiration. The true artist lets his work of art grow, naturally and for itself alone.[23]

Schelling utilized botanical language when he suggested that to produce truly German works of art, the artist must "vegetate," and that he and his works of art become like "plants."[24]

Wagner appropriates this pseudo-theistic strain of Romantic metaphysics and *Naturphilosophie*, writing of the artist as a sort of prophet or medium channeling the voice of nature in "The Artwork of the Future":

> [The artist was uniquely capable of entering] a kind of passive, unconscious state of being that allows one to be inspired by the forces of nature without the obstructions of rational thought and material compulsion.[25]

Drawing inspiration from nature was the most ideally human—and purely German—form of aesthetic activity.

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[20] Wagner, "Kunst und Klima," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 210-11; trans. in Wagner, "Art and Climate," 261-2.
[21] Ralph Ewton, *The Literary Theories of August Wilhelm Schlegel* (Hague: Walther de Gruyter, 1972), 62.
[22] Paul Gruyer, "Schelling's Aesthetics in the *System of Transcendental Idealism*" in Lara Ostaric, ed., *Interpreting Schelling: Critical Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 82.
[23] Ewton, *The Literary Theories of August Wilhelm Schlegel*, 62.
[24] Minsoo Kang, *Sublime Dreams of Living Machines* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 203.
[25] Kang, *Sublime Dreams of Living Machines*, 203.

Unlike natural philosophers such as Schelling or Schlegel, however, Wagner uses these inherited claims not just to meditate on artistic consciousness, but to mount an attack on modernity. He castigates his contemporaries for their betrayal of nature through their "barbarous" civilizations.[26] Out of that barbarity the artist must emerge, the composer proclaimed: in so doing, the artist could save humankind from itself. Wagner outlined the challenge of modernity and his solution to it in an 1850 letter to a member of his Dresden social circle, composer and music critic Theodor Uhlig (1822-1853):

> Excess of luxurious enjoyment on the other hand, but especially a mode of living quite contrary to nature, have brought us into a degenerate condition which can only be got rid of by entire renovation of our deformed organism. […] Now, as we need a water-cure in order to make our bodies sound, so do we need another cure to heal, i.e. to annihilate the conditions surrounding our disease. Do we then wish to return to a state of nature? Do we wish to be able like human animals to attain to the age of two hundred years? God forbid! Man is a social, all-powerful being only through *culture*. Let us not forget that culture alone can enable us to enjoy as man in his highest fullness can enjoy.[27]

Following a central strain in *Naturphilosophie*, then, Wagner held that this process of purification must begin from nature, and specifically the nature of the Teutonic forest—which had the power to inspire and renew the artist. But Wagner acknowledges in the letter to Uhlig that a return to nature cannot in itself redress the damages of modernity. Only culture—and, more specifically, theater—could combat the falsity that plagued modern life and redeem an ailing humanity in/and an ailing natural world. In his quest to revive the "natural" connections between humanity and nature that had been lost to capitalism and bourgeois culture, and endow all of mankind with consciousness derived from Germany's Teutonic, forested climate, Wagner positioned his art as the means through which such redemption could occur. In his "climatic theater," his "eco-aesthetic" would be breathed into existence, its sonic breath filling spectators and changing them from the inside out.

The Wagnerian Spectator between Art and Climate

In the 1850 sequel to his monumental essay "The Artwork of the Future," a shorter piece entitled "Art and Climate," Wagner made explicit the geographic and climatic precepts of his grand theory of nature and culture, theatrical reform and social reform. "Art and Climate" outlines the links between northern and southern climatic zones and the cultural

[26] Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 61; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 88.
[27] Wagner, *Richard Wagner's Letters to His Dresden Friends*, trans. Francis Hueffer (London: H. Grevel & Co., 1890), 80-83. On Wagner's political activities in Dresden, see especially James Garratt, *Music, Culture, and Social Reform in the Age of Wagner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

and social attitudes and behaviors of their inhabitants.[28] While the harsh weather of northern climates like that of Germany naturally promoted heightened rational thought, that influence was fallible: Wagner argued that modern Germans had rejected the beneficial effects of their native northern climate and were no longer living in accordance with nature, choosing instead to build a civilization grounded in the selfish wants and needs of mankind.[29] For this epidemic of ignorance he proffered a radical solution: a new work of art that had absorbed the very essence of "native skies" and could convert the ignorant masses into modern day Siegfrieds.[30]

In framing these provocative statements Wagner drew on established geographical and climatic deterministic discourses, such as the well-known theories of culture and climate advanced in the eighteenth century by Montesquieu and Herder.[31] Wagner's essay could be read as an idiosyncratic intervention into eighteenth- and nineteenth-century climatic thought, or even as an example of one artist's proto-anthropogenic statement on the environmental and cultural woes of modernity. But "Art and Climate" is much more than a footnote in the history of German naturalism or a peripheral work in Wagner's prose oeuvre. The ideas about climate, atmosphere, and art introduced in "Art and Climate" permeate Wagner's theatrical project, in theory and practice, and the ideas about the social engineering of the spectator first bruited in "Art and Climate," especially, would become central to Wagner's practical and intellectual undertakings.

"The Artwork of the Future," the older sibling of "Art and Climate," begins with a strong statement on the relationship of art to nature, a correlation Wagner keeps close at hand throughout his article as he explains the genesis and composition of his *Gesamtkunstwerk* and the terms of its communicative engagement with spectators. He begins with the assertion that "as man stands to nature, art stands to man."[32] Wagner could have launched "Art and Climate" with a similar statement, replacing "nature" with "climate." When "climate" is substituted for "nature," the function of the Wagnerian artwork changes completely. What was construed as a mostly passive and perhaps reciprocal exchange between human and nature is reconceived here as a unidirectional flow in which the unassailable agency of climate elicits a range of involuntary, biological responses in the spectator, who is gradually altered and conditioned. When the climatic forces at work were those of northern climes, the spectator could be brought to states of

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[28] Wagner, "Kunst und Klima," *SSD*, vol. 3, 207-8, 209-10; trans. in Wagner, "Art and Climate," 250-1, 253-4.

[29] Wagner, "Kunst und Klima," *SSD*, vol. 3, 207, 215; trans. in Wagner, "Art and Climate," 251, 259.

[30] Wagner, "Kunst und Klima," *SSD*, vol. 3, 215, 209; trans. in Wagner, "Art and Climate," 259, 253.

[31] Paul Cheney, *Revolutionary Commerce: Globalization and the French Monarchy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 129. See also Charles W.J. Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment: Thinking Geographically about the Age of Reason* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008) and Chenxi Tang, *The Geographic Imagination of Modernity* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008).

[32] Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, vol. 3, 42; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 69.

free will, self-consciousness, wisdom, and love.[33] Southern, tropical climates, on the other hand, would drive their inhabitants to intense passions they could not hope to control.

Climate determines the "true, not imaginary, essence of mankind," Wagner wrote, and his theatrical works would as well.[34] This "vaporous," climatic work of art would invisibly engage every sense at once, triggering the "uniform response" of "völkisch homogeneity" in all members of the opera audience as if they had stepped into a gust of northern, German wind.[35] By redefining his total work of art in these terms, Wagner proffered physiological engagement of the spectator as key to the scope of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, more effective in instituting social reform in the theater than the tragic mode of neo-Hellenic engagement he described a year earlier in "The Artwork of the Future."[36]

While the coercive elements of this aesthetic program seem clear, Wagner himself cast the endeavor as fundamentally educative, the recovery of German nature and atmosphere imagined as an antidote to Germany's crisis of modernity. The conditioning of the spectator was designed to trigger a remedial contract between artist and spectator with concrete political consequences: Wagner implied that those being conditioned by his climatic aesthetic, and therefore culturally saved, would be compelled to uphold the anti-capitalist ethos it endorsed, which, ultimately, would bring about the consummation of a unified German nation-state and a liberated *Volk*.[37] In essence, Wagner hoped that

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[33] It was common in the nineteenth century to prescribe physiological effects to climatic experience. On this subject, see Mike Hulme, "Reducing the Future to Climate: A Story of Climate Determinism and Reductionism," *Osiris*, Vol. 26/1 ("Klima," 2011): 250-1.

[34] Wagner, "Kunst und Klima" and "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, vol. 3, 208-9 and 157; trans. in Wagner, "Art and Climate," 252-3 and "The Artwork of the Future," 191.

[35] Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 248-57. Elsewhere Wagner employs a similar language of vapors and air when he describes the "poet's thought" as a "cloud" and "steaming vapors" that "dissolves itself" into the earth as rain over the "thirsty soil" (Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, vol. 3, 107-8; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 138-9).

[36] Wagner doubles down on this mode of conditioning by referring to his artwork as both climate and as "ether," a popular medical term that referred to the involuntary claim of air ("nervous atmosphere" or "nervous ether") on the body's sensory nerves. Passages that make use of this term include: Wagner defining his artwork as "limpid ether" like that which "we drink in atop the summits of the Alps when, circled with a sea of azure air, we look down upon the lower hills and valleys. Such mountain-peaks the Thinker climbs, and on this height, imagines he is cleansed of all that is earthly" (Wagner, "Eine Mitteilung an meine Freunde," *SSD*, vol. 4, 294-5; trans. in Wagner, "A Communication to My Friends," *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, Vol. 1, 339-40); his artwork is a "fluent, elastic, impressionable ether whose unmeasured bottom is the great sea of Feeling itself" (Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, vol. 3, 157; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 191).

[37] Wagner wrote extensively on how his *Gesamtkunstwerk* would engage the spectator, comparing his work to Greek tragedy. On this subject, see John Deathridge, *Wagner Beyond Good and Evil* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008), 106-7; and

exposure to his artwork would have an effect akin to that of stepping outdoors into a northern climatic zone and breathing deeply.

While "think pieces" like "Art and Climate" are sometimes cast as autonomous aesthetic treatises resistant to this sort of political contextualization, "Art and Climate" can be read together with Wagner's more overtly revolutionary essays—including "Art and Revolution," "The Artwork of the Future," and others—as another prong in the composer's campaign to effect political change through theatrical reform.[38] Writing in the *Deutsche Monatschrift für Politik, Kunst und Leben*, Wagner pitched "Art and Climate" to the journal's primary readership of exiled revolutionary thinkers.[39] In it, Wagner refigured the principal source of moral influence on the Dresden public, wresting authority from the aristocracy and from existing artistic institutions, which he held partially to blame for the social crisis. Instead, he lodged the power to educate viewers in climate and in the artist who could channel its influence. In "Art and Climate" Wagner seems to be suggesting that objectives of the failed revolutions of 1848 could be achieved through climatic determinism.[40] The anti-modernist contract Wagner put forth in "Art and Climate" could therefore be read as a shrouded guarantee of future success to his discouraged readers, post-revolution. Wagner promised fellow radicals a new means by which art could affect social change.[41] No need for post-revolutionary pessimism or a crisis of confidence: the climatic artwork would leapfrog over rational debate and projects for theatrical reform, simply conditioning spectators to want and implement a new social and political order.[42]

Relying on climate, biology, and instinct instead of disappointing state institutions, Wagner's theory of socially-reformative theater was unconstrained by institutional or even physical limitations. It could not be regulated by governing forces, altered by intervening human hands, or ignored by an audience. This was theater without walls, all remnants of its status as "industrial institute" "vanishing into air."[43] This would be an "empire of climate," to use Montesquieu's term, and would be governed by an unalterable "natural constitution" instead of by the turgid, ineffectual political bodies Wagner had (quite

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Mary Cicora, *Wagner's Ring and German Drama* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 18.

[38] Garratt, *Music, Culture, and Social Reform in the Age of Wagner*, 129-30, 167.

[39] Wagner, "Kunst und Klima" in Adolph Kolatschek, ed., *Deutsche Monatsschrift für Politik, Wissenschaft, Kunst und Leben*, Vol. 1/4 (Stuttgart: Hoffmann, 1850): 250. The essay appeared at the request of Theodor Uhlig and Kolatschek; Wagner called it an "important article" (250). On the general demographics of this journal's readership, see Christine Lattek, *Revolutionary Refugees: German Socialism in Britain, 1840-1860* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), 351; and Garratt, *Music, Culture, and Social Reform*, 134-6; Martine Prange, *Nietzsche, Wagner, Europe* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), 36.

[40] Wagner, "Kunst und Klima," *SSD*, vol. 3, 208; trans. in Wagner, "Art and Climate," 259.

[41] Garratt, *Music, Culture, and Social Reform*, 177.

[42] Garratt, *Music, Culture, and Social Reform*, 132.

[43] Wagner, "Ein Theater in Zürich," *SSD*, vol. 5, 49; trans. in Wagner, "A Theater at Zurich," *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, Vol. 3, trans. Ellis (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Trübner, 1907), 54.

literally) fought in 1848.[44] Future generations would be transformed by the invisible influences of climatic schema, advancing as one people towards new, universal allegiances to German climate, the civil values it conditioned, and the works of art that could revive such a climate in an industrial world.

Wagner at the Dawn of German Environmentalism, c. 1880

Four years before Wagner's death in 1883, writer and activist Baron Ernst von Weber (1830-1902) commissioned the composer to write a promotional piece for his anti-vivisection society operating out of Dresden. The resulting publication, "An Open Letter to Ernst von Weber," was first published in 1879 in his Bayreuth Festival newsletter, the *Bayreuther Blätter*, and was later circulated as a pamphlet to members of Weber's society.[45] In the open letter, Wagner attacked the "scientific specter of vivisection," at the time a heated subject of debate amongst intellectuals and topic of a widely circulating petition eventually submitted (unsuccessfully) to the *Reichstag*.[46] Accompanying the first printing of the essay in Bayreuth was a notice addressed to festival attendees imploring them to fund Weber's efforts and join his society.[47] With this treatise, Wagner played a small role in propelling the anti-vivisection petition to the desk of members of government.[48] Here, then, Wagner, for the first time, undertook real (if ultimately unsuccessful) legislative action in pursuit of social change.

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[44] Cheney, *Revolutionary Commerce*, 61, 129.

[45] Wagner, "Offenes Schreiben an Herrn Ernst von Weber," *SSD*, Vol. 10, 194-210; trans. in Wagner, "Against Vivisection," *Religion and Art*, trans. Ellis (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1897), 193-210. The first printing of the essay was in *Bayreuther Blätter*, Vol. 11 (Bayreuth: Schmeitzner, 1880).

[46] Wagner, "Offenes Schreiben an Herrn Ernst von Weber," *SSD*, Vol. 10, 194; trans. in Wagner, "Against Vivisection," 193. For more on vivisection practices in the nineteenth century, see also Hubert Brettschneider, *Der Streit um die Vivisektion im 19. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Fischer Verlag, 1962); Susan Hamilton, *Animal Welfare & Anti-Vivisection, 1870-1910* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2004); R. French, *Anti-Vivisection and Medical Science in Victorian Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975); A.H. Maehler and U. Tröhler, "Animal Experimentation from Antiquity to the End of the Eighteenth Century: Attitudes and Argument" in N. Rupke, ed., *Vivisection in Historical Perspective* (London: Routledge, 1987); and Benjamin Steege, *Helmholtz and the Modern Listener* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 225.

[47] Wagner and Hans von Wolzogen, ed., *Bayreuther Blätter*, Vol. 11 (Bayreuth: Schmeitzner, 1880), 366.

[48] Germany was a step behind Britain with respect to putting a stop to animal testing. As Iwan Rhys Morus explains, "Prominent campaigners [in Britain] wielded considerable influence, arguing that physiologists were no better than bear-baiters or cat-skinners. [They] carried enough clout in the corridors of power to demand a royal commission to call the vivisectionists to account. The result was the 1876 Cruelty to Animals Act, which restricted animal experimentation to those licensed to perform them" (Iwan Rhys Morus, "The Sciences" in Chris Williams, ed., *A Companion to 19th-Century Britain* (London: John Wiley & Sons, 2006), 468).

As deeply as Wagner engaged with writings on climatic determinism and *Naturphilosophie* in his prose works, references to the necessity of protecting the natural environment (including its animals) also appear in his essays on art and culture. As Celia Applegate, David Blackbourn, Thomas Zeller, and others have shown, nineteenth-century environmentalists and natural historians debated the meaning of *Heimat* (homeland), how its borders were determined, and why they should be protected.[49] In a nation of provinces, as Applegate has written, Germans worried that their state—and therefore their "race"—was "an illusion."[50] During Wagner's lifetime, political forces constantly redrew Germany's boundaries, its people seemingly forever scattered. Where, exactly, was the fatherland to which they felt such a patriotic connection? It was on the ground and it was in the air—but "what" air, "what" ground, and to whom did it most "naturally" belong?

The political and official limits of the German nation or *Heimat* were unclear, in flux, sometimes even non-existent in this period; for this reason, the idea of "natural" limits to German territory and identity, in the mind, on the ground, and in the spirit, had tremendous currency. Period environmentalism, including the composer's interventions into it, reinforces these ways of defining the nation, as well as its exclusion and denigration of what was imagined to be outside of it. Natural historian Ernst Moritz Arndt (1769-1860), for instance, identified a "natural" bound of the German state in the Rhine.[51] Wagner agreed: "for the first time [in 1842], I saw the Rhine—with hot tears in my eyes, I, poor artist, swore eternal fidelity to my German fatherland."[52] For him, this natural landmark was a "native" and natural border of his "German fatherland"—and should be politically recognized as such—stepping over it or even seeing it meant that he had entered holy ground.[53] In "The Artwork of the Future," he continues this line of thought, arguing that the German people are "governed by generic ancestry, community of mother-tongue, similarity of climate, and the natural surroundings of a common fatherland," so they should "yield [themselves] unconsciously to the influence of Nature."[54] The German state was circumscribed, in short, by natural bounds, a state made by nature itself where, "from all our 'nooks' we come together […] and you have the genuine German as he is."[55] These

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[49] See Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990); Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature*; Lekan, *Imagining the Nation in Nature: Landscape Preservation and German Identity, 1880-1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

[50] Wagner, *On Music and Drama*, ed. Albert Goldman and Evert Sprinchorn (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1964), 33.

[51] Lekan, *Imagining the Nation in Nature*, 2.

[52] Wagner, "Autobiographische Skizze," *SSD*, Vol. 1, 16; trans. in Wagner, "Autobiographical Sketch," *On Music and Drama*, 19.

[53] Mark Cioc describes the contentiousness of the Rhine as Franco-German border between 1815-1871 in *The Rhine: An Eco-Biography, 1815-2000* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2009).

[54] Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 131; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 89.

[55] Wagner, "Bayreuth. 'Bayreuther Blätter': 3. Zur Einführung," *SSD*, Vol. 10, 21; trans. in Wagner, "Introduction to *Bayreuther Blätter*," 26.

"nooks" and bounds, like the Rhine, needed to be protected, he claimed—when they were, German culture and art would be forever safeguarded, too.

Like contemporary geographers and naturalists such as Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl (1823-1897) and Carl Ritter (1779-1859), Wagner argued for the need to regenerate German land, largely for the purposes of preserving culture and race.[56] In an 1883 letter to his son's tutor, the philosopher Heinrich Freiherr von Stein (1857-1887), Wagner wrote shortly before his death, "and from Nature must we learn the plan: a re-foundation of society on a new domain of the earth, preceded by regeneration of the mother land."[57] Casting industry, urbanization, bourgeois culture as vices, Wagner argued that the future of Germany lay in respecting nature.

Wagner's plan for rebuilding society on a "new domain of the earth," and his conviction that society needed to be cleansed of the pollutions wrought by modernity and industrialization, bear obvious resonances with the events depicted in *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (1876). Crucially, the purified "new domain" would arise not just through preservation; instead, it would be born of Wagner's revolutionary work of art. To tear down the artificial hothouse built over the earth by industry and urbanization, Germans needed to experience the climatic nature of the past constructed out of sound inside of his opera house. Imagining destroying one climatic artifice by building another, art, sound, and aesthetic experience was Wagner's answer to the earliest signs of the Anthropocene.[58]

By the turn of the century, Wagner's treatment of discourses of nature and environmentalism in prose and on stage had been ventriloquized by individuals and organizations that appropriated Wagner's ideas in the service of their own "green" agendas. British periodicals *The Zoophilist and Animal's Defender* and *The Animal Friend* regarded Wagner as "their" composer, finding common cause not only in the composer's statements about animal rights but also in the environmentalist symbolism they discerned in his dramas.[59] *The Zoophilist and Animal's Defender* devoted regular columns to such topics

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[56] Colin Riordan, *Green Thought in Germany: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), 5.

[57] Wagner, "Brief an H.v. Stein," *SSD*, Vol. 10, 220; trans. in Wagner, "Letter to H. von Stein," 332. This letter was published in the *Bayreuther Blätter* after Wagner's death and is dated 31 January 1883 (the composer died on 13 February 1883). On the composer's relationship with Stein, see Roderick Stackelberg, "The Role of Heinrich von Stein in Nietzsche's Emergence as a Critic of Wagnerian Idealism and Cultural Nationalism," *Nietzsche-Studien*, Vol. 5/1 (1976): 178-93.

[58] For early discussions of the concept of the Anthropocene, see Paul Crutzen, "Geology of Mankind," *Nature*, Vol. 415/3 (2002): 23. For more on thinking historically about the Anthropocene, see Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 35/2 (2009): 197-222; Crutzen, "The Anthropocene: Conceptual and Historical Perspectives," *Philosophical Interactions*, Vol. 369/1938 (2011); and Gillen Wood, "Introduction: Eco-Historicism," *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, Vol. 8/2 (Winter 2008).

[59] Columns on Wagner are included in *The Zoophilist and Animal's Defender*, Vol. 2/4 (1883), Vol. 14-15 (1894), Vol. 20-21 (1900), Vol. 25-26 (1905), and Vol. 38 (1918). These columns are discussed in Nicholaas A. Rupke, *Vivisection in Historical Perspective* (London: Croom Helm, Ltd., 1987).

as Wagner's loving treatment of his pet bird and dogs, and translations of his letters to Ernst von Weber on animal cruelty; they also published longer articles on references to animal rights or anti-vivisection in his operas.[60] An 1892 article in *The Animal Friend* linked Wagner's love of animals and abhorrence of hunting with the treatment of wildlife in his operas:

> The impression made on Wagner [when he hunted in his youth] is echoed in the libretto of his early opera *The Fairies*, where the doe is hit by the arrow: "Oh see! The animal weeps, a tear is in its eye. Oh how its broken look rests on me!" And again in his last work, in the pathetic lines of Gurnemanz reproaching Parsifal for killing the sacred swan, […] lines which teach the duty of pity more eloquently than all the essays of Schopenhauer, whom Wagner followed from an inborn sympathy in regarding pity as the supreme moral law. Animals are introduced in all but three of his operas.[61]

By about 1900, Wagner's festival in Bayreuth was playing host to groups of visitors from the popular "back-to-nature" and anti-vivisection movements.[62] Some of these festival-goers—like Wagner himself—were vegetarians and frequented health resorts or "back-to-nature" retreats, such as Monte Verità in Ascona, Switzerland where natural sites were renamed for landmarks in Wagner's later operas (the meadow beyond the retreat's gates was *Parsifal* and the cliffs nearby, *Walkürefelsen*), the retreat's residents often amused themselves by playing and singing excerpts from Wagner's operas deep into the night, and visitors allegedly trekked 375 miles from Ascona to Bayreuth in bare feet or sandals for early performances of *Parsifal*.[63]

Wagner had become the unlikely muse, almost the god of nature, for these turn-of-the-century naturalists. What goes unremarked in these celebratory articles on and responses to Wagner's attitudes towards the forest and its animal kingdom is that the

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[60] Katherine Metcalf, "Wagner's Dog Friends" in *The Zoophilist and Animal's Defender*, Vol. 21/6 (1 October 1901), 147; "Wagner's Correspondence" in *The Zoophilist and Animal's Defender*, Vol. 2/4 (1 April 1883), 59. On Wagner's pets, see Wagner, *Richard Wagner's Letters to His Dresden Friends*.

[61] Henry T. Finck, "Wagner and His Animals," *Our Animal Friends*, Vol. 20/4 (New York, NY: December 1892), 78.

[62] Martin Green, *Mountain of Truth: The Counterculture Begins, Ascona, 1900-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Tufts University Press, 1986), 123. On Germany's "back-to-nature" movements, see Lekan and Zeller, *Germany's Nature*; Corinna Treitel, *Eating Nature in Modern Germany: Food, Agriculture and Environment, c. 1870 to 2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); and Andrea Wulf, *The Invention of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt's New World* (New York, NY: Vintage, 2016).

[63] Green, *Mountain of Truth*, 110, 123, 167, and 244; and Antony Taylor, "'Godless Edens': Surveillance, Eroticized Anarchy, and 'Depraved Communities' in Britain and the Wider World, 1890-1930" in Jessica Pliley, Robert Kramm, and Harald Fischer-Tiné, *Global Anti-Vice Activism, 1890-1950: Fighting Drinks, Drugs, and 'Immorality'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 63-4.

German anti-vivisection movement—and specifically the Dresden society of which Wagner and Weber were members—was deeply involved in a nation-wide campaign to ban *Schächte*, the kosher method of animal slaughter, and was thus at its roots anti-Semitic.[64] Broader Romantic discourses of nature and environmental thought were similarly slanted, the cultural values latent in the Teutonic soil reserved for Germans and inaccessible to Jews. Key to the reception and afterlives of the composer's ideologies of nature, then, is an ironic denial of the discriminatory ideals that, while sometimes occluded on stage or in his essays, made his exclusionary cultural ideologies possible.

"Green" Wagner—to What End?

While Patrice Chéreau's centenary *Ring*, with its backdrop of a massive hydroelectric dam and its dystopian take on the final moments of *Götterdämmerung,* is generally seen as the first prominent instance of environmental thinking informing a production, the early twentieth-century embrace of Wagner as a champion of unspoiled nature sparked a handful of productions that anticipated Chéreau's approach. One early eco-staging was the 1914 open-air *Rheingold* in Grand Forks, North Dakota (see Fig. 1) intended to promote natural resource preservation, admiration and appreciation of the American West, and a sense of national social unity founded in common experience of American natural space.[65]

Figure 1: Wagner at the Bankside Theater (North Dakota, 1914)[66]

[64] Tracie Matysik, *Reforming the Moral Subject: Ethics and Sexuality in Central Europe, 1890-1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010), 35.
[65] On open-air theater in the United States, see Peter Gough, *Sounds of the New Deal: The Federal Music Project in the West* (Urbana-Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2015); Thomas Dickinson, *The Case of American Drama* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1915); "Theaters Roofed by the Stars," *Literary Digest*, Vol. 47 (5 July 1913): 20-21.
[66] Sheldon Cheney, "Community Theater Out-of-Doors," *Theater Magazine*, Vol. 35 (New York, NY: The Theatre Magazine Co.: 1922): 41.

The 1976 Chéreau production (see Fig. 2) cast the *Ring* cycle as what Alexander Rehding has termed the "master metaphor of the environmental imagination."[67] Chéreau read the *Ring* as Shavian-Marxist capitalist allegory or, as Carmel Raz has suggested, "an early representative of steampunk that explores contemporary social and technological anxieties through the metaphor of an epic fantasy world."[68]

Figure 2: Wagner, *Die Walküre* (Bayreuth, 1976)[69]

Where Chéreau's production staged the events of the tetralogy against a backdrop of a newly industrialized Europe in the late nineteenth century and threw the emphasis onto a critique of capitalism, Stephen Wadsworth's "green" *Ring* at the Seattle Opera in 2009 and 2013 (see Fig. 3) adopted a more explicitly ecological approach, using local scenery as backdrop to inspire awareness of environmental crisis in the Pacific Northwest.[70]

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[67] Rehding, "Ecomusicology between Apocalypse and Nostalgia," 409-11.
[68] Carmel Raz, "Wagnerpunk: Steampunk Reading of Patrice Chéreau's Staging of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (1876)," *Neo-Victorian Studies*, Vol. 4/2 (2011): 91.
[69] On the Boulez-Chéreau *Ring*, see Frederic Spotts, *Bayreuth: A History of the Wagner Festival* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996); Patrick Carnegy, *Wagner and the Art of Theater* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006); and Mark Berry, *Treacherous Bonds and Laughing Fire: Politics and Religion in Wagner's Ring* (London: Routledge, 2017).
[70] On the Seattle *Ring*, see Jonathan Dean, "What's Green about the Ring?" *Seattle Opera Blog* (2 September 2009). Online: http://www.seattleoperablog.com/2009/09/whats-green-about-ring.html; and Mike Silverman, "Seattle Opera offers magnificent 'Ring' revival," *San Diego Union-Tribute* (17 August 2009). Online: http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/sdut-opera-seattle-ring-081709-2009aug17-story.html.

Figure 3: Wagner, *Siegfried* (Seattle Opera, 2013)[71]

In each of these examples, Wagnerian artistic thought and dramatic action has been deployed to promote environmental activism and awareness of ecological crisis, and, as we have seen, Wagner's writings provide at least a partial authorial imprimatur for such interpretations.[72] In some ways, it is impossible to envision any future *Ring* productions that do not take up the invitation to respond to the environmental crisis. But I would suggest that these productions approach the question from the wrong angle, as do some of the scholarly interventions (past and present) that attempt to martial Wagner for the eco-musicological cause.[73] Arguably, these authors and stage directors set themselves an impossible task, in trying to update—and de-fang—Wagner's passionate but scattered statements on nature and climate to reconcile them with contemporary environmental thought. Rather than struggling to extract the "good" from Wagner's idiosyncratic and deeply compromised theories, it might be more productive to focus on what attention to Wagner can do for "thinking the Anthropocene" in a historical frame or thinking critically about the links between art and environmental action.[74] When the lens is adjusted in this way, Wagner's interventions suddenly seem remarkably useful because they sharply reveal the impact of environmental action on precarious populations, driving our understanding of the impact of environmentalism on re-inscribing alterity.[75]

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[71] "Building Wagner's *Ring* Cycle: The Shop in Pictures." Online: https://www.seattlesceneshop.org/building-the-ring-iii/ (Accessed: 21 April 2018).
[72] See Grey, "Wagner's 'Ring' as Eco-Parable."
[73] Allen, "Prospects and Problems for Ecomusicology in Confronting a Crisis of Culture": 414.
[74] Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene: The Earth, History and Us* (London: Verso, 2016).
[75] On indigeneity and environmentalism, see especially Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002); and Tracey Heatherington, *Wild Sardinia: Indigeneity and the Global Dreamtimes of Environmentalism* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2011).

Scenes from *The Ring* that have been staged to promote environmental activism or reflect on the "toxicity" of industrial revolution gloss over the discriminatory undertones of those moments, founded as they are in discriminatory Romantic discourses of nature, environmentalism, and ecological activism. For Wagner, as we have seen, the forest was not "for all," but for "some" (Germans, not Jews).[76] To protect the forest was to protect German culture, both of which were made purer by the absence of foreign influence, he and his interlocutors claim. When stripped of this discriminatory legacy, Wagner's operas and even his writings can be instrumentalized to promote liberal environmentalism and denounce one form of capitalist "toxicity." But these undercurrents of discrimination cannot be neatly snipped away: instead, they force a reckoning within environmental thought that humanists are uniquely positioned to spearhead. What Wagner really does for environmentalism today, then, is heighten awareness of the discourses of exclusion that undergird many seemingly liberal discursive spaces (including musical spaces), dispelling assumptions made about the inherent *good* in environmental action and thought across space and time.

Wagner's prose writings about nature, subjective identity, and art are, in some ways, predictable: he borrowed heavily from his interlocutors whose work collectively formed the foundations of Romantic discourses of nature. A few elements were novel for the time; but what was most noteworthy was Wagner's willingness to put this common knowledge into practice—or at least attempt to do so. As I show in the chapters that follow, many among his audiences believed that he was successful in this pursuit.

As Thomas Grey, John Deathridge, and others have argued, Wagner's prose works were published before many of his operas and generally do not align in simple, straightforward terms with the tales told in his dramas.[77] In the chapters to come, I explore the messy, intimate relationships between the theories the composer lays out in his prose works and his treatment of his on-stage characters and environs, spectators and spectacles from the nineteenth century into the middle of the twentieth. While Wagner's prose writings, dramatic texts, and stagings at Bayreuth and elsewhere suggest that Wagner sought to portray a "symbiosis" between his characters and nature or climate—one that allows mankind and nature (or spectators and "climatic" spectacle) to exist in harmonious, Teutonic balance—the relationships he draws out in the theater, on stage and off, are not simply reflections of this idealized Romantic relationship. Instead, the interactions he portrays on stage or arranges in the theater enact evidence of his own social and artistic ideologies, including his radical ontologies of the German body, the senses, and nature that he imagined might be cultivated through immersion in aural mists.

The next two chapters of this dissertation examine Wagner's animation of his "climatic" artistic ideologies on stage, focusing on scenes from two of his music dramas

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[76] Here, "toxicity" references Lawrence Buell, "Toxic Discourses," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 24/3 (1998): 639-665: Buell's "toxic discourses inform texts from the early industrial revolution to the present day that portray the effect of modern ecological crisis" (i.e. "mythology of betrayed Edens," "images of a world without refuge from toxic penetration"). On Buell and *The Ring*, see Grey, "Wagner's 'Ring' as Eco-Parable," 183.

[77] See Grey, *Wagner's Musical Prose* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and Deathridge, *Wagner Beyond Good and Evil*.

(*Tannhäuser* and *Siegfried*) that narrate connections between climate and identity. I argue that these scenes—from their texts to their stagings and scores—were intended to educate spectators as to the Germanic values nature (from its sounds to its scents) could instill in them, if only they would leave the city, go for a walk in the forest, and allow their senses to be re-shaped by the natural world (something of a proto-anthropogenic moral to be sure). But latent in these morals is another lesson for spectators: narratives of nature central to both works, I argue, represent allegories for aspects of Wagner's own aesthetic ideologies, casting *Siegfried* and *Tannhäuser* as self-referential dramas that thematize and critique their own origins, means of production, and ideal modes of spectatorial engagement.

In my reading of *Siegfried* (1876) in Chapter 2, I examine Wagner's settings of two characters' relationships with the natural world, circumscribed by race: Siegfried observes and then learns to listen to nature, while Mime, blind and deaf to nature, feels it only in his stomach.[78] The hierarchy Wagner creates between these two characters can be mapped onto intersecting phases of intellectual history. Siegfried's auditory engagement with nature represents an ideal, Romantic relationship with the forest, echoing writings by Goethe, Herder, and Wagner himself, as well as popular *wandern* and "back-to-nature" practices, that valorize listening to nature over observing it as a means of acquiring Teutonic subjectivity. Here, Siegfried's auditory practices could be read as an allegory for the ideal mode of Wagnerian listening. Mime's lack of attunement to nature and its Teutonic truths implicates him as anti-Semitic (and anti-Wagnerian) caricature, Mime having "internalized" his "Jewish difference" such that he is incapable of absorbing German truths by listening to nature or to the Wagnerian work of art.[79]

This chapter also proffers a new critical orientation to *Siegfried*'s score. I pursue connections among musical tropes that not only sonically situate each character differently within the surrounding environment, but implicate the score as a tool for analyzing the modes of sensory engagement it thematizes. Instead of mining this score for leitmotives prone to dissociative disintegration (as Abbate, Deathridge, Christian Thorau, and others have shown), I suggest that it be sifted for signs and symbols of multi-sensory engagement with it, the score leading the listener in a journey of sensory discovery that mirrors that of Siegfried, the ideal Romantic listener and Wagnerian listener.[80] This method of analysis situates the analyst and audience in a position of learning to listen to nature and the Wagnerian score by following Siegfried's aural journey, raising new political stakes for analysis. At the end of this chapter, I suggest that Wagner's elision of sound and nature

[78] On Wagner's treatment of Jewish bodies, see especially Marc A. Weiner, *Wagner and the Anti-Semitic Imagination* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1997).

[79] Sander L. Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 155.

[80] On the Wagnerian leitmotive, see Christian Thorau, "Guides for Wagnerites: Leitmotifs and Wagnerian Listening," Grey, ed., *Richard Wagner and His World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009); and Matthew Bribitzer-Stull, *Understanding the Leitmotif: From Wagner to Hollywood Film Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

mirrors (and prefigures) John Durham Peters' "media philosophy of nature" that proffers media and nature as promoting the same egalitarian mode of interaction.[81]

Chapter 3 considers the composer's writings not on sensory hierarchy, but on the unification of the senses via synesthetic artistic engagement, all five senses "melting" into a "universal" perceptual faculty.[82] Such transformation of the modern sensorium would be a product, the composer argued, of his own multi-sensory spectacle that, like a climate, could determine the bounds of the senses. Here, Wagner suggests that creating a unified sensorium was a foundational aim of his artistic project, this sensory model critiquing and undercutting more conventional nineteenth-century historiographies of aural-centrism and musical materiality.[83] I argue that *Tannhäuser* (1845) might be read as an allegory for the multi-sensory musical materiality and spectatorial paradigm central to the composer's broader *Gesamtkunstwerk* ideology.

In my reading of this opera, I argue that the composer depicts climate and sound as equally capable of rewiring his characters' physiological and psychological identities as any sense of physical, social, or cognitive autonomy is lost—the composer's work, then, is ultimately an allegory of his own fantasies of total power over his spectators. On stage, that power is granted to his proxies—his on-stage characters—who stage the "melting" of bodies, spaces, and sounds Wagner proffered in this period as central to his artistic project.[84] In examining scenes that blur these boundaries, I show that characters craft climate-like sounds to gain invisible power over others, much like the composer's own fantasies of spectatorial control: Venus, for instance, crafts "roseate sounds," a perfumed, sonic embodiment of the Venusberg's climate that keeps Tannhäuser under corporeal arrest during his imprisonment in her mountain lair. In scenes like this one, Wagner seems to suggest that his sound worlds could convey the feeling of the warm air of the tropics or strengthening breezes of the forest, and can carry the transformative powers he assigned to those atmospheric conditions and to his *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

In Chapter 4, I show that Wagner, not content to simply educate spectators, looked to control the air spectators breathed at his *Festspielhaus* in Bayreuth, Germany. This chapter begins outside of the theater with Wagner's consultation with medical professionals whose theories of the impact of "clean air" on the body influenced his choice

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[81] John Durham Peters, *The Marvelous Clouds: Towards a Philosophy of Elemental Media* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 8.

[82] Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 214; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 97.

[83] On nineteenth-century German aural-centrism, see Jonathan Sterne, *Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); David Trippett, "Towards a Materialist History of Music: Histories of Sensation," Franklin Humanities Institute, Duke University (2017); and Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993).

[84] On oppositional spaces, sensations, and epistemologies in *Tannhäuser*, see especially Katherine Syer, *Wagner's Visions: Poetry, Politics, and Psyche in the Operas Through 'Die Walküre'* (London: Boydell & Brewer, 2014).

of a high-altitude location for the Bayreuth theater.[85] Popular guides to health resorts, "climatic air stations" and pneumatic spas outline these connections, describing sites like Bayreuth's "Green Hill" as providing atmospheric cures to visitors.[86] Wagner's correspondence shows that he hoped the location would not only provide air-borne relief to city-dwellers, but would also reconnect them with German nature. At least some visitors to Bayreuth seem to have agreed: performance reviews and private accounts of the Bayreuth experience often mention the purifying relief visitors found in the forest surrounding the theater. At Bayreuth, Wagner transformed the pursuit of theatrical entertainment into a pursuit of curative experience, the climatic fantasies of control foundational to his ideology of *Gesamtkunstwerk* permeating his artistic project at Bayreuth—from the moment spectators arrived in his chosen city.

Wagner's attempts at creating a multi-sensory *Gesamtkunstwerk* inside of the theater were inspired by steam effects already in use in theaters, air-conditioning systems developed by theater and greenhouse engineers (including his chief architect for Bayreuth, Gottfried Semper), and trends in "synaesthetic" entertainments popular in German greenhouses and beloved by Wagner's benefactor, Bavaria's Ludwig II.[87] Some of those who witnessed early productions at Bayreuth imagined they really *could* feel his music coursing through their lungs and touching their "olfactory nerves."[88] Perhaps, then, Wagner really had managed to condition multi-sensory responses to his largely audiovisual spectacle, achieving the fantasy of climatic control he had first described two decades earlier by encouraging a rhetorical trend among spectators that implicated his work of art and multi-sensory experience of it as inseparable.

My final chapter examines the legacy of Wagnerian ideologies of nature, *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and socially-reformative art in the twentieth century, focusing on Wagner's position in the German outdoor opera movement particularly under the Third Reich, where political reform was pursued through spectatorial experience of Romantic nature and sound, mirroring elements of Wagner's own political ideologies of sound and spectatorship. First, I show that this ideology of sound and space—described in contemporary German theatrical treatises and thematized in commissioned works that narrated the ideal relationship between spectators' identity and nature—finds its roots in climatic determinism: in some critics' writings on outdoor theater, they identify the forest

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[85] On Wagner's correspondence with his doctors, see Cosima Wagner, *Cosima Wagner's Diaries*, Vol. 1-3, ed. Martin Gregor-Dellin and Dietrich Mack, trans. Geoffrey Skelton (London: Harcourt); and Wagner, *The Story of Bayreuth as Told in the Bayreuth Letters of Richard Wagner*, trans. Caroline V. Kerr (Boston: Small, Maynard & Co., 1912).

[86] For lists of nineteenth-century health resorts, see Bradshaw, *Dictionary of Mineral Waters, Climatic Health Resorts, Sea Baths, and Hydropathic*; and J. Burney Yeo, *Climate and Health Resorts* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1885).

[87] On the history of the Bayreuth Festival, see Spotts, *Bayreuth: A History of the Wagner Festival*; Barry Millington, *The Sorcerer of Bayreuth: Richard Wagner, His Work and His World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); and Simon Williams, *Richard Wagner and Festival Theater* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994).

[88] Eduard Hanslick, "R. Wagner's Bühnenfestspiel in Bayreuth," *Neue Freie Presse* (20 August 1876), 155; trans. in Hanslick, "Dr. Hanslick on the 'Ring des Nibelungen,'" *Dwight's Journal of Music*, Vol. 36/16 (Boston, MA, Ditson & Co.: Nov. 11, 1876): 330.

climate as triggering the "biological resonance" of German values within spectators. Breathing the Romantic, forest air and experiencing German sound at a nature stage would, in other words, invisibly instill in listeners the German values latent in the forest, enacting the transformation Wagner had imagined decades earlier.

The second half of this chapter considers the distinct meanings this practice acquired under the Third Reich. From 1933 until the end of the war, the Reich looked to "activate" National Socialist priorities in spectators visiting outdoor stages (*Thingstätte*) they built across Germany and Poland by enveloping them in the influences of forest air and German sound.[89] In propaganda published in 1935 and 1938, Joseph Goebbels, Alfred Rosenberg, Albert Forster, and other high-ranking SS officials called one such outdoor stage, the "forest opera" (*Waldoper*) in Sopot, Poland, "the Reich's most important cultural project" where Wagner's music, the "atmospheric reconstruction" of the forest, was performed outdoors.[90] I argue that experiencing performances at this outdoor stage became a key component of their strategy for conditioning Aryan values in Germans and occupied Poles alike through the passive acts of breathing and listening "in the true Wagnerian spirit," as Günter Grass wrote of this stage in 1959.[91] This festival, then, was an imperialist operation where sound, space, and Wagnerian ideologies of theatrical reform were deployed to do the work of an army, the "forest opera" playing a key role in the Reich's cultural programs and mission to reclaim Poland for the German empire.

Bringing these discursive and material histories of nature to bear on Wagnerian artistry, this project revises current thinking on Wagner's pursuit of socially-transformative art, spectatorial reform, and ideology of *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Scholarship on the politics of Wagnerian art—including the work of James Garratt, David Trippett, Gundula Kreuzer, John Deathridge, David Imhoof, Margaret Menninger, and Patrick Carnegy—often identifies Wagner's adaptation of Hellenic artistic ideologies of "total" art, Feuerbach's humanism and materialism, and creation of a novel theatrical realism as key to his conception and pursuit of socially-transformative theater that might move spectators towards a more liberal, unified political order.[92]

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[89] Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Theater, Sacrifice, Ritual: Exploring Forms of Political Theater* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2007).

[90] On the *Waldoper*, see Friedrich Albert Meyer, *Die Zoppoter Waldoper: ein kleiner Führer für die reichswichtige Festspielstätte* (Berlin: Schlieffen-Verlag, 1938); Stephan Wolting, *Bretter, Die Kulturkulissen Markierten* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo, 2003); and Anselm Heinrich, *Theater in Europe under German Occupation* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017).

[91] Günter Grass, *The Tin Drum*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York, NY: Vintage, 1990), 112.

[92] Garratt, *Music, Culture, and Social Reform in the Age of Wagner*; Trippett, *Wagner's Melodies: Aesthetics and Materialism in German Musical Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Gundula Kreuzer, "Wagner-Dampf: Steam in 'Der Ring des Nibelungen' and Operatic Production," *Opera Quarterly*, Vol. 27/2-3 (Spring-Summer 2011): 179-218; Deathridge, *Wagner Beyond Good and Evil*; David Imhoof and Margaret Menninger, ed., *The Total Work of Art: Foundations, Articulations, and Inspirations* (New York, NY: Berghahn, 2016); and Carnegy, *Wagner and the Art of Theater*.

This dissertation intervenes into this scholarship by exploring how different aspects of "atmospheric" cultural thought and practice became foundational to the composer's artistic-political project, providing him tools for crafting a radical, multi-sensory materiality and form of spectatorship designed to serve his social aspirations. In Chapter 4, for instance, I show that Wagner's pursuit of this conception of transformative art included an expansion of the dramaturgical function of steam machines in service of his transcendental realism and illusions, as Kreuzer, Menninger, Carnegy, and others suggest. But, given the origins of these devices in contemporary physiological, engineering, and architectural pursuits, the dramaturgical effects they facilitated were likely designed to cultivate calculated psychological and social responses in audiences, as well as sensory reactions that amounted to "melting" the "five senses" together as Wagner's theater transformed into a greenhouse full of Teutonic air.[93]

At the end of each chapter, I ask how its central queries—the roots of Wagnerian "climatic" thought in Romantic discourses of nature (Chapter 1), allegory of musical materiality or spectatorship in Wagnerian dramas (Chapters 2-3), aspects of Wagnerian "climatic" spectacle at (Chapter 4), and the resonances of Wagner's atmospheric aesthetic in the cultural practices of the Third Reich (Chapter 5)—have come to inform recent disciplinary treatments of sound, space, and spectatorship in opera, sound, and media studies. In general, this aspect of my project casts Wagner's own pursuit of "climatic" art as an intellectual forefather of Wagnerian "phantasmagoria," Theodor Adorno's influential reading of Wagnerian atmospherics touching multiple disciplines and shaping how we write about sound and its technologies today.[94] Building on Friedrich Nietzsche's readings of Wagner, Adorno critiqued the language nineteenth- and twentieth-century thinkers used to describe their reactions to Wagnerian art that revealed a tendency to describe Wagnerian spectacle as provoking controlled, predictable responses in the spectating body and mind—even if those reactions were really more "imaginary" than embodied. He ultimately argued that Wagner's authoritarian fantasy of control and apparent success in convincing spectators that their bodies and minds were bended to his demands represented the aesthetic foundations of National Socialism, a reality I explore in detail in Chapter 5.

Following observations made recently by Nicholas Ridout on the history of theater spectatorship and Carolyn Abbate, Jonathan Sterne, and Noam Elcott on technological determinism and media aesthetics, the final section of each of my chapters explores parallels between the language and theory of Wagnerian (or Adornian) "phantasmagoria" and a range of ideologies and rhetorical trends central to media, sound, and film studies today—some of our rhetoric about sound and technology, then, is virtually "atmospheric" and owes unacknowledged debts to Wagner and Adorno.[95]

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[93] Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 214; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 97.

[94] See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Der Fall Wagner: ein Musikanten-Problem* (Leipzig: Neumann, 1888); and Theodor Adorno, "Phantasmagoria," *In Search of Wagner*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Verso, 2005).

[95] Nicholas Ridout, "Opera and the Technologies of Theatrical Production" in Nicholas Till, ed., *Cambridge Companion to Opera Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 159-176; Carolyn Abbate, "Sound Object Lessons," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 69/3 (Summer 2016): 793-829; Sterne, *Audible*

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In 2005, Slavoj Žižek argued in his preface to Adorno's 1936 *In Search of Opera* that Wagner is "worth saving"—meaning that he not only needs rehabilitation, but deserves it.[96] My dissertation does not directly participate in this mission as it has been more conventionally approached; this impulse has captivated Wagner studies for decades, particularly with respect to the study of Wagner and his anti-Semitism.[97] My project nonetheless probes the ethics of the composer's artistic project by exploring the terms of Wagnerian spectatorial engagement, his corporeally invasive musical materiality, and the legacy of these innovations in theater, media, and film studies that seems to reveal a "Wagnerian" willingness among some critics today to attest to the ability of audiovisual technologies, performance spaces, and sound to condition users' horizons of perception. This critical orientation towards sound and technology represents an ethically-complex rhetorical afterlife of Wagnerian artistry and its early reception that so alarmed Adorno that he was moved to label Wagnerian aesthetics "totalitarian."[98]

The ethics of Wagnerian spectacle—that it really *could* control the body and mind with an almost totalitarian force—was shaped by ethical complications central to the Romantic discourses of nature that inspired it. Epistemologies of climate provided Wagner with a seemingly guaranteed mode of "deterministic" bodily and affective control over spectators. Capitulating to the composer's own fantasies of control, many period spectators—even those as skeptical and paranoid as Eduard Hanslick—conceded that their bodies and minds were no longer their own as they were immersed, as Nietzsche suggested with opprobrium, in Wagnerian "humidity," "climate," and "steam" emanating from the orchestra pit and stage.[99] Wagnerian listening, then—much like listening to or simply experiencing nature, according to period thought—was cast by early critics as convincing and suggestive, whether the acculturative or physical change they claimed was "real," "imaginary," or some meta-historiographical in-between.

The discursive, methodological, and critical afterlives of these Wagnerian—and broadly Romantic—rhetorical and dramaturgical inventions could be read as absorbing the ethical suspicions of Wagnerian spectatorial control as they are refigured around the composer's unacknowledged influence. For instance, if media archeology grows infinitely "deep" when figured into the composer's Romantic legacy—the idea that new media can not only be traced back to Wagnerian artistic technologies (as Friedrich Kittler argued), but was prefigured by the composer's auto-archaeological claims that his own technologies were a product of nature—is this methodology colored in some way by the coercive ethics

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Past; and Noam Elcott, *Artificial Darkness: An Obscure History of Modern Art and Media* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

[96] Žižek, "Why is Wagner Worth Saving?" in Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, 1-12.

[97] See, for instance, Millington, "Wagner Washes Whiter," *Musical Times*, Vol. 137/1846 (December 1996): 5-8; and Hans Rudolf Vaget, "Wagner, Anti-Semitism, and Mr. Rose: Merkwürd'ger Fall!" *German Quarterly*, Vol. 66/2 (Spring 1993): 222-36.

[98] Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, xii.

[99] Hanslick, "R. Wagner's Bühnenfestspiel in Bayreuth," 155; trans. in Hanslick, "Dr. Hanslick on the 'Ring des Nibelungen,'" 330. Nietzsche, *Der Fall Wagner*, 7; trans. in Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner*, 7-8.

central to Wagnerian aesthetic thought and Romantic discourses of nature?[100] What are the ethical implications of associating audiovisual technological determinism with Adorno, Wagner, and Romantic atmospheric culture? And, finally, what of the legacy of Romantic environmentalism? Wagner's treatment of nature in his writings and on stage is built on the backs of Jews, discrimination making possible his valorization of Teutonic identity as an exclusive product of engagement with the forest. Re-inscription of alterity is often regarded as a central, unfortunate truth of environmental conservation today.

Where, then, do the ethical implications of Wagnerian or Romantic influence begin and end? Under what circumstances are they excised from one afterlife and magnified in another, the bio-politics of nineteenth-century atmospheric culture stretching from the Wagnerian stage to media theory to Anthropocene studies and back again? Perhaps we are all unwilling and unwitting Wagnerian spectators, even now: whether participating in environmental efforts or writing on technology and the senses, we continue to participate in the composer's atmospherically-bound practices and rhetoric, designed for a theater in Bavaria but reaching beyond its walls and informing how we write about sound, technology, and space. Wagner could be understood, then, as creating a ubiquitous "climatic" art that has infiltrated a range of disciplines, lexicons, and methods, underwritten the relationships between users and interfaces—performative, spatial, environmental, multi-medial, sonic, technological—and figured a meta-historiography of aesthetic and technological experience neither "real" nor "imaginary," of the past nor of the present.

[100] Kreuzer, "Kittler's Wagner and Beyond" in "Discrete/Continuous: Music and Media Theory After Kittler," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 70/1 (2017): 228-32.

Chapter 2

Ears, Eyes, and Shivering Limbs: Theater as Forest, Forest as Theater in *Siegfried*

"Ear and eye, as soul and heart."

—Richard Wagner (1850)[101]

Having ventured into the forest, Wieland the Smith, Wagner's hero before Siegfried, encounters a songbird—blind yet singing Teutonic truths into the "endless night."[102] As he listens in the darkness, Wieland wishes to become a bird himself such that he might fly through the forest and vanquish his enemies; but first he must learn to "sing like the songster of the forest."[103] Wieland's Teutonic power is depicted here as derived from listening to—and mimicking—the forest turned to song, sight excised from that process of Germanic enlightenment. In his prose writings, Wagner revisited again and again the Romantic discourse of nature and identity that underwrote Wieland's fantasy, often describing the eye as perceiving only the "outer," superficial world, while the ear had access "inner," Teutonic truths—including those embedded in the forest or in nature turned to song.[104]

Addressing his readers, he suggested in "The Artwork of the Future" that it is primarily through auditory engagement with nature and his derivative artwork that his audience might understand the contours of their true Teutonic identity as their modern ears "[bended] to sacred hymns whose melodious string of words was wafted by breezes from the temple on the mountaintop."[105] This essay and others, then, not only participate in Romantic discourses of nature, but invoke attendant ideologies of the senses that traced personal enlightenment to perceptual acuity mediated by nature channeled into his work of art. Wagner's contemporaries also asked if the eye or the ear was the ideal conduit for gaining insight into occluded German ideals embedded in the Teutonic forest—they, like Wagner, often granted that role to the ear.

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[101] Wagner, "Die Kunst und die Revolution," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 11 ("Auge und Ohr, wie Geist und Herz"); trans. in Wagner, "Art and Revolution," *The Artwork of the Future and Other Prose Works*, 33.

[102] Wagner, "Wieland der Schmied," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 180; trans. in Wagner, "Wieland the Smith," *The Artwork of the Future and Other Prose Works*, 245. Wagner completed a prose draft of "Wieland the Smith" (*Wieland der Schmied*) in 1849-50.

[103] Wagner, "Wieland der Schmied," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 180; trans. in Wagner, "Wieland the Smith," 245-6.

[104] Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 83-4; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 112-113.

[105] Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 84; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 113.

But, in his treatment of these discourses, Wagner did not simply muse on nature, its accessibility to the senses, or the "cognitive value" of each "sensory sphere."[106] Instead, his writings on these subjects outline the terms of his ideology of artistic engagement, bound up in discourses of nature and the senses, and presented as an alternative to the ear- and culture-defeating strains of modern opera. In "The Artwork of the Future," "Art and Climate," "Heroism and Christianity," and other essays, the composer prescribes an ideal mode of sensory engagement with nature and with his work of art by describing how the ear engages the "inner" world of both in tandem. Probing and ultimately collapsing the distinction between nature and art, the composer suggests that auditory engagement with his art was akin to listening to the sounds of the forest: like nature, his spectacles, too, would reshape the "soul" of the bourgeois spectator by teaching him to use the ear to gain rarified "ear-wisdom" instead of spurious eye-wisdom from intense aural engagement with his own "climatic" art.[107]

As David Levin has argued, Wagner's *Ring* project "reflects and renders" the "circumstances of its conception" by facilitating spectatorial "absorption in the tragic Teutonic truths proffered in and by the artwork of the future."[108] I shall argue in this chapter that the *Ring*'s third installment partially set in a forest, *Siegfried*, might be read as an allegory for the auditory regime central to the "circumstances of its conception." *Siegfried* is much more than an aural *Bildungsreis,* meant to foster an enlightened German public, like so many others in the Romantic canon: it is a drama about Wagner's own ideology of *Gesamtkunstwerk* and vision for how the German public might acquire free will and subjectivity via aural experience of art and nature. As Siegfried learns to engage productively with nature's sounds, he models an ideal mode of engagement with the Wagnerian work of art, metaphorically reflected in his journey through the forest and its sounds. Even Mime's scenes of dysfunctional engagement with nature might be understood as reflecting these lessons, his relationship with nature colored by the discriminatory undertones shared by nineteenth-century discourses of nature and the

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[106] On the "cognitive value" of each of the sense according to Herder and his interlocutors, see Jeffrey Barnouw, "The Cognitive Value of Confusion and Obscurity in the German Enlightenment: Leibniz, Baumgarten, and Herder," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, Vol. 24 (1995): 29-50; and Katherine Arens, "Kant, Herder, and Psychology" in *Herder Today: Contributions from the International Herder Conference* (1987), 190-206.

[107] On the cultivating of the "soul" through the training of the senses, see Bernd Fischer, "Toward a constructivist epistemology: Johann Gottfried Herder and Humberto Maturana," *European Legacy: New Paradigms*, Vol. 2/2 (1997): 304-8. The phrase "ear-wisdom" is a play on Nietzsche's consummating phrase "bird-wisdom" that ends his *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, which refers to the process of gaining "the most spiritual human will to power" by "defeating the spirit of gravity" (Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching: An Interpretation of Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 244).

[108] David J. Levin, "The Mise-en-Scène of Mediation: Wagner's 'Götterdämmerung' (Stuttgart Opera, Peter Konwitschny, 2000-2005," *Opera Quarterly*, Vol. 27/2-3 (Spring-Summer, 2011): 220.

Wagnerian artistic ideology.[109] Carolyn Abbate has suggested that Wagner's narrative mode often "reminds us that our experience of his [dramatic enactment] … is the inversion of his own creative process."[110] *Siegfried*, I shall suggest, not only provides a blueprint of the opera's genetic process, but also encodes in its narrative strategies for viewing and listening that are outlined in the composer's theoretical texts.

Siegfried and Mime's sensory engagement with the forest is also mirrored in Wagner's score: for instance, Siegfried's shifting identity as ideal Romantic "listener" of nature (and ideal Wagnerian listener) is tracked in the orchestra's whispers and roars that follow his footsteps through two of the Act II "Forest Murmurs," providing lessons in ideal Romantic engagement of nature and Wagnerian art for spectators.[111] Taking these moments as case studies, I ask: how does our understanding of Wagner's use of the orchestra as an emotional vehicle or "endless melodies" as sonic representatives of heroic identity change if we treat this score as a commentary on its own dramatic existence as both subject and object of audiovisual study, almost a self-referential guide to its own analysis? In treating these scenes as assemblages of Romantic sensory information, I suggest that Wagnerian analysis might take on new, historically-embedded political stakes. As spectators learn to listen to the forest (and to the Wagnerian artwork) with Siegfried, they, too, might be subject to Teutonic conditioning, Wagnerian nature retraining their perceptual faculties just as nature does for Siegfried.

In *Siegfried*, Wagner obscures any distinction between nature and art, as well as ideal, "German" interactions with them, his characters performing that ontological hybridity on stage. The epistemological inseparability of nature and art is reminiscent of John Durham Peters' "media philosophy of nature."[112] At the end of this chapter, I ask what changes about our definitions of new media and understanding of our interactions with it (and with nature) if we locate Peters' claims within Romantic thought.

Nature and the Artwork of the Future between Eye and Ear

Attacking critics and their love of the "ear-tickling" melodies of the modern opera house, Wagner wrote in 1848: "Music-scholars should remove their spectacles and listen for once. Give up their sermonizing and learn the lesson of a noble melody"—one derived from nature.[113] Throughout Wagner's writings, he described a perceptual regime that positioned the auditory over the optical as the ideal sensory mode for absorbing the subjective truths of Teutonic nature, extending that intellectual frame to his anti-modern work of art, derived

[109] On the wide-ranging differences between "German" and "other" common in German Romantic thought, see Weiner, *Wagner and the Anti-Semitic Imagination*; Treitel, *Eating Nature in Modern Germany*; Sara Eigen and Mark Larrimore, ed., *The German Invention of Race* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2006); and Lekan, *Imagining the Nation in Nature.*
[110] Abbate, *Unsung Voices* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 161.
[111] Karol Berger, *Beyond Reason: Wagner contra Nietzsche* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2016), 128.
[112] Peters, *The Marvelous Clouds*, 380, 10.
[113] Wagner, "Bellini," *SSD*, Vol. 12, 19; trans. in Wagner, "Bellini," *Posthumous, etc.*, trans. Ellis. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1852-1919), 67.

from the German forest. In "The Artwork of the Future," he describes this relationship and advantages of auditory perception for achieving enlightenment:

> The inner man can only find *direct* communication through the ear and that by means of *his voice's* Tone… Through the sense of hearing, Tone urges forth from the feeling of one heart to the feeling of its fellow. […][114]

> We cannot give up our metaphor of the Ocean for picturing Tone's nature… Sound itself [is] her fluent, native element… the eye knows but the surface of this sea; its depth alone the heart [by way of the ear] can fathom… Man dives into this sea… his heart feels widened wondrously when he peers down into this depth, pregnant with unimaginable possibilities whose bottom his eye shall never plumb, whose seeing bottomlessness thus fills him with the sense of marvel and the presage of Infinity. It is the depth and infinity of Nature itself who veils from the prying eye of Man the unfathomable womb of her eternal yearning… even because man's eye can only grasp the already manifested, the Blossom, the Begotten, the Fulfilled. This Nature is, however, none other than the nature of the human heart itself.[115]

His work of art, then, would provide spectators the opportunity to access the "depths" of nature and the human heart, containing truths of mankind—if only they would allow their modern ears to be open to them.

Wagner derived the intellectual outlines of this perceptual regime and its relationship to nature (and to art) from interlocutors in natural philosophy and philosophy of language, including Herder, Rousseau, and Goethe. The sensory hierarchy he created—one that preferences the ear over the eye—was common among eighteenth- and nineteenth-century thinkers who identified nature as endowing its early inhabitants with distinct social, cultural, and even physiological and physiognomic traits. In his *Fragments* (1764-7) and *Treatise on the Origins of Language* (1772), for instance, Herder set out the terms of such a sensory regime: he argued that the "enlightened man" is the "hearer of all things," for those willing to listen can find the "whole of nature [resounding]" in the musical and linguistic sounds produced by mankind, its ancestors having listened to nature and learned to speak and sing from it.[116] Similarly, in Goethe's *Doctrine of Color* (1810), he asked

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[114] Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 64; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 91.

[115] Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 82-83; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 112-113.

[116] Ernest A. Menze, *Johann Gottfried von Herder: Selected Early Works, 1764-1767* (State College, PA: Penn State Press, 2010), 15, 106, 176; Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Philosophical Works*, trans. Michael Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 336. As Herder explains, this "engagement with nature" that gave way to language included the "rushing with the whirlwind, resounding in battle, raging with the sea, roaring with the river, cracking with the collapsing rock, and speaking with the animals" (Herder, "Fragments on Recent German Literature," trans. Forster, 61).

readers to "shut [their] eyes" and "open [their] ears"—in so doing, he explained, "nature speaks."[117] Rousseau made analogous claims, arguing that "the ear and music produce the animate quality of nature, whereas the reproductions of vision remain inanimate."[118] Like his predecessors, Wagner crafted an epistemology of nature that privileged the ear as most capable of gaining insight into enlightened, Germanic values latent within German nature. Nature and its "inner feelings" were latent in his rarified work of art, he claimed in "The Artwork of the Future," his melodic inventions a "breeze from the mountain-top" to be absorbed through the ear.[119]

Channeling Teutonic nature into the theater and into "Sound" and "Tone," Wagner imagined that his work of art would not just enlighten modern man via the ear, but condition a total transformation—or "bending"—of its physiology and horizons of perception by exposing it to the right sounds.[120] In "The Artwork of the Future," Wagner lamented that modern German perceptual faculties were not functioning as they should (and that he would provide a solution): German spectators were not using their ears to find enlightenment in nature or in art as Herder, Goethe, and others imagined. Instead, "the march of human evolution [had regressed] from need to satisfaction" or from embrace of nature and "need" to "the luxury of the rich."[121] "Modern opera [had] de-potenced the ear" of the bourgeois public, he claimed in one essay fragment, such that it could "no longer could take in the music intensively," its powers of perception having been dulled by "the unconditioned ear-delight of Melody."[122] These modern "conditions [must be] heaved away," he argued, and replaced with "conditions of True Art… blossoming in like fullness and perfection with Mother Nature" to manifest "perfected mankind; i.e. of men who are all that which of their essence they can be, and therefore should be," total reform derived from sound.[123]

As we saw in Chapter 1, an essential element in Wagner's plan for the renewal of artistic experience—and by extension, of Teutonic body and character—was the force not only of nature, but of climate, a term central to the ideologies elaborated in the 1850 essay

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[117] Paul Bishop, ed., *Analytical Psychology and German Classical Aesthetics: Goethe, Schiller and Jung*, Vol. 2 (London: Routledge, 2009), 57-8.
[118] Michael Steinberg, *Listening to Reason: Culture, Subjectivity, and Nineteenth-Century Music* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 54.
[119] Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 84; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 113.
[120] Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 84; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 113. On epistemologies and hierarchies of hearing from antiquity onwards (including sensory hierarchies expressed in liturgical texts), see Diane Ackerman, *A Natural History of the Senses* (New York, NY: Knopf, 1990); and Constance Classen, *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Age of Empire*, Vol. 1-6 (London: Bloomsbury, 2016); and esp. Jütte, *A History of the Senses*.
[121] Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 99; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 82.
[122] Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 304; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 129.
[123] Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 99; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 82.

"Art and Climate." Wagner and the thinkers from whom he drew did not regard nature as monolithic: it was divided into spheres, each of which gave way to different shades of mankind, endowed with distinct sets of ears shaped by their native climate and the influences of its air, temperature, humidity, and, crucially, its soundscapes. Herder and Montesquieu had advanced the argument that distinct climatic zones acted on the senses differently, conditioning divergent manners, habits, and tastes. In his 1770 treatise *Spirit of the Laws*, Montesquieu wrote that air temperature contracted and relaxed "the body's surface fibers," nerves, and blood flow, either cultivating or sapping "strength of spirit, manners and vices."[124] Around the same time Herder was arguing in his "On Change in Taste" (1766) and *Treatise on the Origins of Language* (1772) that all "manner of thought and taste changes with climate," as does the "physical formations of the different races of human beings."[125]

In "Art and Climate," Wagner imagined that the "depths of the northern forest" could entrain strong, German values in those traversing it not just through generic exposure to its atmosphere and soil. Instead, one must "listen for… [his own] consciousness" in "surrounding Nature" and in the work of art that channeled it.[126] As he suggested in an 1865 essay proposing a national conservatory in Munich, singing his revolutionary melodies would retrain and Teutonicize the "artistic organs" of performers (tongue, lungs, and throat), while, as he suggests in "The Artwork of the Future," listening to those "artistic organs" project nature into the auditorium would do the same for the opera audience's perceptual faculties.[127] The "flower-land of India" (or, indeed, the "costly [French] places of entertainment") would do the opposite for the body.[128] Here, the composer participates in the post-Enlightenment critique of ocular-centrism, by proffering ear over eye and his modern art as primarily accessible to the latter; Romantic nature has *always* privileged the ear, he seems to suggest, doubling down on this critique by making it seem "natural" and

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[124] Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, ed. and trans. Anne M. Cohler, Basia C. Miller, and Harold S. Stone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 231-4.
[125] Herder, *Philosophical Writings*, 247, 336.
[126] Wagner, "Kunst und Klima," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 208-9 trans. in Wagner, "Art and Climate," 252-3.
[127] Wagner, "Bericht an Seine Majestät den König Ludwig II. von Bayern über eine in München zu errichtende deutsche Musikschule," *SSD*, Vol. 8, 133; trans. in Wagner, "Music-School for Munich," *Art and Politics*, trans. Ellis (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Trübner, 1895), 183.
[128] Wagner, "Kunst und Klima," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 209; trans. in Wagner, "Art and Climate," 253. Wagner, "Bericht an Seine Majestät den König Ludwig II. von Bayern über eine in München zu errichtende deutsche Musikschule," *SSD*, Vol. 8, 133; trans. in Wagner, "Music-School for Munich," 183. The nineteenth-century witnessed widespread fascination with nature and the senses, including newfound interest among medical doctors and "nature therapists" with the physiology and functioning of the ear, an extension of sustained, intellectual interest in cultural epistemologies of sound and perception of it. On nineteenth-century theories and experimental work on the physiology of hearing, see Robert V. Baloh, *Vertigo: Five Physician Scientists and the Quest for a Cure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) and Robert Jütte, *A History of the Senses: from Antiquity to Cyberspace*, trans. James Lynn (Cambridge: Polity, 2005).

inevitable that the ear hold preference over the eye.[129] By 1881, after he had encountered Arthur de Gobineau's writings on the "inequalities of man," Wagner argued that his works, derived from the "father-soil" itself, would "cleanse corrupted [German] blood" and the "temperaments and moral qualities proceeding from them."[130] Exposure to Wagner's music dramas would make healthy "defective [modern] bodies" and cultivate an entirely new "human species."[131]

In formulating this theory of the senses, Wagner drew on a range of contemporary social ideologies that linked cultural change to physiological conditioning. "Back-to-nature" movements (including *Lebensreform* and nature therapy movements, popular in the 1870s and 1880s) were founded on the idea that German identity, *völkisch* physiology, ethics, and national health could be cultivated through exposure to the forest climate. Hiking (or "wandern," to use the German word) was regarded as a "tool for reforming Germany."[132] As Wilhelm Riehl (1823-1897) explained in his *Natural History of the German People* (1854), "renewal" of the "life source of the Nordic race" (its blood) might transpire in the forest through exposure to its soil, sounds, and air.[133] The biological politics and social Darwinism behind these social movements held that the ear could be remade with a distinctly German character.[134]

Emil Adolf Roßmäßler (1806-67), botanist and founder of the German *wandern* movement, encouraged Germans to listen as they walked among the trees, arguing that

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[129] Arens, "Kant, Herder, and Psychology," 190. For critiques of "ocular-centrism" in Western culture, see Jay, *Downcast Eyes*; and David M. Levin, ed., *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993).

[130] Wagner, "Heldentum und Christentum," *SSD*, Vol. 10, 275; trans. Wagner, "Hero-dom and Christiandom," 277.

[131] Wagner, "Heldentum und Christentum," *SSD*, Vol. 10, 275; trans. Wagner, "Hero-dom and Christiandom," 277.

[132] On the *Lebensreform* movement and its "biological politics," see Paul Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism, 1870-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); John Alexander Williams, *Turning to Nature in Germany: Hiking, Nudism, and Conservation, 1900-1940* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007); and Matthew Jeffries, "Lebensreform: A Middle-Class Antidote to Wilhelminism?" in Geoff Eley and James Retallack, eds., *Wilhelminism and Its Legacies: German Modernities, Imperialism, and the Meanings of Reform, 1890-1930* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2003), 91-106. The *wandern* movement is, according to Marion de Ras, best defined not as "hiking" but as "aspects of a culture that went back to the Middle Ages. [It was presented] as 'natural,' as 'healthy,' as 'ethical,' as Germany. […] 'To wander' was presented as a tool towards reforming Germany" (de Ras, *Body, Femininity and Nationalism: Girls in the German Youth Movement, 1900-1934* (London: Routledge, 2008), 9).

[133] Gesine Gerhard, "Breeding Pigs and People for the Third Reich," Franz-Josef Brüggemeier, Mark Cioc, and Thomas Zeller, ed., *How Green Were the Nazis? Nature, Environment, and Nation in the Third Reich* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2005), 131-2.

[134] Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism*, 21.

social enrichment would be acquired through focused perceptual interaction with the environment. Roßmäßer claimed that the ears of modern Germans were "underdeveloped": the contemporary public moved through the forest with little more than "half-closed eyes" leading the way; he goes on to suggest that the eye is insufficient for accessing the secrets of the forest.[135] Listening to the forest would ultimately condition greater social unity and *völkisch* homogeneity in body and mind.[136] Similarly, conservationist Ernst Rudorff (1840-1916) called on Germans to "listen to the tone" of the "holy oak forest" "that speaks of the national spirit."[137] It was in the sound of the forest—especially the oak, a symbol of German culture dating to ancient times—that "sows the roots of German essence," he argued.[138] In order for the "soul" of the average German to achieve liberal "education and enlightenment" and learn his place in the "Fatherland," he needed to use his ears more than any other "receptive organ" while outdoors.[139] Wagner envisioned a theatrical and artistic paradigm that would approximate the experience of hiking in the forest—but turned up the volume on the forest's soundscapes to reform the listener's horizons of perception.

Listening to the Forest with Siegfried, Mime, and the Wagnerian Spectator, c. 1876

When Wagner's Siegfried traverses the forest environment described by Herder, Roßmäßler, Rudorff, and, indeed, Wagner, he is initially "deaf" to nature—and "dull" and "foolish" as a result, but eventually learns to listen to the forest. This transformation can be read through intersecting discursive lenses. On the one hand, it carries a set of lessons on Teutonic listening practices derived from discourses of nature and perception. At the same time, Siegfried's education could serve as a guide to Wagner's anti-modern auditory ideals and the post-Enlightenment critique of "ocular-centrism" that informed them.

Siegfried's journey towards sensory and social fulfilment begins with an explanation of his initial resistance, a defiant position shaped by prolonged exposure to the "foreign" Mime and his backward sensory regime (eventually cast as an anti-Semitic caricature of the senses). In the first scene of the drama he proclaims:

Gern bleib' ich taub und dumm…	I'd rather stay deaf and dumb…
Glaub' ich nicht mir dem Ohr,	Believing not my ears,
Glaub' ich nur mit dem Aug'.[140]	But only my eyes.

[135] Wilson, *The German Forest*, 28.
[136] Wilson, *The German Forest*, 181.
[137] Wilson, *The German Forest*, 43.
[138] Wilson, *The German Forest*, 43. On the meaning of the "oak" in German aesthetics and natural history, see Lucia Impelluso, *Nature and Its Symbols* (Los Angeles, CA: Getty, 2003), 62-5; and Carole M. Cusack, *The Sacred Tree: Ancient and Medieval Manifestations* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars), 89-120.
[139] Wilson, *The German Forest*, 43.
[140] Wagner, *Siegfried* (Mainz: Schott, 1876), Act I, scene 1. Wagner, "Siegfried," *SSD*, Vol. 6, 91; translations adapted from Wagner, *Siegfried*, trans. Andrew Porter (London: John Calder, 1984), 68. All subsequent quotations from the libretto refer to this edition and translation.

After fleeing Mime's visually-dominated world, Siegfried enters the forest alone for the first time in Act II. It is there that he learns to listen:

(Wachsendes Waldweben…	(The forest murmurs increase…
Er lauscht mit wachsender Teilnahme	He listens with growing interest
einem Waldvogel	to a bird
in den Zwicken über ihm.)	in the branches above him.)
Gewiss sagt' es mir was…	I'm sure you have something to tell me…
Wie das wohl möglich wär'?	How can I learn your tongue? …
Entrat' ich der Worte,	Your words I will echo,
Achte der Weise,	Mimic your warbling,
Sing ich so seine Sprache,	and sing your language,
Versteh' ich wohl auch,	and then I will understand
was es spricht.[141]	what you say!

As branches stir above his head, Siegfried learns the language of the forest by listening to his surroundings for the first time. A path of sound unfolds before him in the wooded soil, nature's now-audible signs leading him towards his heroic destiny.

In this moment in Act II, Siegfried manages to do what Nietzsche qualifies as beyond "the spirit of gravity" (but key to "refreshing mankind and transforming the world into a garden"): he listens to birdsong to better understand the lessons of Teutonic subjectivity latent in the forest's soil, water, and air.[142] But it is only after several failed attempts at recalibrating the visual and the auditory that Siegfried acquires the ability to communicate directly with the wood-bird. As Daniel Foster notes, after each of these unsuccessful interactions, Siegfried seems sure that his *eyesight* will improve, perpetuating the sensory regime Mime imposes upon him in Act I.[143] But, to his surprise, Siegfried grows capable of *hearing* the wisdom of the forest and its birds after slaying the dragon Fafner. It is not that act of violent aggression that changes his ears, however—it follows his ingestion of Fafner's blood. Nature enters Siegfried's bloodstream and transforms him from within, just as Wagner fantasized of his work of art and its impact on spectators.

Siegfried's ingestion of nature's blood—a metaphor, perhaps, for spectators' absorption of the Wagnerian aesthetic and its consequences, and for the cleansing of German blood Wagner and his contemporaries viewed as a byproduct of sensory experience of nature—accompanies another mode of engagement with the forest, Siegfried's discovery of wandering. Early in Act I, Mime derides Siegfried for walking freely through the forest (he uses *laufen*, *kehren*, and *schweifen*), describing it as an activity meant "solely for pleasure"; Mime's inability to recognize (or even name) the rarified nature of an activity equivalent to Romantic "wandering" (*wandern*) underscores his

[141] Wagner, *Siegfried*, Act II, scene 2. Wagner, "Siegfried," *SSD*, Vol. 6, 135; trans. adapted from Wagner, *Siegfried*, trans. Porter, 97.
[142] As Lawrence Lampert explains, for Nietzsche, listening to and mimicking birds will provide "bird-wisdom," ideals central to "a new human spirit" for its transcendence of the earthly (Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teachings*, 244).
[143] Daniel H. Foster, *Wagner's Ring Cycle and the Greeks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 172.

identity as "foreign," Jewish, and an embodiment of the flaws of contemporary, bourgeois culture.[144] But Siegfried returns again and again to this activity, eventually declaring to his captor that his fate lies in walking in the forest and taking flight, like a bird or the wind:

Aus dem Wald fort	Through the wide world
In die Welt ziehn:	I shall roam,
Nimmer kehr' ich zurück!	Never more to return! […]
Wie der Fisch froh	As the fish swims
In der Flut schwimmt,	Through the waters,
Wie der Fink frei	As the bird flies
Sich davon schwingt:	Through the branches,
Flieg' ich von hier,	So I shall fly,
Flut davon,	Floating afar,
Wie der Wind übern Wald	Like the wind through the wood
Weh' ich dahin![145]	Wafting away!

As Siegfried explores the forest, Mime stays remains unenlightened, living in the forest but incapable of hearing its messages, like an incompetent listener. Just as Wagner caricatures Mime by rendering his voice as strident and inarticulate sobs and wails, approximating Wagner's abhorrent depiction of Jewish speech in his "Judaism in Music" (1850; rev. 1869), he associates the dwarf here with the "blind dullness" of the "public spirit" of the ordinary operagoer and with the ineptitudes of taste and musical discernment of which Wagner accused his Jewish critics.[146]

Throughout the opera's first two acts, Mime is Siegfried's inept guide. Mime experiences the world around him primarily through vision, as indicated when he cautions Siegfried against the terrors of the forest in darkness:

Wenn dein Blick verschwimmt,	When your eyes grow dim,
Der Boden dir schwankt,	Your body grows weak,
Im Busen bang	When trembling shudders
Dein Herz erbebt…	Fill your heart…
Fühltest du nie	Have you never felt
Im finstren Wald,	In the gloomy forest,
Bei Dämmerschein	When twilight falls

[144] Wagner, *Siegfried*, Act I, scene 1.
[145] Wagner, "Siegfried," *SSD*, Vol. 6, 99; trans. adapted from Wagner, *Siegfried*, trans. Porter, 73.
[146] Wagner, "Das Judentum in der Musik," *SSD*, Vol. 5, 82; trans. in Wagner, "Judaism in Music," *Judaism in Music and Other Essays*, trans. Ellis (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Trübner, 1907), 110. On the cultural associations of Wagner's "Jewish" characters, see among many sources: Paul Lawrence Rose, *Wagner: Race and Revolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994); Vaget, "Wagner, Anti-Semitism, and Mr. Rose: Merkwürd'ger Fall!"; and Grey and Kirsten Paige, "Reassessing Anti-Semitism in 'Die Meistersinger': The Owl, the Nightingale, and the Jew in the Thorn-bush," *Cambridge Opera Journal*, Vol. 28/1 (March 2016): 1-36.

Am dunkeln Ort…	In some dark spot…
Zu Leib dir schwebt…	Horror grips your limbs,
Glühnender Schauer	Shivery shaking,
Schüttelt die Glieder…[147]	Quivery quaking…

Mime's lingering fear of the forest—and by extension of German cultural identity—is exactly what inept Jewish critics deserved, Wagner tauntingly suggested: "Even today it would do no harm for example if the Jews learned to be afraid. Each day they are becoming more insolent."[148]

Like those of Alberich, Beckmesser, and Kundry, Mime's "watery eyes" "droop" and fail.[149] He has no hope of understanding the "inner world" of the German forest, even if he were to fully invest himself and his senses in it—his senses are simply inadequate. Mime's body "quakes" and "shivers" as his body unmasks his internalization of his identity as non-German "other" fearful of the forest. The sensations Mime describes recall Feuerbach's allegations of Judaism as a "gastronomic cult" that, as Sigmund Freud argued, gave Jews a "diseased stomach" that represented their "internalization of Jewish difference" (this idea was so widespread in the nineteenth century that "Jewish stomach" was medical shorthand for "chronic dyspepsia").[150] Mime's alterity—from his persistent fear of the forest felt in his "other"-ed body to his inadequate, static senses and lack of sonic awareness—is inscribed into these scenes and reinforced through his maladroit engagement with the natural environment so critical for Siegfried and the German audience's social and physical development. Despite the occasional statements of Wagner and his contemporaries to the contrary, not *all* Europeans could be enriched by the Teutonic or its approximation in his artworks. Some, like Jews, held unwavering genetic resistance to the various influences of the trees, that discriminatory "lacking" critical to its mythology and the composer's artistic ideology.

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[147] Wagner, "Siegfried," *SSD*, Vol. 6, 112; trans. adapted from Wagner, *Siegfried*, trans. Porter, 82-3.

[148] Leon Poliakov, *The History of Anti-Semitism*, Vol. 3 (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975), 451.

[149] Weiner, *Richard Wagner and the Anti-Semitic Imagination*, 96-7. On Wagner's "Jewish" bodies and their musical awareness, see also Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, esp. "Social Character," 1-17. Weiner's text examines the anatomy of Wagner's Jewish characters, including the senses, placing their bodies into their intellectual historical context, building, in these cases, on the Adorno's observations.

[150] Arnold D. Richards, ed., *The Jewish World of Sigmund Freud: Essays on the Cultural Roots and Problems of Religious Identity* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010), 93; and Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender*, 155. Quoting Daniel Schreber's *Memoirs* (1884): "Concerning the stomach: already during my stay in Flechsig's Asylum the Viennese nerve specialist named in Chapter V miraculously produced in place of my healthy natural stomach a very inferior so-called 'Jew's stomach'" (Gilman, 155). Gilman explains: "In reading [Daniel] Schreber's autobiography, Freud carefully underlined the words 'Jew's stomach' in his copy of the text… For Freud, the image of the diseased body of the Jew sprang from the page only in the image of the stomach… the internalization of Jewish difference" (Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender*, 155).

Many of those in attendance at early performances of *Siegfried* at Bayreuth seemed to feel a continuity between their own experiences of nature and rural Germany and the scenes depicted on stage. After experiencing the "Forest Murmurs" in *Siegfried*, one spectator felt sure that Wagner had "copied bits from the charming valley" of Bayreuth, "the dancing effect of the sunlight falling through the foliage upon the greensward in the second act of *Siegfried* came from watching similar effects under the grand old elms of the [Bayreuth] Hermitage."[151] Another early visitor to Bayreuth wrote that "as I listen to [*Siegfried*], my hands grow into branches, my feet become roots out of which grows a gigantic oak, which by-and-by becomes a forest."[152] Albert Lavignac reported in 1897, "at the end of the act, when the last chord sounded, we start from our ecstasy to go and breathe the pure air outside. Nothing could be more delicious or restful than these *entr'actes* passed in the open air, nor could anything be gayer."[153] Wagner planned as much, writing in a report to King Ludwig II that intermissions were incorporated into performances solely to allow the audience to "stroll in the park around the theater and take refreshment in the outdoors… [such that] they gather again with the same receptivity they had for the first act."[154] In *Siegfried* and at Bayreuth, then, Wagner and his Wagnerians enacted a story of the origins of the composer's artistic project as the composer proffered art and "climate" as two words for the same immersive medium, ideally engaged with ears wide open.

"Forest Murmurs" as Sensory Network: Nature, Melody, and Wagnerian Analysis

Like Siegfried, the ideal Wagnerian would learn to listen to nature from his "total" works of art and learn to listen to his "total" works of art from nature. Like many of his predecessors and contemporaries, throughout his prose writings, Wagner frequently weaves references to nature together with discussions of organic melody and form: "The Artwork of the Future," for instance, contains a lengthy passage comparing his "endless melodies," "sea of harmony," and "ever-widening rings of rhythm" to the "depth and infinity of nature."[155] Is it possible, then, to take Wagner's writings on art, nature, and the senses as a loose guide to analyzing his scores? Such an approach would shift attention from the acquisition of empirical and philosophical knowledge to understanding how specific musical techniques and processes shaped and affected sensory experience, in ways that could have concrete consequences for social formations.

Such a sensory and experiential approach would diverge sharply from the predominantly semiotic mode of musical exegesis based on leitmotives. Leitmotivic

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[151] John P. Jackson, *The Bayreuth of Wagner* (New York, NY: Lovell Co., 1891), 57.
[152] Frances Gerard, *Bayreuth and the Festival Plays* (London: Jarrold & Sons, 1901), 145.
[153] Albert Lavignac, *The Music Dramas of Richard Wagner and His Festival Theater in Bayreuth*, trans. Esther Singleton (London: Dodd & Mead, 1912), 9.
[154] Spotts, *Bayreuth: A History of the Wagner Festival*, 52.
[155] Grey, *Wagner's Musical Prose*, 270. Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 83; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 112. On references to nature in writing on music, see Rehding and Suzannah Clark, ed., *Music Theory and the Natural Order from the Renaissance to the Early Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

analysis stretches back to the premiere of the *Ring* cycle, when Hans von Wolzogen published his guide to the tetralogy's themes, circulated to spectators at the premiere.[156] Learning of Wolzogen's effort, Wagner cautioned against the belief that motifs were "melodic signposts of emotions" and against "putting labels in the scores," complaining that such decoding oversimplified the "system of presentiments and reminiscences" on which his thematic recurrences were built. [157] Wagner's complaints about the rigidity of the guides by Wolzogen and others might be read as indicative of his preference for a mode of multi-sensory perception, shifting focus as the drama unfolds in time.

Siegfried's scenes of self-aware listening—the Act II "Forest Murmurs"—brim with "elemental" music that depicts the forest air, leaves, and soil underfoot.[158] Wagner's "elemental" music is not fully his own, however, nor is its mirroring of Siegfried's interiority or its revelation of his heightened auditory awareness borne of exposure to nature. Borrowing from early Romantic topical treatments of nature—such as pastoral sounds familiar from Beethoven's Symphony No. 6 ("Pastoral") or numerous Lieder by Schubert and others—Wagner eases his audience, familiar with these musical *topoi* and expected listening practices, into sharing in Siegfried's journey.[159] Like Wagner, these composers establish an "elective affinity" between poetic speaker and natural environment joined in a "state of perfect peace and grace," as Susan Youens writes of Schubert.[160] Instead of maintaining a consistent, unbroken affinity between nature and Romantic listener, or expressing a wistful longing for that lost wholeness, the Wagnerian pastoral idiom shifts the terms, exploiting the conventional nature sounds in a program of acculturation for spectators that paralleled Siegfried's own acculturation.[161]

In the "Forest Murmurs," the orchestral motifs that depict Siegfried's surroundings vividly evoke familiar sounds, including the Rhine motif heard in *Das Rheingold* and the music of the "terrible woodland glen" in Weber's *Der Freischütz*. However, these variations on familiar patterns do more than sketch the characters' psychic interiors; they

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[156] Thorau, "Guides for Wagnerites: Leitmotifs and Wagnerian Listening," 133-6.

[157] Grey, ed., *Richard Wagner and His World*, 136, 139. 138; Martin Geck, *Wagner: A Life in Music* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 152. Jean-Jacques Nattiez claims evidence to the contrary, but his evidence only amounts to a note from Wolzogen claiming "Wagner's enthusiastic approval" of this system and his popularization of it (see Nattiez, *Wagner Androgyne: A Study in Interpretation*, trans. Stewart Spencer (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 338).

[158] Berger, *Wagner contra Nietzsche*, 128; Grey, *Wagner's Musical Prose*, 286.

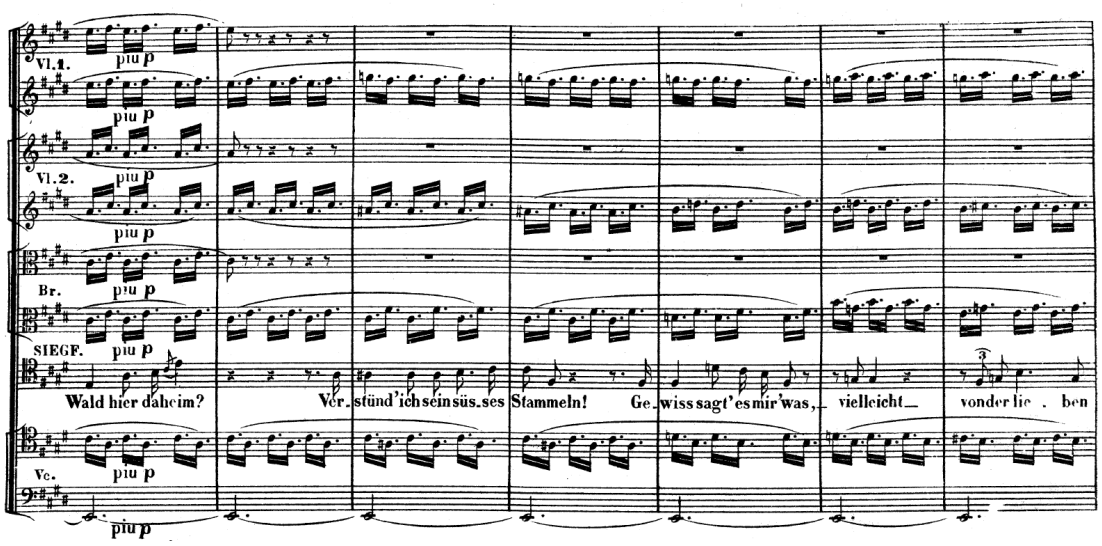
[159] Susan Youens, *Schubert's Poets and the Making of Lieder* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 196. On the "pastoral" idiom in music, see, among many examples, Richard Will, *The Characteristic Symphony in the Age of Haydn and Beethoven* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and Raymond Monelle, *The Musical Topic: Hunt, Military, Pastoral* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006).

[160] Youens, *Schubert's Poets and the Making of Lieder*, 196.

[161] Monelle, *The Musical Topic: Hunt, Military, Pastoral*, 195.

also tell us something about how they listen.[162] In the second statement of the "Forest Murmurs," for instance, the orchestra mirrors differences in Mime and Siegfried's sensory orientation. Mime's embittered commentary overlays Siegfried's enlightened observation of nature. There, the orchestra, though, illustrates Siegfried's state of mind as if Mime is not there. The orchestra's insistent murmurs demand that the audience preference Siegfried's enlightened perceptual frame over Mime's, accepting it as an ideal mode of natural and artistic perception—for themselves, not just Siegfried—and devaluing Mime's impoverished sensorium.

We hear the "Forest Murmurs"—the "unifying musical backbone" of Act II—twice.[163] Subtle changes in vocal style—as well as dynamic levels, orchestration, and treatment of key areas—between the two statements could be read for signs of changes in Siegfried's auditory perception of the forest. The "Forest Murmurs" first appear in Act II before Siegfried has interacted with the wood-bird. As the "Forest Murmurs" unfold around Siegfried for the first time (see Example 1), he is surrounded by sounds of the forest but does not understand them—Mime has trained him to observe nature and his body is following those orders. Here, he calls out to the forest, ears closed and eyes open:



Example 1: Wagner, *Siegfried*
Act II, scene 2: "Forest Murmurs, I." (measures 859-865)[164]

Not only does Wagner mute the strings here (from mm. 868), an orchestral index of Siegfried's deafness, but plagues the forest with a "blend of timbres," interpolating moments of muted "forest melodies" with extended passages of near orchestral silence (mm. 872-879) and blocks of deafening, unmuted sound from the orchestra (mm. 887-899),

[162] Jürgen Maehder, "A Mantle of Sound for the Night: Timbre in *Tristan und Isolde*" in Arthur Groos, ed., *Richard Wagner: Tristan und Isolde* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 97; Berry, *Treacherous Bonds and Laughing Fire*, 74.
[163] Berger, *Beyond Reason*, 128.
[164] Wagner, *Sämtliche Werke* [*SW*], ed. Egon Voss, Klaus Döge, Christa Jost, and Peter Jost, Vol. 12/2 (Mainz: Schott, 2008), 120.

its texture remaining thick, tortuous, and opaque until the fateful appearance of Fafner.[165] This "unstable" timbre, to paraphrase Jürgen Maehder, is "individuated" to accommodate Siegfried and suggests that he does not know what to listen to and what to ignore; he can hear no messages of clarity or purpose from the trees, finding only confusion in their sonic imprints.[166] His "lexical sonorities" seem to add to the confusion: instead of mimicking sounds he hears and producing figurations marked by a corresponding natural formlessness, he declaims his own lack of understanding in fits and starts.[167] He cannot sing to the forest for he cannot hear it, the "contamination" of his perceptual sphere by Mime expressed outwardly in his bristling vocality and uneven audition.

But, even in these moments of deafness, the forest seems to sense his presence—it is not an entirely faithful reflection of his sensorium and feelings, but, subtly, acts as a sonic reflection of its aspirational state. As Siegfried describes the "sweet stammering" of the forest around him and longs to understand it, that "stammering" harmonically shifts around his voice; it refuses to ignore its new inhabitant as it offers harmonic signs of his heroic future embedded into textural unrest. As Siegfried's voice rises chromatically, he vaults beyond the harmonic bounds of the home key—E Major, a key with heroic associations in *Der Ring* and beyond—forcing a sudden A# diminished seventh chord (mm. 861) and a fleeting descent into the parallel minor (mm. 864) over the shimmering, constant E pedal tone.[168] These harmonic maneuvers keep E Major (and the forest) at bay, but only just; he shuttles through a partial circle of fifths here over the pedal tone, but references only leading tones. Even as E Major and the forest's sounds float around him like an inaudible apparition, Siegfried's harmonic detachment and deafness serve to split him from his surroundings and from the heroic disposition E Major represents throughout the tetralogy.[169] As Siegfried remains remote and evades the heroic key the forest refuses to abandon, Wagner implies that, at this point in his heroic development, nature seems more conscious of Siegfried (and of his future) than Siegfried is of it. That division dissipates moments later as Siegfried ingests the blood of Fafner, his ears changing along with his Germanic voice that merges with the orchestra in an "endless," reciprocal cohesion central to Wagner's descriptions of his melodic idiom and conception of the ideal intimate relationship of German man to German nature and art.[170]

The "Forest Murmurs" reappear later in Act II (see Example 2) after Siegfried has tasted the forest's blood and learned to listen to the wood-bird. In its second iteration, the strings are no longer muted (mm. 1208); Siegfried is finally able to hear those sounds of

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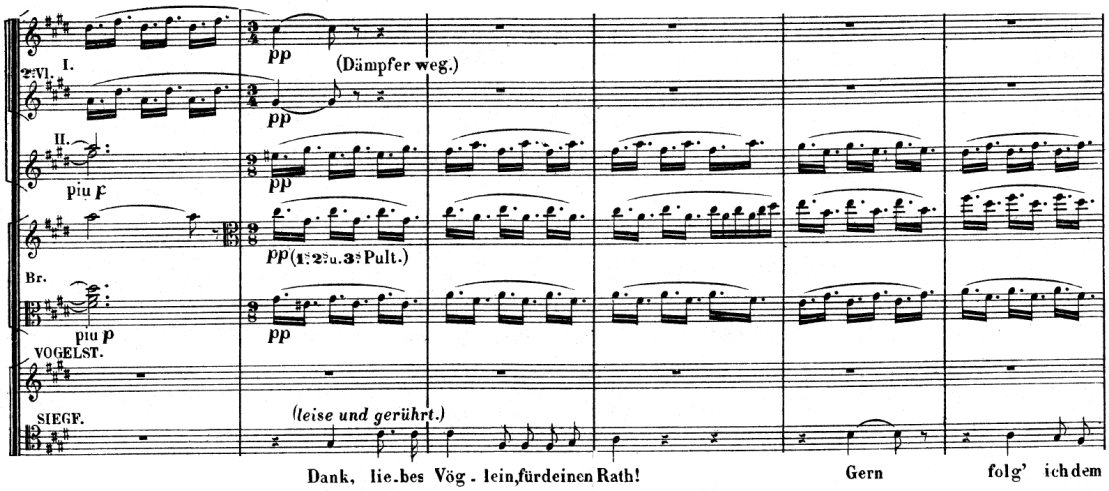
[165] Maehder, "A Mantle of Sound for the Night," 104; Grey, *Wagner's Musical Prose*, 285.
[166] Maehder, "A Mantle of Sound for the Night," 104.
[167] Trippett, *Wagner's Melodies*, 286.
[168] For a cogent overview of the relationship of speech to melody in *The Ring*, see David J. Levin's discussion of *Stabreim* in *Richard Wagner, Fritz Lang, and the Nibelungen: The Dramaturgy of Disavowal* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 45-7.
[169] On E Major in *The Ring*, see Syer, *Wagner's Visions*, 77; Richard Taruskin, "Deeds of Music Made Visible (Class of 1813, I.)," *The Oxford History of Western Music*, Vo. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 537.
[170] Carl Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, trans. Roger Lustig (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 120.

the forest previously beyond the reach of his ears and, for the first time, consciously sing with the forest's tones, his "lexical sonorities" now complementing the forest's sounds and higher meaning.[171] The "forest melodies" Siegfried produces are the product of his aural transformation. This "natural song" "welling up from within" his now healthy, Teutonic "interior body" as, to paraphrase Roland Barthes writing on Schubert's Piano Trio, D. 898, while "listening," Siegfried sings "the *Lied* within [himself]."[172] The horn has finally been replaced by the more natural materiality of voice (mm. 1208), now transformed by forest listening:



Example 2: Wagner, *Siegfried*
Act II, scene 2: "Forest Murmurs, II." (measures 1207-1212)[173]

As Thomas Grey has shown, Siegfried's auditory awareness of the forest is indexed in the transformation of the wood-bird's song, which evolves into "articulate speech" from the "melodious chirping of flute, oboe, and clarinet" it had been a moment before (and from instrumentality to vocality, mirroring Siegfried's transition from horn to song).[174] Soon Siegfried's voice begins to acquire some of the acuity of his ears as he mimics the bird's *Stabreim*—the composer's term for "primitive emotional 'song' that registered emotional impulses of the early human and his responses to the environment."[175]

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[171] Trippett, *Wagner's Melodies*, 286.
[172] Roland Barthes, "The Romantic Song," *The Responsibility of Forms*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), 289; quoted in J.Q. Davies, *Romantic Anatomies of Performance* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014), 3-4.
[173] Wagner, "Siegfried," *SW*, 170-1.
[174] Grey, "Music as Natural Language in the Moral Order of Wagner's *Ring*: *Siegfried*, Act 2, Scene 3," James Sampson and Bennett Zon, ed., *Nineteenth-Century Music: Selected Proceedings of the Tenth International Conference* (London: Routledge, 2016), 41.
[175] Grey, "Music as Natural Language in the Moral Order of Wagner's *Ring*," 41.

Here, Siegfried and Mime share the stage, but only Siegfried can hear the forest. Siegfried comments on the forest's presence with refigured melodic style, his shapeless, "endless melodies" intended as evidence of his acquisition of the "warbling throat" (*Kehlschlag*) of a songbird, as he writes of idealized performance of "natural song" in "The Artwork of the Future," cultivated here by his newfound auditory awareness of his forest environment.[176] Siegfried's "endless melodies" match the wood-bird's song, Wagner's folkloric reconstruction of a "voice of the forest."[177] This refined vocality lacks trite conventional formulae or even cadences; following the composer's prose writings, Siegfried's "artistic organs" seem to have evolved here as he leaves behind the jagged speech that had marked his voice earlier in the act.[178]

Reading *Siegfried*'s score as a set of sensory signs both liberates and tethers Wagner's score to his theoretical writings, and to the composer's presumed intentions. The unfolding of melody and treatment of the orchestra in these scenes from *Siegfried* could be understood as reflecting traces of Wagnerian artistic ideologies and the many foundational discourses that lie behind them. Scanning Wagner's scores for hints of and commentaries on sensory perception adumbrates a new kind of analysis, one that ventures beyond the narrow channels of musical structure and poetic design and points towards a bio-politics of musical composition.[179]

"Elemental Media" and the Wagnerian Work of Art

As Siegfried listens to the forest and is moved in body and mind by its Wagnerian sounds, he implicates nature and Wagnerian art as virtually interchangeable—ubiquitous, immersive, transformative, absorptive, and titillating to the receptive ear. As the composer suggests throughout his prose works, to engage Wagnerian art through the ear was akin to immersion in the atmosphere of the forest; the ontologies and ideal modes of engagement of his work of art and the natural world were no different to him. Some spectators at Bayreuth seem to have been convinced of this truth of nature and art at performances of *Siegfried*: upon emerging from the *Festspielhaus*, some early acolytes perceived that nature had been transformed, as if "chosen" members of the public had been granted a new sensory orientation to nature as they followed Siegfried's lead.[180] The natural world seemed to have absorbed traces of Wagnerian aesthetic experience and signs of *Siegfried*'s soundscapes: one visitor mused that the "Forest Murmurs" and sounds of Bayreuth nature struck him as one and the same.[181]

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[176] Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSW*, Vol. 3, 89; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 119.
[177] Grey, *Wagner's Musical Prose*, 285.
[178] Wagner, "Bericht an Seine Majestät den König Ludwig II. von Bayern über eine in München zu errichtende deutsche Musikschule," *SSD*, Vol. 8, 133; trans. in Wagner, "Music-School for Munich," 183.
[179] On the relationship of Wagner's prose writings to his dramas, see Grey, *Wagner's Musical Prose* and Deathridge, *Wagner Beyond Good and Evil*, among other sources.
[180] Garratt, *Music, Culture, and Social Reform in the Age of Wagner*, 137.
[181] Jackson, *The Bayreuth of Wagner*, 57.

This aesthetic epistemology of immersive nature, as well as its immediate reception history, could be understood as underwriting the "transformation of art into media" Friedrich Kittler claimed was central to Wagner's artistic ideologies and their legacy.[182] As Gundula Kreuzer has put it: "Wagner pushed art from the previous symbolic order of representation toward data streams that 'correlate in the real itself to the materiality they dealt with… [He] flipped the switch towards modern mass media."[183] In this sense, Wagner's aesthetics might be understood as anticipating philosophies of media that invoke discourses and interactive regimes of nature as laying the foundations of media.[184] Wagner's writings and dramas, in other words, pointed towards an archaeological historiography of media that leaps backwards to Wagnerian art (as Kittler suggested) and takes a final step back through time and space to discursive and aesthetic treatments of the primordial soup of the German forest.

Especially prominent in this recent media theoretical epistemology is John Durham Peters' philosophy of nature and media (eloquently rendered in his 2016 *Marvelous Clouds*) that alleges that a "philosophy of nature needs a philosophy of media," for the way that we interact with human technologies is a byproduct of innate interactions with nature.[185] Peters grounds his "history of clouds and media" in media theory—the work of Marshall McLuhan, André Leroi-Gourhan, Stanislaw Lem, Norbert Wiener, and others—and in the atmospheric philology of new media; he is particularly fascinated by the shared nomenclature of new media and natural phenomena, especially weather.[186] Peters' philosophy of elemental media, when recast through a media-archeological lens, is "deep": it may be unconsciously built upon Romantic discourses nature, particularly their adaptation by Wagner whose writings on and stagings of "elemental" art enact the nature-art elision Peters theorizes.[187] The idea that today's digital technologies can be traced not just to historical media, but to *nature*, its discourses, rhetoric, and interactions—that Peters' media philosophy can be recast in historically-embedded, media-archeological terms—implicates the Romantics as prefiguring the very methodology central of Kittler and Peters'

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[182] Kreuzer, "Kittler's Wagner and Beyond," 228. Here, Kreuzer is paraphrasing Kittler's argument in his "World-Breath: On Wagner's Media Technology" (see *Opera Through Other Eyes*, ed. David J. Levin (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 215-35).

[183] Kreuzer, "Kittler's Wagner and Beyond," 228.

[184] Most prominent among these philosophies of nature and media is Peters, *Marvelous Clouds*. See also Robert Hassan and Thomas Sutherland, *Philosophy of Media: A Short History of Ideas and Innovations from Socrates to Social Media* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2016); Arnold Gehlen, *Man, His Nature, and His Place in the World* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1988); and Charles Petzold, *Code: Hidden Language of Computer Hardware and Software* (Seattle, WA: Microsoft, 2000).

[185] Peters, *Marvelous Clouds*, 1.

[186] Peters, *Marvelous Clouds*, 15-16.

[187] The neologism "deep century" comes from Andrew Shyrock and Daniel Smail, *Deep History: The Architecture of Past and Present* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011). It refers to the notion that discourses, ideologies, and practices from the past are still with us today; in that way, a seemingly discrete century can be understood "recursive" in its influence.

writings (that art, media, and their regimes of interaction necessarily find their roots in nature) as Wagner and Romantic thinkers underwrite the historiographical terms of media archeology.

Peters' definition of media—any "data container," from graves to weather to the internet—is broad: any "container" of information is "media," all its information is available and legible to anyone at any time, and every "container" and form of data seems equally valued.[188] For him, "to posit media of nature is to deny the human monopoly of meaning… Not all that is meaningful comes from minds."[189] He ultimately suggests that "we need a better name for the infrastructural aesthetics and ethics of being alive with others in the cosmos" and that nature is "the epitome of meaning rather than the mind" as it "[provides] our model of communication."[190] Nature even taught us to look and listen, Peters claims, those lessons shaping the sensory regimes associated with our audiovisual technologies.[191]

Such broad conceptions of data, nature, and their interchangeable communicative affordances, however, verge on the Utopian, leaving aside crucial questions of human agency, alterity, and power central to Romantic thought on the same subjects. As Iain Chambers asks, who is at the "center" of media interactions and who is at its "periphery?"[192] Or, to paraphrase Rahel Jaeggi, what are the "social and psychological realities" of new media and what forms of identity, "alienated" or otherwise, do they facilitate?[193] By proffering a Utopian vision of these relationships, Peters seems to suggest that nature is egalitarian, "good," and grants media *to us*; we then build equally egalitarian infrastructures in the service of nature's embedded "knowledge," as he claims.[194] According to this model, nature could be read as prescribing an ideal mode of engagement with it—if only we know how to read its signs, symbols, and "secrets" (a very Romantic lesson indeed).[195] Romantic thought and rhetoric, however, reminds us that there can be no Utopian neutrality or absence of "egotism," to borrow Peters' words, in staging interventions into existing discourses and ideologies of media and nature; simply acknowledging the connection between nature and media was, for Wagner and the Romantics, a political act that could be actively pursued through listening to nature or art, hiking in the forest, or even Wagnerian musical analysis.[196] It remains similarly political today.

Siegfried allegorizes a mythic, Romantic version of this ontology. I argue that this drama could be read as "about" the inseparability of Wagnerian art and Romantic nature, Teutonic perceptual interaction with one equivalent to the "right" mode of engagement

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[188] Peters, *Marvelous Clouds*, 16.
[189] Peters, *Marvelous Clouds*, 380.
[190] Peters, *Marvelous Clouds*, 380.
[191] Peters, *Marvelous Clouds*, 302.
[192] Iain Chambers, "Travelling Sounds: Whose Centre, Whose Periphery?" *Otherness and Media: Ethnography of the Imagined and the Imaged* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016).
[193] Rahel Jaeggi, *Alienation*, trans. and ed. Frederick Neuhouser and Alan E. Smith (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2014), 193.
[194] Peters, *Marvelous Clouds*, 116.
[195] Peters, *Marvelous Clouds*, 113.
[196] Peters, *Marvelous Clouds*, 380.

with the other (except, crucially, where Mime is concerned). Indeed, there is a discriminatory underbelly of alterity that warps the socialist and liberal Romantic discourses of nature central to *Siegfried* and, as Chambers and Jaeggi suggest, new media today.[197] If Peters' theories were historicized, then, these discriminatory undertones might be read as complicating his Utopian treatment of media, nature, and the terms of our sensory and semiotic interactions with them as "natural" and even "good" given its derivation from nature's "secrets."[198]

These Romantic ideologies and rhetoric seem to anticipate Peters' "media philosophy of nature," fundamentally recasting it as a "deep" historiographical endeavor that proffers an occluded dialectic of Utopian communication. Peters extends the rhetoric and epistemologies of Romanticism by suggesting that nature might teach us to interact with media, as media teaches us to perceive nature—those interactions, however, seem to fit a prescribed notion of a "right" mode of engagement with nature or media that, over a century before, Wagner suggested his spectators were only too lucky to learn from Siegfried as they rejected Mime. To suggest as much is to position media-as-nature uncomfortably within Romantic thought where to be "of nature" is to be "German" to the exclusion of all else. Peters' project, then, is ever-Romantic and ever-Wagnerian in its debts to nineteenth-century discourses of nature: for him, Wagner, and others participating in their shared intellectual lineage, nature prescribes the "right" way of communicating or organizing human interaction, channeled into derivative "human technologies" or Wagnerian media that seemed so purely "of nature" that some early spectators could not differentiate *Siegfried*'s Act II "Forest Murmurs" and the murmurs of the Bavarian trees.[199]

[197] Chambers, *Otherness and Media*; Jaeggi, *Alienation*, 193.
[198] Peters, *Marvelous Clouds*, 113.
[199] Jackson, *The Bayreuth of Wagner*, 57.

Chapter 3

Synesthetic *Tannhäuser*

"Never have you found me grieving
For your heart with loud despair;
All I asked was quiet living,
Quietly to breathe your air."

—Heinrich Heine, "Schöne Wiege meiner Leiden" (1827)[200]

In 1850, Wagner provided his "artwork of the future" an anatomy all its own:

> [The work of art] is the heart of man, the blood… it gives the outward-facing flesh its warm and lively tint and feeds the inward-coursing brain-nerves with its welling pulse. Without the heart's activity, the action of the brain would be no more than of a mere automaton… through the heart, understanding is allied with the whole body, and the man of mere "five senses" mounts upwards to the energy of Reason.[201]

Wagner's total work of art was a body—and laid claim to bodies. Vivid descriptions like this one could be read—and dismissed—as mere metaphor and as a colorful intervention into claims made by the composer's philosophical interlocutors. This is one of many places in his writing, however, where Wagner hints at the physiological impact he imagines for his works. Here, he implies that when spectators engage his artwork, their nerves, five senses, blood, brain, and "whole body" would be subsumed by the power of reason, sensuality, and understanding.[202] Throughout "The Artwork of the Future" these claims are even more explicit: his progressive "art of tone" "springs from man's five senses," every "sensory faculty" "melting into one another." The senses' "confines [were] removed" by his "vaporous" work of art, as a "sea of azure air" blanketed the auditorium and wreathed its inhabitants in atmospheric sound.[203] In this vision, the *Gesamtkunstwerk* was a corporeal, multi-sensory musical materiality that would not only "warm" spectators' bodies and minds, but, by engaging and rewiring the relationship of every sense to the

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[200] Heinrich Heine, *Poems of Heinrich Heine*, trans. Louis Untermeyer (New York, NY: Holt & Co., 1917), 24.
[201] Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 135; trans. in Richard Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 110.
[202] Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 135; trans. in Richard Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 110.
[203] Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 214; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 97.

phenomenal world, would give "new shape to the life of modern times" and "cleanse" modern spectators of "all that is earthly."[204]

While the composer locks the ear and eye in an immobilized hierarchy throughout his prose writings—and stages the racial implications of that hierarchy in *Siegfried* (1876), as we saw in Chapter 2—his essays also implicate his work of art as engaging senses beyond the audiovisual, but through a familiar starting point: the all-powerful, receptive ear.[205] I show in this chapter that, as radical as this Wagnerian cochlear-corporeal centrism and claims as to the multi-sensory nature of sound may seem, they align with a range of contemporary epistemologies, from Ludwig Feuerbach's philosophy of sensuality to period climatic determinism that implicated each climatic zone as conditioning inhabitants' senses to the growing fascination with synesthesia across scientific and cultural thought, particularly among his contemporaries interested in sound. Wagner's theories of multi-sensory art and spectatorship, then, speak not to bourgeois visual or auditory culture, ocular- or aural-centrism—all products of industrial modernity—but to a universal sensory regime that, for the composer, was navigated by the powerful, sharpened ears of members of his anti-modern Teutonic social order he envisioned his work of art cultivating.[206]

In *Tannhäuser* (1845), the composer stages his interventions into these contemporary "fictions of the senses": scenes throughout depict sound as multi-sensory, tractable environments, so much so that characters are transported from Wartburg to Venusberg and back again via memory of geographically-specific sound and its affective and physiological associations. As characters listen, these sonic traces of nature not only lay claim to their five senses, but shape their heroic minds as well.[207] These scenes tell several interconnected stories: they provide lessons on the social and physiological consequences of climatic influence, and, like *Siegfried* premiered three decades later, implicate this work as self-referential. Even more clearly than the operas of the *Ring* cycle, *Tannhäuser* could be said to tell the story of its own multi-sensory materiality, and of the power that Wagner imagined art exerting on an audience.[208]

Material histories of the senses often seize upon the work of nineteenth-century thinkers fascinated with sound as vibration, sonic emanations that carried Hegelian truths of the phenomenal world to the listener.[209] But what of those contemporary German thinkers who regarded sound as *more* than an auditory phenomenon, challenging dichotomies of nineteenth-century visual/auditory culture? I will argue that Wagner was one such thinker. For him, sound was not just an auditory reality, but instead subsumed

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[204] Wagner, "Eine Mitteilung an meine Fruende," *SSD*, Vol. 4, 279; trans. in Wagner, "A Communication to My Friends," *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, Vol. 1, 340.

[205] On nineteenth-century sensory discourses, see Jütte, *A History of the Senses*; Carolyn Purnell, *The Sensational Past: How the Enlightenment Changed the Way We Use Our Senses* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 2017); and David Howes and Constance Classen, *Ways of Sensing: Understanding the Senses in Society* (London: Routledge, 2014). See also Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

[206] Jütte, *A History of the Senses*, 187.

[207] Abbate, "Sound Object Lessons."

[208] Steege, *Helmholtz and the Modern Listener*, 132-33.

[209] On the materiality of German sound, see especially Trippett, *Wagner's Melodies* and "Towards a Materialist History of Music"; Sterne, *The Audible Past*; Jay, *Downcast Eyes*.

the entire body as the enlightened, Wagnerian ear converted vibrations into "total" corporeal stimulus and Teutonic inspiration, an ideology of the senses that epitomized his vision of an anti-modernist future of the German body. At the end of this chapter, I explore the impact of these Wagnerian ideologies of art and audition—including his claims as to the social impact of sound on the spectator—on recent scholarship on the senses, modernity, and the materiality of sound.

Wagner, Atmosphere, and the Discovery of Synesthesia, c. 1850

Wagner's writings on the senses register a familiar distinction between "higher" and "lower" senses: hearing was the most rarified of the "higher senses" to Wagner, with sight occupying a somewhat lower position and the other senses—smell, taste and touch—grouped into a separate, category.[210] The auditory provided access to truths of the external world (*Wahrnehmbarkeit*), while the "lower senses" (like sight) pursued "carnal" "sensuality" (*Sinnlichkeit*) that was "equally as primary as self-consciousness" despite being associated with "lower" drives.[211] As David Trippett explains, by dissolving any distinction between higher and lower senses, as well as *Wahrnehmbarkeit* (external, observable truths) and *Sinnlichkeit* (sensuality), Wagner "selected and reinterpreted ideas from Ludwig Feuerbach [to] acknowledge the integrity of sensation" as equal to intellect, and implicated his artwork as facilitating enlightened access to both.[212]

Wagner's description of his work of art dissolving the separation between the "higher" and "lower" senses in "The Artwork of the Future" is often read in purely theoretical terms, as explorations of Feuerbach and Hegel's positions on consciousness, subjectivity, the senses, and the material world.[213] But the essay not only proposes a theoretical elision of Feuerbach's spheres of metaphysical thought, but also suggests that the work of art can alter the relationship of the spectator's conscious mind to the phenomenal world by revising the distinction between the "higher" and "lower" senses in the theater, and, ultimately, generate a new humanity with a new set of sharped, Teutonic senses capable of perceiving beauty, reason, intellect, and sensuality free from the dictates of aristocratically arbitrated taste by way of total sensory overhaul.[214] Such claims first

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[210] Viktoria von Hoffmann, *From Gluttony to Enlightenment: The World of Taste in Early Modern Europe* (Urbana-Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2016). On nineteenth-century "ocular-centrism" and its detractors, see Jay, *Downcast Eyes*.

[211] Trippett, *Wagner's Melodies*, 283.

[212] Trippett, *Wagner's Melodies*, 283. On Feuerbach and materialism vs. humanism, see Axel Honneth and Hans Joas, *Social Action and Human Nature*, trans. Raymond Meyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980) on "Ludwig Feuerbach's anthropological materialism," 12-17; and Roberto Cantú, ed., "Marxian Humanism: From the Historical Viewpoint," *An Insatiable Dialectic: Essays on Critique, Modernity, and Humanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014).

[213] Trippett, *Wagner's Melodies*, esp. "Excursus: Bellini's *Sinnlichkeit* and Wagner's Italy," 182-198.

[214] Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 214; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 97. Garratt, *Music, Culture, and Social Reform in the Age of*

appeared in Wagner's writings in 1834 and continued into the 1880s, the idea of multi-sensory engagement of the spectator by way of multi-sensory soundscapes dominating his artistic imagination, pursuit of linked social and physiological reform, and even vision of an artistically-formulated "universal" human species with a "universal," unified sensory faculty (and "universal" taste) for nearly half a century.[215] Around 1850, however, such a theory was likely attractive to Wagner's artistic and political interlocutors as they established the terms of their social revolution as a project of emancipation and enlightenment.[216]

Throughout his writings on this subject, Wagner made use of atmospheric, ethereal, climatic language in describing his work as a multi-sensory medium that would envelop spectators in transformative sound as they sat in the theater. Drawing on established discourses of climate and air, he claimed that his work of art was a "steaming vapor" and would have such "bearing on the human body" that it might transform modern-day, earthly men into "human-outlined clouds" and "hale and hearty Teutons" inhabiting the theater.[217] The "vaporous," "invisible theater" Wagner imagined would be filled with climatic sounds "perceived and felt in the full, warm joy of all the senses."[218] As we saw in Chapter 1, these ideas about climate and character had a prestigious lineage. As Johann Gottfried von Herder argued in his *Philosophy of Language* (1780), climate shaped semiotic and "aesthetic judgments" made by the eyes and ears, the workings of the "linguistic organs," and relative physical health, "the whole species" fundamentally made from "the whole face

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Wagner, 49. By 1876, Wagner proclaimed that, by hiding the orchestra in his *Festspielhaus*, the "sensorium" would finally be entirely "subverted," particularly "eyesight," which would be "neutralized" (Wagner/Kerr, *The Story of Bayreuth as Told in the Letters of Richard Wagner*, 333). On Wagner and defining the *Volk*, see Weiner, *Richard Wagner and the Anti-Semitic Imagination*; Elaine Kelly, *Composing the Canon in the German Democratic Republic: Narratives of Nineteenth-Century Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); and Garratt, *Music, Culture, and Social Reform in the Age of Wagner*, especially Chapter 4 ("Revolutionary Voices: Blueprints for an Aesthetic State"), 128-54.

[215] See Wagner, "Account of a First Operatic Performance" (1834), *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, Vol. 7, trans. Ellis (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1898): "[I] tended towards a frank extolling of the 'liberated senses'" (7); Wagner, "An End in Paris" (1841): "true disciplines of high Art will be transfigured in a heavenly fabric of sun-drenched fragrance of sweet sound united for eternity with the divine fount of Harmony" (67); Wagner, "On German Music" (1841), *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, Vol. 7: "Here not the ear alone asks satisfaction, but the hear, the soul demands refreshment… it is not enough for the German to seize his music by the senses, he makes himself familiar with its inner organism" (89).

[216] On the social politics of Dresden artists before, during, and after the 1848-9 Revolution, see Garratt, *Music, Culture, and Social Revolution in the Age of Wagner*.

[217] Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 107; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 138.

[218] Millington, *The Wagner Compendium: A Guide to Wagner's Life and Music* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001).

[and circle] of the earth."[219] The "prejudices" and "judgements" made by those sensing the world from one climatic point of reference or another differ so widely, Herder explained, that "the three goddesses of human cognition—truth, beauty, and virtue—became as national as language" as they developed in "accordance with its climate or region."[220] So when Wagner wrote that the "conditions of [climatic] existence" were "given back" to spectators in attendance at the theater as they "dissolved" over them in vibrating air, he was essentially suggesting that certain kinds of aesthetic experience could, like a climate, recalibrate the sensory workings of spectators.[221]

Wagner did not simply imagine the work of art touching every sense: he conceived of his artwork "melting" spectators' senses together to form one universal faculty of perception, with no single dominant sense.[222] These unusual claims could be read together with contemporary trends amongst chemists, physicists, and physiologists. By the middle of the century, widespread fascination with synesthesia had taken hold in the sciences—a fascination, in other words, with finding a scientific basis for the notion that the senses were always and already unbound at a time when, according to Martin Jay and Jonathan Sterne, preoccupation with the auditory dominated.[223] Among those most active in this field of experimentation were meteorologist Johann Müller (1809-1875), who theorized that the body's "sensory energies" were not permanently fixed to a limited set of "sensory correspondences" but "rapidly propagate into a number of sensory modalities" based on external stimuli; physicists Hermann von Helmholtz (1821-1894) and Thomas Young (1773-1823) who took up the idea of "color-hearing" that maintained that optic nerves and cochlear resonators shared "sensory energies"; and chemist George Field (1777-1854) who published a treatise on "aesthetic chromatics" and "harmonic analogies of color."[224]

What interested Müller, Helmholtz, Young, and Field most was whether the interaction of the brain and sensory nerve endings could build truly multi-sensory perceptions of the world: was the phenomenal world a fixed set of individuated sensory

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[219] Johann Gottfried von Herder (*Philosophy of Language*, 1780), Montesquieu (*De l'Esprit des Lois*, 1748), and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (*Discourse on Inequality*, 1754-5; and *Essay on the Origins of Language*, 1781). Herder, *Philosophical Writings*, 148-9. On defining climate in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see also Alexander Ramsay, *A Bibliography, Guide, and Index to Climate* (London: Sonnenschein, 1884) and Tang, *Geographical Imagination of Modernity*.

[220] Herder, *Philosophical Writings*, 50 ("Fragments on Recent German Literature" (1767)).

[221] Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 107; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 138. On the relationship of environment and to the aesthetic category of "taste," see Denise Gigante, *Taste: A Literary History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005).

[222] Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 214; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 97.

[223] Jay, *Downcast Eyes*; Sterne, *The Audible Past*.

[224] Purnell, *The Sensational Past*, 40; Jütte, *A History of the Senses*, 218, 225. References here to George Field, *Chromatics* (1845); Johann Müller, *Elements of Physiology* (1834-40) and *Principles of Physics and Meteorology* (1848); and Hermann von Helmholtz, *Handbuch der Physiologischen Optik* (1867).

signs?[225] Did "sensory energies" overlap? And could the senses relearn how to relate the phenomenal world based on social or environmental factors?[226] Wagner's writings intervene in these contemporary discussions: his desire for a "unified" perceptual faculty did not engage with ideas from contemporary science such as "cochlear resonance" or "sensory energies," but their goals were remarkably similar.

The background for Wagner's conception of climate and the senses stretch back to the seventeenth century, when the first meteorologists had defined climate in terms of by the relative weight of air on the skin.[227] Evangelista Torricelli, inventor of the barometer, wrote in the 1640s, that "we live submerged at the bottom of an ocean of elementary air."[228] Herder elaborated on this definition in the 1780s, suggesting that climate was air, water, trees, and soil, as well as its variations in temperature, light, pressure, and humidity, all of which had determinative, disciplining impact on the "sensuous formation" of the "tongue, ear, and eye."[229] Wagner described his work of art as similarly multi-sensory: it was "fruitful rain," "a vaporous emanation," and a "cloud [hovering] between life and light."[230] This Wagnerian musical materiality was weighty, palpable, and sultry as it pressed itself into listeners' skin and onwards towards a new, German social and sensory order borne of Northern atmosphere approximated in sound.

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[225] Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 214; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 97. On the history of synesthetic thought, see Shane Butler and Alex Purves, ed., *Synesthesia and the Ancient Senses* (Durham: Acumen, 2013); David M. Levin, ed., *Site of Vision: The Discursive Construction of Sight in the History of Philosophy* (Cambridge: MA: MIT Press, 1997); Stuart Walton, *In the Realm of the Senses: A Materialist Theory of Seeing and Feeling* (Washington, DC: Zero Books, 2016); Mark M. Smith, *Sensing the Past: Seeing, Hearing, Smelling, Tasting, and Touching in History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007); Dani Cavallaro, *Synesthesia and the Arts* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2013); and Ackerman, *A Natural History of the Senses*.

[226] Purnell, *The Sensational Past*, 40.

[227] Stephen Schneider and Randi Londer, *The Coevolution of Climate and Life* ([n.p.]: Sierra Club Books, 1984), 138.

[228] Schneider and Londer, *The Coevolution of Climate and Life*, 138. On the history of measuring the quantitative parameters of air, see Peter Moore, *The Weather Experiment: The Pioneers Who Sought to See the Future* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015); James Fleming, *Fixing the Sky: The Checkered History of Weather and Climate Control* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2011) and *Intimate Universality: Local and Global Themes in the History of Weather and Climate* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2012).

[229] Herder, *Philosophical Writings*, 148-9, 60 ("Fragments on Recent German Literature" (1767-1777)).

[230] Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 215; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 139.

Tannhäuser's Multiple Worlds: Tales of Opposition in Sound and Space

"Daylight filters dimly, a greenish waterfall plunges down the whole height of the grotto, foaming wildly over the rocks… a soft roseate half-light falls over Venus, reclining in the foreground… illuminated from below by a magical rosy light."[231] It is out of this "rosy mist" that *Tannhäuser*'s Act I Sirens' Song drifts, enveloping Tannhäuser in an intoxicating fog of sound and perfume. After it dissipates, the Shepherd's Song emanates from the Wartburg's mossy landscape as its luminous air becomes the very breath in his lungs. Throughout the opera, Wagner casts music and sound as multi-sensory vessels of nature itself that holds climate-like power over the minds of those listening and over their every sense, perhaps staging his own radical conception of musical materialism and model of spectatorship, which called on multi-sensory sound to "melt together" the senses of modern spectators.

Despite the prevalence of multi-sensory musical engagement and expression in *Tannhäuser*, this work is often cast as a tale of oppositions: supernatural vs. earthly, nighttime vs. daytime, consciousness vs. unconsciousness, realism vs. illusion. One recent text even includes a chapter on *Tannhäuser* called "Oppositional Worlds" that casts the opera's spaces, metaphorical and literal, as intractably separate.[232] The opera seems so clearly designed around spatial, temporal, and experiential difference that interpreters tend to focus on the characters' navigation of these fixed spaces of existential tension, without considering the possibility that the drama's seemingly immovable framework may be a skillfully crafted conceit.

Throughout the opera, I want to suggest, Wagner unsettles those "oppositional worlds" and the corresponding sensory spheres, in ways that ultimately bring about Tannhäuser's salvation. This "melting" of spatial and corporeal division on stage could be read as a metaphor for Wagnerian ideologies, from his quest to integrate the senses to his fantasies of a multi-sensory immersive experience.[233] I shall read *Tannhäuser*, then, as a self-referential work about the claims of the climate-like *Gesamtkunstwerk* over spectators' sensory and social autonomy, a project designed to allegorize, depict—and also create—Germanic heroes with "universal" sensory faculties.

While spatial, sonic, and sensory divisions are eventually contested in *Tannhäuser*, at the outset the opera establishes a stark opposition between the sensory experiences and sonic identities of the Wartburg and Venusberg. Upon entering the Venusberg, for instance, we hear shimmering, ethereal arabesques and stark chromaticism, while the sound world of the Wartburg is mostly diatonic, full of diegetic call and response, and is sometimes even silent. Carolyn Abbate has pointed out that the Wartburg's silent "soundscape" would have been radical in 1845 and "remained avant-garde well into the

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[231] All excerpts from the *Tannhäuser* libretto are drawn from Wagner, *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. 5 ("Tannhäuser und der Sängerkrieg auf Wartburg"), ed. Reinhard Strohm and Egon Voss (Mainz: Schott, 1980). Wagner, "Tannhäuser," *SW*, vol. 5/1, 70-71 and vol. 5/2, 142; translations adapted from Wagner, *Tannhäuser*, trans. Rodney Blumer (London: John Calder, 1988), 61. All future quotations and translations from this opera refer to these editions.

[232] Syer, "Oppositional Worlds: *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*," *Wagner's Visions*, 118-55.

[233] Carnegy, *Wagner and the Art of Theater*, 41.

twentieth century."[234] These sonic differences are doubled by temporal distinctions between these zones: some characters explain that time seems to move at a different pace in the Venusberg than it does in the Wartburg, the former seeming like a timeless, eternal mirage ("the time I have spent [in the Venusberg] I cannot measure," Tannhäuser claims in Act I, scene 2), while the latter represented a world of temporal reality.[235]

Wagner's revolutionary staging of *Tannhäuser* served to reinforce the spatial opposition reflected in the score. Deploying perspectival strategies common in diorama and panorama design popular in the 1840s, as Patrick Carnegy explains, Wagner's stage designers painted figures of varying sizes into the Wartburg's simple backdrop to "conflate near and far" and craft a scene that seemed "to imitate real life in its freest and most noble form."[236] As a result of these manipulations, the alignment of figure and ground in the Wartburg was accentuated so that figures melted into scenic (and musical) backdrop as they receded from sonic and aural view.[237] In contrast, the fresco upon which the Venusberg's "wild mountain cave" was painted on stage was "concealed in a rosy haze," its inhabitants absorbed into rosy, intoxicating fog instead of into quiet, mortal clarity.[238]

Both the score and the stage design suggest that the limitations of sensory perception might be linked to spatial experience, that the inhabitants of one climatic space might hear differently than those in another. Katherine Syer has suggested that the physical and cognitive distance between characters in the Wartburg is so great that they do not hear each other's voices, existing instead in individual "sensory spheres."[239] The Shepherd fails to register the pilgrims' presence at all, whether they are standing right next to him or fading into the distance; he almost never stops playing his pipe, even after the pilgrims have begun singing.[240] In contrast, the Venusberg is a "chaos of emotion" and "drunken abandon," every inhabitant subsumed into the sensory orgy.[241] After fleeing that chaos, Syer argues, Tannhäuser's senses are dulled, mirroring the perceptual aloofness of his Wartburg companions.[242] These environmental spaces, then, hold sensory expectations, and the passage between them requires (or effects) a kind of sensory rewiring. It is almost as if the air of the two realms itself alters the characters' senses, just as Wagner imagined of his own work of art.[243]

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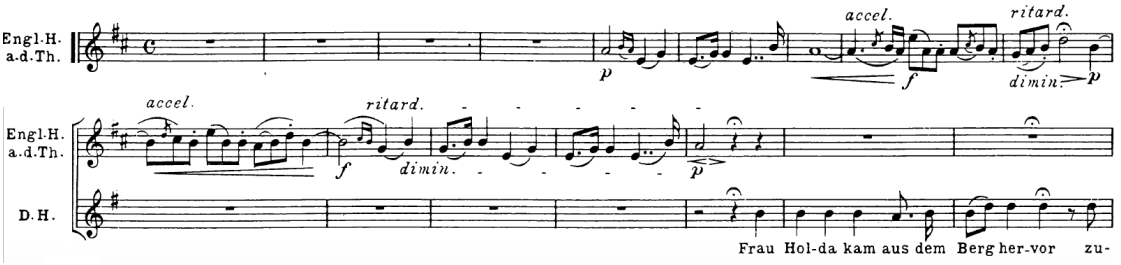
[234] Abbate, *In Search of Opera* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 124.
[235] Dieter Borchmeyer, *Drama and the World of Richard Wagner* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 15. This is a translation of a line from Act I, scene 2: "Die Zeit, die hier ich verweil', ich kann sie nicht ermessen").
[236] Crary, *Suspensions of Perception*, 252; Carnegy, *Wagner and the Art of Theater*, 41, 37; and Abbate, *In Search of Opera*, 125.
[237] K. Koffka, "The Environmental Field," *Principles of Gestalt Psychology* (London: Routledge, 2013), 177-210; Carnegy, *Wagner and the Art of Theater*, 41.
[238] Carnegy, *Wagner and the Art of Theater*, 34.
[239] Syer, *Wagner's Visions*, 128-9.
[240] Syer, *Wagner's Visions*, 128-9.
[241] Syer, *Wagner's Visions*, 128-9; Carnegy, *Wagner and the Art of Theater*, 36.
[242] Syer, *Wagner's Visions*, 128-9.
[243] Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 214; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 97

In the initial moments of the Wartburg scene, we encounter the Shepherd, who epitomizes the idealized, Romantic, Wagnerian mode of audition native to the that space. Instead of listening to the characters around him, the Shepherd is attuned to nature, drawing on its "blue sky," "bright, warm sunlight," and "sleepy" sensation of "soft bells" as the basis for his song.[244] Nature is all the Shepherd hears and all he plays (and sings): his ears seem to divine the multi-sensory experience of his Germanic environment, as if his senses are latched onto Teutonic ecological space, which becomes the breath in his very body (see Example 1, vocal line: mm. 14-16) and sound in his pipe (see Example 1, English horn line: mm. 5-14).



Example 1: Wagner, *Tannhäuser*
Act I, scene 3 (measures 1-16)[245]

The delimited bounds of the Shepherd's horizons of auditory perception and tendency towards mimicry of nature seem to indicate that, in the Wartburg, "human beings and instruments are equated," as Abbate suggests, vocality and instrumentality holding no distinction as the music is "unperformed, rooted in their being" and in nature.[246] The very land seems resonant to the Shepherd. In an appeal to synesthesia, he proclaims that his eye "longs to behold" the sound "caught" by his ear, then plays those sounds.[247]

This Wagnerian conception of musical materiality and spectatorship is most fully indigenous to Venus' realm than it is to the Warburg. On the Sirens' cliffs in the Venusberg, the Sirens and their humid, foggy climate dictate multi-sensory impact of sound on Tannhäuser's body and mind. In Act I, scene 2, for example, the Sirens command Tannhäuser to hear their voices, act on their commands, and immerse himself in the multi-sensory experience of their climate and its soundscape—little else finds its way into the score. Tannhäuser cannot help but follow their orders, his senses rotating to accommodate their commands. As in the Wartburg, place and its sonic imprint are linked, but here the tropical climate holds total, destructive control over characters' bodies and minds.

The spaces and sonic regimes of the Venusberg and the Wartburg do not remain fixed in opposition. *Tannhäuser* stages the "melting" of realism and illusion and the merging of the five senses, as Tannhäuser himself embodies the ideal Wagnerian listener,

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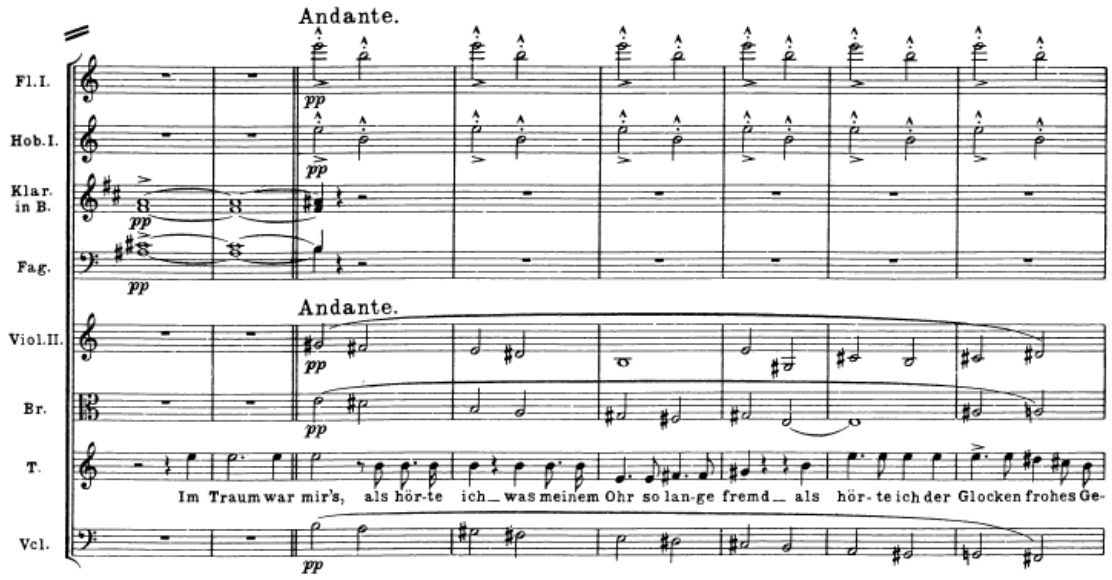
[244] Abbate, *In Search of Opera*, 125.
[245] Wagner, *Tannhäuser* (Leipzig: C.F. Peters, 1920), 105.
[246] Abbate, *In Search of Opera*, 125; see also Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, 75 on the erasure of the "producer" of this music in favor of a "self-producing" musical style.
[247] Wagner, *Tannhäuser*, 105. Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 214; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 97.

his senses unbound and rebound by multi-sensory, Wagnerian sonic influence.[248] This fusion of the spatial and the sensory happens early and often in *Tannhäuser*. Soon after Tannhäuser awakens from his dream at the beginning of Act I, scene 2, his memories of the Wartburg resound through the score, that Germanic space becoming "foreign" pastoral sound that invade the Venusberg. Here, Tannhäuser's narrative is overheard, both by the audience and by Venus herself, listening silently. Wagner shows that Tannhäuser's aural reality in this work is not monolithic, even in the Venusberg where it seems so fully under Venus and the Sirens' control: instead, his sensory autonomy can be frayed by sonic reminiscence.[249] In this scene, Tannhäuser transplants sounds he associates with the Wartburg into the Venusberg, and reality and illusion begin to fold in on each other before our eyes and ears. As he recounts the festive bell sounds that have intruded on his imagination, transporting him back to the Wartburg, we heard a repetitive pattern of accented bell tones in the high woodwinds, underpinned by a stepwise descent in the strings (see Example 2, mm. 18-23):



Example 2: Wagner, *Tannhäuser*
Act I, scene 2 (measures 16-23)[250]

Im Traum war mir's als hörte ich,	In a dream, it was as if I heard
Was meinem Ohr so lange fremd!	What has so long been foreign to my ear!
Als hörte ich der Glocken	It was as if I heard the peal

[248] On Wagnerian realism and illusion, see Carnegy, *Wagner and the Art of Theater*; Borchmeyer, *Drama and the World of Richard Wagner* and *Richard Wagner*; and Laurence Dreyfus, *Wagner and the Erotic Impulse* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).
[249] Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 214; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 97.
[250] Wagner, *Tannhäuser*, 67.

frohes Geläute![251]	of cheerful bells!

This is the first moment in the opera in which the oppositional spaces of Wartburg and Venusberg sonically merge, confusing any clarity of place or sense of subjective belonging. This contestation of sound, space, and sensory autonomy could be read as a metaphor: the realism of the Wartburg collapses into the illusory Venusberg, and sound is cast as multi-sensory, climatic, and a tool for manipulating the sensorium as the composer stages his own conceptions of musical materiality and theatrical spectatorship, the autonomy of spectators' bodies and minds subject to his own manipulations.

Sound is cast here as climatic: Tannhäuser does not need to be physically "in" a space to feel its presence in his entire body, much like the composer's fantasies of physiological control via musical approximation of climatic zone. His reminiscences of the Wartburg's sounds while physically reclining in the Venusberg become a sub-conscious "off-stage" space here that slowly gains traction. Tannhäuser is living a "second life" in his "illusory" version of the Wartburg existing in his mind ("off-stage" in one sense), while the "real" Wartburg glitters above ground ("off-stage" in another sense) and above the "dream-like" Venusberg where he sits, granting space a narrative function that manifests in his sensory experiences (imagined or real) of sound.[252]

As the opera progresses, multi-sensory effects and blurring of spatial settings become more frequent and more striking. Some characters seem fully aware of the ways they are shaped by sound and space, using sound to brazenly manipulate the physiological and psychological stability of others.[253] Venus and her Sirens seem especially aware of the influence of their climatic zone and its sounds on Tannhäuser's horizons of perception. After hearing the sub-conscious, overheard musical narrative Tannhäuser does not intend to share with her, Venus uses those sonic memories of the Wartburg to manipulate his sensory autonomy, redrafting the bounds of space and its associations as its contestation becomes a tool for overwhelming seduction of the senses.[254]

After hearing Tannhäuser's memories of the Wartburg, Venus forces Tannhäuser to question whether he remembers the Wartburg as it "really" is or whether that version of those memories is illusion.[255] Venus confirms that Tannhäuser is mentally occupying one space while still grounded in the Venusberg, confusing reality and illusion. Where Tannhäuser really is is determined by what he hears, she suggests:

Was fasst dich an?	What takes hold of you?
Wohin verlierst du dich? […]	To where are you straying? […] Ha!

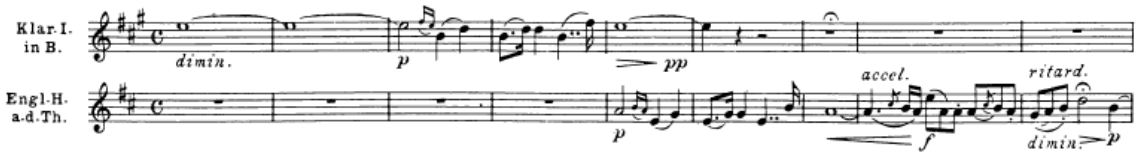
[251] Wagner, "Tannhäuser," *SSD*, Vol. 2, 5; trans. in Wagner, *Tannhäuser*, trans. Blumer, 62.
[252] Syer, *Wagner's Visions*, 128-9. On Wagnerian "off-stage" sounds, see William Kinderman and Katherine Syer, *Companion to Wagner's Parsifal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 181; Groos, *Richard Wagner: Tristan und Isolde*; Julian Johnson, *Out of Time: Music and the Making of Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); and Carnegy, *Wagner and the Art of the Theater*.
[253] Borchmeyer, *Drama and the World of Richard Wagner*, 15.
[254] Abbate, *Unsung Voices*.
[255] Carnegy, *Wagner and the Art of Theater*.

Ha! Was vernehm' ich?	What do I hear?
Welch' tör'ge Klagen![256]	What foolish complaining?

Taking hold of Tannhäuser's sonic memories of the Wartburg, Venus uses them to manipulate her ward by crafting physical space from those sounds, in a parallel to Elsa's "telephonic" conjuring of Lohengrin to "launch the entire action" of *Lohengrin.*[257]

(Auf ihren Wink erscheint eine zauberische Grotte auf welche sie deuten.)	(At Venus' signal, a magical Grotto appears where she indicates.)
Geliebter, komm! Sieh dort die Grotte,	Come, beloved! See the grotto there,
Von ros'gen Düften mild durchwallt. […]	filled with rosy fragrances.
Aus holder Ferne mahnen süsse Klänge	From the pleasant distance, sweet sounds
Dass dich mein Arm	that remind you of my close embrace.
in trauter Näh' umschlänge.[258]	

But those "sweet sounds" do not remain in the Venusberg. When we hear the Shepherd's Song at the beginning of the following scene, we realize that the "sweet sounds" that Venus calls up in her Venusberg grotto also resonate in the Wartburg's German nature (see Example 3). The "climatic" breath of Venus has spread across space and time here, becoming the breath of the Shepherd and the vibrating air of the Wartburg (see Example 3, mm. 1-6) that the Shepherd "longs to see" as he plays his pipe (see Example 3, mm. 5-9), mimicking those atmospheric sounds:



Example 3: Wagner, *Tannhäuser* (1845)
Act I, scene 3 (mm. 1-9)[259]

Frau Holda kam aus dem Berg hervor,	Holda has come out of the mountain
Zu ziehen durch Fluren und Auen,	To roam through fields and meadows;
Gar süssen Klang vernahm da mein Ohr,	My ear heard a sound there so sweet,
Mein Auge begehrte zu schauen.	My eye longed to see.[260]

[256] Wagner, "Tannhäuser," *SSD*, Vol. 2, 7; trans. in Wagner, *Tannhäuser*, trans. Blumer, 62.
[257] The characterization of Elsa's scene as "telephonic" is made by Abbate in *In Search of Opera*, 30.
[258] Wagner, "Tannhäuser," *SSD*, Vol. 2, 8; trans. in Wagner, *Tannhäuser*, trans. Blumer, 64-5.
[259] Wagner, *Tannhäuser*, 105.
[260] Wagner, "Tannhäuser," *SSD*, Vol. 2, 11; trans. in Wagner, *Tannhäuser*, trans. Blumer, 67-8.

Venus creates psycho-sonic links from the Venusberg into the Wartburg as one space resonates with sonic signs of the other on her command. These sounds sometimes have the power to alter the sense of place for other characters, and to play with their ability to discern reality from illusion. In these moments of spatial, sonic, and sensory "polyphony," Venus has taken the fundamental principle of how characters understand space in this world—associating sound with space, space with sound, and fixed affective associations with each—and flipped it upside down. As Dieter Borchmeyer has phrased it, she exerts a "secret sway" over this world by conjuring new spaces, erasing the memory of old ones, and contesting the boundaries of these two zones at will.[261]

In the final moments of Act III, Tannhäuser assumes this power of "shape-shifting" for himself, using it to secure his own salvation: he draws from his own memories to negotiate the terms of his perceptual world as he engages in desperate conversation with Wolfram about his fate.[262] As he explains, his mind is beginning to wander, this time from the Wartburg back into the Venusberg. As he relays his memories of Venus to Wolfram, the Venusberg in all its multi-sensory physicality slowly appears, as if conjured by the sensory richness of his recollection:

TANNHÄUSER	
Zu dir, Frau Venus, kehr ich wieder, In deiner Zauber holde Nacht; Zu deinem Hof steig ich darnieder, Wo nun dein Reiz mir ewig lacht! […]	To you, Venus, I return, into your magic's sweet night; to your court do I descend, where only your charm shall eternally laugh!
(Finstere Nacht; leichte Nebel verhüllen allmählich die Szene.)	(Black night; a vaporous mist fills up the entire scene.)
WOLFRAM	
Wahsinniger! Wen rufst du an?	Mad man! Who do you call upon?
TANNHÄUSER	
Fühlest du nicht milde Lüfte? […] Und atmest du nicht holde Düfte?	Do you not feel the mild breezes? And do you not breathe the sweet perfumes?
Horst du nicht jubelnde Klänge? […] Im Venusberg drangen wir an![263]	And do you not hear the joyful sounds? We have pressed forth into the Venusberg!

[261] Borchmeyer, *Drama and the World of Richard Wagner*, 103.
[262] Syer, *Wagner's Visions*, 76. Dieter Borchmeyer suggests that it is the sounds of the Venusberg ("dancing and singing") that exert the most control over those who venture to enter that space, according Heine's version of *Tannhäuser*, one of the opera's sources (*Drama and the World of Richard Wagner*, 103).
[263] Wagner, "Tannhäuser," *SSD*, Vol. 2, 33-4; trans. in Wagner, *Tannhäuser*, trans. Blumer, 90-1.

The sounds Tannhäuser recalls soon give way to scents, sights, vapors, and overwhelming sensations, as the Venusberg becomes visible. Wolfram does not immediately hear or feel any signs of this new space Tannhäuser calls up from his multi-sensory memories. But, before long he shouts that his "heart beats madly in dread" and he senses that "hell is approaching." Wolfram initially cannot hear what Tannhäuser s hearing; but he can soon discern it, at first through multi-sensory hints, which gradually acquire physical reality.

After Wolfram has liberated Tannhäuser from the Venusberg, when they are both back in the Wartburg, Wolfram asks Tannhäuser a telling question that recalls the role that multi-sensory sonic perception plays in Wagner's ideology. As Elisabeth's funeral procession moves through the valley below, Wolfram asks Tannhäuser if he can hear the chant of the penitents, to which Tannhäuser replies: "Ich höre!" (I hear!) Through this exchange Wolfram confirms that Tannhäuser is now fully present in this space: he hears the right space and sounds at the right time. But the exchange also serves to remind listeners that in the Wagnerian theater sound takes on the multi-sensory, climatic qualities of nature, and that music can create the impression of one climatic zone superimposed on another. The clear map of contrasting spatial and cultural zones that seemed so stable at the outset of the drama has been redrawn and recast as "recursive, reflexive" and "driven to represent, refigure and re-describe" the bodies and minds of the opera audience into a Teutonic social order endowed with "universal" perception.[264]

Wagner and the Multi-Sensory Materiality of Sound

In "The Case of Wagner" (1898), Friedrich Nietzsche directly confronted *Tannhäuser*: he wrote that a "menagerie of tame cattle" debase themselves through their love of this work, allowing Wagner's "Venetian epigrams" to "fatigue" their nerves and create a new "physiological reality" for them out of his "salvation doctrine."[265] Building on these ideas, Theodor Adorno used *Tannhäuser* as an example of Wagnerian "synaesthetic" trickery and deceit, enchanting spectators into seeing "social models [as] magically rooted in nature" rather than deriving from "human labor."[266] Both critics cast *Tannhäuser* as particularly dangerous to spectators, its unbinding of the senses undermining their ability to assess independently the signs and symbols of the phenomenal world. Neither Nietzsche nor Adorno, however, identify these risks to spectators as a product of solely auditory, optical, or even audiovisual Wagnerian hypnosis; rather, they accuse Wagner of afflicting the body by imposing "humid" sounds on the senses.[267]

For both Nietzsche and Adorno, the Wagnerian aesthetic acted on the body, which was all too easily overwhelmed by sensory stimulation. The Wagnerian artwork, to paraphrase Nietzsche, was "atmosphere," a "grey sky of abstraction," that wielded anti-social impact on the naïve mind.[268] These claims, made both by Wagner and his most critical of successors, destabilize dominant nineteenth-century histories of the senses that,

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[264] Sterne, ed., "The Sonic Imagination," *The Sound Studies Reader* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 5.
[265] Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner*, 8, 19, 283.
[266] Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, 76.
[267] Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner*, 59.
[268] Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner*, 3.

as Trippett explains, "implicate the ear, both as object in the history of ontology and—more often—the point of access to sonic events for a history of spectatorship" and "histories of theories of the senses."[269]

But what does it do for our histories of the senses and of sound, if Wagner and his "synesthetic" interlocutors are accounted for? As Martin Jay points out, since the Reformation, German philosophers have "been less positively inclined towards vision than the French" and "have tended to privilege aural over visual experience, as indicated by their tendency to draw on poetry or music rather than painting in their work."[270] Trippett, Jonathan Sterne, Robert Jütte, and Mark Smith have all privileged the ear in their histories, arguing that an existing tendency towards aural-centrism coincided with the advent of audiovisual technologies around 1870.[271]

Wagner was in good company when he diverged from this sensory epistemology, even though he did treat these ideas more radically than was typical of his day. While he certainly *did* write of the receptive supremacy of the ear over the eye, he also imagined the unification of the senses into a single, egalitarian perceptual faculty accessible by radically multi-sensory sound.[272] His interlocutors in the sciences—including Helmholtz, Field, and Young—entertained similar sensory theories, searching for a neuroscientific basis for them through empirical exploration.[273] Closer to Wagner, Hector Berlioz envisioned color informing orchestral methods and reinforcing dramatic action on stage or the programmatic content of his orchestral works (he never went so far, however, to claim that sound contained traces of color or could be perceived by the eye).[274]

Not entirely unreceptive to the relevance of "other senses" to his history of aurality, as Sterne contends, "the history of sound implies a history of the body," the ear receiving sounds that shape how we live and interact with the world as it participates in what Marcel Mauss called educative "body techniques," our modern bodies trained, disciplined, and socialized, in part, by our powers of audition.[275] Wagner and his interlocutors' sensory ideologies and sonic materialism could be read as a product of the same conditions of modernity Sterne credits as producing "aural-centrism" and sound reproduction technologies.[276] But, for Wagner, that multi-sensory ideology and musical materialism were actually products of the Teutonic fantasy of Germany's future he described throughout his writings and dramas as an antidote to the ills of modernity. This contradiction and epistemological divergence from his contemporaries is, of course, another form of Adorno's "phantasmagoria," Wagnerian fantasies of anti-modernity—and attendant fantasies of the senses and of music's materiality—being indebted to the

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[269] Trippett, "Towards a Materialist History of Music," 7, 9.
[270] Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, 265.
[271] Trippett, "Towards a Materialist History of Music"; Sterne, *The Audible Past*; Jütte, *A History of the Senses*; and Smith, *Sensory History*.
[272] Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 214; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 97.
[273] Jütte, *A History of the Senses*; and Baloh, *Vertigo*.
[274] Hector Berlioz, *Berlioz's Orchestration Treatise: A Translation and Commentary*, trans. Hugh Macdonald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 330.
[275] Sterne, *The Audible Past*, 13.
[276] Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, 265.

industrial modernity he claimed to undercut in the theater.[277] Nonetheless, in proposing his work of art "melting" the senses into a new, Teutonic whole, Wagner is proposing an alternative history of sound and the body, borne of an alternative post-industrial modernity.

[277] Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, 85.

Chapter 4

Turning Bayreuth Inside Out:
Wagnerian Atmospheric Design and the Politics of "Breathable" Music

"Wagner did not conquer the youth with music…
But with his genius for forming clouds."

—Friedrich Nietzsche (1888)[278]

I begin with three "atmospheric critiques" of the Bayreuth Festival, its proprietor, and its sounds.

First: in 1888, Friedrich Nietzsche accused Richard Wagner of drawing naïve "youths" to Bayreuth with fascinatingly "infinite symbols" hidden in the "grey, frightful, and cold atmosphere" built from sound.[279] Nietzsche accuses Wagner of phantasmagoric seduction, making extensive use of atmospheric metaphors along the way. Wagner, conjurer of "bad weather," has a genius for creating "air" in the theater, Nietzsche writes. "The steam of the Wagnerian ideal" seems fascinating and even familiar (his music is like "German weather"), but it is all a hoax, designed to seduce.[280] This is *his* air, Wagnerian air, and it is not healthy. Never mistake Wagner's motives, Nietzsche warns; and, if you go to Bayreuth, he seems to imply, hold your breath.

Second: it is 1933 and Adolf Hitler has proclaimed his love of Wagnerian "noise."[281] What he loved most about attending Wagner's festival at Bayreuth was its air, writing once that "the Master's music raised people up out of the daily grind into the pure air [and into] the rhythms of the primeval world."[282] In 1941, Hitler and Joseph Goebbels would send dejected pilots to Bayreuth, one whiff of "pure" Wagnerian air acting as the cure they needed to return to battle. The air at Bayreuth drew Hitler in, and breathing at the festival—both in and out of the theater—was a political act with political consequences for the Aryan mind. While Nietzsche warned his readers to hold their breath, Hitler urged breathing deeply.

Third: it is 1968 and Gottfried Wagner, the composer's great-grandson, is twenty-one years old and hates the "hallowed ground of the Green Hill," much preferring the excitement of Bonn, London, and Paris. He understood the political, historical, and social weight of his

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[278] Nietzsche, *Der Fall Wagner: ein Musikanten-Problem*, 35; trans. in Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner*, trans. Thomas Common (London: H. Henry & Co., 1896), 38.
[279] Nietzsche, *Der Fall Wagner*, 35; trans. in Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner*, 38.
[280] Nietzsche, *Der Fall Wagner*, 36; trans. in Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner*, 38.
[281] Jonathan Carr, *The Wagner Clan: The Saga of Germany's Most Illustrious and Infamous Family* (New York, NY: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2007), 186.
[282] Carr, *The Wagner Clan*, 186.

great-grandfather's music, but Bayreuth, the festival, and its music were not (in his words) cleansing air. His parents, Wolfgang and Winifred Wagner, recognized Bayreuth's recent "brown past," too, but they still frequented Bayreuth. Gottfried all but refused, locating his dislike of Wagner precisely where Hitler had found his inspiration: in Bayreuth's geography, in its air, and in his great-grandfather's music—an atmosphere all its own.

Each of these historical actors identifies Wagnerian "on-stage" air and Bayreuth's outdoor atmosphere as capable of conditioning spectators' bodies and minds, and even shaping new social orders, coerced or voluntary. This politics of atmosphere attracted Hitler as much as it repulsed Nietzsche and Wagner's great-grandson, for it implicated the minds of spectators as fallible, subject to the acculturative influences of the unusual "atmospheres" that surrounded them indoors or out—and even suggested that Wagner had managed to manipulate his audiovisual spectacle as if it, too, were a climate, spectators' minds involuntarily evolving upon exposure to it.

Writing on Wagner's steam and vapor effects, Gundula Kreuzer has argued that the composer's atmospheric dramaturgy ultimately became inseparable from his *Ring* cycle thanks to the intense critical attention those effects attracted; it did not take long after the premiere for critics to demand that every *Ring* production feature steam.[283] But, in engineering the air that filled his theater and stage, Wagner may not have just been creating intoxicating, new dramaturgical effects. He strategically selected the air that surrounded the *Festspielhaus*, creating an atmospheric experience for Bayreuth spectators both in and out of the theater that could be understood as consummating his ideology of multi-sensory *Gesamtkunstwerk* and extending it to engagement of "real" nature.

Wagner's aestheticization of climatic determinism at Bayreuth could be understood as an intellectual forefather to Nietzsche's "decadent" and Adorno's "phantasmagoric" Wagnerisms, both of which cast the composer as playing on spectators' nerves for his own nefarious purposes.[284] At the end of this chapter, I address the afterlives of these reactions to Wagnerian spectatorship and the critical precedent they set. I suggest that today's narratives of spectatorial conditioning continue to treat the composer's audiovisual manipulations as deterministic, even if indirectly. This rhetorical fallacy, I will suggest, was not just borne of period responses to Wagnerian theater (particularly its final consummation at Bayreuth) but of atmospheric metaphors that, for Wagner and his immediate critical successors, just might hold the power to coerce spectators into imagining that their bodies and minds had been changed by sound, air, and light.

Airing Out Wagner's *Festspiele*: Engineering Atmosphere on the Green Hill

When Wagner began to consider constructing a theater that would allow spectators to focus solely on his artistic production without any of the distractions of city life, he first thought

[283] Kreuzer, "Wagner-*Dampf*," 179-218.
[284] See Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, 74-85. For more on Adorno's essay, see Žižek's introduction to *In Search of Wagner*; Nicholas Baragwanath, "Musicology and Critical Theory: The Case of Wagner, Adorno, and Horkheimer, *Music & Letters*, Vol. 87/1 (January 2006): 52-71; and Karin Bauer, "Adorno's Wagner: History and the Potential of the Artwork," *Cultural Critique*, Vol. 60 (Spring 2005): 68-91.

of building on the Rhine and, several years later, on an artificial island in the middle of Lake Lucerne.[285] At this point in the 1850s, he did not yet have consistent funding, so realized these locations were impractical. Nonetheless, the criteria that made these locations attractive remained important and informed his final plans. For instance, even in the 1850s, Wagner already wanted to build his festival in a "beautiful quiet place far from the smoke and disgusting industrial smell of our urban civilization."[286] The ideal location had to be an isolated site with clean air untarnished by industrial smog and might even be a place that had absorbed some nationalistic meaning into its soil, like the banks of the Rhine or the Bavarian forest. The town or city selected should represent a break with the vices of urban life that—according to the composer—fostered theater-goers' all-too-human vices.[287] He found that place in Bavaria's Bayreuth, and the story of how he settled on that location casts "smoke" and "smell" in surprisingly large roles.

In 1864, Wagner finally found a benefactor and collaborator in Ludwig II, the new Bavarian king, who could grant "unbelievable miracles" and provide the funding for the festival he envisioned.[288] Ludwig, a "fanatical fan of Wagner's dramatic dream worlds," had stipulations of his own for the festival's location and design: he demanded the theater be near his home in Munich—exactly the opposite of Wagner's own wishes that the theater be in a secluded place away from urban pressures and temptations. Wagner eventually countered with a compromise, that the theater be built inside of Munich's new *Glaspalast* (Glass Palace), a space that, like other nineteenth-century buildings, was conceived as an engineered bubble of pure air protected from the "smoke and disgusting industrial smell" of Munich's streets (as well as its poor social influences). Ludwig rejected this idea; but the idea of a location protected from industrial air and influences—and instead embedded in clean air and the psychological and physiological influences of its purity—remained central for years to come.

In 1870, Cosima Wagner reported that her husband had "mentioned [Bayreuth] as the one place he would choose" for the festival; he had visited the city in 1835 and it had made an "indelible impression" on him, so much so that it came to mind thirty-five years later.[289] After visiting Bayreuth with Cosima later that year, Wagner reported to his friend Friedrich Feustel that Bayreuth was pleasant, with an attractive surrounding area, and close enough to nearby cities to be accessible to festival-goers. It was just what he had been looking for. Before long, Wagner began planning the festival with the help of the Ludwig and a team of prominent German engineers. Chief architect Gottfried Semper modelled the theater after his earlier design for a hall enclosed in the Munich Glass Palace's bubble of impervious air.[290]

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[285] Spotts, *Bayreuth: A History of the Wagner Festival*, 33-4.
[286] Spotts, *Bayreuth: A History of the Wagner Festival*, 32-3.
[287] Wagner, "Bayreuth Festival Idea," *The Story of Bayreuth as Told in the Bayreuth Letters of Richard Wagner*, 7-8.
[288] The story of Wagner's deliberations about a site for the festival and his negotiations with Ludwig is told in Spotts, *Bayreuth: A History of the Wagner Festival*, 35-6.
[289] Spotts, *Bayreuth: A History of the Wagner Festival*, 39. Quotation from Cosima Wagner's diaries (entry dated 5 March 1870).
[290] Matthew Wilson Smith, *The Total Work of Art: From Bayreuth to Cyberspace* (London: Routledge, 2007), 24.

In this familiar story of Wagner's search for financial support and a site for his theater, one voice that is never heard is that of Wagner's Bayreuth doctor, Carl Landgraf, who treated the composer when he fell ill during his 1870 visit to Bayreuth with Cosima. In the months that followed that initial encounter, Wagner wrote to Landgraf several times about his decision to establish his festival in Bayreuth. In these letters, Wagner mused on the physical appeal of various outdoor sites, including the city's *Hofgarten* property, declaring that, in general, he wanted to find a place to build in Bayreuth with "large" gardens or parks attached, and the *Hofgarten* ("a pretty piece of meadow-land") seemed ideal.[291] Eventually Wagner asked Landgraf directly to arrange for the purchase of "desirable" land in Bayreuth for his festival complex. Throughout the correspondence Wagner seems intently focused on the topographical characteristics of these sites, almost as if spending time outdoors was as important for his vision of conditioning social change in visitors as their time spent in the theater.

Landgraf was a prominent figure in Bayreuth and probably had the connections Wagner needed to secure a place to build near the city, so in some ways it was only logical for Wagner to ask for his help. But Landgraf's medical credentials were also key to the composer's decision to trust him with this crucial decision.[292] As we have seen, Wagner was searching for conditions that might cleanse visitors' bodies of the stench and smoke of urban civilization. With Landgraf's help, Wagner placed the experience of clean, Bavarian nature at the core of the festival's apparatus for social reform.

It was common in this period to ascribe curative properties to pure, clean air and Landgraf's prescription of "air cures" in the Bayreuth gardens for Wagner's health was a typical remedy for breathing difficulties brought on by city smog.[293] After "taking the air" at Bayreuth's *Hofgarten* and at other sites Landgraf chose, Wagner was satisfied, remarking to Cosima that the air was "like milk and roses" and contributed to his "good health."[294] For Landgraf and Wagner, then, Bayreuth had become what was sometimes known in the nineteenth century as a "climatic air station," the name for an outdoor site European travelers visited in this period for an invigorating, medicating "change of air."[295]

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[291] Wagner, "Letter to Carl Landgraf, 11 May 1871," *The Story of Bayreuth as Told in the Bayreuth Letters of Richard Wagner*, 21.

[292] Landgraf's medical credentials were never far from the composer's mind: he even made him the festival's doctor-in-residence by the time performances finally commenced in 1876 and gave him the task of finding suitable housing for singers and orchestral musicians when Bayreuth's hotels became overrun with festival attendees (Landgraf housed them in one of the city's psychiatric asylums). Wagner/Kerr, *The Story of Bayreuth as Told in the Bayreuth Letters of Richard Wagner*, 19.

[293] Bradshaw, *Dictionary of Mineral Waters, Climatic Health Resorts, Sea Baths and Hydropathic Establishments*, xxvii, 67 ("health […] is shattered by city life").

[294] Cosima Wagner, *Cosima Wagner's Diaries*, Vol. 2, 497 (entry dated 26 June 1881).

[295] For a list of such "air stations" and their correlating cures, see Bradshaw, *Dictionary of Mineral Waters, Climatic Health Resorts, Sea Baths and Hydropathic Establishments.* Bayreuth is not included.

Wagner's autobiography, *Mein Leben*, contains repeated references to the medicinal effects "a change of air" brought him and his family throughout his life.[296] As early as 1855 he was spending ample time at "mountain health-resorts" with his then-wife Minna Planer, remarking that "nature has a cure for everything!"[297] In the 1870s, Wagner frequented the "air station" at Wildbad, Germany at the suggestion of his regular physician Friedrich Keppler, who was also Wildbad's doctor-in-residence.[298] The air and "ozone" there was "buoyant," "bracing," and "fortifying," according to one guide to such places, the perfect natural cure for Wagner's breathing problems exacerbated by city smoke.[299]

While Bayreuth itself was not an officially-designated "climatic air station," there is reason to believe that when Wagner chose it for his festival it was already widely understood as possessing climatic conditions that could have a restorative effect on the body. Over the course of the nineteenth century, two asylums, both of which made use of atmospheric cures, had been built in Bayreuth. In 1805, Karl August von Hardenberg and Johann Gottfried Langermann built the first *Psychische Heilanstalt für Geisteskrank* (Psychiatric Sanitarium for Mental Illness) in Bayreuth, and a second opened in 1870, the year Wagner visited the city with Cosima and met Landgraf.[300] Landgraf was likely involved in the selection of Bayreuth for this asylum, as he and his brother Wilhelm were both active members of the regional medical oversight committee at that time.[301] It is possible that the asylum and its employment of Bayreuth's native atmosphere for patients' health was a topic of discussion between Wagner and Landgraf in their early meetings.

Both Bayreuth asylums made use of atmospheric cures, practices "generally regarded as the beginning of the modern treatment of mental illness in German-speaking countries."[302] In this period, it was common not only to medicate such patients by way of atmospheric therapies administered within the hospitals' walls—including the regular "renewal" of indoor air and "impregnation" of that air with saline—but also to keep patients away from "hot climates" thought to exacerbate their conditions.[303] German asylums, like those in Bayreuth, were generally built atop hills where patients could spend

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[296] Wagner, *My Life*, ed. Andrew Gray and Mary Whittall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 224, 533-4, 662.

[297] Wagner, "Letter to Wilhelm Fischer, 17 August 1855" and "Letter to Wilhelm Fischer, undated," *Letters to his Dresden Friends, Theodor Uhlig, Wilhelm Fischer, and Ferdinand Heine*, trans. J.S. Shedlock (New York, NY: Scribner & Welford, 1890), 403-4.

[298] Cosima Wagner, *Cosima Wagner's Diaries*, Vol. 2, 147.

[299] Bradshaw, *Dictionary of Mineral Waters, Climatic Health Resorts, Sea Baths and Hydropathic Establishments*, 357.

[300] "Oberfranken: Medicalanschluss," *Hof- und Staatshandbuch des Königreichs Bayern* (Munich: Central-Schulbücher-Verlage, 1875), 304.

[301] Theodor Ziolkowski, *German Romanticism and Its Institutions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 203-4. See also W.F. Bynum and Roy Porter, *Companion Encyclopedia of the History of Medicine* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1993), 1361.

[302] Bynum and Porter, *Companion Encyclopedia of the History of Medicine*, 1361.

[303] On atmospheric cures in asylums, spas, and "air stations," see Bradshaw, *Dictionary of Mineral Waters, Climatic Health Resorts, Sea Baths and Hydropathic Establishments*.

time outdoors at a high altitude, an especially healthy climate for their needs.[304] Bayreuth's second asylum was built on a hill just "three stones, at three separate flights" away from the hill upon which the *Festspielhaus* stood, suggesting that the location of the *Festspielhaus* may have been chosen with naturopathic climatic theories in mind.[305] Given Landgraf's involvement with Bayreuth's asylums and familiarity with their restorative principles, the *Festspielhaus* may well have been built atop the famous "Green Hill" on his recommendation, with Wagner's theater and the Bayreuth asylum imagined as climatic and therapeutic twins.[306]

While Wagner could have found a healthy climate in many small cities in Bavaria, the professional connections he developed in Bayreuth gave him a remarkable amount of control over his theater's surroundings. He gave detailed orders to the city's *Bürgermeister*, Theodor Müncker, as to what plants, flowers, trees, and shrubs should be planted around his theater, which then determined what fragrances visitors would inhale.[307] Wagner's concern with choosing and engineering the environment for his festival and theater seems to have had the desired effect on early attendees. Some of the earliest visitors to the festival suggested that attending performances there had the added benefit of exposure to clean forest air, a welcome change from their city environs:

> Bayreuth enjoys a mild climate; the air is pure and invigorating, scented with the aroma of numberless flowers and fir trees. No wonder that the inhabitants of the various cities and towns return year after year, not caring to seek further, when all they can desire lies at their own doors.[308]

Claims that Wagner's festival was located in a healthy climatic zone persisted from the festival's opening in 1876 into the early twentieth century. German critic Edward Dannreuther's comment that the festival was situated in a "healthy," "private [slice of]

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[304] Anna Shepherd, *Institutionalizing the Insane in Nineteenth-Century England* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 20. See also Serena Trowbridge and Thomas Knowles, ed., *Insanity and the Lunatic Asylum in the Nineteenth Century* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015); Steven Pierce and Anupama Rao, *Discipline and the Other Body: Correction, Corporeality, Colonialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 139; and David Goodman, *Gold Seeking: Victoria and California in the 1850s* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 198.

[305] *The Musical World*, Vol. 54 (London: Duncan Davidson & Co., 7 October 1876), 677; "The Central Model Opera-House for Germany," *The Athenaeum*, No. 2498 (London: John Francis, 11 September 1875), 350.

[306] Finck, *Wagner and His Works: The Story of His Life*, Vol. 1 (New York, NY: Skell, 1968), 300.

[307] Finck, *Wagner and His Works*, 447; Wagner/Kerr, "Letter to Theodor Müncker, 10 February 1872," *The Story of Bayreuth as Told in the Bayreuth Letters of Richard Wagner*, 58-9. See also Richard Wagner National Archiv und Museum Doc AFS26a/2, dated 24 August 1881: contracts signed by Müncker giving permission to do construction at the *Festspielhaus* site.

[308] R. Milner Barry, *Bayreuth and Franconian Switzerland* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, Lowry & Co., 1887), 159.

nature in the middle of Germany" was repeated or echoed in other critics' writings on the festival for decades.[309]

The festival's location may have been chosen not just for its ability to medicate urban lungs, but also for the transformative influence Wagner believed such a climate might have on social values. In his writings and letters dating from 1850 through the end of his life, the composer suggested that his festival should facilitate a closeness with nature that would physically and psychologically separate them from the vices of the industrial world; he found such a place in Bayreuth, writing that it "occupied 'a vast Hercynian wild in which the Romans never set foot" and where "the relationship between the German people and the German land" could be "resurrected" by "affirming nature over culture."[310] All spectators had to do was breathe in this place he had sent them to, and their bodies—and minds—would change.

The connections Wagner drew between nature and German values was underwritten by the tenets of climatic determinism, the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theory that climate dictates every facet of human difference. In his 1850 essay "Art and Climate" and in subsequent writings, Wagner compared his total work of art to this powerful force of nature and argued that his audiovisual spectacle would act like a Teutonic climate by eliciting a range of involuntary, biological responses in those who experienced it, from free will to self-consciousness, wisdom, and love.[311] This claim built on similar arguments made by Montesquieu in *De l'esprit des Lois* (1748) and Herder in his *Treatise on the Origin of Language* (1772), both of whom also cast climate as determining every element of identity by mediating the body and mind through exposure to temperature, atmosphere, and soil.[312] Wagner's treatment of spectatorial experience at Bayreuth suggests that the ideas about climate, atmosphere, and art introduced in "Art and Climate" permeated his project, both in theory and practice. At Bayreuth, Wagner resolved to "contribute to the ennobling of the nation's manners and tastes" by transforming the "more rational and intelligent" parts of the public, in part through his manipulation of the "real"

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[309] Edward Dannreuther, "Wagner's Theater at Bayreuth," *The Monthly Musical Record*, Vol. 6 (1 June 1876): 85. Dannreuther's comments were quoted in Joseph Bennett (*Letters from Bayreuth* (London: Novello, 1877), 1) and Barry's (*Bayreuth and Franconian Switzerland* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, Lowrey & Co., 1887), 161) writings on their experiences at Bayreuth. Similar comments were made in C.V. Ostini, *Bayreuth Album* (Elberfeld: Lucas, 1891), 55 ("Bayreuth [is] in a beautiful and healthy situation, as well as its climate").

[310] Elinor Fuchs and Una Chaudhuri, ed., *Land/Scape/Theater* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 254.

[311] Wagner, "Kunst und Klima," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 207-21; trans. in Wagner, "Art and Climate," 249-66. It was common in the nineteenth century to prescribe physiological effects to climatic experience. On this subject, see Hulme, "Reducing the Future to Climate: A Story of Climate Determinism and Reductionism": 250-1.

[312] Cheney, *Revolutionary Commerce*, 129. See also Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment: Thinking Geographically about the Age of Reason*; and Tang, *The Geographical Imagination of Modernity*.

and "artificial" environments spectators experienced.[313] The experience he crafted for visitors traveling to Bayreuth's "Hercynian wild" was prefigured by the climatic fantasies of control foundational to his larger artistic-political vision. Pilgrimages to Bayreuth's Green Hill—an earthly Grail Realm—were conceived as a journey towards absolution. Like Parsifal, spectators could find a salvation of sorts shimmering in the air on a Wagnerian hillside.

Breathing in the *Festspielhaus*: On the Physiology of Wagnerian Spectatorship, c. 1880

Thanks to Ludwig's nearly unconditional generosity, Wagner held immense control over the physical conditions and design of his festival theater. As Juliet Koss, Jonathan Crary, Patrick Carnegy, and others have pointed out, in planning the interior of the *Festspielhaus*, Wagner, Semper, and the rest of the composer's team of architects looked to engineer the theater, its interior, and its stage technologies so that the design of the space itself would facilitate unification of the individual arts into the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, creating optimal conditions for direct communication with the opera audience.[314]

From the exclusion of standard viewing boxes to the auditorium's darkness and silence, the interior of the *Festspielhaus* and its stage technologies were designed to enthrall spectators.[315] Reactions to early performances of *Parsifal* at Bayreuth suggest that spectators were convinced that they were breathing, smelling, and tasting the vaporous, aesthetic atmosphere that filled Wagner's theatrical hothouse. The presence of steam, soft lighting, ethereal music, and other audiovisual cues convinced some spectators that the air in the theater matched the clouds wafting over the stage. This assemblage of sensory tricks acquired a particular intensity in the Magical Garden scene, during which some reported that the air—or perhaps it was the music—that surrounded them seemed "floral," "perfume-laden," and "roseate."[316] One English critic who attended the premiere of *Parsifal* at Bayreuth described the sensory overload achieved by Wagner's staging of this scene:

> [In the Magical Garden], flowers of every possible variety grow in luxuriant profusion and of enormous dimension. These garlands of roses, manifold larger than their real prototypes, drop from the parent vine and veil from view the greater distance, the colors are so reflected by the lights as to make a seeming atmosphere of fragrance, which almost insists upon the spectator's realizing through the sense of smell. The delightful romantic

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[313] Anthony Steinhoff, "Richard Wagner, *Parsifal*, and the Pursuit of *Gesamtkunstwerk*" in Imhoof, Menninger, ed., *The Total Work of Art: Foundations, Articulations, Inspirations*, 65; Garratt, *Music, Culture, and Social Reform in the Age of Wagner*, 137.
[314] Juliet Koss, *Modernism After Wagner* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 26-7.
[315] Koss, *Modernism After Wagner*, 26. On Wagner's darkening of the *Festspielhaus*, see Elcott, *Artificial Darkness: An Obscure History of Art and Media*, especially Chapter 2 ("Dark Theaters," 47-76).
[316] "Wagner's Tannhäuser Pilgrimage," *A Programme of the Saturday Concert: Crystal Palace* (London: Crystal Palace, 1885), 263.

> strains of the orchestra enhance the picture till the enchanting scene has become a reality, and all are within its spell of Arcadian loveliness. […] The air is heavy with so much sweetness. The eye is entranced, the ear enraptured, and the spectator can do no less than give himself up to the moment and submit, a slave to his enchanted senses.[317]

Eduard Hanslick described a similarly synaesthetic experience, in which odors and scents were "physiologically perceived" when "music [from the] invisible orchestra [was] heard" and "vapors [rose] from under the seat."[318] Spectators in the hall were, he implies, made to feel the same responses to the overblown audiovisual stimuli as did characters on stage. Another British attendee at *Parsifal* commented that Wagner's staging gave the impression that the world of the opera and its music were "in the air all around," while German composer and conductor Felix Weingartner described the audiovisual sensations of the Magical Garden as "fragrance," the opera's "atmosphere of incense-smoke" "[penetrating] the entire [festival] house."[319]

These accounts suggest that the atmospheric abstractions and fantasies of "Art and Climate" had been realized in the *Festspielhaus*. The visual stimulation of steam, vapor, and lighting effects along with the acoustic provocations from the hidden orchestra caused critics and spectators to imagine that they were inhaling a vaporous acoustic "[woven together from] scent and sound."[320] Claims that Wagner changed the air in the theater pair provocatively with nineteenth-century theories of synesthesia and "nervous ether" (the word Wagner uses alongside "climate" in his essays to characterize his aesthetic as physiologically affective), the idea that air, vibrating with sound, odor, or other "solid particles of matter" created a "nervous atmosphere" that strikes the auditory, optical, or olfactory nerves to communicate sounds, sights, or odors to the brain.[321] While some

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[317] Louis Russell, "Wagner's Parsifal," *Music: A Monthly Magazine*, Vol. 3 (Nov. 1892), 53. Edmund von Hagen describes a similar experience at the premiere of *Parsifal*, writing that he must not be intoxicated by the scents on stage nor should his ears be overwhelmed by its "sensual orgy" (*Die Bedeutung des Morgenweckrufes in Richard Wagner's Bühnenweihfestspiele 'Parsifal'* (Berlin: Theodor Barth, 1882), 54.

[318] Hanslick, "R. Wagner's Bühnenfestspiel in Bayreuth," 155; trans. in Hanslick, "Dr. Hanslick on the 'Ring des Nibelungen": 330. See also Crary, *Suspensions of Perception*, 149-280 on period theories of conditioning physiological responses to external stimuli and the exploitation of these principles by artists around 1880.

[319] *The Monthly Musical Record*, Vol. 40 (London: Augener, 1910), 100; Edward Wheeler and Frank Crane, "A German Tribute to American Music," *Current Opinion*, Vol. 39 (New York: Current Literature Publishing Co., 1905), 549.

[320] Jakob Nover, *Richard Wagner und die deutsche Sage* (Hamburg: F.F. Richter, 1889), 710 ("er wob Duft und Schall").

[321] Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 148; trans. in Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future," 339. For nineteenth-century German definitions of "nervous ether," see Michael Benedict Lessing, "Aetheres" in *Handbuch der speciellen praktischen Arzneimittellehre*, Vol. 2 (Berlin: P. Jeanrenaud: 1854), 210-13 and and Hermann Scheffler, *Die Physiologische Optik: eine Darstellung der Gesetze des Auges und der Sinnesthätigkeiten Überhaupt* (Braunschweig: Schulbuchhandlung, 1865). For

contemporary reactions to Wagnerian premieres suggest that spectators simply imagined that they were breathing aerated Wagnerian sound, other reports from Bayreuth suggest that the air in the theater really *had* changed, in ways that might affect spectators' nervous systems.

Documentation of Wagner's discussions with architects and engineers suggest that he may have looked to fill the *Festspielhaus* auditorium with clouds from his steam machines, greatly expanding the conventional uses of these apparatuses in contemporary theaters.[322] It is possible, then, that these observers at Bayreuth were not simply imagining themselves enveloped in the sounds and spaces on stage but really *were* in the thick of it from the relative safety of their seats. The archives at Bayreuth contain a mechanics' logbook (see Fig. 1) dating from the months leading up to the *Parsifal* premiere that records the efforts of the theater's engineers to estimate the quantity of water that would be needed to fill the theater with steam. The intended effect is labelled "Atmosphäre," using a term common among civic and sanitary engineers to describe the air inside of greenhouses, hothouses, and other covered glass buildings full of sweaty, floral steam by necessity and design.[323]

English language definitions, see Benjamin Ward Richardson, "Theory of Nervous Ether: Theory of a Gaseous or Vaporous Atmosphere of Nervous Matter," *The Asclepiad: A Book of Original Research and Observation in the Science, Art, and Literature of Medicine, Preventative and Curative*, Vol. 10/2 (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1893), 198-9; James Samuelson, et al, "Theory of Nervous Ether," *The Popular Science Review* (London: Hardwicke, 1871), Vol. 10, 379-87. On the ontology of atmosphere and history of atmospheric engineering (including its material history in Germany around World War I), see Sloterdijk, *Terror from the Air*, particularly Chapters 1 and 3.

[322] Emil Staudt (Richard Wagner National Archive and Museum, Doc AFS 26a/7b; dated 28 March 1882). For more on standard uses of steam machines in nineteenth-century opera houses, see Kreuzer, "Wagner-Dampf," 179-218; Carl-Friedrich Baumann, *Bühnentechnik im Festspielhaus Bayreuth* (Munich: Prestel, 1980); and Richard Hamblyn, *The Invention of Clouds: How an Amateur Meteorologist Forged the Language of the Skies* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001).

[323] Emil Staudt (Richard Wagner National Archive and Museum, Doc AFS 26a/7b; dated 28 March 1882). The premiere of *Parsifal* took place at the *Festspielhaus* on 26 July 1882. For more on the period usage of this term, see Erich Schild, *Zwischen Glaspalast und Palais des Illusions: Form und Konstruktion im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Birkhäuser, 1967); Volker Hütsch, *Der Münchner Glaspalast, 1854-1931: Geschichte und Bedeutung* (Berlin: Verlag für Architektur und technische Wissenschaften, 1985).

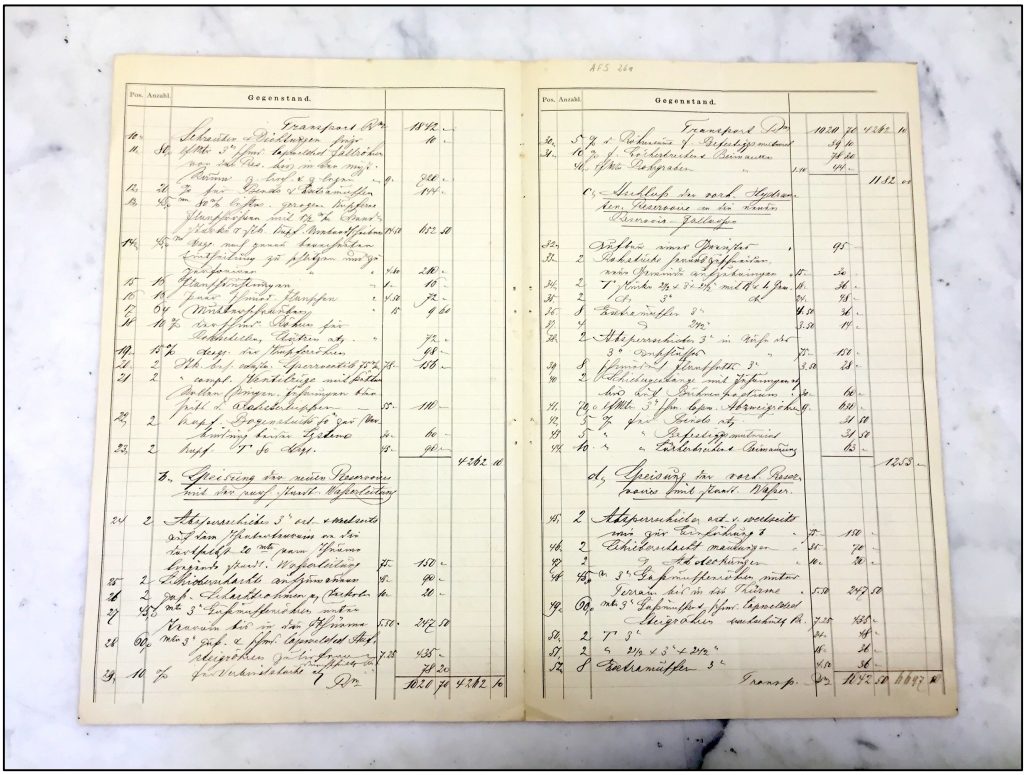

Figure 1: Emil Staudt's *Festspielhaus* Logbook (1882)[324]

It was only appropriate that *Parsifal*'s hothouse, the Magical Garden, was intended to manifest as immersive, auditorium-filling "Atmosphäre," intoxicating the spectating body along with Parsifal's as if they were hothouse plants, languishing under Klingsor's artificial sun. Whether Wagner's engineers were successful in piping enough hot steam into the *Festspielhaus* that spectators really could smell it without feeling suffocated is another story; more likely that the engineers' efforts fell short and failed to fill the auditorium as planned, just as some other extravagant designs, like the "water curtain" (see Fig. 2) sketched for the opening of *Das Rheingold* or even Semper's original plan for the theater be open-air, fell by the wayside.[325]

[324] Image reproduced courtesy of the Richard Wagner National Archive and Museum.
[325] On the "water curtain," see Staudt (RWNAM, Doc AFS 26a). On Semper's plan, see Elcott, *Artificial Darkness*, 52.

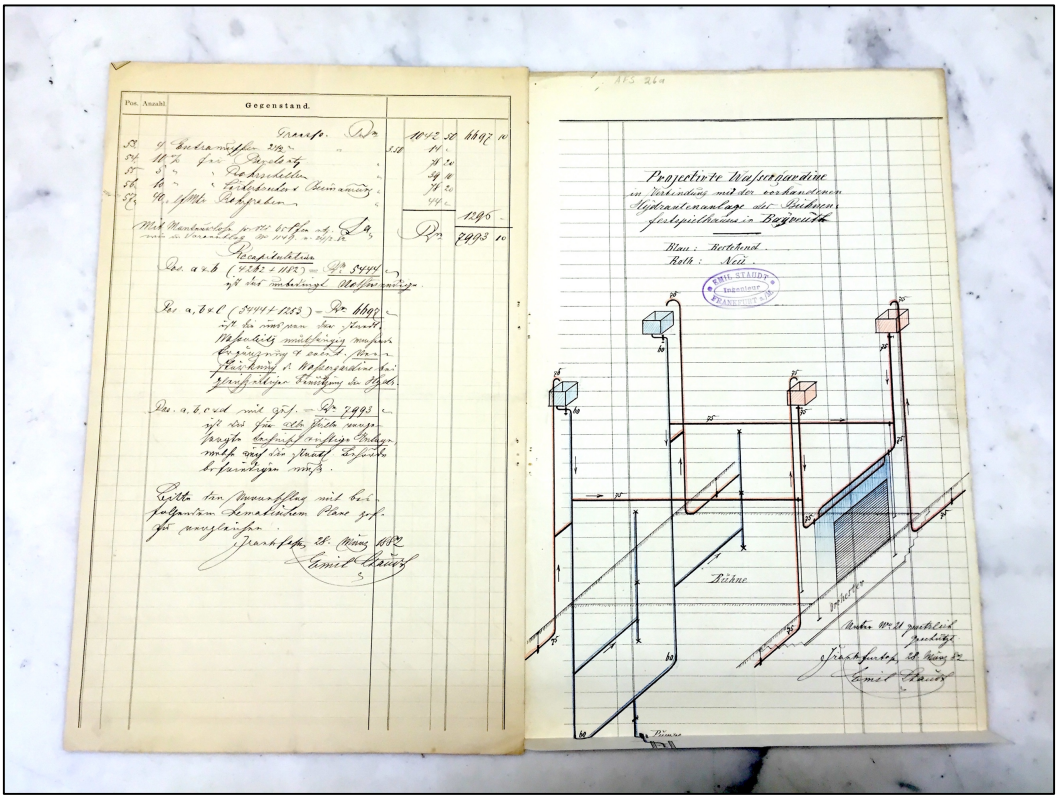

Figure 2: Sketch of the *Wassergardine* ("Water Curtain") for *Das Rheingold*
Emil Staudt's *Festspielhaus* Logbook (1882)[326]

Fragrance played a key role in actualizing Wagner's depictions of tropical climates: staging instructions for Venus's scenes in *Tannhäuser*, as well as for Klingsor's magical garden, call for flowers and their scents to fill the stage. It is difficult, however, to determine when and whether real flowers were used as props or costumes and if enraptured spectators were reacting to "real" scents or imaginary ones, inspired by the effects of sound and light. In recounting his own initial conception for *Tannhäuser*, the composer claimed that his "first breath" of this subject matter was "fragrant atmosphere" that "intoxicated" him. This striking initial impression of the *Tannhäuser*'s story was incorporated into the libretto and instructions for its staging, which calls for "dense," "rosy mists," "tropical vegetation," and "sweet perfumes" fill the stage in Acts I and III as Venus tries to overwhelm Tannhäuser with the power of tropical vapor.[327] And at least one listener perceived such rich fragrances in the score as well: in an 1891 pamphlet for the *Bayreuther* Taschenbuch, Arthur Smolian inventoried the opera's themes using labels such as "intoxicated gestures" and "the senses' mastering spell."[328] Reactions to *Tannhäuser* are full of rapturous statements about the

[326] Image reproduced courtesy of the Richard Wagner National Archive and Museum.
[327] Wagner, "Tannhäuser," *SW*, vol. 5/1, 70-71 and vol. 5/2, 142; trans. Wagner, *Tannhäuser*, 61 and 90.
[328] Finck, *Wagner and His Works*, 164, 181.

"fragrant roseate mists" that arise from the stage, the "floral tone" of the music, and the perfumes that seem to permeate the theater.[329]

The libretto for *Parsifal* also includes references to scented vapors or effects on stage: it indicates that the Flower Maidens should be "adorned with" and "clad in garments of flowers," that Kundry lies on a "bed of flowers" and, at the end of the act, flowers lie strewn over the stage.[330] Perhaps in an effort to realize Wagner's explicit instructions, some productions, including the 1883 Bayreuth première may have made use of real flowers (see Fig. 3).[331]

[329] "Wagner's Tannhäuser Pilgrimage," *A Programme of the Saturday Concert: Crystal Palace* (London: Crystal Palace, 1885), 263; *The Monthly Musical Record*, 100. Other responses to *Tannhäuser*'s so-called fragrances include R. Nolte "Über die musikalische Anlage des 'Tannhäuser'" in Edmund von Hagen and Hans von Wolzogen, *Richard Wagner's Tannhäuser und Lohengrin nach Sage, Dichtung und Musik* (Berlin: Barth, 1873), 10 ("der Bacchantinnen im Hintergrunde verschwindet, vor welchem… werdender Düfte ausbreitet"; "as the Bacchanale unfolded in the background, various scents continued to spread"); Franz Liszt, *Richard Wagner's Lohengrin und Tannhäuser mit Musik-Beilagen* (Cologne: Carl Gissen, 1852), 34 (*Tannhäuser* is full of "unfaßbare Düfte"; "inconceivable fragrances"). The overpowering effects of this staging were so extreme that Charles Baudelaire even remarked of the Paris production's Venusberg that Wagner's multi-sensory spectacle managed to convince him that "we were in the depths of the earth […] breathing a scented but stifling atmosphere, bathed in a pink glow that did not come from the sun; we were sharing the experience of the knight Tannhäuser himself" (Charles Baudelaire, "Richard Wagner et Tannhäuser à Paris" in Bojan Buijc, ed., *Music in European Thought, 1851-1912* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 237).

[330] All excerpts from the *Parsifal* libretto are drawn from Wagner, *SW*, Vol. 14 ("Parsifal"), ed. Egon Voss (Mainz: Schott, 1973). Wagner, "Parsifal," *SW*, Vol. 14/2, 85, 91, 127, and 221; translations adapted from Wagner, *Parsifal*, trans. Andrew Porter (London: John Calder, 1986), 106, 107, 111, and 116.

[331] Inspired by the Bayreuth staging, an early performance of *Parsifal* in New York made use of "Easter flowers" to divide the stage from the auditorium in Act 2; "Society" in *Brooklyn Life*, Vol. 3 (1891), 9.

Figure 3: "Original Image of the Bayreuth Festival Staging"
Parsifal, Act II (1882)

One reviewer noted that, at Bayreuth, the Flower Maidens waved "floral hats" as they ran about the "flowery avenues of the bewildering garden" on stage, gestures that led Weingartner to remark that the theater seemed to be full of "fragrance," "atmosphere," and "grace"—and that he was overwhelmed.[332]

Claiming that Wagnerian technologies and stagings of florid scenes and music effected his "olfactory nerves" (using a term often associated with "nervous ether" and synesthesia), Hanslick argued that Wagner was looking to "co-opt certain emotions" such that the opera audience might feel an emotional participation in the drama derived from that physical pre-conditioning.[333] Hanslick's contemporary, Edmund von Hagen, forewarned his readers that Wagner would make their "taste" (*Geschmack*) and "feelings" (*Gefühl*) "drunk" (*berauschen*) by way of his sounds and scents that would target all five senses (he mentions eyes, ears, nose, and mouth with equal emphasis).[334]

Wagner may well have managed to bring floral scents to the theater in these stagings of *Tannhäuser* and *Parsifal*; but it is more likely that the preponderance of theatrical effects—including soft lighting, steam, gauzy "atmospheric curtains," painted scenery depicting "tropical vegetation," and musical effects that themselves exploited foggy and effervescent timbral and harmonic techniques—were suggestive enough to compel spectators to imagine that their bodies, minds, and even olfactory nerves had been

[332] Henry Krehbiel, *Chapters of Opera* (New York, NY: Holt & Co., 1908), 333.
[333] Hanslick, "R. Wagner's Bühnenfestspiel in Bayreuth," 155; trans. in Hanslick, "Dr. Hanslick on the 'Ring des Nibelungen,'" 330.
[334] Von Hagen, *Die Bedeutung des Morgenweckrufes in Richard Wagner's Bühnenweihfestspiele 'Parsifal,'* 54.

touched. Claims to multi-sensory responses to Wagner's works continued from the opening of the *Festspielhaus* onwards.[335] Eventually, there was no Wagnerian theater without Wagnerian synaesthetic fog, and no Wagnerian fog without invocations of sensory and psychological intoxication matching the physical sensations characters describe as they traverse matching climates on stage. It was as if the fantasies of spectatorial conditioning articulated in "Art and Climate" were made real—or at least brought before the imagination in vivid enough detail to convince some spectators they were breathing Wagnerian sounds.

Into the Magical Garden and Out Again: The How and Why of Making Weather Musical

If the climatic dimension of Wagner's theater—and festival experience more broadly—was intended to condition "northern" sensations in spectators so that they would reenter the urban, phenomenal world more responsible and free-thinking, it might seem a strange choice to expose spectators to decadent tropical climatic influences in the theater, like those of the Magical Garden.[336] When taken together with the experiences of purification that follow those tropical scenes, however, the strategy makes more sense. If the Magical Garden could enrapture the audience along with Parsifal, the Grail Realm's purifying atmosphere could cathartically cleanse the bodies of spectators, instilling in the audience the values needed to make "innocent fools" into Germanic saviors. If Wagner had his way, every inhabitant of the *Festspielhaus*, on-stage and off, would breathe the same transformative air as they were led together through the tropical challenge in Act II and the cleansing relief offered in Act III (and beyond the theater's doors in Bayreuth's forests).

As Gurnemanz explains in Act I, Parsifal's immersion in—and rejection of—the Magical Garden is essential to his acquisition of enlightenment and compassion, and thus to his transformation into an enlightened hero.[337] Without being tempted and emancipating himself from temptation, Parsifal would not have developed free will, nor cast off his foolish innocence and gained the power to initiate the "new cycle of the world" key to the redemption of the Grail Realm. Taking spectators along for this transformative, cathartic journey, the drama of *Parsifal* enacts crucial elements of the anti-modernist contract that Wagner had outlined in similarly cathartic, Aristotelian terms in "Art and Climate." If the production of *Parsifal* went off without a hitch, Wagner might have imagined that he had

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[335] For examples of early twentieth-century reactions to Wagner's works as multi-sensory spectacles, see Wakeling Dry, *Wagner's Tannhäuser* (London: de la More, 1902), 58 ("a mist, tinged with a rosy and supernatural light, seems to fill the atmosphere"); Gustav Ernest, *Richard Wagner, sein Leben und Schaffen* ([n.l.]: Bondi, 1915), 105 ("a rosy scent descends as the scene unfolds"); Anne Oberndorfer, "Overture: 'Tannhäuser'" in *What We Hear in Music: A Laboratory Course of Study in Music History and Appreciation* (Camden, NJ: Victor, 1916; rep. 1921), 381 ("a roseate-hued and fragrant mist arises, wafting voluptuous shouts of joy to our ears").

[336] Wagner, "Kunst und Klima," *SSD*, vol. 3, 207-8; trans. in Wagner, "Art and Climate," 250-1.

[337] In Act I, Gurnemanz tells Parsifal that Klingsor's "magic garden" is full of "blooming women" "awaiting the knights of the Grail." Klingsor and this space "gains control" of those who are seduced by them, but only a truly "holy man" will be able to "subdue this plague of sorcery."

gotten his way: after breathing deeply the clear forest air surrounding the opera house during the intermission following Act II—a "true" moment of atmospheric bodily purification after the intoxicating Magical Garden scene—the cleansing of the world began with clean, open air turned to sound in Act III.[338] Parsifal and his assembly of theater-bound followers would emerge into the Grail Realm from cloistered seclusion compassionate, enlightened, and newly capable of feeling in their bodies the salutary "magic" of the Grail Realm and its soundscape, a sensitivity of body and mind earned through his demonstration of rational thought in Act II.

The ground is laid for this purification with Parsifal's triumph over the climatic challenges of the Magical Garden. Gurnemanz suggests as much when he explains to Parsifal that, since he has "endured the sufferings of the redeemed," he (and assembled viewers) could now have the "last burden lifted from [his] head," the Grail Realm delivering him from the last of his sins.[339] In response, Parsifal muses on the cleansing power of the Grail Realm and the idea that anyone—including spectators or even the Flower Maidens, should they make the journey—could be redeemed by its air and sounds:

(Parsifal wendet sich sich um und blickt	(Parsifal, turning away, gazes in gentle ecstasy
mit sanfter Entzückung auf Wald und Wiese,	upon field and forest, which are glowing
welche jetzt im Vormittagslichte leuchten.)	in the morning light.)
Wie dünkt mich doch die Aue heut so schön!	Today, the fields and meadows seem so fair!
Wohl traf ich Wunderblumen an,	Many a magic flower I've seen,
die bis zum Haupte süchtig mich umrankten;	Which wildly sought to twine around me;
doch sah ich nie so mild und zart	But never before so fair and mild
die Halme, Blüten und Blumen,	the meadow flowers blooming,
noch duftet all so kindisch hold	their scent recalls my childhood days
und sprach so lieblich traut zu mir…	And spoke to me of loving trust …
O wehe, des höchsten Schmerzentags!	Oh sorrow, that day of agony!
Da sollte, wähn' ich, was da blüht,	When all creation, all that blooms,
was atmet, lebt und wiederlebt,	that breathes, lives, and lives anew
nur trauern, ach!	Now only sighs and sorrows, ah!
…Ich sah sie welken, die einst mir lachten:	…I saw them withering when once they mocked me:
Ob heut sie nach Erlösung schmachten?	Are they now yearning for redemption?[340]

In *Mein Leben*, Wagner characterizes the Good Friday music as not simply a mimetic expression of the Grail Realm's meadows and trees, but a manifestation of its clean air.[341] He traces his first inklings of the opera that would become *Parsifal* to a Good Friday spent

[338] Lavignac, *The Music Dramas of Richard Wagner and His Festival Theater in Bayreuth*, 9.
[339] Wagner, "Parsifal," *SW*, Vol. 14/3, 66-68; trans. in Wagner, *Parsifal*, 122.
[340] Wagner, "Parsifal," *SW*, Vol. 14/3, 71-89; trans. in Wagner, *Parsifal*, 122-3.
[341] Kinderman, *Wagner's "Parsifal"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 51-2; Wagner, *My Life*, trans. Andrew Gray and ed. Mary Whittall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 547.

in the Swiss Alps where he had taken "asylum" from urban existence in the cleansing "spring weather" (*Frühlingswetter*).[342] Critical reactions to the first stagings of this scene dwell on the Good Friday Music, consistently alluding to the fresh effects of "spring weather," borrowing Wagner's own words that imply that a desire to turn the theater into an Alpine meadow.[343] The Good Friday music was even described by one listener as Christ's "breath," this holy, aural climate inspiring tranquility in those listening and breathing in Wagner's theater.[344]

In a little-known 1881 essay, Wagner drew on Arthur de Gobineau's "Essay on the Disparity of the Races of Man" (1853-5), to argue that that the function of art was to instill in the audience the superior racial characteristics that could be fostered by exposure to the soil and climate of northern regions.[345] Gobineau had argued that "the permanence of racial types is beyond dispute" and that "the most complete change of environment has no power to overthrow it"; as an example, he suggests that it is impossible to join the "Germanic family" simply by "speaking an Aryan dialect" or moving to its climate.[346] In fusing art and environment so completely at Bayreuth, Wagner rendered audible the originary site of both religion and art, Teutonic nature—but at the same time revised Gobineau's theories by admitting the possibility that exposure to the "right" climatic forces could have an ameliorating effect.

Wagner's vision of what might happen to modern Germany should his attempts at social conditioning be successful was no more than a fantasy. But perhaps some critics' willingness to imagine or suggest that their bodies *were* changing as a result of Wagnerian

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[342] Wagner, *My Life*, 547. For more on nineteenth-century associations of health benefits with clean air, see Bradshaw, *Bradshaw's Dictionary of Mineral Waters, Climatic Health Resorts, Sea Baths, and Hydropathic Establishments*; Ian Bradley, *Water Music: Music in the Spas of Europe and North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[343] For references to "spring weather" in period writings on the Good Friday Music, see "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft und sein Meister: Parsifal—die 'Weise' des Hanses," *Stimmen der Zeit*, Vol. 27 (Freiburg: Herder, 1884), 135; Joseph Kürschner, "Chronik und Miszellen," *Richard Wagner-Jahrbuch*, Vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Selbstverlag, 1886); 398; John P. Jackson, *Parsifal: A Festival Music-Drama by Richard Wagner* (New York, NY: Edward Schuberth & Co., 1891), iii; William James Henderson, *Richard Wagner, His Life, and His Music Dramas* (New York, NY: Putnam & Co., 1901), 447; Theodor Schmidt, "Wagner's 'Parsifal': A Critical Study," *The Messenger*, Vol. 5 (New York, NY: The Messenger, 1904), 61; Gerhard Schjelderug, *Richard Wagner und Seine Werke* (Leipzig: F.E.C. Leuckart, 1913), 536.

[344] Peter Waddell, *The Parsifal of Richard Wagner at Bayreuth* (Edinburgh: Blackwood & Sons, 1894), 11. For other examples of this language, see Gustav Kobbé, *Wagner's Life and Works*, Vol. 2 (New York, NY: G. Schirmer, 1896), 208; Lavignac, *Music Dramas of Richard Wagner at the Festival Theater in Bayreuth*, 467.

[345] Wagner, "Introduction to Count Gobineau's 'Ethnological Resume of the Present Aspect of the World'" in *Religion and Art*, trans. Ellis (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Trübner, 1897), 38-40.

[346] Arthur de Gobineau, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, Vol. 4 (Paris: Didot Frères, 1855), 62; trans. in Arthur de Gobineau, *On the Inequality of Human Races*, trans. Adrian Collins (New York, NY: Putnam & Sons, 1915), 126, 133.

audiovisual interactions—even if such change was just a fantasy for them, too—implies that synesthetic conditioning *was* happening. Reading the numerous accounts of sensory overload and ecstatic immersion in the spectacle, it is difficult to disentangle vivid metaphorical language from more literal indications of sensory stimulation. The fevered rhetoric of the Bayreuth public, whether intended as synaesthetic description or metaphor, is widespread enough to suggest some supra-normal experience, while leaving ambiguous the performance's actual impact on body and mind.

On the Fantasy of Wagnerian Success

Vaporous stagings and critical claims of their intoxicating effects on the body and mind endured into the early twentieth century and beyond, suggesting that multi-sensory dramaturgical effects and "fantastical" accounts of their calculated impact on the audience became inseparable from Wagner's works and from the critical legacy of his artistic-political project. One leading voice in making such assessments was that of Friedrich Nietzsche, who warned readers of the ease with which they might fall victim to the composer's "hypnotic trickery" and lose their free will:

> Wagner is a great corrupter of music. With [his spectacle], he found the means of stimulating tired nerves—and in this way, he made music ill. In the art of spurring exhausted creatures back into activity and recalling half-corpses to life, the inventiveness he shows is of no small order. He is the master of hypnotic trickery and he fells the strongest of us. Wagner's success… converted the whole world of musicians into disciples of his secret art. And not only the ambitious, but the shrewd, too.[347]

This deception, he goes on to argue, "seduces" spectators into thinking they have been "saved"; but Wagner's "sublime symbols" are no more than "clouds," mirages designed to blindly cajole audiences to complacent, irreversible captivity and drive them to "hallucinatory" sensations and "fantastical" claims about their experiences in Wagner's theater that they may well have believed to be authentic.[348]

To Nietzsche, Wagner's aesthetic represented a danger in part because it was designed to act upon the nerves like invisible atmosphere, climate, ether, or weather.[349] It was "northern," "damp," and nothing but "steam," and, he cautioned, even after his music faded away, "in every respect, the climate [in the theater] was altered."[350] Decades later,

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[347] Nietzsche, *Der Fall Wagner*, 14-15; trans. in Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner*, 14.
[348] Nietzsche, *Der Fall Wagner*, 35-6; trans. in Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner*, 31-2.
[349] Adorno only makes these comparisons when invoking Nietzsche, writing that "Wagner achieves only that cloud of hot air that Nietzsche mistrusted" (Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, 28).
[350] Nietzsche, *Der Fall Wagner*, 3-4; trans. in Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner,* 7-8. In this passage, Nietzsche compares other national paradigms (mainly French) to "warm climate" and "dry" air, continuing the metaphor as a means of articulating the deficiencies of the Wagnerian artwork and its mode of tricking spectators into believing in its ontological superiority (nothing but a vaporous illusion, he suggests).

Adorno would make similar claims, locating the aesthetic roots of National Socialism in Wagner's totalitarian artwork and accusing him of making the spectator "sick" through "stimuli" that affected "the totality of [the] senses."[351] The Wagnerian spectacle was so suggestive and powerful, these critics warned, that it would be safest to hold one's breath when sitting in the theater.

These influential readings of the Wagnerian aesthetic promoted the idea in Wagner studies that performances of the composer's works not only enchanted spectators by subjecting them to bodily and mental control, but perhaps even altered their horizons of perception in some fundamental ways. Theater historian Nicholas Ridout has pointed out that theories of *Gesamtkunstwerk* and accounts of Wagnerian spectatorship continue to rely on this fiction of complete and successful conditioning of the spectator, often blurring the distinction between Wagner's theatrical aspirations and the lived experience of the spectator as reflected in critical responses. Ridout warns against "full endorsement for the effectiveness of Wagner's scenic inventions," arguing that "audiences at the Bayreuth Festspielhaus were not really subjugated to the power of the illusion, but that, aware of conventions of representation, they went along with what was offered them, participating in its fabrication through their perceptual activity."[352] But Nietzsche and Adorno's alarm have polarized debate to the extent that it sometimes seems as if "success" or "failure" are the only two options when assessing the impact of Wagnerian spectacle. But the testimonies surveyed in this chapter make it clear that nineteenth-century responses to Wagnerian dramaturgy relay both rhetorical and embodied reactions that are more nuanced than Ridout lets on. Most importantly, the reception history amply attests to what we might call a "placebo effect": reports of sensory experiences brought on by Wagner's suggestive effects, but perhaps not rooted in concrete physiological change.

The contours of the critical trend to which Ridout was responding—that Wagner managed to negotiate the senses via technological engagement—resemble the tendency in media studies, film studies, and even in the natural sciences to assume that each new technological apparatus has the power to change the body and/or the sensory experience of its users.[353] Jonathan Sterne, Carolyn Abbate, and many others have recently challenged deterministic thinking in media studies, condemning it (to cite Sterne) as an "impoverished notion of causality."[354] Abbate makes this point even more forcefully, reminding us that

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[351] Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, 82, 91.

[352] Ridout, "Opera and the Technologies of Theatrical Production," 165.

[353] On audiovisual technological determinism and the senses in media and sound studies, see also Marshall McLuhan, "McLuhan's Laws of the Media," *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 16/1 (1975): 74-8; Friedrich Kittler, *Optical Media* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2009), Introduction; Trippett, "Towards a Materialist History of Music: Histories of Sensation"; and Sterne, *The Audible Past*. On the treatment of these discourses in film, see Elcott, *Artificial Darkness* and Beat Wyss, "Ragnarök of Illusion: Richard Wagner's Mystical Abyss," *October*, Vol. 54 (1990): 72-77. On discussions of technology and the senses in biology and neuroscience, see Robert DeSalle, *Our Senses: An Immersive Experience* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018) and Michael Graziano, *The Spaces Between Us: A Story of Neuroscience, Evolution, and Human Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[354] Sterne, *The Audible Past*, 8.

(however seductive the idea might appear), users of new technologies have never in fact been "remade by [any other] non-human objects that possess an agency equal to our own."[355] Just as Ridout argues that Wagnerian technologies never really managed to provoke bodily change—despite what some period thinkers may imply—Abbate and Sterne suggest that modern minds and bodies have never been re-engineered by new technological interfaces. But perhaps there is room here, too, for a reading of audiovisual engagement that falls somewhere between "success" or "failure," one that is distinctly Wagnerian in the "fantastical" nature of its embodiment: if those users of new audiovisual technologies believe or report that the body and mind has been "remade," perhaps in some way it has, transcending the polarized bounds of "success" or "failure" and falling instead into a mature form of Wagnerian "fantasy"—like so many other Wagnerians have and had when experiencing *Tannhäuser*, *Parsifal*, or *Der Ring*.

The rhetorical ground shared by narratives of Wagnerian conditioning and those of technological determinism raise questions of where, when, and why this entrenched belief in the deterministic impact of sensory technologies—audio, visual, audiovisual, and haptic—on the body arose. Was Wagner really the first to think that theatrical experience could transform the viewer or does this idea extend back to the ancient Greeks, who, like Wagner, may have understood space, air, and sound as "working" on the body and mind? Nietzsche's assessment of Hellenic Dionysian and Apollonian "artistic impulses" that drive the viewer to emotional and physiological "sublimation" points in this direction, as does Wagner's own invocation of the Greeks in his early writings on *Gesamtkunstwerk* and spectatorial engagement.[356]

Wagner's association of Bayreuth with "inconceivable fragrances" and the legacy of recognizing their traces in his evocative musical and dramaturgical materiality continues to intoxicate Wagnerian critics today; it is as if Wagner scholars have been "conditioned" to approach spectacle and elements of stage technology as deterministic, driven to fantastical rhetoric just as their critical predecessors were.[357] Perhaps those Wagnerian "fragrances" have, in a way, conditioned similar responses in those thinking more broadly about audiovisual stimuli, too. As they imagine change to the body stemming from provocation to the mind, Wagner, his climatic treatise, and nineteenth-century atmospheric and climatic consciousness continues to cast a deep breath over the imprecise psychology and materiality of audiovisual experience.

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[355] Such theories hold that "instruments and technologies have the power to [permanently] alter and reshape… attentiveness and perception, or the human sensorium—the brain's 'seat of the senses'—or the ear and eye themselves, the biological organs." Abbate, "Sound Object Lessons," 794.

[356] On Nietzsche, see Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik* (Leipzig: E.W. Fritzsche, 1872) and John Sallis, *Crossings: Nietzsche and the Space of Tragedy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991). On the Greeks' influence on Wagner, see Deathridge, *Wagner Beyond Good and Evil*; and Foster, *Wagner's Ring Cycle and the Greeks*.

[357] Liszt, *Richard Wagner's Lohengrin und Tannhäuser mit Musik*, 34.

Chapter 5

On the Politics of Performing Wagner Outdoors, 1909-1959: Open-Air Opera, *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and the Rise and Fall of the Third Reich

"Ich steh' vor einer grünen Bühne!
Fang an, fang wieder an, du Spiel!"

—Georg Trakl (1887-1914), "Naturtheater"[358]

It was August 3, 1933. The port at Danzig was busy and rumors were flying. A loudspeaker declared the news: "The Chancellor has landed at the port in Danzig!" [359] Telephones rang in the offices of the *Waldoper*, the open-air amphitheater dedicated to Wagner in the nearby town of Sopot. The Magistrate of Danzig called again and again: "Hitler is coming to the *Waldoper*! The *Führer* is coming!" But it was not true—or, according to the *Waldoper*'s General Manager, Hermann Merz, it was only "half true" but, nevertheless, the tale "took on a life of its own."

This story was printed in National Socialist propagandaa in 1935 and 1938. Perhaps it was intended to convince readers of Adolf Hitler's popularity in recently-annexed Danzig (now Gdańsk) or emphasize the *Waldoper*'s political and cultural significance under the Reich. In either case, in 1935, Joseph Goebbels called the *Waldoper* paradigmatic of the National Socialist vision of the future of German opera and began referring to the stage as "an important artistic site for the Reich," ordering this lofty statement stamped on all its advertising and propaganda.[360] This designation was not applied to any major opera houses in Berlin or Munich—it was granted only to the *Waldoper*, and remained affixed to its programs and posters until the end of the war.[361]

In addition to acting as an important site of cultural tourism, the *Waldoper* had a darker function for the Reich. I shall argue in this chapter that the *Waldoper*—an unexplored, yet highly significant project within the Reich's cultural program—acted as an artistic prong of the Reich's *Volksdeutsche* project, an initiative designed to coerce Poles

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[358] Georg Trakl, "Nature Theater": "I stand before the green stage! Begin, begin again, you play!" Hans Weichselbaum, "Georg Trakls Weg in die literarische Moderne" in Károly Csúri, ed., *Georg Trakl und die literarische Moderne* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2009), 222. All translations mine unless otherwise noted.

[359] This anecdote is reported in Meyer, *Die Zoppoter Waldoper* (Berlin: Schlieffen, 1935), 35.

[360] Meyer, *Die Zoppoter Waldoper*, 14. For more on this terminology, see Thomas Eicher, Barbara Panse, and Henning Rischbieter, ed., *Theater im 'Dritten Reich'* (Berlin: Kallmeyer, 2000) and John London, ed., *Theatre under the Nazis* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

[361] For more on the long history of the *Waldoper*, see Wolting, ed., *Bretter, die Kulturkulissen markierten*.

into acknowledging that they were "ethnically German."[362] In Poland, this often amounted to registering as many Polish people as possible under this designation, a process that forced them to shed their national and ethnic identity completely. Those who refused were tortured, deported, or sometimes even killed.[363]

Goebbels, Alfred Rosenberg, and other SS members believed that imperceptible "purification" of Polish blood could take place at the *Waldoper*, which they also on occasion described as a *Bluttheater* ("blood theater"). In essays published in Sopot in 1935, the Reich's propagandists described Wagnerian sound as an "atmospheric reconstruction of the Sopot forest's oaks and pines… echoing over the boundaries our homeland [and] consecrating the deepest conviction regarding the German-ness of those in the East."[364] Claims like this one implicate the forest air and Wagnerian sound as invisibly reshaping national identity of occupied peoples as, in Hitler's words, "Aryan blood was bequeathed to their subjugated race."[365] To these members of the Third Reich, Germans and Poles would unknowingly become members of Hitler's "new human type" at the *Waldoper*, simply by listening closely and breathing deeply.[366]

Wagner's music dramas and other operatic repertoire were performed outdoors all over Germany in the first half of the twentieth century—the Third Reich did not invent this practice. Nonetheless, the history of open-air opera can tell us much about how opera, braided together with discourses of nature, was pressed into service to cultivate specific—and shifting—notions of community during the first half of the twentieth century. Both as local entertainment and pillar of National Socialist art, this institution's mode of community-building relied on the German fantasy that German forest and sound could condition national values. Critics, spectators, and singers capitulated to this Romantic conceit when writing on outdoor opera, reporting almost uniformly that they imagined or even believed that opera outdoors could influence who they were. Opera outdoors created a community bonded by rhetoric that, at least in the imaginations of spectators, could lead to real consequences for the future of the German *Volk*.

This is what attracted the Reich to open-air opera, what underwrote their *Waldoper* propaganda, and what they were determined to exploit there—the broadly accepted

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[362] Valdis O. Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries: The Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle and the German National Minorities of Europe, 1933-1945* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 159-60. For more on the *Volksdeutsche* program, see John J. Kulczycki, *Belonging to the Nation: Inclusion and Exclusion in the Polish-German Borderlands, 1939-1951* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), especially Chapter 13 ("The Last Phase of Nationality Verification and Rehabilitation") and Tadeusz Piotrowski, "Polish Collaboration" in *Poland's Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918-1947* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1998), 77-142.

[363] Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, 159-60.

[364] Meyer, *Die Zoppoter Waldoper*, 20.

[365] Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. James Murphy (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1939), 216. On the role of climate in Hitler's racist ideology, see Richard Weikart, *Hitler's Ethnic: The Nazi Pursuit of Evolutionary Progress* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

[366] Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 218.

conviction that sound and space had the power to alter identity, affect the body, and initiate listeners into communities based in imperial or expansionist ideologies. To write the history of this Nazi cultural project, the historian needs to interrogate its base assumptions, especially the assumption that new communities might be conditioned by German nature and sound at all. For underlying open-air operatic practice and propaganda is a seductive fantasy of phantasmagoric cultural control, one that has much in common with the broader ideologies of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, Wagnerian agendas for social reform, and their legacy in Adorno's writings on Wagner and National Socialism.

Naturbühne, 1909-1935

When I visited Sopot, Poland in August of 2017, I asked my tour guide if she knew anything about the circumstances of the *Waldoper*'s founding. She replied with the following origin story: in 1909, a man from Sopot was walking in the woods. He soon began singing and found a place under the trees that seemed to have the "perfect" acoustic. It was in that spot that the forest opera was built, and a range of operas including *Fidelio*, *Tiefland*, and *Der Freischütz* were performed there until the stage was dedicated entirely to Wagner's *Waldspiele* beginning in 1922.[367] The idea that German operatic sound (and particularly Wagnerian sound) resonates "differently," more "innately," or more "naturally" in the primeval, German forest attracted spectators to Sopot from all over Poland and Germany, all keen to hear the German "forest acoustic" for themselves when urban opera houses were closed for the summer.[368]

Throughout the early decades of the twentieth century, nature stages like the *Waldoper* were so common across Germany and such a popular part of operatic and theatrical culture that theater critic Heinrich Mettin estimated in 1937 that there were "more open-air theaters than playgrounds."[369] That year, the number of German amphitheaters was about 235; the Third Reich had built 121 more by 1940 that could seat a total of 120,000 people.[370] While some stages acted as summer festivals for urban opera houses, others operated within pneumatic spa complexes, offering aural therapy to vacationers in search of bodily cures.[371] Sopot's *Waldoper* was situated within one such health resort, providing visitors the opportunity to breathe clean air and hear curative sounds during their visit to Sopot's popular resort on the Baltic coast. At the *Waldoper*, as one critic asserted

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[367] Einhard Luther, *Die Zoppoter Waldoper* (Sopot: Traditionsgemeinschaft Zoppot-Travemünde, 1966), 21.
[368] Luther, *Die Zoppoter Waldoper*, 21.
[369] Heinrich Mettin, "Theater im Natur," *Die Tat*, Vol. 29/7 (1937): 498. For more on the German "nature stage," see Hellmut Renenrt, ed., *Essays on Twentieth-Century German Drama and Theater: An American Reception, 1977-1999* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2004); and Frank Waugh, *Outdoor Theaters: The Design, Construction, and Use of Open-Air Auditoriums* (Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1917), esp. sections on the "garden theater" in Mannheim.
[370] Mettin, "Theater im Natur," 498; *Deutsches Bühnen Jahrbuch* (Berlin: Günther & Sohn, 1940), 62.
[371] *Deutsches Bühnen Jahrbuch*, 318.

in 1931, spectators not only basked in the sounds of the "forest acoustic," but "breathed in […] a sense of vitality and joy of life" among the trees.[372]

Repertoire at nature stages was almost always German, often varying according to the natural landmarks present at a given site. According to Mettin, German nature stages were divided into categories based on natural surroundings—there were *Felsenbühne*, *Waldbühne*, *Strandbühne*, *Gartenbühne*, among other categories—and repertoire was often chosen based on its suitability to those surroundings. Works set against cliffs would only be performed on *Felsenbühne*, while those that thematized the forest would only find their homes on *Waldbühne*. Intervention into the natural environment was discouraged, the "natural" setting ideally sufficing as backdrop for the works on offer. [373]

At some nature stages, repertoire not only reflected setting, but commented upon that setting to enact an aesthetic education rooted in experience of nature. Some outdoor festivals even commissioned new plays or operas that made explicit connections between the natural features of the region and the identity of the local population. One example of this specialized dramatic genre was Ludwig Hacker's 1890 "Die Losburg" (see Fig. 1) performed annually at the base of the Luisenberg in Alexandersbad, Bavaria where a "mountain stage" was incorporated into pneumatic spa activities around 1890.[374]

Figure 1: Ludwig Hacker, "Die Losburg: Bergfestspiel" (1906)

[372] *Deutscher Bäder Kalendar* (Berlin: Bäder- und Verkehrs-Verlag, 1927), 288.
[373] Mettin, "Theater im Natur," 498.
[374] At the end of the nineteenth century, the so-called "Green Hill" upon which Wagner's *Festspielhaus* was built was labeled "Die Luisenberg" in some early documentation (Richard Wagner National Archive and Museum, Doc. AFS 26a).

In Hacker's work, personifications of the natural landmarks visible nearby were assigned lines about how to treat nature with respect and the intimate bond between nature and the cultural identity of the audience. Lessons expressed (literally) by nature itself were reinforced by claims from Teutonic heroes who stood just inches from listeners. As the character of "the Mountain" explains in "Die Losburg," at the Luisenberg's "mountain stage," spectators could breathe "pure air" "under [its] cliffs" and Nature would cultivate "a true *Volk* [gathering] in joyful unity" that would "consecrate" Germany and its divine future.[375]

Physiologist Fritz Kahn registered the discourses foundational to this conception of cultural conditioning in his 1926 "History of the Anatomy, Biology, Physiology and Developmental Psychology of German Man." "Our country grows, bleeds, and is renewed at open-air stages," Kahn wrote, Germans' shared cultural identity "biologically resonating" with them as they were immersed in German nature and German music, created by composers channeling the consciousness of the forest itself.[376] Here, Kahn is suggesting that, by marshalling forest, atmosphere, and sound, open-air theater could engage biology and genetics, as well as culture and identity. By 1935, this attitude towards open-air opera—that it really *could* shape German society by channeling the power of nature—was practically gospel within the Reich Ministry of Culture: that year, SS biologist Willy Hellpach published a pseudo-scientific treatise on what he called "cultural climate," a theory that associated the conceits of climatic conditioning with *all* German art. Hellpach argued that German art was not just *like* the northern, German climate, but could embody German nature and transform spectators accordingly.[377] As discussed in Chapter 1, Wagner had propounded very similar ideas in his "Art and Climate" and elsewhere.[378] Hellpach and his contemporaries, then, may have adapted aspects of Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* ideology—and their consummation at his Bayreuth *Festspiele*—to their cultural program.

Suggestions that spectators' civic values might be physiologically conditioned by their surroundings at nature stages—and by the musical and dramatic mimesis of those same natural and climatic elements in the works performed—engage not just Romantic associations of identity and forest, but also the epistemology of climatic determinism, a theory first developed in the eighteenth century founded on the idea that climate shaped every facet of human identity, from skin tone to manners.[379] The statements made by Kahn, Hellpach, and others that link open-air performances to the conditioning of mind and body reveal an important continuity between old ideas of climatic determinism and the outdoor opera movement.

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[375] Ludwig Hacker, "Die Losburg" (Alexandersbad: Wunsiedel, 1912), 12.

[376] Fritz Kahn, *Das Leben des Menschen: eine Volkstümliche Anatomie, Biologie, Physiologie und Entwicklungsgeschichte des Menschen* (Stuttgart: Franck'sche Verlagshandlung, 1926), 258.

[377] Willy Hellpach, *Kultur und Klima* (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1938), 290.

[378] See Wagner, "Kunst und Klima," *SSD*, Vol. 3, 207-21; trans. in Wagner, "Art and Climate," 249-66.

[379] On the history of climatic determinism, see James Roger Fleming, *Historical Perspectives on Climate Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Tang, *The Geographic Imagination of Modernity*; and Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment*.

German notions of climate in the first decades of the century were shaped by the work of some of the nineteenth-century thinkers who influenced Wagner's thinking on the subject (see Chapters 1 and 2). One influential figure was Wilhelm Riehl, a natural historian who argued in the first few decades of the nineteenth century that Germans "genetically inherit" their culture from the infallible "soil of the German Fatherland."[380] Riehl himself drew on hallowed models that included Herder's notion that climate influences "the nerves and muscles" of mankind to determine national rituals, customs, and laws or Montesquieu's theory that those inhabiting northern climates (like the German forest) naturally developed social values that those in other, southern climates could not.[381] Appropriating the conceits of climatic determinism, then, the Reich imagined aesthetic education at nature stages to be physiological and inescapable, driven not just by climate and the sounds that mimicked it, but by a willingness among spectators to believe that nature really *could* change who they were.[382]

Wagner in the Forest: the *Waldoper* and the Third Reich, 1933-45

In 1933, Goebbels and the Ministry of Culture declared that 400 new outdoor stages would be built by the Ministry of Open-Air and *Volk* Theater across Germany and Poland, each large enough to seat at least 15,000 spectators. While the Reich's outdoor theater and opera program never reached its intended scale, over one hundred new amphitheaters were completed. These new stages, along with all existing amphitheaters, were dubbed *Thingstätte*, the word *Thing* ("sacred oak clearing") referring to the open-air amphitheater stage and making use of a symbolic ecological reference associated with the renewal of the German *Volk* since ancient times.[383]

Thingstätte became "pulpits" of National Socialist values where commissioned *Thingspiele* told the stories of the rebirth of the nation in the image of a glorified Teutonic past, much like "Die Losburg" had decades before.[384] All *Thingspiele* took the same form—"movement chorus" after "movement chorus"—described by one *Thingstätte* dramaturg, Rainer Schlosser, as appealing to the "cult of participation" by stimulating

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[380] Raymond Dominick, *The Environmental Movement in Germany: Prophets and Pioneers, 1871-1971* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), 87.
[381] John K. Noyes, *Herder: Aesthetics Against Imperialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 218.
[382] Dominick, *The Environmental Movement in Germany*, 41. For more on the Third Reich's forest ideology, see Wilson, *German Forest*; and Brüggemeier et al, ed., *How Green Were the Nazis?: Nature, Environment, and Nation in the Third Reich*.
[383] Fischer-Lichte, *Theater, Sacrifice, Ritual*, 129. For more on the history of "oak" terminology, see Mary Anne Perkins, *Nation and Word, 1770-1850* (London: Routledge, 1998) and Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, esp. Chapter 2 ("Der Holzweg").
[384] Rainer Stollmann and Ronald L. Smith, "Fascist Politics as a Total Work of Art: Tendencies of the Aestheticization of Political Life in National Socialism," *New German Critique*, No. 14 (Spring 1978), 44. Today, the most regularly used surviving *Thingstätte* is Berlin's *Waldbühne*, which is still used for concerts (sometimes even performances of Wagner). On the *Waldbühne*, see Axel Steinhage and Thomas Flemming, *Berlin 1945-1989* (Berlin: Argon, 1995).

spectators' bodies and instinctually engendering participation in the social movement *Thingspiele* narrated.[385] To Goebbels, Schlosser, and other members of the Ministry of Culture, this was an aesthetic formula that would bring about cultural renewal on a mass scale, *Thingspiele* "rhythmic music and choruses," "musical and gestural effects" and the "choreography of dance" acting as tools for engaging thousands of bodies at once via occluded aesthetic means.[386]

According to a report delivered by Schlosser at the 1935 conference of SS architects, these stages brought together the culturally "refreshing" influence of imaginary "ancient oak clearings" with the physiological authority of commissioned spectacles (*Thingspiele*) to "activate" Aryan values in the throngs of assembled spectators (see Fig. 2):[387]

Figure 2: *Thingstätte* (Berlin, 1934; capacity: 23,000)

[385] William Niven, "The Birth of Nazi Drama?: *Thing* Plays" in London, ed., *Theatre Under the Nazis*, 73-4.
[386] On *Thingspiele*, see Karl-Heinz Schoeps, "The Thingspiel," *Literature and Film in the Third Reich* (Camden, NJ: Camden House, 2004), 154; and George Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 292.
[387] Niven, "The Birth of Nazi Drama?: *Thing* Plays," 58. On the construction of *Thing* stages, see Robert Taylor, "Architecture for Social Order and Unity" in *The Word in Stone: The Role of Architecture in the National Socialist Ideology* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974), 182-218; Rainer Stollmann and Ronald L. Smith, "Fascist Politics as a Total Work of Art: Tendencies of the Aestheticization of Political Life in National Socialism," *New German Critique*, No. 14 (Spring 1978): 44.

Between 1933 and 1935, some of these venues were so important to the Reich that they were labelled "important festival site for the Reich," a status that came with special state subsidies.[388]

While *Thingspiele* were meant to invisibly "activate" the spectators physically, the outdoor environment ("oak groves") was also granted an important role in that process of physical activation and nationalistic acculturation. The "oak grove," a symbol of "national pride" since Tacitus' *Germania*, long held deterministic associations for German thinkers: Jakob Grimm, for instance, claimed in 1846 that exposure to oaks could "refresh" Germans and "rouse [them] to a higher devotion" after having been "brought to ruin by their own delusions."[389] At *Thingstätte*, then, thousands of assembled Germans were not only instructed by *Thingspiele* "movement choruses" as to their duties in the Reich's mission, but were to be physically refreshed and reborn through exposure to the influences of the allegedly ancient oak groves in which they sat. This was an adaptation of the form of conditioning and acculturation that had long been key to the institution of the open-air theater in Germany, but directed towards a contemporary political mission: the biological conditioning of Aryan values through activation of the body and mind via combined textual, musical, and environmental means.

By 1935, *Thingstätte* had been abandoned by the Reich in favor of a new theatrical agenda that prioritized a single voice, not a "movement chorus," emanating from the stage, a *Führer* instructing spectators as to their mission. *Thingspiele* had supported a community-driven didacticism embodied in choral address, a form that was no longer tenable as Hitler continued to consolidate power. As a result, the Reich's Plays Committees were dismantled, the very word *Thing* was made forbidden, and *Thingspiele* were banned as of an October 1935 statement issued by the Ministry of Propaganda—*Thingstätte* were also stripped of their labels as "important festival site for the Reich."[390] By the end of 1935, however, only one theater—the *Waldoper*—retained this title. The *Waldoper* had never participated in the *Thingstätte* program, probably because its performance of Wagner and only Wagner was considered to be more important. When Hitler outlawed these stages in 1935, the Reich dedicated newly available resources to the *Waldoper,* while *Thingstätte* were left to grow over with weeds.

Goebbels and Hitler were so enamored with the *Waldoper*'s potential for convincing spectators that they had been altered via environmental and sonic persuasion that in 1935 they ordered the production of a seventy-five-page collection of essays on the importance of Wagner and the *Waldoper* to the Reich's cultural and imperialist mission in the region. That year, Goebbels also appointed SS member Robert Heger chief conductor and began recruiting top German singers to perform.[391] In their contributions to this collection, members of the Ministry of Culture articulated their support for the *Waldoper*

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[388] Fischer-Lichte, *Theater, Sacrifice, Ritual*, 129.

[389] Perkins, *Nation and Word*, 38; Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 75-134. On the mythology of the German oak, see also Eva Giloi, *Monarchy, Myth, and Material Culture in Germany, 1750-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); and David Huckvale, *Visconti and the German Dream: Romanticism, Wagner, and the Nazi Catastrophe in Film* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2012).

[390] Niven, "The Birth of Nazi Drama?: *Thing* Plays," 73-4.

[391] Luther, "Impressions and Memories," *Opera*, Vol. 17 (Autumn 1966), 16-19.

(see Fig. 3): this was "living theater," they claimed, "its natural, climatic conditions invigorating nationalism" and "providing an inner rebirth and fulfillment of the German people."[392] There, Wagnerian music, "consciously and unreservedly German and nothing else," as Goebbels put it, would reinforce the climatic influences of the Sopot forest that Hermann Goering, Forestry Minister and President of the *Waldoper*, could teach anyone—including and especially local Poles—to be a National Socialist.[393]

Figure 3: *Waldoper* (1932; capacity, 15,000)
Otto von Wechman Collection, Muzeum Sopotu

In this collection, essay after essay attests to the power of the *Waldoper*'s unique combination of nature and sound over spectatorial consciousness, the Reich's representatives writing with confidence that performances there would guarantee the formation of a unified *Volksgemeinschaft* in Poland. "The forest and music have been woven together at the Sopot *Waldoper*," President of the Danzig Senate Hermann Rauschning claimed, arguing that this "new form of art" propelled the "consciousness of man towards higher unity with nature, where it will remain forever."[394] Alfred Rosenberg made similar statements, writing that "the harmony between environment and drama [allows the *Waldoper* to] play the most important role in German cultural rebirth in the

[392] Meyer, *Die Zoppoter Waldoper*, 13-14.
[393] Michael Imort, "Eternal Forest—Eternal Volk": The Rhetoric and Reality of National Socialist Forest Policy" in Brüggemeier et al, ed., *How Green Were the Nazis*, 54.
[394] Meyer, *Die Zoppoter Waldoper*, 7.

East."[395] Creating a key role for Wagner in this imperialist mission, music historian and SS convert Gotthold Frotscher argued that, "the experience of the Sopot Forest Stage… is epitomized by *Parsifal*: to be led out of the earthly towards freedom, from darkness to light… [At the *Waldoper*, spectators will be] cleansed of lower natural drives in favor of the purity of nature, humanity and nature united in higher unity."[396]

Here, Rosenberg, Frotscher, and Goebbels—along with local officials like Rauschning and Danzig regional governor Albert Forster—outline the *Waldoper*'s crucial role in the Reich's imperialist activities in "the East."[397] The Reich implemented a range of programs in the Danzig area during their occupation intended not just to coerce Poles into joining the National Socialist party, but to pressure them into conceding that they were racially and ethnically German, not Polish. Collectively, these programs were known as *Volksdeutsche* initiatives and included signing away Polish names, heritage, and ethnicity (and accepting German alternatives), agreeing to participate in the deportation of Jewish neighbors, and committing to serve in the German army; *Volksdeutsche* enlistees were sometimes transported to SS bases in freight cars adorned with bits of forest, perhaps intended to symbolize the past, present, and future source of their German identity.[398] The *Waldoper*'s design and function as a space for invisible acculturation of German identity was likely part of this set of initiatives: it was not just an attraction for German tourists to hear Wagner in Poland, nor was it a site for the "activation" of National Socialist values in those visitors alone. Instead, at the *Waldoper*, the Reich deployed sound, space, and spectacle to do the work of an army—and relied on spectators to believe, as they always had, in the power of forest and sound to change them.

The Reich's plan to use the *Waldoper* as part of their *Volksdeutsche* program was conveyed not just in propagandistic writings, but through the festival's iconography as well. Embedded in the Reich's collections of essays on the "forest opera" are images of the stage and crowd, carefully designed to implicate the *Waldoper* as a site for converting Polish viewers into National Socialists. Among the most common images in the Reich's propaganda are those that display spectators sitting deep in the forest surrounding the stage, the audience made to look as if it was disappearing into the forest and becoming trees (or trees becoming spectators). The Reich made use of this symbolism in their 1938 guide to the *Waldoper* (see Fig. 4):

Figure 4: Image from the *Waldoper* Festival Guide (1938)

[395] Meyer, *Die Zoppoter Waldoper*, 8.
[396] Meyer, *Die Zoppoter Waldoper*, 8.
[397] Meyer, *Die Zoppoter Waldoper*, 9.
[398] Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, 244.

While this visual trick might seem heavy-handed, it was a practiced visual tactic in forestry propaganda—like in the 1936 film *Ewiger Wald*—designed to depict an SS forestry motto in action (see Fig. 5):

Figure 5: Still from *Ewiger Wald* (1936)

As the film's disembodied chorus of trees repeats again and again, "from the multitude of species, create the new community of the eternal forest, create the eternal forest of the new community… excise what is foreign and sick."[399] This was their plan at the *Waldoper*, "excising" the "foreign and sick" from their midst by surrounding Poles with tress and turning them into ethnic Germans.

In this example of an advertisement for *Tannhäuser* from 1939 (see Fig. 6), *Waldoper* propagandists used this pictorial strategy to imply that spectators will symbolically merge with trees at performances as they were molded, in body and mind, into the Aryans they always and already were.

[399] Imort, "Eternal Forest—Eternal Volk," 55. For more on SS forestry propaganda, see also Rolf Giessen, *Nazi Propaganda Films: A History and Filmography* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2003), 35-40. On *Ewiger Wald*, see Robert G. Lee and Sabine Wilke, "Forest as Volk: Ewiger Wald and the Religion of Nature in the Third Reich," *Journal of Social and Ecological Boundaries*, Vol. 1/1 (Spring 2005): 21-46. The film is available online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYok2LWmF4Y (accessed: 18 March 2018).

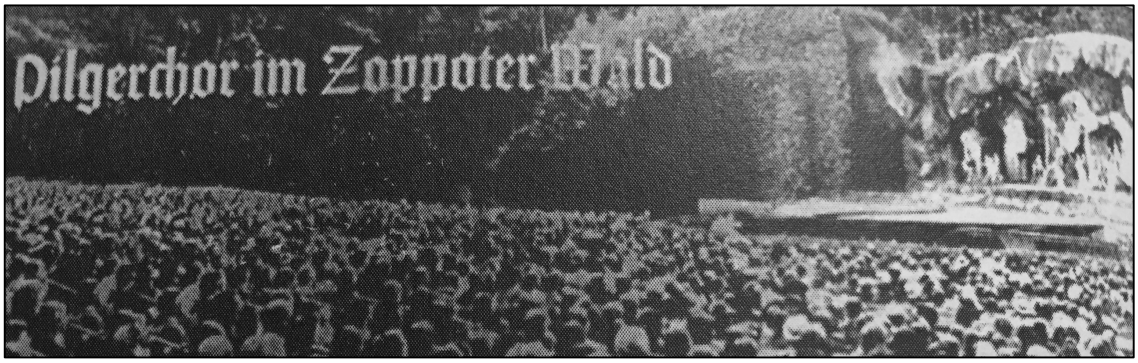

Figure 6: Advertisement for *Tannhäuser* (*Waldoper*, 1939)
Muzeum Sopotu

This image does something more with this visual trick, however: it suggests that Wagner would help guide Polish spectators back to this originary state, the phrase "Pilgrims' Chorus in the Sopot Forest" splashed over the image of spectators disappearing into the trees. According to the Reich's plan, as Polish spectators sat amongst Sopot's trees, they ostensibly would transform into modern-day versions of those wayward pilgrims that traversed the Germanic Wartburg in search of salvation with Wagner's hero. Here, spectators are cast not as an opera audience at all, but as Teutonic pilgrims who had flocked to Sopot from near and far, the Forest Opera and guiding hands of Wagner and the Reich granting invisible absolution for genetic flaws and molding the Polish masses into a *Volksgemeinschaft* with a shared heritage rooted in nature itself.

In 1934, residents of Sopot would have spotted another piece of *Waldoper* advertising plastered over their city streets (see Fig. 7):

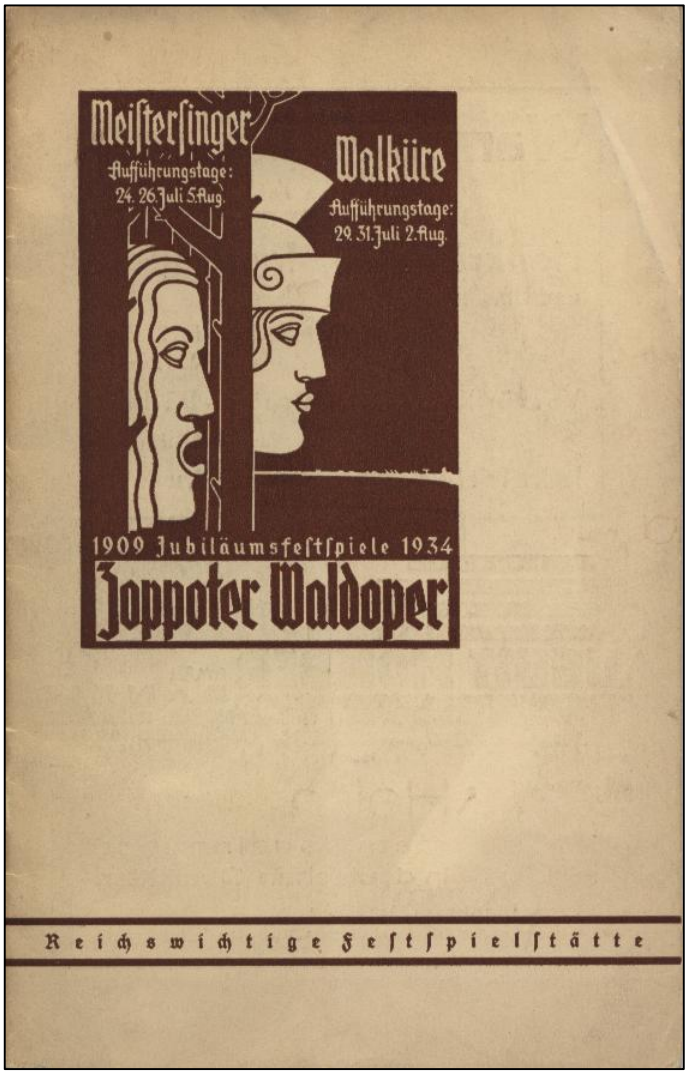

Figure 7: *Zoppoter Waldoper* (1934)[400]
Muzeum Sopotu

As if to depict the Reich's occupation in action (and carve out a role for Wagner in that mission), in that year's festival poster, a Valkyrie and Meistersinger stoically stare out from amongst the forest's trees towards the Baltic coast, as if they are standing in for SS generals appraising their newly-occupied territory. Here, the Meistersinger does not just survey the coast, but sings to it, calling out to Poland from amongst the trees with universal truths of German nature that, in accordance with SS forestry mottos, might teach the Polish people how to be National Socialists.[401]

The placement of these singing faces, one imbricated over the other (and both, in turn, set into the forest) recalls a motif common in SS propaganda (see Fig. 8).

[400] Meyer, *Die Zoppoter Waldoper*, 72.
[401] Imort, "Eternal Forest—Eternal Volk," 55-6.

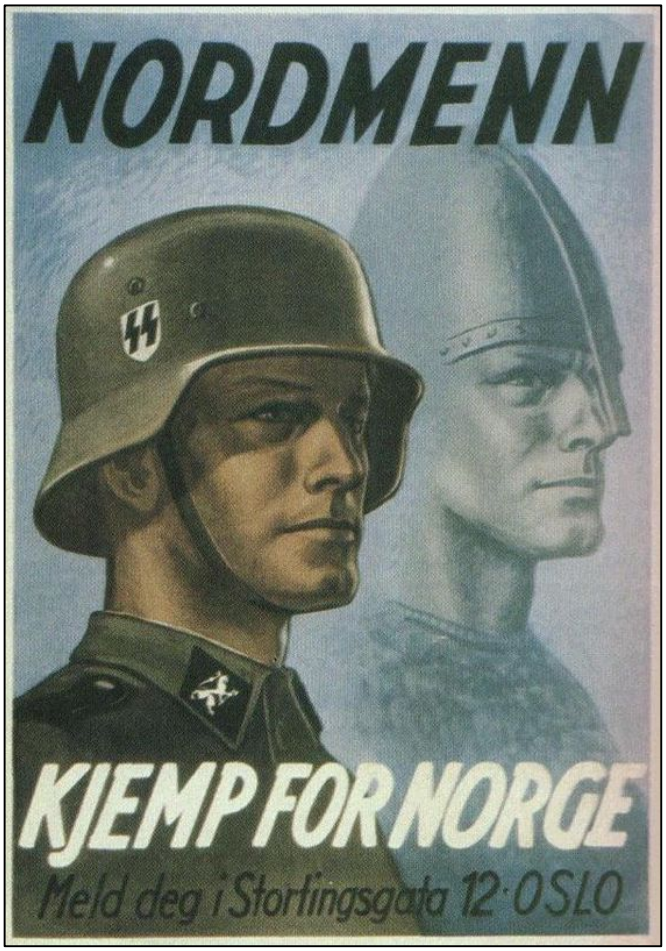

Figure 8: Norwegian SS Recruitment Poster (1942)[402]

As Mark Neocleous has pointed out, the Reich's propagandistic images regularly depicted German political icons—often a swastika, Valkyrie, or Hitler himself—set alongside mortal representatives of the National Socialist political platform, including SS soldiers or Aryan children.[403] This visual indication of equivalency was a coded reference to shared lineage, the Teutonic Valkyrie or Hitler himself as genetic, divine, and cultural ancestor to the Aryan people, past, present, and future. This image from Sopot makes use of this propagandistic strategy, implying that Wagner's figures derive their lineage from the forest

[402] "Nordemenn Kjemp for Norge (Norwegians Battle for Norway)," Wolfsonian Art and Design Collection. Online: http://www.wolfsonian.org/explore/collections/nordmenn-kjemp-norge-norwegians-battle-norway (accessed: 19 October 2017).

[403] Mark Neocleous, *Fascism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 67. In National Socialist propaganda, these ancient images often stood alongside German bodies in an attempt to "produce a mythological past designed to defend the regime's historical legitimacy" and cast Hitler as "the new Cesar of this era" (Ward Rennen, *CityEvents: Place Selling in a Media Age* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 104). Note that these images not only appeared on posters for theatrical performances, but in recruitment advertisements and other campaigns as well.

itself and promising, through sound and forest alone, to reawaken German identity in modern members of their ancestral line.

Four years later, Hitler was preparing to invade the rest of Poland, promising them what he felt he had already brought to the Danzig area, participation in the rebirth of Germany in the East triggered, in part, by the allegedly "civilizing" influence of primeval, German nature, as Hitler himself had claimed.[404] The *Waldoper*, still labeled "an important cultural project for the Reich," had replaced the 1934 poster—one that demonstrated occupation in action—with an image suggesting that that occupation had been successful (see Fig. 9):

Figure 9: *Zoppoter Waldoper* (1938)[405]
Muzeum Sopotu

Poland was part of the Reich's growing empire and, according to this image, the *Waldoper* was helping to bring about a cultural revolution there: adapting a motif common in SS

[404] Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 218.
[405] *Zoppoter Waldoper: Richard Wagner Festspiele, Reichswichtige Festspielstätte* (Danzig: A.W. Kafemann, 1938).

propaganda (see Fig. 10), this poster depicts Wagner in the place of a swastika or Hitler's bust (as in other, similar SS posters) as a luminous sun, rising over the Sopot forest and leading Polish people towards a new German dawn. No institutional artifice is visible here: there is no stage, audience or orchestra. Instead, there is only Wagner, blanketing Poland in an aural climate of resonant, German air that could biologically compel the Polish people to want and implement a new social and political order, climate and sound more persuasive than military force.[406]

Figure 10: Postcard (Vienna, c. 1942)

[406] David Redles, *Hitler's Millennial Reich: Apocalyptic Belief and the Search for Salvation* (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2008), 49. This image also recalls Josef Danhauser's *Franz Liszt Fantasizing at the Piano* (1840), which depicts Beethoven's bust hovering just beyond the windowsill as Liszt improvises, spellbound, at the piano, inspired by Beethoven's presence and the sight of Romantic nature. For more on the relevance of this painting and its symbolism to Romantic thought, see, for instance, Lawrence Kramer, *The Thought of Music* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2016), 114.

Towards the end of the war, the *Waldoper*'s propagandists released a final poster that, much like earlier advertising campaigns, borrowed imagery from other SS propaganda (see Fig. 11). Here, the illuminated bust of Wagner once again hovers over the *Waldoper*, symbolizing the role Wagner was playing in the German occupation of Poland, his aural climate still enveloping this occupied territory, conditioning that essential German character latent in the forest itself in occupied Poles:

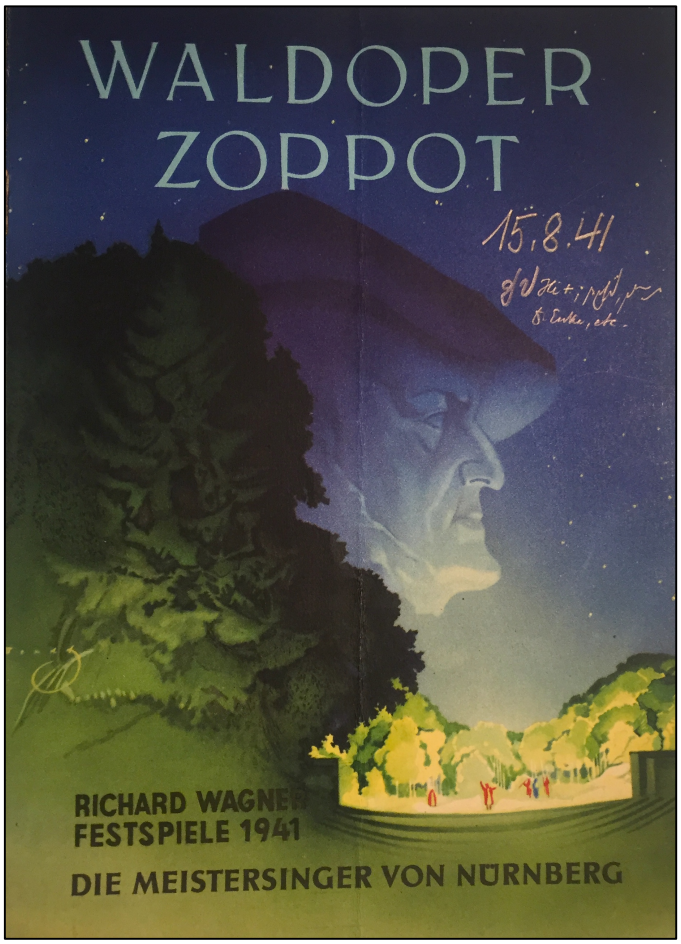

Figure 11: *Waldoper Zoppot* (1941)[407]
Muzeum Sopotu

Like the 1936-8 posters, Wagner is once again positioned as *Führer* here, his protective gaze emerging from the forest and hovering atmospherically over the stage (not unlike the hovering SS officer (see Fig. 12), imploring those at the foreground of the poster of their duty that they must "help, too":

[407] Program for "Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg," *Waldoper Zoppot: Richard Wagner Festspiele* (Danzig: A.E. Kafemann, 1941).

Figure 12: "Hilf auch Du mit!" (1941)

This is the first image the Ministry of Culture produced for the *Waldoper* that includes the amphitheater stage, its light seeming to illuminate the Wagnerian presence peering down from above. If there is a source of heavenly light here, it is emanating from the "natural stage," not from Wagner's visage. The artificial Wagnerian nature on display on the *Waldoper* and in its sounds, then, serves to provide illumination to "real" Teutonic nature, this poster implies, its spokesman hidden amongst the mythologized trees that merge with the stage.

Wagnerian Sound, Spectatorship, and Politics at the *Waldoper*

Claims in *Waldoper* propaganda that the Wagnerian acoustic represented an "atmospheric reconstruction" of the forest often go on to describe his soundscapes in multi-sensory terms, casting it as embodying the forest's sounds, scents, temperatures, and sensations. Rauschning, for instance, provides a vivid account of "the world of Wagner":

> The world of Wagner is given life by the lofty forest light as Sopot… shadows and sun, cool air drifting from the canopies, the bird singing, the

> sea rushes and ebbs, shadows appear, stars come out, the light grows dim… and then, out of nowhere, wonderful and gleaming, Wagner's music appears, spread over the green landscape and under every tree and shrub.[408]

Given this unified influence of Wagnerian sound and Sopot climate upon spectators, Rauschning concludes, a "pious community [of Germans and Poles would be] brought together" at the *Waldoper*, borne of climate and Wagnerian sound.[409]

For Rauschning and some of his likeminded contemporaries, then, the Wagnerian work of art was not simply to be listened to at the *Waldoper*, but would be absorbed through every sense to shape the body and mind—like German nature itself.[410] This spectatorial paradigm and conceit mirrors Wagner's own, casting Sopot—in more ways than one—as "the Bayreuth of the East."[411] Rauschning's assessment of the Wagnerian aesthetic may have been meant to prepare spectators as to what sensations to expect at the *Waldoper* and how to process them like a "true" Wagnerian (and Aryan). This multi-sensory rhetoric, then, represented an extension of Wagnerian historiography: like pilgrims bound for Bayreuth, at Sopot, rhetorical and aesthetic conditions were designed to convince visitors that they were sharing physiological and psychological experiences of Wagnerian sound and German nature—the social order they would consecrate and join at Sopot, then, was not just National Socialist and Aryan, but fundamentally Wagnerian.

David Welch argues that every element of SS propaganda functioned as part of a larger rhetorical machine and was designed to convince the public to join a social community unified around Aryan and National Socialist ideals.[412] That social community, however, could be defined around rhetoric that figured horizons of perception—here, consummate Aryan visual, auditory, or (Wagnerian) multi-sensory culture. Carolyn Birdsall, Naomi Waltham-Smith, Brian Kane, and others have described the modes of spectatorial address of other "fascist" *Reichkammer* performance projects, including concerts performed in darkened rooms meant to focus and unify listeners' experience, *Thingspiele* designed to "activate" social values outdoors, and the blaring of sonic propaganda through occupied cities' streets.[413] Like the *Waldoper*, these contemporary listening projects were intended to condition a new social order and "listening community," unified and conditioned through auditory experience. Building on the contemporary aesthetic and social agenda that authorized this set of initiatives—itself shaped by

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[408] Meyer, *Die Zoppoter Waldoper*, 10.
[409] Meyer, *Die Zoppoter Waldoper*, 10.
[410] For other "climatic" descriptions of Wagnerian sounds, see Luther, "Impressions," 16-19.
[411] Luther, *Die Zoppoter Waldoper*, 3.
[412] David Welch, ed., *Nazi Propaganda: The Power and the Limitations* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble Books, 1983), 216.
[413] See Carolyn Birdsall, *Nazi Soundscapes: Sound, Technology and Urban Space in Germany, 1933-1945* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2012); Naomi Waltham-Smith, "The *Saît* of Sound," Position Paper for the "Sights and Sounds" Seminar at the German Studies Association Annual Conference (October 2017); Brian Kane, *Sound Unseen: Acousmatic Sound in Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* ideologies and practices—SS propagandists sought to create a "perceptual public" of a new order at the *Waldoper*, one that did not just *listen* together but *felt* together and, in so doing, were socially transformed into a National Socialist, Aryan, and Wagnerian, all equally important and entwined.

The same complex of beliefs about art, climate, and social transformation that informed Wagner's theories attracted the Ministry of Culture to the *Waldoper* and its Wagnerian ideologies of reform—and the social and "perceptual" order cultivated there was, according to some propagandists, exactly what the composer would have wanted. Wagner had become their artistic and political muse, the composer determining the composition of the future Aryan body and mind, as well as the means of achieving it.

Like "us," members of the Ministry of Culture suggested, Wagner conceived of art as a multi-sensory, nature-like vehicle for inspiring Teutonic social values in spectators—he would lead the way forward. His "German legends" summoned the "forces of nature" at Sopot, Waldemar Henke wrote in 1934, its combined "power [cultivating] the German spirit."[414] Similarly, Frotscher claimed that the "true intention of Wagner's idea of reform in the theater"—"drawing together the community"—would be achieved at the *Waldoper* given the presence of the "right" climatic zone for the Wagnerian sound.[415] Repeated comparisons of *Waldoper* visitors to "pilgrims" and Sopot to Bayreuth serves to reinforce the debts of the SS artistic-social project to Wagnerian artistic practices. As at Bayreuth, spectators at the *Waldoper* were to be convinced, through exposure to Germanic nature, its audiovisual approximations, and traditions of associating "total" change with them, that they were unified, joining together in a new community. This idea, prefigured by Wagner himself, transformed into an imperialist project at Sopot and, according to those writing on it, Wagner would have approved: he underwrote and silently oversaw their operations, but they had taken the next step, preserving his legacy in their cultural programs.

Günter Grass, *The Tin Drum*, and the Blinding of Senta

In March of 1945, Danzig was annexed by Poland as the result of agreements made by Allied, Soviet, and Axis powers at the Yalta and Potsdam Conferences. Many Germans still living there fled to postwar Germany as Danzig struggled to redefine its identity under shifting leadership. In the years that followed, the *Waldoper*, a symbol of the occupied past, was shut down and Polish residents of Sopot built a new stage over the old one (now called Opera Lesńa), filling it with performances of operetta, local song, and a Eurovision-like festival (the Sopot International Song Festival) that continues today.[416] During this

[414] Meyer, *Die Zoppoter Waldoper*, 62.
[415] Meyer, *Die Zoppoter Waldoper*, 46-9.
[416] Opera *Lesńa* no longer associates itself with the operation that was once known as the *Waldoper*. Its advertising concedes that the *Waldoper* once existed, but claims that it operated under a limited budget during the war and did not attract many visitors. The Reich's *Waldoper* propaganda certainly contradicts these claims, as does Goebbels' attachment of the title "reichswichtige Festspielstätte" to the Waldoper. Sopot city budgets confirm that the *Waldoper* was operating with a large budget during the war, this festival site designated more funding (much of it coming from Nazi high command) than

process of deconstruction and reconstruction, Danzig-born novelist Günter Grass sought to reclaim his home city for Poland, reckoning with his own past as both conscripted member of the Waffen-SS in 1944 and native son of one of the most contested cities in Nazi Germany.[417]

Grass' first novel, *The Tin Drum* (published in 1959), does this work through comic, often uncanny means, recovering the "lost territory" of Sopot by mocking and unmasking the artificial nature of the ideological accretions and phantasmagoric eco-aesthetic the SS had constructed there.[418] Instead of promoting some holy Germanic nature that might turn Germans or Poles into Teutons, Grass shows that the *Waldoper* was nothing more than an *Illusionstheater* and failed imperialist operation, and arrays the defiant autonomy of the Polish sensing body in opposition to this National Socialist fantasy and illusion of control.

The Tin Drum recounts the memories of Danzig-born Oskar, a half-German, half-Polish child born just before the Nazi annexation of his native city. Through force of will, Oskar halts his physical development at the age of three, discovering shortly thereafter that, even though his body had stopped growing, his vocal cords had changed such that he has the power to break glass through what he calls "long-distance song effects" or high-pitched shrieks from a great distance.[419] By way of his ultrasonic voice and deformed body, its disorderly sonic power extended by way of the technology of his tin drum, Oskar not only disrupts the sensory systems of those around him by mediating their perceptual interactions with the world, but intervenes into the German-Polish tensions gripping Danzig and shaping the hostile dynamics within his own dysfunctional family.[420]

When war cast its shadow over Danzig in 1933, Oskar and his family travel to Sopot and to the *Waldoper*, which Grass begins to mock even before Oskar steps inside—comparing the outdoor theater to a "circus" and reveling in description of the Polish nobility parading by in their "fur capes," "blue sunglasses," and "violet fingernails," *en route* to the casino, beach, or, indeed, the opera.[421] With these descriptions, Grass firmly associates the *Waldoper* with the mundane and socially acquisitive aspects of opera-going, sharply demystifying the idea of a hallowed, Teutonic ground described in the Reich's propaganda.

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any other operation in the city (and, indeed, more funding than many of the artistic programs funded by the Reich during this period).

[417] Helmut Frielinghaus, ed., "A Look Back at *The Tin Drum*, or: The Author as Dubious Witness," in *The Günter Grass Reader*, trans. Charles Simic (Göttingen: Steidl Verlag, 2004), 68; "I remember…," 282-87. For more on the function of memory in Grass' writings on Danzig, see Robert G. Moeller, "Sinking Ships, the Lost Heimat and Broken Taboos: Günter Grass and the Politics of Memory in Contemporary Germany," *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 12/2 (May 2003): 150.

[418] Simic, *The Günter Grass Reader*, 66.

[419] Grass, *The Tin Drum*, 95.

[420] For more on Oskar's genealogy, see Thomas di Napoli, "In the Quest of the Messiah: A Study of the Christ Figure in 'The Danzig Trilogy" of Günter Grass," *The Centennial Review*, Vol. 24/1 (Winter 1980): 26-7.

[421] Grass, *The Tin Drum*, 111.

As Oskar and his family take their seats, Grass' dismantling of the *Waldoper*'s artificiality continues, as Oskar narrates the evening's events. "It was not until the summer of 1933 that I went to the theater," Oskar begins. "It was a profound experience that stayed with me. The thundering surge still rings in my ears. No, I am not exaggerating, all this took place at the Sopot Opera-in-the-Woods, where summer after summer, Wagner was poured forth upon nature beneath the night sky."[422]

> It was the *Flying Dutchman*… Sailors began singing at trees. I fell asleep. […] Mama, gliding with the waves and breathing in the true Wagnerian spirit, was taking so much interest in the *Dutchman*. She failed to notice that Matzerath and Jan had covered their faces with their hands […] and that I, too, kept slipping through Wagner's fingers. […] Then, suddenly Oskar awoke for good because a woman was standing all alone in the forest, screaming for all she was worth… She was screaming because a spotlight […] was blinding her. "No!" she cried. "Woe is me!" and "Who hath made me suffer so?" […] The screams of the solitary woman subsided into a muffled whimper, only to rise again in a silvery bubbling fountain of high notes which blighted the leaves of the trees before their time… a brilliant voice, but its efforts were of no avail. It was time for Oskar to intervene, to locate that importunate source of light and, with a single long-distance cry […] destroy it.[423]

What happens next amounts to a "short circuit" leading to a "forest fire," "darkness," "panic," and "confusion"—Oskar even loses his tin drum in the ensuing chaos.[424] As the stage and forest burn, Oskar's so-called vocal "art" takes precedence over Wagner's, as the erstwhile temple of Aryan nature and art burns to the ground, leaving nothing but ashes.

Grass is poking fun at Wagner here, writing characters with little interest in hearing or seeing what is happening on stage, deriving more pleasure and enlightenment from the resort town's more populist attractions and its carnival-like atmosphere.[425] During their visit to the *Waldoper*, Grass' Polish characters "slip through Wagner's fingers": to escape the Wagnerian phantasmagoric spell, Grass seems to suggest, one only needed to go to sleep or cover one's eyes and ears. But there is little need to avert one's attention to avoid the *Waldoper*'s influences: the corporeally-affective artifice of the *Waldoper*, even if it really *could* hold some real power over human mind (Grass suggests that it is absurd to think it ever could), had no impact on the bodies or minds of Poles because Wagner was just too boring to hold their attention. To Grass, the *Waldoper* was a failed, idealistic experiment, an illusion and fantasy that could never even have attracted sufficient attention from apathetic Poles to convert them into Aryans.

In ridiculing the acculturative agenda of the National Socialists at the *Waldoper*, Grass deconstructs the network of sensory influences at work there, "short-circuiting"

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[422] Grass, *The Tin Drum*, 112.
[423] Grass, *The Tin Drum*, 112-13.
[424] Grass, *The Tin Drum*, 113.
[425] On Grass' mockery of Wagner in this episode, see Siegfried Mews, *Günter Grass and His Critics: From 'The Tin Drum' to 'Crabwalk'* (New York, NY: Camden, 2008), 27.

audiovisual and environmental stimuli meant to overwhelm and condition listeners without them knowing.[426] In his cathartic vignette, Grass reveals the *Waldoper* as *Illusionstheater*, not *Naturtheater*, by laying bare the means of production of its many illusions and "short-circuiting" them, rendering them comically obsolete: the stage's spotlight is nothing more than an artificial, malleable instrument instead of natural source of light, its limpid beams illuminating Senta as a mere "solitary woman," not Wagnerian heroine. Grass finally forces her to relinquish her balladic formulations as they devolve into pure, guttural sound and articulations of tortured affective states. Quickly unmasking the *Waldoper*'s quotidian illusions, the "solitary woman's" pure sound "blights" the forest instead of merging seamlessly with it, as National Socialist propaganda had promised. Oskar ultimately uses his destructive voice to "short-circuit" the *Waldoper*'s phantasmagoric assemblage of stimuli, his ultrasonic vocal cords more powerful than German nature, Wagnerian sound, and the Reich's propaganda machine.

Instead of consolidating into a unified *Volksgemeinschaft*, Grass ensures that the snoozing, uninterested Poles assembled at his *Waldoper* disperse in alarmed confusion, more satisfyingly rewriting this space's history and its position in his own memory and that of his readers. In Grass' tale, the Nazis' Polish *Walhalla*—along with the German forest and its sonic refraction in the music of Wagner—is ultimately brought to its knees by the voice of a mad three-year-old and the pen of a young Polish novelist, 26 years after Hitler set foot in Danzig.

But the *Waldoper* takes something from Oskar in the mayhem he creates: he loses his drum, an extension of his sonically- and socially-disruptive body. Just before recounting the experience at the *Waldoper*, Oskar shares with readers what it is that his drum is used for, a description that implicates Grass' own attempts at locating the "lost territory" of Poland for himself through the process of composing this text:[427]

> He [Oskar] cannot help but look for Poland […]. How does he look for it? With his drumsticks. Does he also look for Poland with his soul? He looks for it with every organ of his being, but the soul is not an organ. I look for the land of the Poles that is lost to the Germans, for the moment at least. […] I, meanwhile, conjure up Poland on my drum. And this is what I drum: Poland's lost but not forever, all's lost but not forever, Poland's not lost forever.[428]

If Oskar's antics at the *Waldoper* allow him (and Grass) to reclaim that space for Poland by exposing its artificiality and tearing it away from the National Socialists' imperialist efforts, what does it mean that he loses his drum in the process, the instrument he had been using to call out across the void in search of Poland and affirm that it is "not lost forever"? Perhaps this loss indicates that the drum is no longer needed—that the destruction of this temple of German nature and its claim to climatic and aesthetic phantasmagoric powers over assembled spectators have rendered it obsolete. "Poland's not lost forever," for Oskar has found it in the ashes of the *Waldoper* and in the ruins of Wagner.

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[426] Grass, *The Tin Drum*, 113.
[427] Simic, *The Günter Grass Reader*, 66.
[428] Grass, *The Tin Drum*, 95.

Open-Air Opera, Propaganda, and the Politics of the Spectatorial Imagination

Critics writing on open-air opera seem convinced that reformation of body and mind really *did* happen at nature stages and that this is what these stages were for. They write of the experience as if they feel change within themselves (or within others) when sitting amongst the trees, their experience of outdoor opera mediated by assumptions of conditioning key to discourses of nature. Where does the distinction lie between "real" and "imaginary" conditioning in this context? And what can the *Waldoper* tell us about the relationship of the workings of propaganda to phantasmagoric social control, particularly with respect to these performances of official art taken outdoors? Like the *Waldoper*, Nazi cultural programs were predicated on an expectation that they might condition a "common fate" within the German people through artistic experience that, in some cases, employed phantasmagoric means of spectatorial engagement.[429] Propaganda materials generally reinforced the politically transcendental effects such an experience was intended to have on contemporary audiences.

At the *Waldoper*, the Reich deployed an environmental and sonic phantasmagoria along with familiar rhetoric about nature, sound, and identity in their bid to cultivate a new social order: their fascination with this particular artistic site and discursive treatment of it, then, gestures towards the centrality of phantasmagoric conditioning to Nazi propaganda and artistic projects, as well as the means of production and address they used to pursue such conditioning. And, while the question of just how convincing these programs were to contemporary audiences is complicated, the presence of the physical forest and use of established rhetoric of nature and cultural revolution in accompanying texts, advertisements, and posters may have strengthened the Ministry of Culture's resolve that experiencing German art in such a space would bring about the social change the Reich imagined.[430]

The combination of "atmosphere" and "invisible music" that the Reich argued would provide "freedom and serenity" to "receptive minds" was the very same assemblage of atmospheric forces Wagner himself, borrowing epistemologies of climate, German sound, and the body, suggested in his prose writings would transform spectators at performances of his operas.[431] It is likely no coincidence that the Reich was attracted to the mode of spectatorial conditioning their artistic figurehead had authorized and, in their view, successfully deployed to perpetuate Aryan values through aesthetic experience. The propagandistic rhetoric the Reich used at the *Waldoper*, then, was Wagnerian in its perpetuation of nineteenth-century conceits of fantasies of climatic deterministic and German aesthetic influence over body and mind.

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[429] Werner Cohn, "Bearers of a Common Fate? The 'Non-Aryan' Christian 'Fate-Comrades' of the Paulus Bund, 1933-1939," *LBIYB* (1988).

[430] On artistic suppression and censorship under the Third Reich, see Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter, ed., *Music and German National Identity* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Richard Etlin, *Art, Culture, and Media Under the Third Reich* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002); and Michael H. Kater, *The Twisted Muse: Musicians and their Music in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[431] *Passing Through Germany* (Berlin: K.A. Kiessel, 1927), 234.

In the late 1930s, Theodor Adorno called Western spectators' willingness to imagine their bodies and minds changed or controlled by the invisible hands of artists "phantasmagoric" and the political ideologies of National Socialist artistry.[432] For those operating the *Waldoper* and attending performances there, this was, of course, always and already just a fantasy of conditioning with a lengthy historical legacy centered around Wagnerian spectators at Bayreuth. Nonetheless, even if there was never any concrete evidence that "phantasmagoric" conditioning via *Gesamtkunstwerk* "really" occurred at these stages, perhaps imagination was enough—imagining that change to body and mind had occurred suggests that, for some, it really had. This was certainly enough for the Third Reich, which manipulated this epistemology of nature and the established belief in his impact on the German mind towards truly nefarious ends. Indeed, the Reich crafted the imperialist policies that underwrote artistic practices around these ideals of environmental conditioning: at the *Waldoper*, Poles were forced to confess they really *could* be genetically formulated into Aryan subjects by forest and Wagnerian art. There was no longer room for mere fantasies of the forest producing modern-day Siegfrieds from soil and air. If these conceits of nature, art, and society were rejected, death and torture would follow. Capitulation to these fantasies of conditioning, then (or failing to do so), had consequences.

[432] Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, 74.

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