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THE GRAIL AS CULTURAL HERITAGE: REVALUATING THE TRADITION OF WOLFRAM'S *PARZIVAL* IN THE LIGHT OF WAGNER'S MUSICAL DRAMA *PARSIFAL*

Abstract

The German Arthurian romance *Parzival* is one of the most challenging texts which were written on the subject of the Grail. It differs from the French authors, though Wolfram claims that he continues the unfinished work of Chrétien de Troyes. The meaning of the poem includes European and Oriental influences, transforming the text into a palimpsest of multiple readings. The German romance has inspired many rewritings, among which is the libretto for Wagner's musical drama *Parsifal*. The paper attempts to analyze the changes brought by the German composer to Wolfram's poem in the context of the late Romantic paradigm by presenting the universal meaning of man's journey towards the sacred.

Key words: Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, Richard Wagner, *Parsifal*, Arthurian romance

The Arthurian legend is one of the main literary achievements of the Middle Ages. It presents in a fascinating way the adventures of the Knights of the Round Table, whose main purpose is to put an end to the magic of the land and to make the ideals of the Arthurian court prevail. The romances centering round such deeds represent an ideal image of human nature facing the temptations of the world. The texts combine in a unique

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manner the Celtic and Germanic sources with the principles and themes of the Christian religion. The romances introduce the concept of life as a quest, namely, the deliberate departure of the knight in order to experience the ultimate adventure of his life. These texts should be divided into two types, namely, poems of quest and poems of adventure. The difference lies in the symbolic meaning of the journey and the spiritual consequences it implies. A quest evolves around the search for a particular object or place, the finding of which may bring light or darkness to the protagonist. During the journey human nature is deeply changed, as the experience cannot be narrated and shared with anyone. The knight leaves knowing what he looks for, and he is prepared for the meetings awaiting him during the journey. The division between poems of quest and poems of adventure corresponds to two important concepts of the medieval romance: the sacred and the fantastic. The fantastic presupposes the concepts of initiation, magical adventures in the labyrinth of the forest, courtly love, honor and loyalty inside and outside the court of King Arthur. The sacred dimension of the legend is more complex, as it implies the confrontation of man with the most intimate aspects of the world and of his own nature. No mistakes are allowed in the sacred realm, since any error brings exile and spiritual loneliness. In this context, poems of quest receive a special meaning, as they identify with the discovery of the sense of life and death.

A poem of quest is organized according to some specific patterns, representing the wish of the knight to discover the mystery of his journey. Such an example is the English poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, in which the protagonist leaves in search of his own death. In poems of adventure, what matters is the moral lesson learned by the knight and shared with the rest of the fellowship. On the contrary, in poems of quest human nature is deeply changed, and a failure implies a fall into the abyss of melancholy and despair. These poems correspond to the sacred dimension, involving man's attempt to go beyond the limits of his existence. In the sacred perspective, poems of quest receive a different meaning, as they identify with the search for the innermost aspects of human identity. The poems of the Grail constitute the most challenging and mysterious part of the Arthurian legend. The French tradition represented by the text of Chrétien de Troyes does not offer an explanation of what the Grail is. He simply introduces the object during the procession at the Fisher King's castle. "A maid accompanying the two young men was holding a grail in both hands; she was beautiful, noble and richly dressed. After she came in

the hall bearing the grail, the room was so powerfully lit that the candles lost their light, as it happens with the moon and the stars at sunrise. The grail was made of the finest gold. It was incrustated with various gems, the most beautiful and precious in the world.” (de Troyes, 420-421) The enigma of the Grail made it attractive to the medieval poets following Chrétien, who transformed the story into man’s search for immortality and the sacred meaning of existence.

The first continuator of the French poet was the German writer Wolfram von Eschenbach, who, in his romance *Parzival* (1220-1230), attempts to provide a conclusion to the unfinished poem of Chrétien. Though it generally follows the same epic line as the previous poem, Wolfram brings in many changes, making his text an original version rather than a simple imitation of his literary model. When analyzing Wolfram’s poem, one should bear in mind several approaches that contribute to the puzzle of concepts and ideas provided by the romance. Intertextuality functions at the level of symbols, creating a sort of *mise-en-abîme* of the medieval texts. In the German poem, Wolfram claims that a source of inspiration was the story of Kyot le Provençal, who should be considered as the implied narrator of the poem. The fact that Wolfram hides behind an imaginary author should not be surprising, as it was a common medieval practice not to assume authorship out of the wish to avoid the sin of pride. The fact that Wolfram hides behind a mask is also a game which he plays with the reader, since it is obvious that the narrator is himself. *Parzival* is a romance that intrigues in many ways due to the themes it contains. The hero is the model of an innocent young man who is attracted by the world of King Arthur and abandons his life in the forest, causing the death of his mother. He has all the features which are specific of a Grail knight, namely, physical and spiritual purity, humility, simplicity of the mind, ignorance of the outside world. Yet, the temptation to travel the world is too strong, and he falls prey to it.

In order to understand the meaning of Parzival’s journey, one should take into account the stages of initiation which the knight goes through. Starting with the meeting with five knights and ending with the procession at the Grail’s castle, the romance can be decoded as a search of man for the right path in order to find the way towards God. The hero himself should be seen as a symbol of the Soul of man hesitating between Faith and Doubt, eventually reconciling with the divinity. Given this line of analysis, the specific features of a Grail poem should be considered. Space is a concept

which corresponds to the environment in which the quest takes place. It is both the space of the wasteland and that of the castle, but it is also the inner space of the human soul, which needs to be changed in its turn. It is also the land of the supreme initiation in the mysteries of the beyond. It is an environment in which man evolves by transforming it into a personal projection of his moral development.

Space can be divided in two: the Arthurian land and the land of the Grail. In such poems, Camelot is no longer the ideal sheltering the fellowship of the Round Table. When Parzival decides to leave for the Arthurian realm, he commits the first sin, which causes the death of his mother and his exile from the Grail. He wants to be a part of the Arthurian elite fellowship. The Arthurian space becomes a land of temptation and of destruction, quite the opposite to the one found in poems of the fantastic. The space of the Grail constitutes the ideal for the knight, as it opens the road towards the divine. Poems of the sacred are more profound, and they propose a specific approach to the mysteries of human nature. The space relating to the Fisher King and the Grail castle constitutes the ideal for the knight, who needs to obtain the knowledge found in the world of common adventures. The Grail dimension is superior to the one of miraculous journeys in the forest, and that is why the elect must understand that he is in a different space and that he has to act accordingly. Wolfram introduces this difference, which he inherits from the French poet. Parzival fails because he does not understand that he is in another dimension, and he applies wrongly the same rules as in Camelot. He has to cope with the desolation of the Fisher King's realm, which is caused by the wound inflicted to him by the Painful Blow.

In anthropological terms, one should set the opposition between the concepts of the sacred and the profane as they are analyzed in the treatise of Mircea Eliade. According to Eliade, the sacred is made up of small islands of sacredness, which the protagonist needs to discover in order to find the meaning of his quest. On the contrary, the profane attracts by being homogeneous, neutral and common. It is often difficult for the protagonist to distinguish between these spaces, and then his journey is in danger. In the German romance, the sacred is threatened by the surrounding profane space of knightly adventures. The sterility of the land is identified with the disease of the king. The wasteland surrounding Munsalwaesche needs to be lifted by the ritual question: *What does the Grail serve for?* The dying forest is a mirror reflection of the fears and doubts of the knight during his

encounter with the unknown of the sacred dimension. The illness of the king is reflected in the disease of the land, because the king and the country are intimately connected. The wasteland surrounding the Grail castle is a sign of a great sorrow which must be lifted by the elect. The failure before the Grail brings about great melancholy and sadness. Wolfram humanizes his hero by focusing on the spiritual torment he suffers after having failed the Grail. Differently from the French text, which presents the situation in an abstract way, the German poet has a more compassionate and sympathetic view of his protagonist. He sees the test as a ritual which should have cured the land and the king at the same time. He ascribes to it the values of a rite of purification meant to cleanse the human soul and open it towards the sacred revelation. The chance he gives to Parzival to return to the Grail is a part of his wish to show man's quest for identity and the spiritual significance of his destiny. Wolfram's text centers on the relationship that Parzival has with the Grail itself, considering that identity and redemption depend on the assimilation of the unknown by man.

The Grail itself has particular features which are found only in Wolfram's text. It is a green stone called *lapis exilis* (the stone of exile), and it is known as the stone which fell from Lucifer's forehead when he was thrown out of Heaven after the defeat of the devils in the war against God. The emerald is so heavy that only a maiden can carry it, and it functions as an anesthetic for Amfortas's wound. It is an original description which Wolfram makes, but it is in accordance with the new philosophy circulating at that time. The poem was written during the Crusades, when the miraculous of the Orient was entering the western world. The stories coming from the Holy Land told of marvelous palaces and beautiful gardens, revealing a world which surpassed the grey daily existence of the medieval man. In Wolfram's text, the influence can be seen in the concept shaping the Grail quest and in the implied meanings of the sacred object itself. Like the French poem, the German romance does not explicitly talk about a Christian Grail, but rather links it to some older strata of religious beliefs. The connection with the angels' revolt introduces the theme of pride, because of which they are doomed to live in "darkness visible" (to quote Milton). The Grail could thus be considered as an object through which evil endured. What makes it an instrument of healing is the devotion its servants have towards it and the loyalty for the king. By putting the ritual question, Parzival defeats evil and gives a new meaning to the Grail. Since the time he first fails, the hero endures moral agony and has to make penitence in order to overcome

his spiritual pain. A failed ritual must be cleansed by an equally strong punishment, when the knight gets to the bottom of sadness before rising as a new man. The precious stone is reminiscent of the light of heaven, but it is a dim light, as if the darkness of the fall has diminished it.

The magic and the enchantment of the Orient become part of the medieval mentality, which can be seen at the level of the concepts shaping the meaning of the Grail. Wolfram links it to ancestral traditions telling of old beliefs. The connection with the angels' revolt introduces the theme of pride and revenge characterizing the devils and causing their fall. The green color of the stone stands for the concepts of faith and death. The Grail represents either the faith which the knights have that one day the malefic magic of the land will be lifted and that Amfortas will be healed. Death is implied in the idea that those revolting against God pay for their sins. It is a spiritual death, as Parzival suffers deep agony in the desert of his own despair. Only by enduring penitence at the hermit's abode can he overcome his pain. The Grail is part of a ritual of initiation because by healing the king the knight heals the object too. It is a sort of identification in the mirror of the owner and the object which he owns. Parzival must make the right choice before accepting to be a part of the elect at Amfortas's castle.

The Oriental influences point towards another meaning of the Grail, namely, the one of the alchemical stone. The lapis is not only the stone of exile but also the stone of knowledge. The exile is a self-imposed isolation in a land seeming to appear out of nowhere before the eyes of the traveler. The alchemical stone originates from the belief that gold can be obtained from base materials. Gold is both the supreme matter and a means of getting knowledge and wisdom. Wolfram suggests that the Grail as the alchemical stone is one of the basic interpretations of the object. Exile originates in the deliberate retreat from the world because of the special type of space surrounding Munsalwaesche. Thus, space corresponds to an elusive land appearing out of nowhere before the eyes of the traveler. It increases the belief that the castle cannot be found by any common person, as only the elect may see it. It has special features which make it invisible to common eyes. Wolfram ascribes to it enchantment and magic like the ones found in *The Arabian Nights*. The concept to which he refers is the so-called Veil of Maya.

Coming to the castle for the first time, Parzival is blinded by the errors he has made during the journey. He has abandoned his mother, has followed

the advice of Gurnemanz about courtly good manners, has preferred the Arthurian court to the protective forest and has lost his innocence because of physical love. The Veil of Maya has already trapped him in its illusions. Due to it, “things appear to be present, but they are not what they seem.” (Lochtefeld, 433) The Maya principle is a way of concealing the true nature of things by making man discover the truth in his own soul. He must make the right choice, as the veil is changing and symbolically it is unreal. It corresponds to a land of dreams in which man can get lost and miss the initiation path. Parzival does not understand what he sees because the veil is too dense and mist covers his eyes. The Grail itself is a mystery, as it does not accept the knight in the castle among the elect. The first coming to Munsalwaesche should be taken as a prelude to the second coming, when the hero knows where he is and what he has to do. Understanding the nature of the Grail equals understanding the deepest aspects of one’s soul. It is a genuine exploration which ends with the discovery of human identity. Identity is made of the memories going back to the deeds of his father Gahmuret in the Holy Land and all the other deeds to come. The mystery surrounding the Grail and the procession invite Parzival to see the truth beyond the Veil of Maya and to choose the right path in the labyrinth of his own soul.

In the context of the Grail, Wolfram offers an original perspective on human destiny. Chrétien leaves his poem unfinished, concentrating on Gawain’s adventures, and so does Malory in his prose version. The German poet talks about a great sorrow, which is quite unusual in a text full of Oriental miraculous beliefs. In a certain manner, he returns to the early medieval tradition, which used to underline the skepticism and the fatality that man felt regarding his existence. The early medieval thought focused on the impossibility of man to shape his own destiny, as his fate had been already decided by the divinity. Wolfram’s text makes a sort of a cultural bridge between epochs. Man’s option is to choose either good or evil, light or darkness, life or death. The duality of terms is reminiscent of Oriental Manichaeism, in the sense that it implies a complementary vision, and it depends on man to keep them in balance. According to an Old Persian belief, Manichaeism introduces a dualistic cosmology describing the struggle between a good spiritual world of light and an evil material world of darkness. During the evolution of mankind, light is gradually removed from the inferior material world, and it is taken to the world of the spirit, whence it had once come from. Manichaeism is in accordance

with Wolfram's view, since the green stone of Lucifer, namely, the Grail, is an instance of a dualistic vision of the object. Man's identity depends on the struggle between light and darkness. Together with the Veil of Maya, the double nature of the emerald prevents man from accomplishing the quest. The mission of the knight is to transform the sadness of loss into the joy of revelation, due to the recovery of light in the Grail castle.

Wolfram's poem is the most human of them all, as in it Parzival is a man struggling to get out of the wasteland he has been traveling through. Light or darkness is the consequence of man's choice. In this context, the wound of Amfortas is itself a source of evil, because it prevents the knight from understanding the true nature of the Grail. It is a sort of a dark barrier between the mystery of the object and man's wish to know. The second coming to the castle is the chance given to the knight to repent and redeem himself by asking the question. Initiation occurs only when the protagonist has given up all the ties with the common world, which tries to draw him back to temptation. He is offered two alternatives, the good one of the Grail and the evil one of the surrounding world. When he first comes to the castle, Parzival is dressed and armed as a knight for battle. In the second case, he is a humble and penitent man. The warrior turns into a servant of God. Parzival is allowed to heal Amfortas and take his place as king of the Grail. His son Lohengrin will be the knight with the swan in the future German poems. From the image of a man tormented by the injustice of God, he becomes the abstract image of a savior isolated from the common world of knightly deeds and enjoying the light of divine revelation.

This exemplary story is also a modern way of exploring the drama of man who fulfills his ideal by losing all that once connected him to the world. The feeling of exile and isolation is found in the musical drama *Parsifal*, composed by Richard Wagner. It is his last opera and it can be considered as his musical testament. Composed in 1882, *Parsifal* was restricted to Bayreuth for almost 30 years, according to Wagner's wish. It was considered a religious rite, and the performances had to take place in the musical theater Wagner had built there. Differently from Wolfram's text, the German composer introduces some elements like the Spear and the Redeemer, which link the opera to the Christian tradition. The religious scenes are completely in the style of a musical drama, as *Parsifal* is a piece of music and a stage festival. The beginning presents a new vision on the medieval legend. Wagner changes the role of the characters in Wolfram's poem. Gawain is a sort of medicine man, bringing herbs that are supposed

to cure Amfortas's wound. In Wolfram's text, he has adventures paralleling the story of Parzival, actually following the tradition of Chrétien. One of the most important moments in the first act is the monologue of Gurnemanz about the fight which took place between the magician Klingsor and the knights of the Grail. During it, the sacred spear came into the possession of the magician, who uses it to destroy Munsalwaesche and its people. The prophecy about the savior tells of the hope that one day a man will come and restore the spear in the hands of the protectors of the Grail.

Wagner insists on the words of the prophecy as a linguistic leitmotif: "Pity makes you wise." It is the reflection of Schopenhauer's concept *Mitleid*, which is found in his theory about love and compassion. The libretto also introduces the Romantic idea, which is actually taken from the ancient Greek theatre, about the disequilibrium in the universe and the role of the tragic hero in bringing harmony back again. Parsifal changes from the innocent savage into a man aware of the mistakes he has committed, looking for the redemption of the Grail. The manner in which he is introduced in the story is by having him kill one of the sacred swans living near the castle. In an allusion to the German tradition of the legend about the knight with the swan (and to *Lohengrin*, possibly), Wagner insists upon the spiritual purity of his hero. Parsifal is opposed to the sophisticated and mysterious society of the Grail. Killing the swan is a terrible murder, but Parsifal does not understand the true meaning of his act. He has killed hope, love and beauty, which are symbols of the Romantic paradigm. Instead of bringing salvation, the hero brings disaster, adding to the pain of the Grail people. Yet, he does not know anything about the place he is in, and his future moral evolution depends on the memories he acquires during his spiritual development. The melancholy characterizing him would be a parallel to the nostalgia he feels in the medieval romance when he sees three drops of blood on newly fallen snow.

The first coming to the castle is a failure, although the protagonist sees the Grail. He watches the Eucharist performed by the Grail, which brings comfort to Amfortas and the court. The text mentions the words of the religious ceremony while the Grail is perceived as a great light enchanting the people. Not only is Amfortas alleviated of his pain, his father Titurel also is. The latter is a sort of a living dead who survives in a tomb due to the Grail. Wagner uses a tradition which appears after Wolfram in French and English romances, telling about the father of the Grail king, Joséphé, who is a direct descendant of Joseph of Arimathea. He is the one who

brought the Grail to Britain, where it was lost. Wagner links the Grail to a Christian history, which did not exist in Wolfram. It is most interesting that in the period of late Romanticism he returns to the medieval tradition of the *sanguis realis*, a reminiscence of the faith characterizing the medieval thought. It is proof that, in the context of Wagner's work, the opera is a sort of reconciliation with the divinity after the cycle of the *Ring*, as a return to the faith of *Lohengrin* or *Tannhäuser*. The protagonist does not meet the world of the Arthurian fellowship, as he is only a part of the deep forest, where he has been raised by his mother. In the case of Wolfram, it was important to mention the genealogy of the knight, because the courtly ideal was essential at that time. In the medieval text, the protagonist was the son of a noble knight and of an aristocratic lady. The courtly ideal represented the rule of the best, and it respected the French tradition describing the fellowship of the elect.

An interesting addition brought by Wagner is the presence of the garden of pleasures, created by Klingsor, in which he tries to trap Parsifal and turn him away from the quest. In the context of Wagner's musical drama, it is a life alternative offered through magic, a sort of rewriting of Ortrud's magic in *Lohengrin*. The world of the Grail is a very old world, full of sins, in which people like the father of Amfortas are kept alive due to the sacred power of the Grail. He resembles a Norse deity, coming from the entrails of the earth and being brought to life due to a spell. The condition to enjoy the Grail is to have faith and to love. These ideas are uttered by a chorus, talking about the triumph of good over evil and pity making people wise. These features are obtained through suffering and penitence, which do not point to any religion in particular. The moral lesson which he offers to the public is an abstract one about friendship and generosity, as a modern view set against the principles of late Romanticism and its focus on the human revolt against the divinity. Romanticism recuperates the medieval paradigm by cleansing it of any dogmatic approaches and getting to the essence of humanity, which is filtered through the Romantic concepts.

In the opera, the focus is on human emotions and relationships with others. It comes in contradiction to the medieval text, in which the knight suffers for himself and feels little empathy with the others. The failure before the Grail is caused by the abandonment of his mother, but he suffers more, as he did not ask the redeeming question. In Wagner's drama, the situation changes, as, during the first meeting with Kundry, Parsifal is

reminded of the protection his mother used to offer him and of the way in which she took care of him in the forest. Kundry's purpose is to make the protagonist forget about his mother, even to despise her, as she did not let him enjoy the pleasures of love. The feminine character of the drama, Kundry, is herself a temptress serving Klingsor, who changes into a penitent woman looking for the light. She almost succeeds in winning Parsifal over and in luring him into the trap of physical love. She is rejected when the hero reveals himself as the man guided by God. The image of his mother haunts him, but at the same time strengthens him for the ultimate meeting with the Grail. During the journey, the protagonist must concentrate on the quest, which may be seen as the poetic evolution of man transcending the limits of the common world.

In the essay *Religion and Art*, Wagner says that "when religion becomes artificial, art has a duty to rescue it. Art can show that the symbols which religion would have us believe in are actually figurative. Art can idealize those symbols and so reveal the profound truth they contain." (Wagner, 41) The Romantic paradigm to which the opera belongs introduces the concept of art as salvation for man, replacing the old theme of nature characterizing Romantic imagination. The manner in which Wolfram portrayed his protagonist followed the rules of the medieval mentality by turning him into a sort of abstraction. Wagner gives Parsifal his human side back in terms of the late Romantic theory. He is an artist meant to find his way in the world, which equals a choice in favor of solitude and loneliness. The artist/poet/musician cannot fit in a daily common existence, as he has a supreme vision, which brings him before the beauty of the universe. Owing to imagination, he can see the cosmos and through his art recreate it in his work. Owing to his vision, he actually sees the beauty in his own soul, and he enters in a deep communion with the soul of the universe itself. He is a maker, a demiurge, as he recreates the divine act of creation in his work. The cost of this revelation is solitude, isolation, a denial of the world and a self-imposed exile. The path he takes is difficult, but rewarding in the end.

Though Wagner mentions the Redeemer in his text, the role of saving the world belongs to man and not to some divine authority that is invisible to human eyes. In the German poem, the errors made by Parzival were caused by his misunderstanding of the nature of the Grail. In Wagner, Parsifal seems to already be above human temptations. One of the reasons for which he succeeds is the fact that he is different from the

others. In the German poem, Wolfram insisted on the habitual features of a Grail knight, namely, purity, humility and devotion to the quest. The purpose was to show that he belonged to a superior world and not to the Arthurian court, doomed to perish. In Wagner, King Arthur's court is not present at all. During the musical journey, the protagonist sees that he has to break with the common world if he wants to succeed. The world is tainting and destroying spiritual purity. This view is in accordance with the Romantic paradigm talking about the man of genius whose role is to recreate in his art the image of universal beauty. The cost of this vision is spiritual loneliness and the impossibility of finding happiness. The world of Kundry or Gurnemanz appeal to him, but he correctly chooses the one of Amfortas and the Grail, because he cannot give up his quest. He resembles Tannhäuser, the penitent pilgrim looking for illumination and the love of God. The spear is identified with a means of support during the journey, though it symbolically relates to Amfortas's wound and the disease affecting the land.

After vanquishing Klingsor, Parsifal holds the spear which the magician has stolen from the people of the Grail. Thus, the hero gets another connotation, namely, that of a traveler, a pilgrim looking for salvation, and an answer to the enigma of his existence. Besides the Biblical allusion, the spear is the counterpart of the sword cutting through Amfortas and causing the wound which destroyed the land and the king. Cutting instruments stand for separation and delimitation. Parsifal clearly delimitates himself from the world of humans as any artist should do. An important aspect of the musical drama is provided by the moment in time when Parsifal arrives again at the Grail castle. It is Good Friday, a day of sorrow and of great pain. Different from the first coming he is now the mature man, feeling melancholy and spreading wisdom. Gurnemanz receives him again, acting like a guardian of the threshold who welcomes the elect after a long journey. He is teaching Parsifal the mysteries of the Grail, as the hero is now worthy of knowing about the mysteries of the sacred rite. Wagner gives him a beautiful role, which is different from the one in Wolfram, in whose text he prevents the ritual question by his wrong advice. He assumes the role of the hermit in Wolfram's poem when introducing Parsifal to the mysteries of the Grail. It is the power of human love and kindness that makes the hero enter the castle, redeem Kundry and heal Amfortas. The Grail does not appear, it is mentioned in the end. One may understand that it is not

necessary anymore as an object. It is apart of the human soul, made up of the deepest and most intimate emotions which man has.

A feature of late Romanticism says that salvation comes through humans and not from the divine authority anymore. Modern doubts have already started to influence the previous paradigm. The power of compassion and generosity towards others (Kundry, Amfortas) makes Parsifal enter the castle and redeem its inhabitants. Parsifal becomes a projection of the power of the Grail, as in the end he emerges among its people, bringing light instead of the darkness of the tomb. Amfortas is cured and peacefully dies after his father has already passed away. The apparently rigid rules of the medieval romance melt into the late Romantic shapes, anticipating modernism. In Wagner's drama, the story grows in a crescendo of musical emotions until it reaches the final apotheosis, ending with the music of Good Friday, standing for reconciliation with human suffering.

The answer provided by the opera is not in an object, no matter how precious it is. The answer lies with the human soul, the empathy it has towards others and the deep faith man has in himself. The end of the musical drama is provided by the infinite melody which Wagner uses, and it reflects the reconciliation of man with his destiny. The music of Good Friday brings peace and harmony. The musical testament of Wagner not only recreates the poem of Wolfram, it raises it to the level of the supreme initiation and revelation of human emotions. The story of Parzival/Parsifal becomes one of man looking for light and finding it in the Grail of his soul. The redeemed man is allowed to take part in the liturgy of the Grail, reminiscent of the Eucharist and the supreme divine sacrifice. The message is one of deep emotion felt by the human who has eventually found his place in the world.

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