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Interpreting Puccini's Suor Angelica: An application of the semiotics of temporality

ABSTRACT: This article summarizes recent discussions in the secondary literature of the semiotics of temporality, understood not as *time* per se but as the "time signified" by the signs in any semiotic system. Drawing especially on theories of the late Raymond Monelle and noting parallels with Monelle in work of, for example, Abbate, Daverio, Kinderman, Hatten, and Berger, the article posits that states of "temporality" in music can correlate with the syntactic signification of linear, teleological motion through time, whereas states of "atemporality" can correlate with syntactic signification of suppressed linear motion through time. As one of the distinguishing semantic characteristics of post-Classical music, the signification of extended moments of atemporality is understood as a central expressive issue in the structure of Puccini's *Suor Angelica* (from the *Il trittico* of 1918), an opera that divides approximately into two halves: an atemporal half focused on portraying the Roman Catholic church, and a temporal half focused on exploring the character of Angelica, where both halves also include "tropes of temporality" cued by juxtapositions of temporal and atemporal signifiers. That the church in *Suor Angelica* is elevated to the position of the drama's primary antagonist is asserted as one of the ways with which the piece engages with the aesthetics of "realism", an aesthetic that, in turn, informs an interpretation of the opera's ending, which includes a *deus ex machina* in the form of an appearance of the Virgin Mary and an apparition of Angelica's dead son.

KEYWORDS: temporality, time, Raymond Monelle, levels of discourse, atemporality, verismo, realism, Giacomo Puccini, Suor Angelica, Il Trittico, forms in melodrama, marvelous (topic), Romanticism, nineteenth-century

The means with which music signifies temporality remains a central concern in contemporary approaches to musical semiotics. As the late Raymond Monelle[1] has explained, "temporality" is distinct from "time:" time is a natural phenomenon, a condition of life, an object of cognition that can be measured on the clock; it flows at a uniform pace and in a single direction, continuously

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[1] Raymond Monelle, "The Temporal Index", in *Musical Signification: Between Rhetoric and Pragmatics: Proceedings of the 5th International Congress on Musical Signification, Bologna, 14–16 November 1996*, ed. Gino Stefani, Eero Tarasti and Luca Marconi (Helsinki: International Semiotics Institute, Bologna: Cooperativa Libraria Universitaria Bologna, 1998), 95–102; Raymond Monelle, *The Sense of Music: Semiotic Essays*, foreword by Robert Hatten (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 81–4.

and irreversibly, such that past, present, and future have discernible and stable relationships (the present is always a point between the past and the future). Temporality, while depending in part on the cognitive framework provided by time, depends also on an understood or agreed upon cultural context — that is, on some semiotic system within which orderly relationships among signs and their meanings may be discerned. Whether that system is language, advertising, music, or some other, by definition "temporality" is the "time signified" by the signs, where the signified meaning results from an interaction among the natural time in which the sign system is structured and the time indicated by the signs" objects; the latter may not be the same as the former. Monelle framed the problem in terms of a dialectic among "temporality of content" (or syntactic temporality), "temporality of expression" (or semantic temporality), and the degree of conformance between the two.

As an application of the semiotics of temporality to music, Monelle[2] formulated an opposition of "progressive time" versus "lyric time," two musical conditions that semantically signify, respectively, "temporality" (here equated with the sense of linear, teleological motion through time) and "atemporality" (equated with a sense of suppressed linear motion through time). Both conditions occur within single pieces or movements, and indeed the expressive power of some genres — the sonata, for example — depends in part on shifts from one to the other: for example, transitions, or destabilized, less thematic sections with complex harmonic and phrase structures and heightened rhythmic activity signify directed motion from one place to another and thus "temporality"; themes, or presentational sections with foregrounded melodies and relatively stable harmonic and phrase structures, signify lyric excursions, suspensions of motion, and thus "atemporality". Monelle's model also proves useful in formulating a semiotic framework for interpreting music of the post-Classical age, in which one of the distinguishing semantic characteristics is a suppression of linear time and signification of extended moments of atemporality. Numerous authors[3] have recently recognized this phenomenon as definitive in nineteenth-century instrumental and operatic music, and all have noted that it can be cued with numerous syntactic strategies — from ruptures in a piece's normative, teleological formal trajectory (where ruptures signify a departure from the normative

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[2] Monelle, *The Sense of Music*, 115–17.

[3] Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); John Daverio, *Nineteenth-Century Music and the German Romantic Ideology* (New York: Schirmer, 1993), 19–47; William Kinderman, *Beethoven*. 2nd edn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 239–52 and 266–79; Robert Hatten, *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, and Tropes: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 55; Karol Berger, *Bach's Cycle, Mozart's Arrow: An Essay on the Origins of Musical Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 293–352.

temporal flow) to expressively marked stylistic shifts (perhaps a reversion to, for example, a pre-Classical, non-linear, circular musical grammar signaled by, for example, harmonic cycles of fifths).[4]

As a genre comprising multiple semiotic layers in music and other dimensions, including text and *mise-en-scène,* opera can be a particularly rich source of temporal signification, both syntactic and semantic. In late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century opera, furthermore, one of the unifying characteristics (to the extent that any such aesthetic unity can be detected) is an attempt to cope with the pervasive influence of Wagner and his music dramas.[5] As one solution among many, numerous composers sought to integrate the late-nineteenth-century literary and artistic aesthetic known as naturalism, or realism.[6] In Italy this aesthetic played a role in the rise of *verismo* opera, and, while *verismo* as a generic subcategory is far from universally recognized,[7] one of the ways of incorporating realism into post-Wagnerian opera was to elevate the dramaturgical role of the "place" in which the drama occurs. Some of the best known examples of this strategy appear in the operas of Giacomo Puccini, where in the critical literature[8] it is normally known as "local color" (It. *colore locale*). Puccini's late opera *Suor Angelica,* while diverging in many ways from his earlier realist excursions such as *La bohème, Tosca,* and *Madama Butterfly,* nevertheless exhibits aspects of the realism aesthetic, especially in its elevating the setting in which the drama occurs to the role of a central character — an antagonist with whom the protagonist, Angelica, is constantly at odds.

One of the means with which Puccini achieves such an elevation is by using the musical syntax to signify a semantic opposition between temporality and atemporality, then correlating the latter with, respectively, the real, earthly world of Angelica and her human desires and the tyrannical world of the church and its liturgies, rituals, customs, and expectations. Semiotically, temporality and atemporality function as "symbolic signs" for the real world and the church world, where, in Peircean semiotics, "symbolic signs" are those that bear no direct relationship to the objects they signify but instead are fundamentally arbitrary and therefore

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[4] In any expressive opposition no two terms are equally weighted; one is marked, or weighted more heavily, and thus carries additional expressive meaning. See Robert Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 29–66.

[5] Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music,* tr. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989 [1980]), 339–59.

[6] Carl Dahlhaus, *Realism in Nineteenth-Century Music,* tr. Mary Whittall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985 [1982]).

[7] Andreas Giger, "Verismo: Origin, Corruption, and Redemption of an Operatic Term", *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 60 (2007), no. 2: 271–316; Arman Schwartz, "Rough Music: *Tosca* and *Verismo* Reconsidered", *19th-Century Music* 31 (2008), no. 3: 228–44.

[8] Jürgen Maehder, ed., *Esotismo e colore locale nell'opera di Puccini: Atti del I convegno internazionale sull'opera di Puccini a Torre del Lago* (Pisa: Giardini, 1985), for example.

must be learned.[9] Their significant value can only be apprehended with the aid of their interpretant (the cognitive bridge between the sign, or *representamen,* and the object). Symbolic signs are distinct from Peirce's "iconic signs", which signify by virtue of a discernible resemblance to their objects, and "indexical signs,"which signify through contiguity — through, that is, a causal relationship in which the sign is directly affected by the object — and require for their interpretation no learned cultural codes.

Suor Angelica — part of a set of three one-acts, with *Il tabarro* and *Gianni Schicchi,* collectively titled *Il trittico* and premiered in 1918 — is an original creation of playwright and librettist (and future stage and film director) Giovacchino Forzano, who set the piece in a convent and populated it with an all-female cast of nuns. Beyond this, in stark contrast to *Bohème, Tosca,* and *Butterfly,* for example, *Angelica* reveals almost no details of the time and location at which it takes place: the year is specified only as the end of the seventeenth century (and this appears only in the printed score and libretto and thus may not be evident to an audience); the precise geographic location is never specified; the season is identified only as spring (eventually we learn the month is May); and the story opens at sunset, closes shortly thereafter, and occurs somewhere in the middle of a 15-day period of ritual observance (called *quindene*) following one of the church's liturgical festivals — although the festival itself remains unnamed. The withholding of so many details results in the convent itself, as the opera's only concrete (physical or otherwise) manifestation of place, becoming dramaturgically accentuated to the point of its gaining the status of a main character, one with dramatic weight equal to that of Angelica herself and one that acts as a corollary for the larger Roman Catholic Church. The opera thus can be understood as exploring the relationship between these two characters, Angelica and the church; all others, including the other nuns, Angelica's aunt, and the apparitions of the Virgin and Angelica's dead son, function as accessories that elucidate this central conflict. The Angelica-church relationship unfolds in four stages: (1) Angelica attempts to conform to church code in order to repent of her sins; (2) she reveals a conflict with the church, brought about by its tyrannical suppression of human desires; (3) she conceives a solution (suicide) to escape the suffocation; and (4) she carries out the solution (self-administration of a lethal poison concocted from herbs and flowers), only to realize immediately that she has condemned herself to eternal damnation.

Structurally *Suor Angelica* divides into two large parts — one each devoted to the two main characters: the first centers on the church, the second on Angelica. The music delineates the division with semantic temporality: the piece's first part

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⁹   Raymond Monelle, "Music and the Peircean Trichotomies", *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 22 (1991), no. 1, 99–103, Maciej Jabłoński, *Music as Sign* (Imatra: International Semiotics Institute, 2010), 87–95.

centers on atemporal music as a means of establishing the hegemony of the church (dramatic stages 1 and 2), while the second part turns toward temporal music as a means of signifying Angelica's emerging independence (dramatic stages 3 and 4). Consider the opera's opening: a theme (example 1, mm. 1–4) sounds in offstage chimes over a closed curtain, where the chimes iconically signify the convent's bells and the closed curtain and the chimes" physical position offstage indexically signify distance, both physical (the visual and aural images are obscured) and metaphorical (the setting is foreign and untouchable).

Example 1. *Suor Angelica*, mm. 1–8.

Temporally this entire introductory sequence signifies both a "beginning" and "the past." The sense of beginning is signified syntactically: the music behaves according to the conventions of an operatic opening. The curtain rises, the orchestra announces a theme, tonic emerges (F major), and a chorus enters. The chorus in particular is a conventional reference to nineteenth-century Italian melodrama, which normally opens with a choral movement with interpolated solos — the latter of which also occurs here, in the short solo passage for Angelica (4 bars before R2). Semantically the scene combines this sense of a beginning with a sense of the past, in that the music constructs a sonic image of "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth': God (signified by the church, as mentioned) creates animals (the piccolo iconically signifies birds at R1.5)[10] and humans (the voices of the choir), and the textural fulfillment that emerges by R2 as a result of gradually increasing density in the orchestration signifies completion — God's task finished. Finally, the music signifies "atemporality" in its structural syntax by suppressing normative teleological motion in form and harmony: the opening sequence comprises four repetitions of the 8-bar theme in example 1 (divided into two phrases, 4 bars each), plus a varied, 10-bar coda. Every 4-bar phrase articulates motion from tonic to dominant, and every 8-bar unit comprises exactly the same melody and supporting harmony. Normative Classic-Romantic practice would call for the motion to the dominant in each 4-bar phrase to be eventually projected onto a higher structural level, perhaps in the form of a modulation to the dominant

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[10]   "Rn" indicates rehearsal number n; Rn.m indicates m measures after rehearsal number n, where the measure at the rehearsal number is Rn.1.

Example 2. *Suor Angelica*, end of introduction.

key area supported by a new theme that contrasts with the first, but this never happens, and the music systematically suppresses any potential sense of change. Every dominant phrase ending returns exactly back to where it started — back to the beginning of the phrase, for another repetition. The effect is that of circular motion, the momentum of which is impossible to stop but the trajectory of which ultimately leads nowhere.

The atemporality here is a symbolic signifier (it requires knowledge of musical syntax and stylistic norms) for the church: the music's syntactical circularity correlates with the cyclic sense of sacred time in medieval Christianity, in which time was measured according to solar cycles, lunar cycles, the seasons, and the liturgical cycles of the church calendar.[11] Every temporal cycle brings one back to where one started — to the start of another liturgy, another day, another month, or another year — just as in Puccini's introduction every 8-bar phrase leads back to the start of the same phrase. There is no musical progress or evolution, just as in medieval time there is none of the sense of forward, linear progress known to modern time — a time measured on the clock and the calendar, not dependent on the cycles of nature.
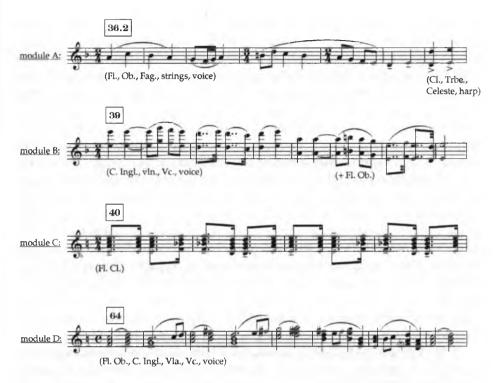
In contrast, the second part of *Suor Angelica* centers not on the church but on the protagonist herself. The focus shifts around the time the sisters notice the arrival of an elegant coach, which, together with the ensuing entrance of its occupant, Angelica's aristocratic Princess aunt (the *Zia Priuncipessa*), signifies the invasion of the outside (i.e., modern) world into the monastic world of the convent. The Princess ostensibly arrives to deliver news to Angelica of her sister's impending marriage, which requires that Angelica sign away her share of the family's (presumably extensive) holdings. In the confrontation scene that ensues, Angelica remains uninterested in such impersonal business matters, instead wanting only news of the illegitimate son whose birth precipitated her family's committing her, against her will, to the convent seven years ago. But the news she receives is not good: the boy contracted an illness and died at age five.

The music signifies this real-world intrusion by introducing real-world temporality, in the form of linear, teleological formal processes that had been previously absent from the piece. Beginning with the one of the *cercatrice*'s description of the coach at R36.2 ("Da gran signori"), the opera enters into dialogue with what is known in music analysis as a *rotational form,* an organizational principle in which an ordered set of thematic modules repeats itself over the course of a piece, movement, or portion thereof, in the same order (where every repetition is a "rotation") but perhaps with variations, substitutions, interpolations, or additions. In *Angelica* the rotational schema comprises four such modules (see example 3), which Hepokoski[12] has named A (the F-major theme introduced at R36.2), B (Angelica's prayer to the Virgin, R39), C (R40, the dotted rhythms of which echo the march topic discussed earlier, a march now transformed into a tragic, minor-mode death march), and D (the "grace" theme of R64). The first rotation (the anticipation of

[11] Monelle, *The Sense of Music*, 93–6; Berger, *Bach's Cycle, Mozart's Arrow*, 158–65.

[12] James Hepokoski, "Structure, Implication, and the End of *Suor Angelica*", in Virgilio Bernardoni, Michele Girardi, and Arthur Groos (eds.), *Studi Pucciniani 3: "L'insolita forma': Strutture e processi analitici per l'opera italiana mell'epoca di Puccini: Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi Lucca, 20–21 settembre 2001* (Lucca: Centro studi Giacomo Puccini, 2004), 245–6.

Example 3. Rotational modules in *Suor Angelica* (after Hepokoski 2004).

the Princess's entrance) comprises modules A, B, and C (see example 3 for measure numbers). The second (Angelica's scene and aria, in which she reacts to the confrontation with her aunt) passes through the same three modules again (A at R61, B at 8 before R62, and C at R62) before adding module D (R64) as a *telos* — a goal toward which the earlier, incomplete rotation is understood as aiming, in a process known as teleological genesis.[13] The third rotation (Angelica's suicide: A at R66.3, B at 67.6, C at R69, and D at 81) essentially retraces the second.

At the same time the formally multivalent opera also enters into dialogue with the organizational conventions of nineteenth-century Italian melodrama,[14] which involve multi-movement scenes designed to efficiently organize in music the dramatic evolution of a character or group of characters. For example, the Princess's meeting Angelica in the *parlatorio* sets the stage for what conventional melodrama would treat as a *duet:* a four-movement scene for two characters comprising an initial, dramatically kinetic *tempo d'attacco,* a lyric, dramatically static *adagio,* a kinetic *tempo di mezzo* that provides renewed dramatic impetus, and

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[13]   Hepokoski, "Structure, Implication", 244.

[14]   Andrew Davis, *"Il trittico," "Turandot," and Puccini's Late Style* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

a lyric, static *cabaletta* that functions as the formal goal and brings the scene to an emphatic close. The Princess-Angelica scene comprises a deformed version of this schema: the initial dialogue (R44.1–R50) functions as a the *tempo d'attacco,* while the ensuing lyric statements for the Princess (R50.4) and Angelica (R52) are analogous to the parallel stanzas expected for the two characters in a normative *adagio.* After this the scene, and Angelica, collapse: Angelica suddenly demands news of her son in a frenzied outburst, shouting "mio figlio" over a violent, chromatic motive in the orchestra that repeats, relentlessly, sixteen times, mirroring Angelica's own uncontrolled hysteria; the Princess coldly delivers news of the child's death, then promptly leaves the room, permanently denying the scene any possibility of a *tempo di mezzo* or *cabaletta.* Angelica's presence on stage alone subsequently sets up a second opportunity for Puccini to enter into dialogue with a conventional melodramatic form — this time the solo *aria,* the form of which normatively parallels that of the duet, replacing the *tempo d'attacco* with a solo recitative. The scene proceeds as expected, with a recitative (Angelica's "Senza mamma," R60.3), an *adagio* ('Ora che sei un angelo del cielo," R61), an interlude (R63) for Sister Genovieffa and the chorus of sisters analogous to a *tempo di mezzo* (the most conventional of which often include choral interjections), and a climactic movement that in for a *cabaletta* ('La grazia è discesa, dal cielo," R64).

Both of the piece's formal schemata, the rotational and the melodramatic, are "temporal" in the same sense in which a sonata form is a temporal schema for Classic-Romantic instrumental music. Each depends for its expressivity on the *order of* "appearance" of its thematic, tonal, or rhetorical events, and on listeners "knowing their location" in the form at any given moment. Any change in the order of events in the formal narrative — including any unexpected addition or deletion of a theme, for example — constitutes a *deformation* that, far from accidental or expressively neutral, demands interpretation of its expressive significance. The duet's disintegration, for example, signifies Angelica's descent into madness and hysteria. Her fully normative aria that follows posits a model of perfection, which, in the context of the deformed duet just witnessed, must be understood as a signifying a fully hallucinatory state from which the protagonist delivers a vision of an unspoiled, idyllic reality — a reality that moments earlier was coldly and abruptly denied to her in her real, earthly life.

The temporal-atemporal opposition in *Suor Angelica* does not divide rigidly along formal lines. Temporal signifiers occasionally appear in the opera's first (atemporal) part, just as atemporal signifiers occasionally appear in the second (temporal) part. Semiotically, the juxtapositions thus created constitute a form of what Robert Hatten[15] (2006) has called a "trope of temporality," in which the

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[15] Robert Hatten, "The Troping of Temporality in Music", in *Approaches to Meaning in Music,* ed. Byron Almén and Edward R. Pearsall (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 62–75.

semantic temporality of the musical material in question contradicts its expected temporal meaning, given its syntactic position in the music. Consider the interlude for Sister Genovieffa and the chorus of sisters at R63, the *tempo di mezzo* in the middle of Angelica's aria: the passage indeed provides in its text the resurgence of dramatic motion expected in conventional movements of this type (the nuns" reference to the Virgin and her grace, "la Vergine ha fatto la grazia," dramatically propels the scene from Angelica's lyric *adagio* into the transcendent cabaletta). But this movement's music unexpectedly cues cyclic atemporality, especially in its static pedal tone in horns and cellos, its melodic lines inflected by a chant topic (the repeated As acquire the quality of a reciting tone), its parallel triads (which suspend normative harmonic motion), and its latent modality (tonic is A, but the harmonic parallelism undercuts any sense of harmonic functionality). The trope produces an ironic reversal of expressive meaning: the ancient, unearthly world of the church intrudes on Angelica's real, human, modern world, but now — because we must understand Angelica's aria as a hallucination — the church signifies a "return to," not a "departure from," temporal normalcy. The trope turns the expressive significance of the church upside down, semantically underscoring Angelica's latent insanity.

Earlier, Angelica's monologue "I desideri sono i fior dei vivi" (R16.5) — which ushers in the drama's second stage, that of Angelica's conflict with the church — cues another trope of temporality, now juxtaposing syntactic temporality in the middle of a sea of atemporal music. The monologue engages with an expansive, lyric, voice-centered texture, normative harmonic motion, and — very important for its expressive meaning — a Classic-Romantic formal schema: the Classical *period* design, with teleological antecedent and consequent phrases of 12 bars each (R16.5–16 and R16.17–R17.3). But the monologue ends up strikingly and abnormally short, truncated (at R17.7) by the sudden intervention of the *Zelatrice* ("Noi non possiamo / nemmen da vive avere desideri" — "Even when we are alive we cannot have desires") and a return to syntactic atemporality before it can fulfill its potential of expanding into a full lyric aria. It sounds as if it ends as soon as it begins; the trope signifies the heavy hand of church discipline rising to suppress normative, real-world desires as soon as they threaten to emerge.

Suor Angelica ends, as mentioned, with Angelica committing suicide by ingesting a homemade potion made from herbs and flowers, followed by a miracle that apparently saves the hapless nun from damnation (which, according to church doctrine, would be the result of suicide, a mortal sin). The chapel fills with light, a choir of angels appears, and the Virgin Mary herself ushers into the room Angelica's child, clothed entirely in white. Angelica dies, thus completing the eagerly anticipated reunion with her son in heaven. This scene engages overtly and explicitly with a centuries-old operatic tradition of invoking a theatrical genre known as the "marvelous", tokens of which include exaggerated natural or supernatural forces, transformative miracles, dream sequences, or other unreal elements that intrude upon real-world certainty — all designed to arouse in the viewer a sense of

wonder, enchantment, or momentary disbelief. As late as the eighteenth century the marvelous often manifested itself in a phenomenon known to the history of opera and theater as the *deus ex machina,* the dramaturgical function of which is normally to miraculously resolve the piece's central dramatic problem. Seventeenth-century examples are numerous (the best known may be Monteverdi's *Orfeo,* 1607), and the tradition continues through the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries in, for example, Mozart's *Idomeneo* (1781) and *Don Giovanni* (1787) and Spontini's *La vestale* (1807). Later examples of the marvelous (not necessarily involving a *deus*) include Weber's *Der Freischutz* (1821), Auber's *La Muette de Portici* (1828), Rossini's *Guillaume Tell* (1829), numerous of the works of Wagner, the ballet masterpieces *Giselle, ou les Willis* (1841) and *The Nutcracker* 1892), and Puccini's own opera-ballet *Le villi* (1884).

Nineteenth-century aesthetics upheld the marvelous as one of the definitive elements in German Romanticism. Figures such as Schlegel and Hoffmann described it not only as essential in Romantic opera but as an avenue into the inner reaches of the intellect, an inspiration for the most noble aspirations of the soul, and a source of universal (and otherwise unknowable) truths. But Puccini, working in the post-Wagnerian age of realism, is one in a long line of composers who sought to undermine the marvelous, in the realist spirit of suppressing imaginative fantasy in lieu of dramatic verisimilitude in the theater. *Suor Angelica* proves a good example of realism in this sense: while the piece seems to be a backward-looking nod toward a tradition of placing naïve trust in the power of the marvelous, in fact the piece's musical treatment of the marvelous exposes its realist aesthetic.

The music undercuts the marvelous in at least two ways. The first occurs at the final cadence in Angelica's aria (example 4), which comprises a temporally normative harmonic progression with a fifths cycle (8 bars before R66) leading to a dominant seventh (6 before R66), which in turn would be expected to resolve to tonic in a sublime cadence, underscoring in music the Virgin's grace delivered from heaven. But lowered sixth and seventh scale degrees (A♭ and B♭) badly discolor the cadence and introduce elements of the minor mode at the very moment of arrival of tonic C major (4 before R66), weakening the cadence's transcendent power, throwing into question the reality of everything that has transpired, and highlighting Angelica's delusional state.

The second occurs by virtue of a temporal trope in the piece's underlying rotational structure, one that renders the piece's entire ending, from the close of Angelica's aria onward, a dream sequence — a fantastical excursion in which Angelica imagines a way out of her predicament, then acts out the events in her mind. Consider that syntactic temporality at R66 (see example 4) signifies full closure — the end of the opera. Nothing here, deformative A♭s and B♭s notwithstanding, suggests that this cadence should not be the end of the piece: A♭ and B♭ ultimately resolve normally, tonic stabilizes in a transcendent C major, the chorus proclaims "Amen," and the music fades away to nothing (in a pianississimo fol-

Example 4. Angelica's aria, final cadence.

lowed by a decrescendo). But instead, following a *lunga pausa* we have a reiteration of one line from the just-completed rotational module D (Angelica's "La grazia è discesa dal cielo"), then a resumption, in the orchestra, of rotational module A. Syntactically the music of R66.3 now signifies a new beginning, because module A functions rhetorically as an initiation — the start of another cycle through the rotational modules. Thus a moment of clear, definitive "ending" juxtaposed with a surprising new "beginning" cues a temporal trope that signifies a "rewinding of the clock".[16]

This temporal rewinding should allow for another pass through the same musical modules — another trip across the same musical terrain — perhaps with the hope of undoing or correcting what has unfolded thus far. But instead, the ensuing third rotation mirrors the second rotation almost exactly, except for an added block of music (R75–R81) for the suicide sequence. Even the final cadence is the same (compare the music 4 bars from the end with 4 before R66), complete with the same lowered sixth and seventh scale degrees. Thus semantically the final rotation as a whole signifies not an undoing or correction of what occurred earlier, but instead signifies that "nothing at all" gets changed; in fact the third rotation's near-exact musical duplication of the second defies the very essence of teleological, temporal music, and it undermines the expected semantic function of the temporal "rewinding" that occurred when the music backtracked to module A just after R66. Such as it is, this final rotation demands an alternative reading: this is not an attempt to correct and remedy some problem established earlier, but rather a semantic "shift of level of discourse",[17] a shift from the world of reality into the utterly fantastical world of Angelica's grief-stricken hallucination. After the curtain falls Angelica will wake up from her dream, come back to reality, and return to the tedium of her forced life of monasticism.

In true realist spirit *Angelica,* just like its *Trittico* companions *Il tabarro* and *Gianni Schicchi,* remains blatantly pessimistic. Puccini's music sends Angelica deep into a hallucinatory oblivion, a mental damnation from which not even the church or a *deus ex machina* can save her. Women remain oppressed under the force of societal conventions; escape is hopeless.

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[16] James Hepokoski, Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[17] Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*, 174–88.

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