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Islamophobia, Anti-Semitism, and Censorship: Reflections on Religious and Political Radicalism in John Adams's *The Death of Klinghoffer*

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Islamophobia, Anti-Semitism, and Censorship: Reflections on Religious and Political
Radicalism in John Adams's *The Death of Klinghoffer*

A Thesis Presented

by

ALLISON R. SMITH

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ABSTRACT

ISLAMOPHOBIA, ANTI-SEMITISM, AND CENSORSHIP: REFLECTIONS ON
RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL RADICALISM IN JOHN ADAMS'S *THE DEATH OF
KLINGHOFFER*

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The issue of anti-Semitism in John Adams's 1991 opera, *The Death of Klinghoffer*, has been widely discussed by scholars such as Richard Taruskin, Robert Fink, and others. For instance, Taruskin asserts that Adams favors the Palestinians through musical grandiosity and by describing them as "men of ideals." However, this fails to consider the possibility that Adams intended to portray an evenhanded view of diverse religious groups. Through close readings of the libretto and select numbers from *Klinghoffer*, such as the "Chorus of Exiled Palestinians," the "Chorus of Exiled Jews," and the "Aria of the Falling Body," my thesis maintains that Adams treats both sides equally. Although he depicts each group differently through a contrasting approach to text, orchestration, and texture, he nevertheless does not favor one group over the other. Additionally, a close reading of the "Aria of the Falling Body" provides Adams's possible solution to this conflict – reconciliation between religious communities. Adams does so through portraying Leon Klinghoffer as a scapegoat. This aria is sung by Leon Klinghoffer's body after he is sacrificed by the Palestinian hijackers – his sacrifice ensured the safety of the remaining passengers on board. Adams thus presents *Klinghoffer* as religious commentary – not only by vividly depicting the warring religious communities – but also by offering a solution to a centuries-old conflict.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: CHARACTERIZATIONS OF ISLAMOPHOBIA AND ANTI-SEMITISM IN *THE DEATH OF KLINGHOFFER*

“*The Death of Klinghoffer* is not only about a brief, violent incident from the recent news. It is about religious and social intolerance, about a struggle over land that is as old a story as the first pages of written history.” –John Adams¹

Since its Brooklyn premiere on September 5, 1991, John Adams’s *The Death of Klinghoffer* has garnered various criticisms of anti-Semitism, largely due to the controversial Rumours scene, which is now-removed.² This scene depicts a stereotypical Jewish family in a sitcom-like setting that trivializes the modern Jewish condition. This depiction contrasts with the textual gravitas that often accompanies the Palestinian terrorists as they describe themselves as “men of ideals.” The opera takes place on the *Achille Lauro*, a cruise ship headed for Egypt. A group of Palestinian terrorists hijacks the *Achille Lauro*, holds the terrorized passengers and crew hostage, and eventually kills a disabled Jewish man, Leon Klinghoffer. The Palestinian terrorists are permitted to disembark in Syria before the police take them away. The opera ends with all of the crew members and passengers, save Leon Klinghoffer, disembarking safely as Marilyn Klinghoffer, Leon’s wife, soliloquizes about her husband’s death.

¹ David Wiegand, “Boston Symphony missed the point on art and grieving,” *San Francisco Gate*, November 7, 2001, accessed October 10, 2016, <http://www.sfgate.com/entertainment/article/Boston-Symphony-missed-the-point-on-art-and-2860361.php>.

² This scene depicted a Jewish-American family familiar with the Klinghoffers in a sitcom-like setting. The first version of the opera opened with this scene in between the “Chorus of Exiled Palestinians” and the “Chorus of Exiled Jews.” John Adams removed this scene after *Klinghoffer*’s premieres in Brussels (March 1991) and Paris (April 1991) in preparation for its American premiere in Brooklyn (September 1991). He removed it because he found that it did not have the lightening effect he was hoping it to have and felt it detracted from the enormity of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. See John Adams, *Hallelujah Junction: Composing an American Life* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), 152-154. For a complete list of performances from 1991-2014, see the Metropolitan Opera’s program from its 2014 production of *Klinghoffer*: <http://metopera.org/PageFiles/41061/Oct%2020%20Klinghoffer.pdf>.

Due to an unbalanced musical treatment of Palestinian and Jewish people, *Klinghoffer* has also been frequently criticized for being too sympathetic with the Palestinians. Critics such as Richard Taruskin³ and Raymond Sokolov⁴ have alleged that because Adams, composer, and Alice Goodman, librettist, depict the Palestinians with musical grandiosity and poetic language, that the Palestinians are portrayed as terrorists with humanity. Islamophobia, defined in this paper as the stereotype that categorizes Middle Eastern people as Muslim, and Muslims as extremists, is at its peak in the United States.⁵ Due to this issue, any attempt to humanize Muslim terrorists is uncomfortable and, when juxtaposed with Jewish characters, anti-Semitic. On occasion, however, the Jews have also been “the terrorists” and the Palestinians “the terrorized.”⁶ Because Jews are politically powerful in the United States, the Jewish point of view has dominated the rhetoric.

Through examining the libretto, the score, and a survey of critical and audience reactions, I argue that Adams’s *The Death of Klinghoffer* is neither anti-Semitic nor Islamophobic; however, it appears that some of the audience reaction and critical responses may have been Islamophobic and anti-Semitic. While the opera contains

³ Richard Taruskin, “The Danger of Music and the Case for Control,” in *The Danger of Music: And Other Anti-Utopian Essays* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009): 168-180.

⁴ Music critic for *Wall Street Journal*: Raymond Sokolov, “Adamsweek: *Klinghoffer* Dies Again,” *Wall Street Journal*, September 18, 1991.

⁵ For discussions of rising levels of Islamophobia in America and Europe, see Seyyed-Abdolhamid Mirhosseini and Hossein Rouzbeh, *Instances of Islamophobia: Demonizing the Muslim “Other”* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015).

⁶ The 1985 murder of Alex Odeh, a Palestinian-American who served as the regional director for the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), by Jewish-American activists is likely the most notable example of Jewish-led terrorism. His office was bombed three days after the *Achille Lauro* hijacking. Roughly two months before the *Achille Lauro* hijacking, Jewish-American activists bombed the ADC’s Boston office. These incidents, according to John Adams, were underreported in the United States. He believes that Americans often sympathize more with Israel than Palestine and wanted the opera to reflect both the Palestinian and Jewish point of view and to raise questions about the nature of terrorism. See Adams, *Hallelujah Junction*, 152-154.

obvious anti-Semitic and Islamophobic language, I argue that Goodman used this language to characterize the Palestinian hijackers as anti-Semitic and the Jewish characters, primarily Leon Klinghoffer, as Islamophobic.⁷ In support of this thesis, I will first provide a brief survey of critical and audience reactions concerning alleged anti-Semitism, aided by Robert Fink and Taruskin.⁸ Because several of the allegations that *Klinghoffer* is anti-Semitic mention the representation of Leon Klinghoffer, I will also compare critical theories concerning his representation to both Goodman's and Adams's intents in his portrayal. In order to contextualize these critiques of anti-Semitism, I will then provide a brief history of Americans' view of Jewish-Americans from the 1980s-1990s. This survey will also postulate why *Klinghoffer* did not cause as much controversy in Europe as it did in America. Although accusations of Islamophobia are not as prevalent in American and European sources as accusations of anti-Semitism are, I will provide a survey of audience and critical reactions of perceived Islamophobia in *Klinghoffer*. Finally, I provide a comparative stylistic analysis of two pieces that provide musical representations of *Klinghoffer*'s alleged anti-Semitic and Islamophobic language.

Throughout this thesis, I refer to Penny Woolcock's film version because it is the most widely circulated, and to the published vocal score.⁹ *Klinghoffer* was commissioned

⁷ It is necessary to note, however, that there is little to no mention of Islamophobic language in audience reactions. Its only presence in critical reactions is by those who are Middle Eastern. See Edward Said, *Music at the Limits* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2008) and Moustafa Bayoumi, Kayla Epstein, Alan Yuhas, and Eli Valley, "We Took Four New Yorkers to *The Death of Klinghoffer*: What Was Their Verdict?" *The Guardian*, October 21, 2014, accessed December 10, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/music/2014/oct/21/the-death-of-klinghoffer-panel-art-censor>.

⁸ Robert Fink, "Klinghoffer in Brooklyn Heights," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 17, no. 2 (July 2005): 173-213.

⁹ For the film, see *The Death of Klinghoffer*, DVD, directed by Penny Woolcock, 2003 (New York, NY: Universal Classics Group, 2003). For the vocal score, see John Adams and Alice Goodman, *The Death of Klinghoffer: An Opera in Two Acts with Prologue, Vocal Score* (London: Boosey and Hawkes, 1991).

by a consortium of six organizations: La Monnaie in Brussels, the Opéra de Lyon in France, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the San Francisco Opera, the Los Angeles Festival, and the Glyndebourne Festival in England.¹⁰ In no other venue did *Klinghoffer* attract as much vitriol as it did at the Brooklyn Academy of Music – an area with a sizeable Jewish population.¹¹

In New York, there was widespread criticism that *Klinghoffer* was anti-Semitic, primarily by Jewish activist groups such as the Anti-Defamation League, former mayor of New York Rudy Giuliani, as well as criticism published in *The Wall Street Journal*. These critics claimed that the opera was too sympathetic toward the Palestinians and that it featured negative Jewish stereotypes, especially in the Rumours scene.¹² Fink notes that Adams's intention with this scene was to create a satyr play to lighten the coming tragedies of the opera.¹³ However, in doing so, Fink argues that the portrayal of the Rumours trivializes Jewish culture and takes away its chance to be heroic against the Arabs. Fink analyzes the Rumours scene through the lens of American-Jewish identity as portrayed in Jewish-centered American sitcoms. The first such sitcom, *The Goldbergs*,

¹⁰Mark Swed, "Music Review: *Death of Klinghoffer* at last," *Los Angeles Times*, October 19, 2009. The six opera houses mentioned formed a consortium that collectively commissioned *Klinghoffer*. Between 1991 and 1992, *Klinghoffer* premiered at all six opera houses. The opera venues are listed in order of premiere.

¹¹ According to a 2013 study, 13% of all Jewish people in America live in New York City. This is the most of any metro area. See Derek Kravitz, "New York City Area's Jewish Population Rises," *The Wall Street Journal*, Oct. 1, 2013, accessed Oct. 19, 2016, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304373104579109671933282670>. According to an article from Dutch newspaper, *De Volkskrant*, *The Death of Klinghoffer* premiered without problems in its European countries, meaning that the opera did not spark protests. The article expresses surprise that an opera from 1991 could still incite such controversy. See Redactie, "Waarom de opera De Dood van Klinghoffer zo gehaat wordt," *De Volkskrant*, Oct. 21, 2014, accessed Oct. 19, 2016, <http://www.volkskrant.nl/theater/waarom-de-opera-de-dood-van-klinghoffer-zo-gehaat-wordt~a3773221/>. For an opinion in English, Nicholas Lezard expresses shock at the protests of *Klinghoffer* and maintains that its content allows it to wrestle with current political issues. See Nicholas Lezard, "Those most offended by John Adams's *Death of Klinghoffer* haven't seen it," *New Statesman*, July 10, 2014, accessed Oct. 19, 2016.

¹² See footnote 2.

¹³ Fink, "*Klinghoffer* in Brooklyn Heights," 186.

was about a Jewish family assimilating to life in suburban 1950s America. Another sitcom featuring a Jewish family did not appear again until 1972. *Bridget Loves Bernie* only ran for one season as it was met with the same level of critical vitriol as *Klinghoffer*. Bridget was Catholic and Bernie was Jewish, which mirrored a great fear among American Jews – intermarriage resulting in a loss of Jewish identity and culture. The Goldbergs were too Jewish, Bernie was not Jewish enough.¹⁴

Throughout *Klinghoffer*'s seven scheduled performances at the Metropolitan Opera between October and November 2014, several protestors from groups such as the Simon Wiesenthal Center, the Zionist Organization of America, and the Catholic League gathered outside of the opera house to rally against its performance due to perceived anti-Semitism. One such protestor, Jeffrey Wiesenfeld stated that *Klinghoffer* was evidence that “anti-Semitism [has] reach[ed] the pinnacle of American high culture...this opera is not just anti-Semitic but there is gratuitous anti-Semitism that is repeated.”¹⁵ Another protestor, Rabbi Schmuley Boteach stated that an “opera that romanticizes terrorism – especially in a city with the most Jewish citizens in the world – is deeply offensive.”¹⁶ Betty Ehrenberg, director of the World Jewish Congress stated that the opera “sympathizes with the terrorists and tries to [...] bring in both sides. But both sides are not equal.”¹⁷ Phyllis Chesler wrote that showing the opera is

equivalent to a college president’s decision to allow the Muslim Brotherhood, ISIS Hamas, or the Ku Klux Klan to speak on campus because “all sides must be heard” [...] the emotional deck is loaded against both Jews and Jewish Israel and in favor, not merely of Palestinians, but in favor of Palestinian terrorists. They are

¹⁴ Ibid., 186-189.

¹⁵ Stewart Ain, “Rhetoric Rising as ‘Klinghoffer’ Opera Nears,” *The Jewish Week*, October 14, 2014, accessed February 25, 2016, <http://www.thejewishweek.com/news/new-york/rhetoric-rising-klinghoffer-opera-nears>.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

meant to be pitied, understood, perhaps forgiven – but not the Jews, who are seen as greedy, thieving colonizers.¹⁸

Protestors were also present inside of the theatre, booing loudly during the performances. One protestor shouted, “the murder of Leon Klinghoffer will never be forgotten!”¹⁹ During his bow at the end of this particular performance, Adams was greeted with a cacophony of cheers and boos.²⁰

Many of *Klinghoffer*’s dissenters also took issue with the alleged insensitivity of producing an opera that details both a recent tragedy against Jewish people and not consulting with Leon Klinghoffer’s surviving family members, his daughters Ilsa and Lisa Klinghoffer.²¹ In 2011, they released a statement to the Anti-Defamation League in response to St. Louis’s 2011 production of *The Death of Klinghoffer*:

We are strong supporters of the arts, and believe that theater can play a critical role in examining and understanding significant world events. This opera, however, does no such thing. *The Death of Klinghoffer* takes a heinous terrorist event and rationalizes, legitimizes, and explains it. There is no way that this terrorist murder can or should be presented in a balanced manner. There can be no compassion, understanding, or objectivity for terrorists, no matter who they are, where they live, or what their story is.²²

Klinghoffer does mythologize both a sensational recent event as well as the Palestinian hijackers and Leon and Marilyn Klinghoffer. Lawrence Kramer refers to

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Chris Browner, “Controversial ‘The Death of Klinghoffer’ puts human face on tough issue,” *Columbia Spectator*, October 23, 2014, accessed February 25, 2016, <http://columbiaspectator.com/arts-and-entertainment/2014/10/23/controversial-%E2%80%98-death-klinghoffer-puts-human-face-tough-issue>.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Marilyn Klinghoffer, Leon Klinghoffer’s wife, passed away from cancer mere months after the *Achille Lauro* hijacking. See Robert D. McFadden, “Marilyn Klinghoffer dies at 58; Wife of victim of ship hijackers,” *The New York Times*, February 10, 1986, accessed October 10, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/1986/02/10/obituaries/marilyn-klinghoffer-dies-at-58-wife-of-victim-of-ship-hijackers.html>.

²² Ilsa and Lisa Klinghoffer, “Statement by Lisa and Ilsa Klinghoffer of ‘The Death of Klinghoffer’ at Opera Theatre of St. Louis,” last modified May 27, 2011, accessed September 19, 2016, <http://www.adl.org/press-center/press-releases/terrorism/statement-by-lisa-and-ilsa.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/>.

Klinghoffer as “opera as political theater” because it contains postmodern musical vocabulary in that it features an often static, oratorio-like quality through use of choruses and tonally ambiguous blocked chords modeled after J.S. Bach’s *Passions*. In sum, it lacks an expressive, active musical language more typical of opera – Kramer theorizes that this compositional style is “pointedly unoperatic.”²³ In effect, *Klinghoffer* turns history into allegory – it details the fate of an ordinary middle-class, Jewish-American couple whose vacation is interrupted by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Although the Klinghoffers suffered a real and tragic event, this turns Leon and Marilyn Klinghoffer’s story into a parable and Leon and Marilyn Klinghoffer themselves into Jewish-American archetypes. When Leon Klinghoffer’s body is thrown overboard at the climax of the opera, his body soliloquizes and reflects on his fate. He undergoes a sort of metamorphosis and thus, Kramer argues, becomes mythological.²⁴

Goodman, states, however, that she did not want to present Leon Klinghoffer as a mythological character, but intentionally portrayed him as “an ordinary, touchy, vulgar bourgeois – there’s this Jewish fantasy that our heroes and our victims are always either highly cultured or highly pious.”²⁵ Goodman presented Leon Klinghoffer in this manner to decouple the notion that the Jewish people are the “terrorized” and the Palestinians are the “terrorists.” Goodman argues that Jewish people have also committed grievances

²³ Lawrence Kramer, “The Great American Opera: *Klinghoffer*, *Streetcar*, and the Exception,” *The Opera Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (2007), 69.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 69-71.

²⁵ Rupert Christiansen, “Breaking Taboos (Portrait of Alice Goodman),” in *The John Adams Reader*, ed. Thomas May (Pompton Plains, NJ: Amadeus Press, 2006), 256. Adams, however, did intend to present Leon Klinghoffer as a mythical character by alluding to Bach’s *Passions* to frame Leon Klinghoffer as a scapegoat. However, Kramer mentions both the music and libretto when positing that Klinghoffer becomes a mythological character in the “Aria of the Falling Body.” See John Adams, *Hallelujah Junction: Composing an American Life* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), 152-154.

against Palestinians and that the two are “alike – temperamentally, culturally, in family dynamics, and in ultimate origin.”²⁶ In sum, Goodman disagrees with Kramer’s central argument in that she de-mythologizes the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by portraying both Leon Klinghoffer and the Palestinian hijackers as flawed humans with complicated cultural histories. In either case, Ilsa and Lisa Klinghoffer lost agency over the portrayal of the terrorist event that led to their father’s murder because they were never consulted about the opera. They were informed of the opera’s existence just as the general public was – through the news. Peter Sellars, the director, did personally invite them to its New York premiere free of charge. They, however, bought their own tickets for the opera and published their comments concerning it after they had seen it.

Despite protests from both Jewish activist groups and Leon Klinghoffer’s family, a live, international simultaneous broadcast in over sixty countries was originally scheduled for one of the November performances. However, in June 2014, due to the activism of groups such as the Anti-Defamation League, the Metropolitan Opera’s general manager, Peter Gelb, decided to cancel the simultaneous broadcast. Adams condemned this decision: “The cancellation of the international telecast is a deeply regrettable decision and goes far beyond the issues of ‘artistic freedom,’ and ends in promoting the same kind of intolerance that the opera’s detractors claim to be preventing.”²⁷

Klinghoffer is far from the first opera to spark protests and it is not unique in its

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Clive Paget, “Met cancels broadcast amidst anti-Semitism row,” *Limelight Magazine*, June 18, 2014, accessed March 30, 2016, <http://www.limelightmagazine.com.au/Article/388413.met-cancels-broadcast-amidst-anti-semitism-row.aspx>.

vulgar portrayal of Jewish people.²⁸ In order to contextualize why *Klinghoffer* sparked more criticism in New York than in Europe, it is necessary to trace a recent history of Jewish-American relations leading up to *Klinghoffer*'s New York premiere. The Arab-Israeli Six Days War of 1967, for example, did not fare well for the image of Jews in America. Israel's growing power due to their victory led to increasing anti-Semitism in the United States. Activist groups such as the Black Panthers and the Nation of Islam began to take public anti-Semitic stances. Jewish people separated into two camps: muscle Jews and diasporic Jews. Muscle Jews were overzealous Zionists who sought for a stronger Israel after the Six Days War, and diasporic Jews were pacifists who were seeking to redeem the entire world, not just the Jewish parts of the world. Due to the growing anti-Semitism in America which pitted Jewish people against each other, any stereotypical Jewish depiction was not entirely taboo, but was difficult to pull off successfully.²⁹

The 1980s and 1990s brought various Jewish-led atrocities in response to growing American anti-Semitism. Israel invaded Lebanon and led massacres of Palestinians. An American Naval officer spied for Israel. Israel put pressure on Jewish people around the world to be more conservative and to fight against assimilation. This period was known as the Silent Holocaust in America – due to a high degree of intermarriage, Jewish people became an incredibly small minority, now outnumbered by African-Americans and Hispanics. American Jews faced a loss of cultural identity.³⁰

Klinghoffer only poured salt in those wounds. It premiered in Brooklyn mere

²⁸ One such opera is Richard Strauss's *Salome*.

²⁹ Fink, "*Klinghoffer* in Brooklyn Heights," 189-191.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 191-193.

weeks after the Crown Heights Riots – a three-day race riot between Jews and African-Americans that resulted in several deaths, two of whom were children. According to Fink, these Brooklyn Jews saw a reflection of both themselves and of their fear of intermarriage in the Rumours scene. The Rumours’s neutral political stance and distaste of anything multicultural mirrored the crisis of Jewish identity. The Rumours were too Jewish; Leon Klinghoffer was not Jewish enough.³¹ This Jewish identity crisis was not present in European Jews, which explains why *Klinghoffer* was not as much of a controversy in those countries.

Klinghoffer also premiered in Belgium, France, and England, and did not face notable anti-Semitic vitriol. Fink posits that European Jews were able to distance themselves from the Jewish characters in *Klinghoffer*, just as they have done in other works with negative or over-the-top representations of Jewish people. The characterization of Jews in Strauss’s *Salome*, for example, was so grotesque that European Jews could draw a line between themselves and the biblical Jews. It allows them to displace anti-Semitic stereotypes onto another group.³² The biblical Jews were “ancestors of those loud, aggressive, materialistic, incestuous, mad Jews whom the Viennese and Berlin Jews saw everyday on the streets.”³³ Modern European Jews have essentially the same reaction to *Klinghoffer*; in that they view the Klinghoffers, but primarily the Rumours, as descendants of these biblical Jews. In the Rumours, European Jews again found a group onto whom to displace anti-Semitic stereotypes.³⁴

³¹ Ibid., 193-196.

³² Ibid., 198.

³³ Sander Gilman, “Strauss and the Pervert,” *Reading Opera*, ed. Arthur Groos and Roger Parker (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 325.

³⁴ For an Israeli’s explanation of how he views *Klinghoffer*’s perceived anti-Semitism, see Brian Schaefer, “‘Klinghoffer’ Opera Does Not Glorify anti-Semitic Violence,” *Haaretz*, Oct. 22, 2014, accessed Oct. 19, 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-1.622074>.

In sum, European Jews are able to displace the negative Jewish stereotypes in *Klinghoffer*; they simply displace them onto diasporic, Western Jews rather than Eastern, biblical Jews.³⁵ American Jews, by contrast, cannot justify the anti-Semitic stereotypes on stage with the, “at least we are not that bad” defense. When modern American Jews watch *Klinghoffer*, they see themselves, and they do not like what they see.

Taruskin argues that part of the vitriol toward *Klinghoffer* may be due to its performance closely following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.³⁶ The Boston Symphony Orchestra removed excerpts of *Klinghoffer* from one of its concerts due to this concern.³⁷ People have the right, Taruskin argues, to wish to avoid recent pain when attending an opera.³⁸ Adams notes, however, that al-Qaida’s terrorist attack should have no connection with Palestinians – demonstrating that some audience members equate violent terrorism with Palestinians.

Taruskin also refers to Adams's presentation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as trading “in the tritest undergraduate fantasies.”³⁹ In presenting his accusation that *Klinghoffer* romanticizes terrorism, he defines terrorism as, “the commission or advocacy of deliberate acts of deadly violence directed randomly at the innocent.”⁴⁰ Following this definition, he alleges that Adams, Goodman, and Sellars are terrorists because they are advocates of the Palestinians’ actions. Adams, however, responds that, “terrorism is evil and everyone who experiences it suffers immeasurably. But there are reasons why a terrorist behaves the way he or she does, and we would be foolish and self-deluding not

³⁵ Gilman, “Strauss and the Pervert,” 200.

³⁶ Taruskin wrote a scathing attack on *Klinghoffer* for the *New York Times* to which Fink’s article in the *Cambridge Opera Journal* is a response.

³⁷ Adams, *Hallelujah Junction*, 167.

³⁸ Taruskin, “The Danger of Music and the Case for Control,” 171.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 172.

to ask why."⁴¹

Taruskin's terrorism definition could easily be applied to the Palestinian point of view – through Palestinian eyes, they were innocent when the Jewish people massacred their villages and forced many into refugee camps. Taruskin's definition, therefore, actually lends credence to the ambiguity of who is the "terrorist" and who is the "terrorized" in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; it also exposes Taruskin's Zionist position. In calling for censorship of a work that attempts to offer context to both Palestinian and Jewish narratives, Taruskin hinders the possibility for a de-marginalization of both Palestinians and Muslims in favor of political circumstances in which Jews and Palestinians live in moral absolutes – the Jews as the "terrorized" and the Palestinians as the "terrorists."

Kayla Epstein, an Orthodox Jew and engagement editor for *The Guardian*, does not ignore the anti-Semitic sentiments expressed in *Klinghoffer*, but still encourages fellow Jews to attend the opera. She asserts that most people who view *Klinghoffer* as anti-Semitic have not seen the opera, but have merely subscribed to the views of countless reviews and highly-publicized figures such as Taruskin or Rabbi Abraham Cooper, who condemned Edinburgh's 2005 production: "I would hope the people [...] would respond appropriately by allowing these moral midgets to do their opera to an empty house."⁴² He later admitted to a BBC interviewer that he had never actually seen the opera.⁴³ Epstein acknowledges that Rambo, the most violent of the hijackers, is

⁴¹ Peter Culshaw, "Why I Gave Terrorists A Voice," *The Telegraph*, January 10, 2002, accessed December 6, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/classicalmusic/3571564/Why-I-gave-terrorists-a-voice.html>.

⁴² Adams, *Hallelujah Junction*, 165.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

indeed incredibly anti-Semitic when he exclaims, “America is one big Jew,” but Epstein also notes that the “shrill, frenzied music” that accompanies this line classifies him as a villain, not the moral compass of the opera. She asserts that both sides are presented equally, but Jewish people truly get the last word in Marilyn Klinghoffer's heart-breaking closing aria: “They should have killed me. I wanted to die.” This final line, “lays bare the suffering and anguish that terrorism and anti-Semitism has wrought.”⁴⁴ Finally, Epstein finds that the protests are perpetuating more ignorance; they are not encouraging people to think for themselves. She believes the opera should make one uncomfortable in forcing one to listen to views to which one would not ordinarily listen. In the words of the Captain, *Klinghoffer's* moral compass: “If you think you should talk like this, sitting among your enemies, peace would come.”⁴⁵

Moustafa Bayoumi, a professor and outspoken advocate of Arab-American rights, attended the Metropolitan Opera's production of *Klinghoffer* in 2014. He agrees that Rambo expresses most of the anti-Semitic views in the opera, but his anti-Semitism is proof of his depravity, not evidence of an overlying theme of anti-Semitism. He disagrees that the opera is skewed toward the hijackers, and along with Epstein, references Marilyn Klinghoffer's final aria. Furthermore, Bayoumi disagrees that *Klinghoffer* attempts to rationalize or romanticize terrorism; he, instead, is critical of the hijackers' lack of depth asserting that, “this production is still firmly ensconced in a theatrical tableau of dark-skinned men with guns terrorizing innocent whites.”⁴⁶

He acknowledges that Adams attempts to set the opera symmetrically with its

⁴⁴ Bayoumi, et. al., “We Took Four New Yorkers to *The Death of Klinghoffer*: What Was Their Verdict?”

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

opening choruses of exiled Palestinians and Jews, but claims Adams does not ultimately treat Palestinian issues with the same evenhandedness. The Palestinian Liberation Front, the group that hijacked the *Achille Lauro*, was a Marxist-Leninist faction, not a Muslim group. This group broke off of the Marxist-Leninist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, which was led by Christian Palestinian George Habash. The presence of Christian or Marxist Palestinians is notably absent in *Klinghoffer*. Bayoumi concludes that Adams and Goodman left out these details to dramatize a timeless religious battle between Muslims and Jews; however, the Palestine-Israel issue is over both territory and religion.⁴⁷ In his review, Bayoumi claims that Adams and Goodman substituted parts of the Palestinian narrative to augment the romanticism of *Klinghoffer*. In doing so, Adams, whether intentionally or not, further marginalized Palestinians as extremists.⁴⁸

Evidence for Bayoumi's assertion that *Klinghoffer* only concerns itself with Muslim Palestinians is found in Act II, when Leon Klinghoffer and Rambo use each other as scapegoats in their respective musical diatribes: "I've never been a violent man" and "You are always complaining of your suffering." Leon Klinghoffer, accompanied by powerful brass, explains to Rambo that he has never been a violent man, but he then displaces Muslim extremist stereotypes onto Rambo – equating him with the group "who shot that little girl in Rome," those who laugh at "old men at the Wailing Wall [who] get a knife in the back," and asserting that he would "pour gasoline over women passengers on the bus to Tel Aviv and burn them alive."⁴⁹ Leon Klinghoffer departs from his minimal, tonal, and syllabic style and adopts this style when uttering his Islamophobic lines. Up

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ain, "Rhetoric Rising as 'Klinghoffer' Opera Nears."

⁴⁹ Adams and Goodman, *The Death of Klinghoffer*, 131-136.

until this point in the opera, Klinghoffer was mostly silent, only speaking to dote on his wife. Such powerful writing is typically reserved for Rambo, but Leon Klinghoffer briefly adopts Rambo’s style when expressing his hatred. Adams notes that Klinghoffer, “voices both the indignant rage of an innocent hostage as well as letting slip some of the typical condescension that Americans, Jews, and Christians alike, hold about Arabs and Palestinians.”⁵⁰ This sudden change of language and musical style on Klinghoffer’s part showcases Islamophobia’s ubiquity – in Klinghoffer’s Islamophobia, the audience members see their own.

The image displays a musical score for a vocal performance. It consists of five systems, each with a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are as follows:

- System 1: Was it your pal who shot that lit-tle girl
- System 2: at the air-port in Rome? You would have done the same.
- System 3: There's so much
- System 4: an-ger in you. And hate.
- System 5: I know how chil-dren in the

The piano accompaniment features a dense, rhythmic texture with many sixteenth notes, creating a sense of urgency and anger. The vocal line is marked with a forte dynamic and includes some melisma.

Figure 1. Leon Klinghoffer addressing Rambo: Adams, *Klinghoffer*, “I’ve never been a violent man,” mm. 202-210.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Adams, *Hallelujah Junction*, 160.

⁵¹ Adams and Goodman, *The Death of Klinghoffer*, 134.

In response, Rambo displaces multiple Jewish stereotypes onto Leon Klinghoffer. The low timbres and heavy percussion give Rambo an evil, primal quality. Rambo asserts that, “wherever poor men are gathered you can find Jews getting fat” and that, “America is one big Jew.”⁵² A monosyllabic male chorus accompanies his anti-Semitic diatribe, chanting “yuh!” or ordering Leon Klinghoffer to kneel and beg for his life.⁵³ This is the precise language that *Klinghoffer*’s protestors use to characterize the opera as anti-Semitic. However, there was no Islamophobic outrage concerning Leon Klinghoffer’s arguably Islamophobic language.

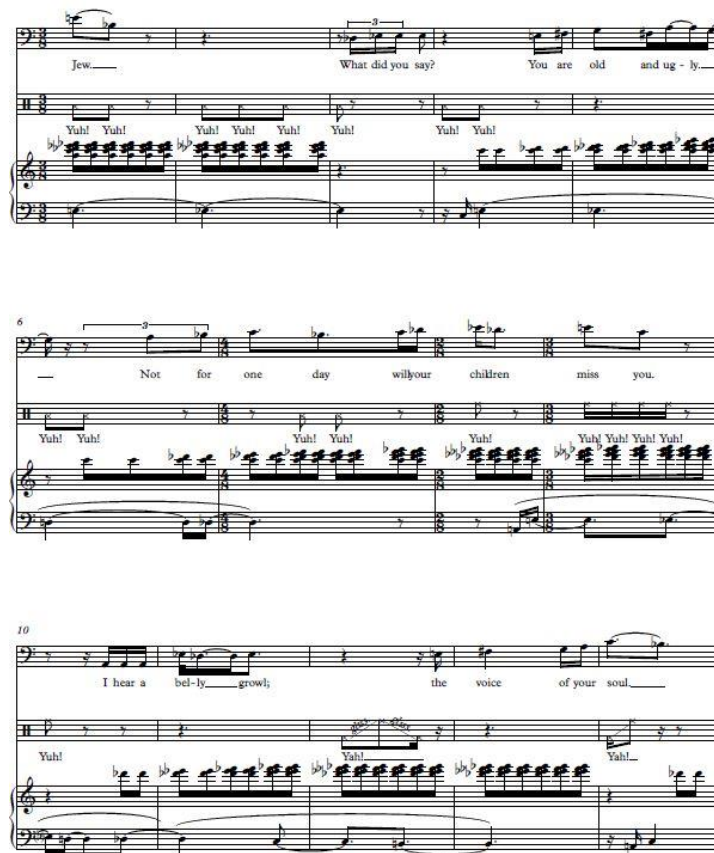


Figure 2. Rambo addressing Leon Klinghoffer: Adams, *The Klinghoffer*, “You are always complaining of your suffering,” mm. 303-316.⁵⁴

⁵² Ibid., 139-141.

⁵³ Ibid., 141.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

In stark contrast, Leon Klinghoffer immediately returns to his home style after Rambo's diatribe. The cacophony of a "mean saxophone," percussion, and synthesizers are slowly replaced with lush strings. His only concern is for his wife, Marilyn: "I'll get a man to wheel me below. One less thing for you to worry about."⁵⁵

In writing the text for these contrasting musical diatribes for Leon Klinghoffer and Rambo, Goodman states that she employed a rhetorical technique from the Elizabethan grammar school in which the students would present both sides of a case "as fully and forcibly as you could."⁵⁶ It is clear from context, Goodman claims, that Rambo is a "thug."⁵⁷ Adams refers to Rambo as the "loudmouth bully terrorist" and agrees that his words are "disgusting" – yet, he suggests that Rambo's lyrics express "precisely how so many hopeless and disenfranchised poor in the Middle East feel about us."⁵⁸

Bayoumi found Islamophobia in *Klinghoffer* not in the language, but with Adams's treatment of the Palestinians as primal, extremist Muslims. This oversimplifies the Palestinian narrative. Audiences, however, did not find this Islamophobia because this treatment of Palestinians, as Edward Said points out, matches up perfectly with their stereotypes.

Said⁵⁹ attended *Klinghoffer* in 1991, and admitted that he was "greatly disturbed" at the prospect of an opera on such a topic. Due to Israeli propaganda and the "criminal idiocy" of a small number of Palestinians, many Americans tend to apply the terrorist

⁵⁵ Ibid.,148-9.

⁵⁶ Christiansen, "Breaking Taboos (Portrait of Alice Goodman)," 256.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Adams, *Hallelujah Junction*, 158.

⁵⁹ Edward Said was a distinguished Palestinian-American literary critic and public intellectual who championed for the rights of Palestinians. He was born in Israel in 1935, thus, the history of the Jewish-Palestinian debate was highly personal to him.

image to Palestinians as a whole; Said worried that an opera on this topic would deepen Islamophobic sentiments.⁶⁰ He saw the opera, however, because he was interested to see if Sellars, Adams, and Goodman could shed new light on a centuries-old conflict.⁶¹

Said responded to Sokolov's claim that the opera is unevenly handled in *The Wall Street Journal*:

Obviously we are meant to conclude that the Klinghoffers were trivial suburbanites, sheltered from want and danger, while his assassins were acting out the righteous anger of their oppressed brethren. A truly even-handed treatment would have included a scene of wealthy robed Saudis in a gaudy palace in the desert, nattering on about their latest limo or Learjet.⁶²

Said argues that the assumption that the opera diminishes the Jewish perspective is “a lapse into automatic thinking.”⁶³ The opera does not attempt to excuse the violence of Klinghoffer's death, but seeks to provide a historical framework for the Jewish-Palestinian conflict in the present day.

Said admits that, in comparison to the portrayal of middle-class American Jews, the inherent drama of the Palestinian tragedy does dominate the senseless killing of Leon Klinghoffer. Said also notes, however, that *Klinghoffer* is unique in portraying the Palestinians as “tragically aggrieved” dramatic characters.⁶⁴

In claiming *Klinghoffer* is anti-Semitic due to its interpretation of Palestinian and Jewish issues, Taruskin's call for and support of its censorship effectively force Islamic issues out of the public conversation. Adams's oversimplification of the Palestinian narrative further marginalizes Palestinians as Muslims. As Bayoumi points out, the

⁶⁰ Said, *Music at the Limits* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2008), 135.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Raymond Sokolov, “Adamsweek: *Klinghoffer* Dies Again,” *Wall Street Journal*, September 18, 1991, accessed March 10, 2016.

⁶³ Said, *Music at the Limits*, 135.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 136.

situation is more complex. The Christian element of the Palestinian narrative is eliminated in order to provide a more obvious parallel between the Jewish/Israeli community and the Muslim/Palestinian community. Finally, the lack of audience or critical reaction to Leon Klinghoffer's Islamophobic remarks is telling. Muslims are outsiders, looking in on a society that only sees their religion; the only place in which they can find camaraderie is with other Muslims. Although this is primarily benign and characteristic of many first-generation immigrant ethnic groups, ostensibly forcing Muslims into a homogenous underground enhances the likelihood of the formation of groups such as the Palestinian Liberation Front or even ISIS. When non-Muslim countries vilify all Muslims for the actions of a few to the point where they feel isolated and unwelcome, it greatly increases the attractions of an extremist group and can result in an increase of innocent casualties. As shown in some of the responses to *The Death of Klinghoffer*, Islamophobia can be a roadblock in developing a more diverse social discourse. The next chapter will show that marginalizing any culture, including the Jewish diaspora, also creates a roadblock to developing more diverse discourse.

CHAPTER II

REPRESENTATION OF THE JEWISH DIASPORA IN THE “ARIA OF THE FALLING BODY”

Introduction and Methodology

The music and lyrics in the “Aria of the Falling Body” are highly repetitive, a quality that Caroline Potter identifies as a key component of Erik Satie’s furniture music, arguing that this aspect gives the music a mechanical feel.⁶⁵ One would not have to pay attention to the pieces that fall under furniture music because they are based on a small amount of musical material that is often reiterated and rarely varied – the music works as a “repeating loop,” or a cog in machinery.⁶⁶ In writing the “Aria of the Falling Body” as a piece of furniture music, a piece that does not demand attention, John Adams and Alice Goodman are providing ironic commentary. Society, represented by the orchestral accompaniment and lyrics, has largely ignored the tragedy of diasporic Jews because they were told, as shown in the lyrics, not to demand attention.

Adams modeled the “Aria of the Falling Body” after furniture music in order to force the listener to focus on the mistreatment of diasporic Jews and Leon Klinghoffer’s death rather than the music itself. The lyrics themselves also play a role in defining this aria as furniture music. The lyrics are emotionally objective, but they place emphasis on the other-worldly and the intangible. In part, the lyrics encourage the listener to focus on the soul because the body is inconsequential. This is shown in the lyrics: “nothing is lost,

⁶⁵ Caroline Potter, *Erik Satie: A Parisian Composer and his World* (Suffolk, UK: Boydell and Brewer, 2016), 138.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

but the sea level has risen fast against the sea wall.”⁶⁷ The rising sea level indicates the presence of Leon Klinghoffer’s body in the ocean, but the body is disposable. The aria goes on to describe, matter-of-factly, the migration of Jewish refugees. It details their belongings that were lost, stolen, or damaged, but they were told to leave their homeland “empty-handed, but not hurriedly, they were minded to go far away.”⁶⁸ The Jewish refugees were not in a position to take action, “and so decay followed defection.”⁶⁹ Following in the footsteps of Satie, Goodman uses irony to expose the circumstances of Jewish refugees. Through use of irony, Adams also intended to portray Leon Klinghoffer as a scapegoat for the Palestinian hijackers.⁷⁰

At the same time, in the “Aria of the Falling Body,” Adams also alludes to the opera aria – thereby creating a dichotomy between the lyrical vocal line and the highly repetitive orchestral accompaniment in order to illustrate an analogy between diasporic Jews and the community. The aria is also in ABA’ prime form, alluding to the da capo form found in many opera arias.

Adams alluded to both Satie’s furniture music and to the opera aria in order to provide ironic commentary on the current state of the Jewish diaspora. To illustrate the similarities between Satie’s *Trois Gymnopédies* and the “Aria of the Falling Body,” I provide a contextual background and a comparative analysis in order to demonstrate Satie’s influence. To illustrate Adams’s allusion to the opera aria, I provide a stylistic analysis of the “Aria of the Falling Body.” I also discuss the role of irony in the “Aria of

⁶⁷ John Adams and Alice Goodman, *The Death of Klinghoffer: An Opera in Two Acts with Prologue*, vocal score (London, UK: Boosey & Hawkes, 1994), 207.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ John Adams, *Hallelujah Junction: Composing an American Life* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), 155.

the Falling Body” both as an allusion to Satie and as social commentary on the current state of the Jewish diaspora.

Adams’s use of furniture music styles to represent societal commentary on the plight of the diasporic Jews is made explicit through his direct allusions to the work of Satie. The “Aria of the Falling Body” is subtitled “Gymnopédie,” which offers a clear allusion to Satie’s *Trois Gymnopédies* (1888-1895).⁷¹ Adams confirms the allusion to Satie in a 1996 interview, stating that the “Aria of the Falling Body” was a conscious implementation of some of Satie’s compositional techniques in order to give the piece a “lilting” and “melancholy” feeling.⁷²

The Greek *gymnopaedia*, off of which the *Gymnopédies* are based, placed an emphasis on non-violence that captured the aesthetic of Leon Klinghoffer’s scapegoat character.⁷³ The *gymnopaedia*, according to the *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, was “the festival of naked youths, was celebrated at Sparta every year ... Spartan youths performed their choruses and dances in honor of Apollo.”⁷⁴ Eric Frederick Jensen points out, however, that although the Greek root *gymno* means

⁷¹ The first and third *Gymnopédies* were published in 1888. The second was not published until 1895.

⁷² Sarah Cahill, “*Century Rolls* (1996),” in *The John Adams Reader*, ed. Thomas May (Pompton Plains, NJ: Amadeus Press, 2006), 161.

⁷³ The *gymnopaedia* also denotes a focus on the body, which is present in the “Aria of the Falling Body.” When viewed through the lens of the Symbolist movement, with which Satie was involved, it becomes clear that the focus on the body is ironic. Jensen argues that Satie may have been fixated on the *gymnopaedia* because it was still an obscure topic even to ancient Greek experts in the nineteenth century. When he was composing the *Gymnopédies*, Satie was a strong follower of the Symbolist movement. The Symbolists had a penchant for the obscure and used obscure topics in their creative outputs in order to, in their minds, hone their own understanding of the topic and to further obscure the topic for their audiences. Symbolists also wrote from the point of view of the detached observer, rendering their creative outputs inherently emotionally objective. See Eric Frederick Jensen, “Satie and the ‘Gymnopédie,’” *Music and Letters* 75, no. 2 (May 1994), 236-237.

⁷⁴ William Smith, *A Smaller Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities: Abridged from the Larger Dictionary* (London, UK: J. Murray, 1868), 198.

“naked,” it can also mean “unarmed.”⁷⁵ Through examining more contemporary accounts of the *gymnopaedia* such as Athenaeus’s *The Deipnosophists*⁷⁶, Jensen also points out that both men and boys participated in the *gymnopaedia* and it was meant to celebrate a war victory with dancing and music without the weight of weapons.⁷⁷

Adams’s conceptualization of a *gymnopaedia* reflects on the sacrifice that Leon Klinghoffer made for the safety of the other passengers on board. When discussing his presentation and characterization of Leon Klinghoffer, Adams speculated as to why Klinghoffer was singled out by the Palestinian hijackers and was the only fatality of the hijacking – stating that he served as an innocent scapegoat figure, in part, because he was helpless and unarmed:

⁷⁵ There is also a reference to Greek culture other than the *gymnopaedia* and an emphasis on “whiteness” in Satie’s own writings and in Gustave Flaubert’s 1862 novel *Salammô*, the source that Satie identified as his inspiration for the *Gymnopédies*. The concept of “whiteness,” as Potter reveals, makes a reference to Greek culture, the topic of this novel. *Salammô* reveals an emphasis on “whiteness” that likely influenced Satie: it describes the “white tufts of the cotton-trees,” and an “ebony staircase.” Greek statues, made of marble or agate are pale and range between white and beige. Flaubert references ancient Greek art in *Salammô*: “the yellow-veined Numidian marble.” See Gustave Flaubert, *Salammô*, trans. E. Powys Mathers (New York, NY: Rarity Press, Inc., 1932), 2. To illustrate Satie’s fixation on ancient Greek art, Potter describes the very statues that may have influenced Satie: “the finest ancient cameos are carved from a single agate block, often a carved relief portrait against a background, revealing the contrasting colours of the naturally striped rock.” This suggested to Satie a connection among ancient Greek art, static poses, and musical repetition or quasi-repetition. Potter argues that Satie’s concept of “whiteness” denotes an association with furniture music. “Whiteness” is used figuratively to denote a blank canvas or backdrop – “whiteness” is unobtrusive. Potter, *Erik Satie: A Parisian Composer and His World*, 146. In his *Memoirs of an Amnesiac*, Satie discusses his obsession with whiteness, albeit with stark irony. He eats “only white foodstuffs” and wears “a white bonnet, white stockings and a white waistcoat.” This predisposition to “whiteness” is in stark contrast to Romantic maximalization, or darkness – “whiteness” encourages simplicity and clarity. Because of the color white’s association with purity and innocence, “whiteness” can also be understood as an analogy of Klinghoffer’s innocence in the case of the “Aria of the Falling Body.” Based on the various insights and definitions provided by Potter, my definition of furniture music is music that takes the ideals of repetition, cyclicity, simplicity, and emotional objectivity to such extremes that it becomes mere atmospheric accompaniment rather than a focal point. See Erik Satie, “Memoirs of an Amnesiac,” in *The Writings of Erik Satie*, ed. and trans. by Nigel Wilkins (London, UK: Ernst Eulenburg, Ltd., 1980), 58-59.

⁷⁶ Athenaeus was a late second and early third century Greek writer and rhetorician. He wrote *The Deipnosophistae* (which translates to dinner-table philosophers) in the early third century. It is a multi-volume work set in Rome in which the protagonist discusses a series of references from literature and history for a gathering of musicians, philosophers, and others.

⁷⁷ Jensen, “Satie and the ‘Gymnopédie,’ 236-237.

I would not go so far as to compare my Leon Klinghoffer with Bach's Jesus, but I did think that Klinghoffer's murder was carried out not because of who he was as an individual but rather because of what he represented to his killers: a bourgeois American and a Jew. Nevertheless, one had to wonder why, of all the passengers on the ship, this seventy-year-old man in a wheelchair was the one chosen to be sacrificed. Had Klinghoffer, possibly believing his handicap would protect him from violence, spoken his mind too openly to his abductors, saying something that the other passengers might not have dared articulate?⁷⁸

Because Leon Klinghoffer was nonviolent, he was an easy target for striking fear in a subset of people. In the case of Leon Klinghoffer's death, the subset of people that were targeted by the hijackers were diasporic Jews, represented by the passengers on board the *Achille Lauro*.

Leon Klinghoffer's nonviolence, Jewish heritage, and role as a scapegoat for the Palestinian hijackers could be why, Adams notes, Leon Klinghoffer is often compared to Bach's Jesus.⁷⁹ In order to musically portray Leon Klinghoffer as a scapegoat, Adams alludes to Bach's *Passions* by using high strings when writing for Leon Klinghoffer.⁸⁰ Critics such as Richard Taruskin, however, have criticized *Klinghoffer* as anti-Semitic due to this exact portrayal of Leon Klinghoffer.⁸¹ Taruskin claims that the grandiose musical writing for the hijackers was not enough of a contrast from Leon Klinghoffer for him to be considered a scapegoat: "the portrayal of suffering Palestinians in the musical language of myth and ritual was immediately juxtaposed with a musically trivial portrayal of contented, materialistic American Jews."⁸²

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ A discussion of Adams's allusions to the Bach *Passions* and Leon Klinghoffer's role as a scapegoat figure is found in the following chapter.

⁸¹ Richard Taruskin, "The Danger of Music and the Case for Control," in *The Danger of Music: And Other Anti-Utopian Essays* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 172-173.

⁸² Ibid., 172.

Moreover, the theme of the human body, so closely associated with the *gymnopaedia* and with Jesus's sacrifice, comes into play here, too. During this aria, Leon Klinghoffer's body soliloquizes about its fate after the hijackers kill him and throw him overboard. Taruskin claims: "Only after death does the familiar American middle-class Jew join the glamorously exotic Palestinians in mythic timelessness. Only as his body falls lifeless is his music exalted to a comparably romanticized spiritual dimension."⁸³

In the "Aria of the Falling Body," the lyrics are written from the viewpoint of the detached observer because the focus on the body rather than Leon Klinghoffer's soul indicates a sense of detachment. This detachment is ironic commentary on the detachment of society from the diasporic Jews. Society is detachedly observing the diasporic Jewish culture, which it does not fully understand. Following on Jensen's definition of the Greek *gymnopaedia*, Leon Klinghoffer went unarmed into a battle that was not his own. Rather than a festival of dancing that relishes in the glory of a battle won, the "Aria of the Falling Body" is instead a reflection on Leon Klinghoffer's sacrifice and selflessness when standing up to the Palestinian hijackers.

A May the Lord God and His creation be magnified
Be magnified in dissolution
Nothing is lost
But the sea level has risen fast against the sea wall

B After the war in this part of town, good furniture exposed to the rain
Buckled and warped
Malachite and brass were quickly stripped
And inlays worked loose
Locked bureau drawers had their locks broken
The souvenirs which would be taken
Fetched not a cent
As for the papers, no instrument could find the sleepers
Whose things these were
None of the damage, water nor fire nor any outrage

⁸³ Ibid., 173.

Reported there came to their notice
As if secure in the Lord's justice
Empty-handed but not hurriedly
They were minded to go far away

A' Empty-handed but not hurriedly
They were minded to go far away
To go away, not to take action
To go away, not to take action
And so decay followed defection
Study the laws they celebrated knowing this house
The living and the dead

Figure 3. The lyrics of the "Aria of the Falling Body," from Adams's *Klinghoffer* separated into ABA'.⁸⁴

Comparative Analysis

Adams makes the musical connection to Satie explicit through harmonic simplicity. In his first *Gymnopédie*, for instance, Satie alternates between subdominant and dominant with a clear tonal center on D major due to both the triads in the right hand and the descending fourth relationship in the left hand. Major seventh chords provide mild dissonances, and there are periodic splashes of color to the seventh chords, indicated by the #11 in the seventh measure (Fig. 4a). These repeated seventh chords provide both the repetition and cyclicity needed for a piece to function as background or furniture music. Both the rhythmic and harmonic structures are simple and emotional objectivity is achieved through a lack of color in the harmony and a lack of drive in the rhythm. Although they increase in complexity, the second and third *Gymnopédies* (Fig. 5) operate much like the first. The second primarily oscillates between an E minor triad over a G pedal and a D minor seventh chord. The third primarily oscillates between an A minor triad and an E minor seventh chord over a D pedal. The third *Gymnopédie* (Fig. 5b) is

⁸⁴ Adams and Goodman, *The Death of Klinghoffer*, 207-213.

the most complex and colorful of the three, primarily due to its inclusion of modal mixture. Rather than the subdominant-tonic relationship present in the first two *Gymnopédies*, the third *Gymnopédie* oscillates between a tonic-modal dominant relationship due to the greater emphasis on the A tonal center than the E tonal center. In the first four measures, the A minor triad is in root position, whereas the root of the E minor seventh is more ambiguous to the listener not only because the seventh is in the bass, but also because the seventh is heard before the triad. Additionally, the A is in the bass for the E diminished seventh chord and for the B-flat sixth chord. This suggests a return to A rather than E despite E being the root of the diminished seventh chord. This nebulous sense of the tonic is also present in the “Aria of the Falling Body.”

Because the *Gymnopédies* become increasingly colorful between the first and the third, Adams most likely based his G tonal center and static bass on the first two *Gymnopédies* and based his harmonic structures on the final *Gymnopédie*. Adams’s allusions to the first *Gymnopédie* in the “Aria of the Falling Body” (Fig. 4b) provide distinctly more harmonic color than the original, but still maintains its emotional objectivity and rhythmic stasis. Adams uses G minor as his tonal center, indicated by the pedal point in the bass and the descending fourth and ascending fifth relationship also present in the bass. While Adams’s rendition lacks the IV-I relationship, the subdominant-tonic relationship is still present when the ii is understood as a subdominant function and the VI is understood as the relative major. The harmony is also primarily built off of seventh chords, but the inclusion of minor triads, suspensions, and added tones to these seventh chords provides color. Although there is not a rhythmic drive, there is an offset of the harmonic rhythm that adds more interest than the original. The

emphasis on G (as the subdominant in the first *Gymnopédie* and as the pedal for E minor in the second *Gymnopédie*) in both the first and second *Gymnopédies*, Adams chose G minor as the tonic for the “Aria of the Falling Body” as an homage to the first two *Gymnopédies*.

The image shows two musical staves, labeled 'a' and 'b', representing the first seven measures of Satie's second and third *Gymnopédies* respectively. Both are in 3/4 time. Staff 'a' has a treble clef and a bass clef. Above the treble staff, chords are labeled: Em/G, Dm7, Em/G, Dm7, Em/G, Dm11, Dm7, G13(omit5), Em/G. Below the bass staff, chords are labeled: Am, Em7, Am, Em7, Am7, G13/D, Em7, E°/A, Bb6/A. Staff 'b' has a treble clef and a bass clef. Above the treble staff, chords are labeled: i, v, i, v, i, VII, i, bNF, bII. Below the bass staff, chords are labeled: Am, Em7, Am, Em7, Am7, G13/D, Em7, E°/A, Bb6/A.

Figure 5. The first seven measures of Satie’s second *Gymnopédie* (a) and Satie’s third *Gymnopédie* (b) with harmonic and chordal analysis.⁸⁶

At first glance, the third *Gymnopédie* seems dissimilar to the “Aria of the Falling Body.” However, in terms of harmonic color, it is the most similar to the “Aria of the Falling Body.” The “Aria of the Falling Body” contains late-twentieth-century color with added fourths, elevenths, thirteenth and suspensions that are absent in Satie’s more austere, intentionally simplistic, early-twentieth-century language. The third *Gymnopédie* is the only one that has a diminished seventh chord and a sixth chord, which, rather than truly being a triad in first inversion, is borrowed from the jazz idiom, which contains a major triad with an added major sixth above the root. The inclusion of a chord from the jazz idiom suggests that Satie included more color in his final *Gymnopédie*. Adams also uses jazz-influenced harmonies in the “Aria of the Falling

⁸⁶ Satie, *Trois Gymnopédies*, 5, 8.

Body” in the form of added fourths, sharped elevenths, and other altered chords typically reserved for jazz.⁸⁷

The orchestral music is, thus, emotionally objective and reveals the indifference that the community showed toward these diasporic Jews. The music is rhythmically repetitive, which, like the *Gymnopédies*, creates a sense of cyclicity because it is unclear when musical phrases begin and end. The music is simple both in its rhythmic and harmonic content with a primarily static bass line under seventh chords. To add color and a distinctly twentieth-century sound, Adams alters the seventh chords with suspensions or added tones. The melody is a simple, melancholic line with mild dissonances against the bass. Lastly, the emphasis on the body over the person indicates a strong degree of emotional objectivity.

Goodman also employs another technique common to Satie – irony. Satie believed that irony was a high art form akin to philosophy, as expressed in an article he wrote for the *L’Oeil de Veau* in 1912. As is typical of Satie, his praise of irony is hidden behind a curtain of irony: “Proof: It thus appears, on the delightful summits of Reason, that Joking is only an inferior Art which should not be taught, which can never aspire for glory, whatever one’s aim.”⁸⁸ Similar to Satie’s assessment of irony, Goodman’s lyrics, on the surface, trivialize the Jewish emigration out of their home countries before and

⁸⁷ There is a closer comparison between the “Aria of the Falling Body” and the second and third *Gymnopédies* (Fig. 5) than there is between the “Aria of the Falling Body” and the first *Gymnopédie*. In the second, there is still a subdominant sound between i and vii due to the descending fourth in the bass, although it is not technically a subdominant relationship. However, this *Gymnopédie* has distinctly more color than the first. It oscillates around a minor seventh chord instead of a major seventh chord and uses the melodic line to include 11ths and 13ths. The 13th chord in measure seven operates as a colorful preparation for the tonic, as III can often be heard as the tonic.

⁸⁸ Erik Satie, “Proper Observation,” in *The Writings of Erik Satie*, ed. and trans. by Nigel Wilkins (London: Ernst Eulenburg, Ltd., 1980), 78.

during World War II through focusing on material possessions lost, damaged, or stolen. Her lyrics illustrate that the possessions, livelihoods, and social history of the Jewish diaspora have been viewed as unimportant.

“Aria of the Falling Body” Analysis

The lyrical line of the “Aria of the Falling Body,” expresses the tragedies suffered by Jewish immigrants during and after World War II. Viewed through an ironic lens, the music and lyrics of the aria are intended as a reminder of how Jewish immigrants were and still are treated through focusing specifically on Leon Klinghoffer’s death, and, more broadly, on the displacement of Jews during World War II. Adams keeps the music simple in order to force the audience to focus on the tragedy rather than the music itself.

Adams’s choice of an aria and the style in which Leon Klinghoffer’s body performs the aria is also ironic. None of the other pieces in the opera are named after any type of genre – their names, as is typical in opera, are the first few words of the song. Only the “Aria of the Falling Body” is named after a genre. The aria as a genre is supposed to be an emotionally subjective piece, intended for a character to express strong, unfiltered emotion. The lyrics and accompaniment in arias, therefore, are typically as emotionally subjective as the lyrical line itself. In the case of the “Aria of the Falling Body,” only the lyrical line itself is emotionally subjective.

Because the “Aria of the Falling Body” is in ABA’ form, it alludes to a traditional aria’s da capo form. The lyrical line in the first A section (Fig. 3) of the “Aria of the Falling Body” is in G minor. It contains soft dissonances such as tritones and minor seconds that create the lilting, melancholy quality for which Adams was searching. That same minor second interval introduces the framing device for both of the A sections in

the aria – the descending line in the oboe. This line introduces the end of the first A section and the beginning of the second A section. The B section begins in G minor before wandering in modal ambiguity rather than modulating to any identifiable key areas. The B section has an overall phrygian sound due to an emphasis on major and minor seconds. The only fifth relationships in the B section are between G and D, indicating that this aria is still largely intended to be in G minor. This section also contains several tritones, echoing the first A section. The overall nebulous tonality of this section echoes the lyrics – they discuss displacement and mass emigration (Fig. 3). The loss of a distinct tonal center echoes the losses of the Jewish community. The A' section and final section of the aria returns with a G tonal center, but is in G harmonic minor rather than G natural minor. Leon Klinghoffer's melodic line ends on a G major seventh chord (Fig. 6).

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system shows the Baritone vocal line and the Piano accompaniment. The Baritone line has the lyrics "Stud-y the laws they cel-e-brat-ed". The Piano part features a complex accompaniment with many accidentals. The second system shows the Baritone vocal line and the Piano accompaniment. The Baritone line has the lyrics "know-ing this house_ the liv-ing_ and dead". The Piano part includes a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure of the system.

Figure 6. The last five measures of Adams's "Aria of the Falling Body" indicating G harmonic minor and Leon Klinghoffer's G major seventh chord, mm. 81-85.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Adams and Goodman, *The Death of Klinghoffer*, 212-213.

Conclusion

By modeling the “Aria of the Falling Body” after Satie’s *Gymnopédies*, and da capo aria form, Adams seems to draw the listener’s attention toward the senseless tragedy of Leon Klinghoffer’s death and, more broadly, the emotional state of Jewish people when they were forced to emigrate out of their home countries. The simplistic, cyclic, repetitious, and emotionally objective music coupled with Goodman’s lyrics that, on the surface, trivialize all that was lost during the Jewish emigration out of their home countries, actually provides a dark commentary on how society has largely forgotten about the tragic past of the Jewish community and Leon Klinghoffer’s sacrifice for the safety of his fellow passengers.

CHAPER III

RELIGIOUS RIVALRIES IN THE “CHORUS OF EXILED PALESTINIANS” AND THE “CHORUS OF EXILED JEWS”

The Death of Klinghoffer has frequently been criticized as anti-Semitic, primarily due to its libretto. In his essay for *The New York Times*, Richard Taruskin criticizes the music as anti-Semitic as well, partly due to Adams’s allusion to J.S. Bach’s *Passions* – works that also have been criticized for being anti-Semitic. Taruskin implies that, while attempting to portray the eponymous Leon Klinghoffer as a scapegoat, Adams sympathizes instead with the Palestinians, due to the symphonic grandeur with which he frames them.⁹⁰ In his response to this essay, Robert Fink argues that Adams’s use of Bachian tools from the *Passions*, such as counterpoint and a strong sense of irony, frame Leon Klinghoffer as a savior. In both of their arguments, criticisms of the libretto and music are separated; this is also historically the case in analyses of Bach’s *Passions*. In his book on the *St. John Passion*, Michael Marissen argues that the *Passions* cannot truly be understood without analyzing the music and libretto together; I argue that the same is true for *Klinghoffer*. This chapter suggests that Adams creates, on the surface, a depiction of Judaism vs. Islam (or Israel vs. Palestine); however, I argue that Adams reveals the inherent nuance in religious disputes through his postmodern use of the aforementioned Bachian tools such as irony and counterpoint. Through an analysis and comparison of *Klinghoffer* and the *Passions*, this chapter seeks to show that Adams provides a commentary on the longevity of the damage caused by religious rivalries using Bach as a compositional model and a model for reconciliation.

⁹⁰ Richard Taruskin, “The Danger of Music and the Case for Control,” in *The Danger of Music: And Other Anti-Utopian Essays* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 171-173.

Although Bach was not in the initial opera plan, his *Passions* became central to the music and to the dramatic unfolding of the portrayal of religious rivalries in *Klinghoffer*, as Adams's attention shifted from politics to a more inclusive message about unity within and between religious communities. The initial structural plan conceived by both Adams and his team, Peter Sellars, director, and Alice Goodman, librettist, was three-fold: a prologue, a first act that would reenact Leon Klinghoffer's death, and a second and final act that would feature various politicians such as Margaret Thatcher, Oliver North, and Ronald Reagan attempting to capitalize on this tragedy. *Klinghoffer*, like its predecessor *Nixon in China*, was indeed originally intended to be a dark comedy.⁹¹

However, when Goodman provided Adams with the lyrics of the "Chorus of Exiled Palestinians" and the "Chorus of Exiled Jews," Adams felt that the choruses in the Bach *Passions* were the best models for this section of *Klinghoffer*. The "biblical" nature of Leon Klinghoffer's story forced *Klinghoffer* to take on a whole new dynamic.

But I found myself instantly drawn to the story [of Leon Klinghoffer], principally because the murder of this man, Leon Klinghoffer, possessed a strange, almost biblical feeling [...] The man's murder, played out against a background of impassioned claims of Jews and Palestinians alike, touched a nerve that went deep into the body politic of our lives as comfortable, self-satisfied Americans [...] The dramatic structure [of the choruses] reflected my initial impulse about the story. It was as up-to-date as this morning's news, yet it also was tethered to mythic moorings as old as recorded history. The mixture of reflective choruses and faster-paced narrative suggested the Bach *Passions*.⁹²

Adams's decision to allude to Bach's *Passions* is primarily a structural one. The choruses in the *Passions* are used as dramatic framing devices that define the different

⁹¹ John Adams, *Hallelujah Junction: Composing an American Life* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), 154.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 152-153, 155.

communities. Bach used Lutheran chorales to represent contemporary Christians, turbae choruses to represent the Jewish crowds, and contrapuntal choral fantasies to represent varying thoughts within one community. In alluding to Bach, Adams uses a patchwork of styles in his “Chorus of the Exiled Palestinians” and “Chorus of the Exiled Jews,” in order to musically illustrate these different communities.

However, due to the different methods by means of which Bach and Adams depict religious rivalries in their respective works, an allusion to one type of chorus, the Lutheran chorale, is noticeably absent in Adams’s choruses. Bach’s implementation of chorales for the Christians and turbae choruses for the Jewish crowds depicts a religious rivalry between the Christian and Jewish communities. Although both types of choruses are primarily homorhythmic and syllabic and express the thoughts of a community, the turbae choruses ostensibly represent the “other” in Bach’s *Passions* – the group that persecutes the savior. These choruses are often angry, less melodic and contain less symmetrical phrasing than the Lutheran chorales. In short, Bach’s representations of the Christian and Jewish communities are not balanced. Through representing the Christian and Jewish communities in these contrasting fashions, Bach makes it clear which community is the “victim” and which is the “victimizer.”

Adams, by contrast, alludes only to turbae-style choruses in his homorhythmic, syllabic passages rather than a mixture of turbae choruses and Lutheran chorales. This indicates that, in *Klinghoffer*, there is no “other” or only one “victimizer.” In contrast to Bach’s representation, Adams’s representation of the Jewish and Muslim communities is balanced.

Adams further alludes to Bach by sharing in and augmenting his narrative of a savior. In Bach's *Passions*, Jesus, himself a Jew, is a savior because he serves as a sacrificial lamb to save a group of people; in this narrative, especially clear in the Gospel of John, he is crucified by other members of the Jewish community. Adams, however, alters this narrative – Leon Klinghoffer, also a Jew, is crucified by Palestinians. His sacrifice facilitated the survival of the remaining crew and passengers on board. In this aspect of Adams's narrative, the Jewish community is the “victim” rather than the “victimizer.” This interpretation challenges the allegation that *Klinghoffer* is anti-Semitic and reveals Adams's structural connection to Bach's *Passions*. This interpretation also shows that the roles of “victim” or “victimizer” are tenuous at best and change frequently depending on the point of view. The *Passions*, primarily the *St. John*, depict a religious rivalry between the Jewish and Christian communities. *Klinghoffer* sets up a religious rivalry between the Jewish and Muslim communities.

Modeling *Klinghoffer's* lyrics and musical form after the Old Testament and the Quran also add a religious flavor to *Klinghoffer*.⁹³ Adams and Goodman both read the Old Testament and portions of the Quran in order to depict the religious rivalry at the beginning of the opera. The style of the Quran is reflected in the text and form of the “Chorus of Exiled Palestinians.” The Quran is nonlinear, and seems to have no beginning, middle, or end. This is largely due to the fact that the Quran is organized by verse length rather than by chronology. The Quran was also, according to tradition, revealed to the prophet

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 153.

Muhammad in piecemeal fashion. Therefore, the Quran reads more as a series of unrelated observations.⁹⁴

Because it is modeled after the Quran, the music and lyrics of the “Chorus of Exiled Palestinians” are nonlinear. The lyrics are presented from the point of view of a detached observer and seem to abruptly change topic between stanzas, creating a sense of nonlinearity and free association. For example, the text moves from discussing a village being razed to describing a tree that provides shade in hot weather. The lyrics also do not build up to an event as a linear text would. Beginning with discussing a house in the village being razed, the chorus goes on describe all of Israel being laid to waste, to paying to drink their own water, to seeking revenge against the Jewish community.

Correspondingly, the music unexpectedly shifts texture and voice type. The chorus begins with an SA voice pairing, followed by a soprano solo, followed by SATB which causes the chorus to sound without a default voice grouping. The brief melismatic and contrapuntal passage, sung only by the sopranos, is demarcated by its surrounding homorhythmic sections. Its immediate return back to syllabic homorhythms and SA voice pairing creates a sense of nonlinearity. Nonlinearity is also illustrated in the passage between a village being razed and describing a tree that provides shade, during which the music loses the tonic. The F tonic pedal presented at the beginning is eliminated and the F minor chords are replaced with F diminished chords. Because a diminished chord cannot operate as a tonic and is unstable due to its tritones, the passage itself is perceived as unstable. This chorus never regains stability – Adams shifts to several unrelated keys and never returns permanently to an F tonal center. His tonal centers are also often implied or

⁹⁴ Issa J. Boullata, "Literary Structures of the Qur'ān," from *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*. Jane Dammen McAuliffe, ed., (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University, Brill, 2008).

ambiguous – he implements several major-minor seventh chords. These chords can only function as V^7 chords, yet he does not provide or resolve to their corresponding tonics. Without a stable tonal center that is presented, developed, and returned to, it is more difficult to hear aural linearity. In addition, Adams eliminates the possibility of aural linearity through the use of quick and unprepared shifts between keys.

During the transition between the lyrics, “The doorstep had worn down” and “I see in my mind’s eye,” for instance, Adams’s abruptly shifts from an implied A tonal center (due to the E major-minor seventh chord) that, rather than resolving to the tonic, resolves to a chord with an ambiguous root (Fig. 7). Containing the pitches D-flat, F, A-flat, B, D-natural, and G, the chord could be understood as: a G major-minor seventh chord with an added flat ninth, a G major-minor seventh chord with a flatted fifth and an added flat ninth, or a bi-tonal chord containing a D-flat major triad and a G major triad. Due to the D/A-flat and G/D perfect fifths, it is difficult to discern which pitch is truly the tonic. The E major-minor seventh chord also does not resolve entirely. Although there are three shared pitches (G#/A-flat, B, and D) and the E resolves to an F, the D-flat at the base of the chord and the G at the top of the chord are added tones that obscure the resolution. By implementing both an implied tonal center and resolving to a tonally ambiguous chord with added tones, Adams creates aural nonlinearity.

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line (SA) and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in 4/8 time and has the lyrics: "The door-step had worn down: I". The piano accompaniment is in 4/8 time and features a red circle around the first four measures and a blue circle around the last four measures, highlighting a tonal shift from A major to G-flat major.

Figure 7. Abrupt shift between an implied A tonal center (red) and an ambiguous G/D-flat tonal center (blue): Adams, *Klinghoffer*, “Chorus of Exiled Palestinians,” mm. 44-47.⁹⁵

Although linearity can also be achieved through a texture or timbre that operates as a home base, Adams eliminates this possibility through constantly varying the number of musical phrases in each section. He also slowly moves away from the opening texture and voice pairing, but never returns. Starting with SA, Adams gradually increases the number of voices, the length of phrases, and rhythmic length and ends with SATB. Although he does eventually return to shorter, non-melismatic phrases from “Of that house, not a wall” to the end of the piece, the addition of male voices and elimination of legato in favor of staccato rhythms distinguishes the ending from the beginning. Table 1 illustrates each stanza and its lyrical and musical contrasts.

Stanza	Voices	Rhythmic/Textural Description	Phrasing	Key Area(s)
My father’s house was razed In nineteen-forty-eight When the Israelis passed Over our street.	SA	Homorhythmic, homophonic, syllabic, long phrases, legato, short-long rhythms, tonic pedal	3-4 measure phrases	F minor and D-flat major

⁹⁵ John Adams and Alice Goodman, *The Death of Klinghoffer: An Opera in Two Acts with Prologue*, Vocal Score (London: Boosey and Hawkes, 1991), 3.

The house was built of stone With a courtyard inside Where, on a hot day, one Could sit in shade	SA	Homorhythmic, homophonic, syllabic, long phrases, legato, short-long rhythms, elimination of tonic pedal	4-5 measure phrases	F diminished
Under a tree, and have A glass of something cool. Cool, cool, cool. Coolness rose like a wave From our pure well.	SA	Mostly homorhythmic, homophonic, and syllabic, with some melismas, long phrases, legato, short-long rhythms	5-6 measure phrases	F diminished, B-flat diminished
No one was turned away. (x2) The doorstep had worn down: I see in my mind's eye A crescent moon. Moon, moon	SA	Homorhythmic, homophonic, syllabic, short phrases, some melismas, legato, short-long rhythms	2-9 measure phrases	F minor/major, A major, B major, C minor
A crescent moon	S	Melismatic	2 measure phrase	G-flat major
I see in my mind's eye A crescent moon. (x2) The doorstep had worn down: I see in my mind's eye A crescent moon.	SA	Long phrases, melismas	3-18 measure phrases	G-flat, G, A-flat, A, F
Of that house, not a wall. Not a wall In which a bird might nest Was left to stand. Israel laid all to waste. (x3) Israel laid all, Laid all to waste.	SATB	Homorhythmic, short phrases, staccato, short-short rhythms, staccato strings, gradually increasing tempo and dynamics	2-5 measure phrases	G minor

Though we have paid to drink Our water, and our wood Is sold to us, we thank The only God. (x6)	SATB	Mostly homorhythmic, long-short rhythms, staccato strings replaced with legato woodwinds	2-10 measure phrases	E-flat
Let the supplanter look upon his work (x2) Our faith will take the stones he broke (x4) And break his, And break his teeth (x2) Our faith will take the stones he broke And break his teeth.	SATB	Homorhythmic, combination of short-long, short-short, and long-short rhythms	2-7 measure phrases	E-flat, C, G

Table 1. Character of music and lyrics in the “Chorus of Exiled Palestinians.”⁹⁶

In contrast to the “Chorus of Exiled Palestinians,” the “Chorus of Exiled Jews,” similar to the Old Testament, is more linear. The Old Testament is generally split up into four sections: the first five books or the Torah, books that detail the history of the Israelites up to the Babylonian exile, poetic books that discuss good and evil, and the books of the prophets who warn against turning away from God. These sections are all different in terms of structure – the Torah combines narrative with lists of rules, customs, and ancestries, the history books are written as narratives, the poetic books are typically written in verse, and the books of the prophets are also written as narratives. Yet, even though these individual sections convey their purposes in diverse manners, they are linear because they all build up to the appearance of the messiah.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 1-17.

The “Chorus of Exiled Jews” works in a similar way to the Old Testament because it frequently varies texture due to the diverse voice groupings that, on the surface, seem to render the “Chorus of Exiled Jews” an unrelated patchwork of voices. These voice groups, however, act as characters each relating different accounts of the same experience. This common experience is related by the opening SATB chorus – representing the Jewish diaspora following World War II. This SATB chorus represents the Jewish diasporic community as a whole, while the individual voices and varying voice groups represent members of this community. The varying voice groups each relate their own experiences as a result of their diaspora – the tenor implores each member to “recount to each other/All we endured since we parted.” After each voice group has expressed its account of a common experience, the return of the SATB chorus indicates the linear result of this chorus’s narrative – unification.

In the “Chorus of Exiled Jews,” Adams devised his own method of modal linearity through what he calls gates. Gates sound as though they are linearly progressing through the circle of fifths (or fourths) through adding or removing one sharp or one flat. Adams uses a gate to shift between G minor and C minor between the stanzas “When I paid off the taxi” and “O, Daughter of Zion” through adding the A-flat, making the passage sound like it is linearly progressing through the circle of descending fourths (Fig. 8).

SOPRANO
 mem- bers. My emp - ty hands shall sig - ni fy this pas sion, which it-self re -

ALTO
 mem- bers. My emp - ty hands shall sig - ni fy this pas sion, which it-self re -

TENOR
 mem- bers. My emp - ty hands shall sig - ni fy this pas sion, which it-self re -

BASS
 mem- bers. My emp - ty hands shall sig - ni fy this pas sion, which it-self re -

Piano

2

4

mem bers, which it - self re - mem - bers...

mem bers, which it - self re - mem - bers...

mem bers, which it - self re - mem - bers...

mem bers, which it - self re - mem - bers...

mem bers, which it - self re - mem - bers...

7

O Daugh ter of Zi- on, When you

Figure 8. Gate (indicated in red) between G minor and C minor: Adams, *Klinghoffer*, “Chorus of Exiled Jews,” mm. 22-31.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

Linearity is also achieved through a mostly consistent set of rhythms and textures which Adams develops and to which he returns. Only one passage is not homorhythmic and syllabic, but resolves to the homorhythmic and syllabic home base. The non-homorhythmic passage is contrapuntal and accompanies the text, “and we shall rise, miraculously/virgin, boy, and bride.” The imitative counterpoint in this passage suggests diasporic Jews reuniting and their return to syllabic homorhythms suggests that they have successfully united. Table 2 illustrates this musical and lyrical linearity.

Stanzas	Voices	Rhythmic/Textural Description	Phrasing	Key Area(s)
When I paid off the taxi I had no money left And, of course, no luggage (x2) My empty hands shall signify this passion Which itself remembers My empty hands shall signify this passion Which itself remembers (x2)	SATB	Homorhythmic, syllabic, tonic pedal, long-short rhythms	3-9 measures	G minor
O Daughter of Zion, When you lay upon my breast I was like a soldier Who lies beneath the earth of his homeland, resolved You said,	T	Syllabic, tonic pedal, mixture of short-long and long-short rhythms	1-6 measures	C
“I am an old woman. I thought you were dead. I am an old woman. I thought you were dead. I have forgotten how often	SSA	Syllabic, tonic or subdominant pedals, homorhythmic, mixture of short-long and long-short rhythms	4-7 measures	C minor, G minor

We betrayed one another. My hide is worn thin, Covered with scars and wrinkles Now only doctors gather at my bedside, To tell what the Almighty has prepared for me.”				
“A woman comes in To keep the place looking occupied.”	B	Syllabic, dominant pedal, mixture of short-long and long-short rhythms	4 measures	D minor
Let us, when our lust is exhausted for the day, Recount to each other All we endured since we parted (x2)	T	Syllabic, mixture of long-short and short-long rhythms, elimination of pedals	3-4 measures	C
There is so much to get through (x2) It will take until night (x2)	SSA	Mostly syllabic, homorhythmic, subdominant pedal, mixture of short-long and long-short rhythms	6 measure phrase	G minor
Then we shall rise, miraculously Virgin, boy, and bride.	SST	Contrapuntal, imitative, elimination of pedals, mixture of short-long and long-short rhythms	2-3 measures	G minor
To me you are a land of Jerusalem stone; Your scars are holy places. There, under my hand, the last wall of the Temple, There, the Dome of the Rock. And there the apartments, The forest planted in memory, The movie houses picketed by Hasidim The military barracks,	TBB	Homorhythmic, syllabic, tonic/dominant pedal, mixture of short-long and long-short rhythms	2-3 measures	G minor

The orchard where a goat climbs among branches.				
Your neighbor, the one who let me in, She was brought up on stories of our love. Your neighbor, the one who let me in, She was brought up on stories of our love.	SATB	Homorhythmic, syllabic, tonic pedal, mixture of short-long and long-short rhythms	3-4 measures	G minor

Table 2. Character of music and lyrics in the “Chorus of Exiled Jews.”⁹⁸

Adams thus highlights these religious rivalries musically by using contrasting choral styles that allude to Bach’s choral styles to create a musical sense of contrasting communities. Just as Bach signified different groups of people in his *Passions* through the use of turbae choruses, Lutheran chorales, and contrapuntal choral fantasies to represent religious rivalries in the *Passions*, so Adams does this as well (but without the direct use of Lutheran chorale melodies).

The introduction to the “Chorus of Exiled Palestinians” alludes to Bach’s turbae choruses. Although this portion of the chorus is only written for SA, its uneven phrasing, homorhythmic and syllabic voice part, and angry, driving eighth notes render it most reminiscent of Bach’s turbae choruses.

In a later melismatic passage more similar to Bach’s contrapuntal choral fantasies, Adams signifies a conflict between the Muslim and Jewish communities through invoking a symbol unique to the Muslim faith. The “Chorus of Exiled Palestinians” opens with a reflection on the state of the village after being razed. The reflection revolves around a meditation on a “crescent moon.” The community in this portion of the chorus sees a crescent moon worn into the doorstep of one of the destroyed houses in

⁹⁸ Ibid., 18-28.

the village. In the Muslim tradition, the crescent moon is as representative of the Muslim faith as the Star of David is of the Jewish faith. Adams paints the word “moon” with melismas. This texture stands out from the syllabic, homophonic remainder of the chorus.



Figure 9. Soprano and alto melisma on “moon:” Adams, *Klinghoffer*, “Chorus of Exiled Palestinians,” mm. 50-55.⁹⁹

This reflective, melismatic passage is followed by a gradual increase in tempo and dynamics, culminating in a passage that returns to an allusion to Bach’s turbae choruses. This portion of the chorus is in SATB and features a community that is angry, impassioned, and unified – both over their desire for revenge against their religious rival and over love of their God. Adams uses this chorus to unite the Muslim community over text in which the Palestinians assert that their faith will help them seek revenge on the Jews: “our faith will take the stones he broke/and break his teeth.”¹⁰⁰ In the case of the “Chorus of Exiled Palestinians” their chorus was indeed successful in uniting them for one common purpose – revenge against the Jewish community. Viewed through the lens of this passage, the previous mention of the crescent moon seems ominous.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 3.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 15-16.

SOPRANO

ALTO

TENOR

BASS

Though we have paid to drink our wa-ter, and our wood is

Though we have paid to drink our wa-ter, and our wood is

Though we have paid to drink our wa-ter, and our wood is

Though we have paid to drink our wa-ter, and our wood is

sold to us, we thank the on-ly God. We thank the on-ly God.

sold to us, we thank the on-ly God. — We thank the on-ly God. —

sold to us, we thank the on-ly God. We thank the on-ly God.

2

14

We thank the on-ly God. We thank the on - ly God. We

We thank the on-ly God. — We thank the on - ly God. We

We thank the on-ly God. We thank the on - ly God. We

We thank the on-ly God. — We thank the on - ly God. We

Figure 10. Turbae-like setting in Adams’s “Chorus of Exiled Palestinians,” mm. 148-167.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 9-11.

In sum, Adams reflects the nonlinearity of the Quran in the “Chorus of Exiled Palestinians” through a lack of a tonal, textural, or timbral home base, a lack of smoothness when shifting between keys, and two different methods of Bach’s choral writing. The incorporation of the crescent moon as a means of foreshadowing further unites one religious community against another. Adams’s setting shows that insular religious communities, such as the one depicted in the “Chorus of the Exiled Palestinians” can generate hate and anger. When a religious group’s unification is driven by revenge, there cannot be reconciliation.

The opening of the “Chorus of Exiled Jews” also alludes to Bach’s *turbæ* choruses. The SATB chorus in this portion of the “Chorus of Exiled Jews” is accompanied by voice doubling and a dominant or tonic pedal in the orchestra. This portion of the chorus also features uneven phrasing and a homorhythmic, syllabic vocal part.

The middle portion of the “Chorus of Exiled Jews” alludes more closely to Bach’s choruses that contain a madrigal text. These choruses are reflective in nature and often include an element of dialogue – the “Chorus of Exiled Jews” follows this style. It does not feature the anger of the “Chorus of Exiled Palestinians,” but instead encourages the Jewish community to reflect on its experiences concerning their diaspora during and after World War II: “Let us,/when our lust is exhausted for the day/recount to each other/all we endured since we parted.”¹⁰²

¹⁰² Ibid., 23.

12

"I am an old woman. I thought you were dead."

"I am an old woman. I thought you were dead."

"I am an old woman. I thought you were dead."

8 You said,

Figure 11. Reflective dialogue passage in Adams's "Chorus of Exiled Jews," mm. 43-47.¹⁰³

The dialogue passages in the "Chorus of Exiled Jews" are primarily homophonic and syllabic. Only one passage is written in imitative counterpoint and is on the text: "Then we shall rise,/miraculously/virgin, boy, and bride."¹⁰⁴ These reflective, homophonic passages often discuss scars, physical injuries, and the limits of old age. These passages suggest what unites this community – painful memories of their common experience as diasporic Jews. Like the community in the "Chorus of Exiled Palestinians," the community in the "Chorus of Exiled Jews" cannot seek reconciliation because their sole focus is on their own suffering.

As in the "Chorus of Exiled Palestinians," there is just one contrapuntal passage in the "Chorus of Exiled Jews." This suggests that Adams uses counterpoint to emphasize a theme that unites each community. Because the contrapuntal passages are

¹⁰³ Ibid., 21.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 24-25.

short and demarcated from the syllabic, homophonic passages that dominate both choruses, the contrapuntal passages stand out. For Adams, the syllabic, homophonic passages identify the community and the brief contrapuntal passages identify what unites the community.

The image shows a musical score for the 'Chorus of Exiled Jews' in Adams's work. It features five vocal parts: two Sopranos, a Tenor, and three Soprano voices (S. 1, S. 2, S. 3) and a Tenor (T.). The score is in 4/8 time and begins with a key signature of one flat. The lyrics are: 'Then we shall rise, vir gin, boy, vir gin, boy and bride, and bride.' The score illustrates imitative counterpoint, with the voices entering at different times and intervals, creating a complex texture. The lyrics are: 'Then we shall rise, vir gin, boy, vir gin, boy and bride, and bride.'

Figure 12. Imitative counterpoint in Adams’s “Chorus of Exiled Jews,” mm. 96-102.¹⁰⁵

The “Chorus of Exiled Jews” ends with a return to a style that alludes to Bach’s *turbæ* choruses. It returns to voice doubling and a tonic pedal in the orchestra beneath a homophonic and syllabic vocal line in SATB. The uneven phrasings are, again, reminiscent of Bach’s *turbæ* choruses.

In sum, Adams portrayed linearity in the “Chorus of Exiled Jews” by using a tonic center and vocal grouping as a home base, which was recapped after harmonic development. The use of a reflective text that relates different experiences of one

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

communal tragedy also contributes to the linearity of the “Chorus of Exiled Jews.”

Adams also shows in this chorus that a religious community can unite in a positive way with a desire for healing. However, he also shows that both communities unite for selfish reasons – the Palestinians over revenge and the Jewish community over their wounds and suffering. Neither side acknowledges the harm they have caused and cannot seek reconciliation until they do. Without reconciliation, the scars of the community in the “Chorus of Exiled Jews” can never truly heal.

Through modeling the choruses of exiled Palestinians and Jews after Bach’s choruses from his *Passions*, Adams expresses the thought that, should these opposing groups seek forgiveness, they could possibly reconcile, put an end to their suffering, and move forward. However, neither the Palestinians nor the Jews seek reconciliation – they instead seek acknowledgment of their suffering from their respective religious rival. Both groups continue in their religious rivalry instead of focusing on seeking forgiveness because it binds together diasporic subgroups of both communities. Adams, however, proposes that reconciliation might be achieved between these warring communities by relinquishing an insular focus on one’s own communal suffering.

Although he knew it would be controversial, Adams chose to write an opera that depicts the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in order to elucidate the seemingly endless tragedies that religious rivalries can provoke. Adams’s decision to structurally model *Klinghoffer* after Bach’s *Passions* in order to provide religious commentary indicates a postmodern intention due to his redefining of Bach’s compositional tools. The tools Adams chose to borrow from Bach are not random – they are tools that signify unity, community, conflict, and death. Bach uses these ideals to encourage Christian unity and

community through self-reflection and atonement. Adams still uses these tools as indicators of unity and community, but he encourages harmony between religious communities as a path to reconciliation. Through using these tools in choruses that depict both exiled Jews and exiled Palestinians, Adams suggests that religions that seem disparate could possibly still share common ground.

Adams shares Bach's narrative by having a Jewish man serve as a scapegoat character. However, Adams's Leon Klinghoffer sacrifices himself to ensure the safety of the other passengers and crew members on board, regardless of their religion, turning Bach's Lutheran-centric narrative on its head. This shows that Adams disagrees with the idea of a dominant religion. This is represented through his assertion that the focus of the opera is not on musical evenhandedness or on which side gets more grandiose musical representation. Rather, it is on the tragedy of Leon Klinghoffer's death – a death that resulted from these religious communities' inability to reconcile:

Many have praised its [*Klinghoffer's*] "evenhandedness," a characterization that puzzles me. Such a judgement seems irrelevant. I didn't start out with the idea of being evenhanded, and I suspect neither did Alice Goodman. How can one say it? Neither of us was trying to parse out judgment in equally measured doses, and neither was attempting to make of the drama a political forum. The tragic results of this act of terrorism permeate the end of the opera. What I emphatically did *not* do was tally up the number of bars assigned to one side or the other, and I did not keep a running account of how much "noble" or "beautiful" music was accorded to the hijackers as opposed to how much was given to the hostages or to the Jews.¹⁰⁶

Through alluding to Bach's different methods of depicting rivalrous religious communities in the form of *turbæ* choruses and contrapuntal choral fantasies, Adams provides a postmodern interpretation of a contemporary religious conflict. Traditionally, religions are insular, focusing on unity within those of the same religion. Adams's

¹⁰⁶ Adams, *Hallelujah Junction*, 165.

postmodern interpretation focuses on achieving harmony between warring religious groups as a method of reconciliation. In Adams's and Goodman's understanding, by adopting a more universal ideology, one can overcome disputes over land and dominance in favor of community. Goodman found reconciliation in just this fashion through embracing both her cultural Jewish heritage and Christian belief system when writing the libretto for *Klinghoffer*: "I should add that by origin, upbringing, and education I am a Jew. I'm Jewish by nearly every definition. I converted to Christianity between writing the choruses and arias for *Klinghoffer*."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 170.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

“I think if you could talk like this, sitting among your enemies, peace would come.” –

Captain, *The Death of Klinghoffer*¹⁰⁸

The Death of Klinghoffer has been viewed as both anti-Semitic and Islamophobic due to three primary factors: xenophobic language and grandiose musical styles used as characterization tools, the portrayal of Leon Klinghoffer as a scapegoat for the Palestinian hijackers, and the possible anti-Semitism associated with modeling parts of *Klinghoffer* after Bach’s *Passions*. Scholars such as Richard Taruskin and Robert Fink have also discussed anti-Semitism in *Klinghoffer*, but they rarely delve deeper than a surface re-iteration of anti-Semitic utterings by the Palestinian hijackers.¹⁰⁹ However, the critics have not addressed the issue of Islamophobia or provided a close musical reading of the pieces in the opera. Through a close examination of the music and lyrics of the “Aria of the Falling Body,” the “Chorus of Exiled Palestinians,” and the “Chorus of Exiled Jews,” together with Adams’s own writings, it is revealed that Adams holds neither the Jewish or Muslim communities in higher regard than the other. Rather, Adams wrote *Klinghoffer* in order to suggest the only possible solution to the Jewish-Muslim/Israel-Palestine conflict – reconciliation. If both sides could show remorse for what they have done to each other, and listen to each other, then, in the words of the Captain, *Klinghoffer*’s moral compass, “peace would come.”

¹⁰⁸ John Adams and Alice Goodman, *The Death of Klinghoffer: An Opera in Two Acts with Prologue, Vocal Score* (London: Boosey and Hawkes, 1991), 82.

¹⁰⁹ Richard Taruskin, “The Danger of Music and the Case for Control,” in *The Danger of Music: And Other Anti-Utopian Essays* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009): 168-180, Robert Fink, “Klinghoffer in Brooklyn Heights,” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 17, no. 2 (July 2005): 173-213.

In order to contextualize and understand the critical vitriol stimulated by *Klinghoffer*, it was necessary to first provide a brief survey. Many of these criticisms revealed an Islamophobic bias because they did not express outrage over Islamophobic lines such as “you pour gasoline over women passengers on the bus to Tel Aviv and burn them alive.” Conversely, the outrage over lines such as “America is one big Jew!” are typically the thesis of audience and critical reactions that claim the opera is anti-Semitic. Those who did not find the above Islamophobic line offensive on its surface most likely did not do so because, in the United States and Europe, that kind of sentiment directed at Muslims, whether thought or spoken, is commonplace. In the United States, especially, the Jewish community has dominated the rhetoric in the Israeli-Palestinian debate, causing anti-Semitic statements to be met with outrage, and Islamophobic utterances to be met with indifference.

Because criticisms of *Klinghoffer* also frequently discuss how grandiose the writing for the Palestinians is in comparison to Leon Klinghoffer and the other passengers, it was necessary to inspect what such grandiose writing really indicated. This style of writing, typically accompanied by either lilting, high strings and neo-Romantic chromaticism or low strings, synthesizer, and jagged rhythms tended to accompany sections that showcased the dangers of insular religious unity. Passages with lilting, high strings accompanied Rambo’s assertion that he and his followers are “men of ideals” – he believed that by following his interpretation of the ideals of his religion, that his actions were justified. Passages with low strings and synthesizers accompany passages with violent text, such as anti-Semitic statements or commands to harm the passengers. In one of these passages, Rambo utters “America is one big Jew!” Leon Klinghoffer departs

from his minimal, tonal, and syllabic style and adopts this style when uttering his Islamophobic lines. Adams reveals that the grandiose writing, rather than illustrating favoritism toward the Palestinians, illustrates the dangers of insular religious unity.

Adams's musical commentary continues with his allusion to Erik Satie's furniture music style in the "Aria of the Falling Body." Furniture music is not intended to be a focal point – it functions more as white noise. It is also intended to encourage indifference due to its emotional objectivity. Adams used furniture music in a postmodern fashion to show that the plight of Leon Klinghoffer and the Jewish diaspora is largely seen as societal white noise because society is largely indifferent to their plights. This societal white noise is heard in the musical accompaniment through static harmonies that refrain from a linear progression. It is also reflected in the lyrics that seem, on the surface, emotionally blank and objective. They mostly discuss the loss or damage of material possessions, seemingly underlining the stereotype of Jewish materialism. However, the discussion of lost or damaged material possessions is actually a reflection on the way society treated and still treats the Jewish diaspora: "As for the papers, no instrument could find the sleepers/whose things these were/none of the damage, water nor fire nor any outrage/reported there came to their notice." The displaced Jewish diaspora lost possessions, homes, and community, and no one seemed to notice or care.

Adams's explicit use of an "aria" for the "Aria of the Falling Body" is ironic and contributes to his social commentary. An aria is emotionally subjective, and this emotional subjectivity is reflected in Leon Klinghoffer's intense lyrical line that markedly contrasts with his singing style in the remainder of *Klinghoffer*. The aria genre

is also solidified in its ABA' form that is reminiscent of da capo aria form. It is in this aria that Leon Klinghoffer is most plausibly represented as a savior because it takes place after he has sacrificed himself for the safety of the remaining passengers on board. The lyrics assist in this characterization through their emphasis on the loss of the body, not of the soul: "Nothing is lost/but the sea level has risen fast against the sea wall." The combination of an emotionally subjective genre and singing style, which represents the anguish of the displaced Jewish diaspora, paired with emotionally flat lyrics and musical accompaniment, which represents the indifference of society, provides a compelling commentary, but not a resolution.

At the beginning of *Klinghoffer*, Adams sets up a double prologue to the conflict between the Muslim and Jewish communities with the "Chorus of Exiled Palestinians" and the "Chorus of Exiled Jews." The "Chorus of Exiled Palestinians" is modeled after its religious text, the Quran, and is nonlinear, while the "Chorus of Exiled Jews" is modeled after its religious text, the Old Testament, and is linear. Both choruses are homorhythmic and syllabic for the most part, indicating that these are insular religious communities that function as one unit with one thought. However, both choruses also feature one contrapuntal section that starkly contrasts with the surrounding musical material. In these contrapuntal passages, Adams reveals what binds together each community – the Palestinian community is united by the quest for revenge, the Jewish community is united by the quest for acknowledgement of their own suffering. Because both of these unifying themes are only focused on themselves, with no consideration for the pain that they have caused their religious rival, these groups cannot seek reconciliation.

Framing Klinghoffer as a religious conflict that requires reconciliation between religious communities led Adams to structurally and musically model *Klinghoffer*, to some degree, on Bach's *Passions*. In his *Passions*, Bach also depicts religious rivalries by musically contrasting respective religious communities. Encouraging his audience members to seek redemption through humility and reconciliation is also the purpose of Bach's *Passions*. Bach's *Passions* communicate that Jesus's death was not entirely the fault of the Jewish community – humankind in general was also responsible. Adams sought to accomplish something similar with *Klinghoffer*. While both the Jewish and Muslim communities have committed travesties against each other, neither side has accounted for its own contributions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. By portraying Leon Klinghoffer, a Jewish man, as a sacrificial scapegoat for the Palestinian hijackers, while the remaining passengers disembarked, unharmed, Adams has suggested that reconciliation between rivalrous religious communities is possible.

Although *The Death of Klinghoffer* has been viewed as a political statement in both audience and critical reactions, Adams's postmodern implementation of the compositional techniques of Erik Satie and J.S. Bach reveal that *Klinghoffer* can also be viewed as religious commentary. Adams implemented Satie's furniture music as evidence of society's indifference to the Jewish diaspora. Leon Klinghoffer's emotionally subjective melodic line in stark contrast to the indifference of the lyrics and static accompaniment painted him as a scapegoat figure. Adams borrowed Bach's method of differentiated choral writing to represent different communities. Doing so set up the musical depiction of a religious rivalry between the Jewish and Muslim communities that permeates the opera. At the climax of the opera, this religious rivalry

resulted in the death of an innocent, disabled Jewish man. However, Adams suggests that if both groups could first acknowledge their responsibility in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, reconciliation could be achieved.

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