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ARMGART'S VOICE PROBLEMS

By Grace Kehler

> In voices, time and accident may occasion great alteration.
> — Charles Burney, *The Present State of Music in France and Italy*

IN CONTEMPORARY FEMINIST SCHOLARSHIP examining British or North American women of previous centuries, one frequently deliberated issue comprises voice: what did it mean for women in pre-emancipation societies to have a voice or to be rendered voiceless? "Voice" may refer to representation generally, to concerns especially related to women, to public or political audibility, or to a particular form of vocalization: for example, the singing voice of opera's prima donna (S. Brown 92; Leonardi and Pope 21; Pope 140; Rutherford 98). George Eliot's *Armgart* (1871) uses voice in all of these senses, for this verse drama features a young prima donna who successfully makes her debut as Orpheus, but soon afterwards loses her singing voice. Both preceding and succeeding this traumatic event, the title character self-consciously reflects on the available roles for women (on and off stage), scorning all but the professional singing-actress's life as narrow and insignificant. Her perspective, though, is made relative by the other speakers and by the form in which it is presented: the verse or closet drama. As Rosemarie Bodenheimer observes, "'Armgart' is the only poem George Eliot wrote in fully dramatic form. Its four major voices – two female, two male – clash in unmediated conflict throughout, as though their parts had been written for a vocal quartet singing passionate and argumentative music" (22).[1] Each of these characters occupies a distinct social position and struggles to impress upon a listener the validity or even necessity of his or her perceptions of admirable gender roles and artistic representation. But, to augment Bodenheimer's idea, not only does the drama function as a kind of extended operatic quartet of baritone, tenor, soprano, and mezzo-soprano with each voice harmonizing musically while fully occupied with its own passions, equally the historical power struggles of the operatic world inform the content and structure of *Armgart*, especially the struggle between the singer and the composer-librettist who, since the eighteenth century, had been competing for control of operatic production.

The multiple and layered contests of *Armgart* cohere in symbolizing voice as beset with problems, ranging from physical failure to difficulties in dramatization or reception. Extending these metonymic, metaphoric, and literal uses of voice, *Armgart* conforms generically not to musical or even unambiguously theatrical traditions, but to those of a verse or closet drama. While Victorianists and Romanticists frequently idealized the theatre as a potential site of communal and moral regeneration, even the poets (such as Coleridge

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and P. B. Shelley) who experimented with drama critiqued the contemporary stage and equivocated their aims for their own dramatic scripts (Carlson 25; Watkins 18–19). In the verse drama, writers tried to emend or at least address the perceived problems of the stage and, simultaneously, to protect drama from the contaminations of the theatre. As Julie Carlson avers, the fraught relation between (ideals of) high-minded poetry – with its intellectual-moral appeal – and action – with its inevitable ties to the imperfections of the sexual, political, and social arenas – significantly meld structure and content in the verse drama (46; cf. Bennett 217; Dowd 474; S. Brown 104). Not only do key characters often ponder what constitutes appropriate action in a difficult situation – a pervasive "Hamletting" of the nineteenth-century drama – but, additionally, the genre itself repeatedly returns to the issue of the relative virtues of contemplation and action. The verse drama, which achieved but moderate success on the Romantic or Victorian stage, positions itself somewhere between embodied representation and closeted thought, between public and private. Stage directions and the unmediated interplay of voices suggest the typical dramatic situation, but not necessarily its usual setting and reception. Exacerbating this position, many of the drama's protagonists understand themselves as profoundly isolated by their exceptional situations (whether ennobled or degraded) and attendant emotions. Think, for example, of Baillie's de Montfort, Coleridge's Osorio, Byron's Manfred, P. B. Shelley's Beatrice, Arnold's Empedocles, and Tennyson's speaker in *Maud*. Another self-consciously exceptional character, Eliot's Armgart dominates the drama insofar as she participates in each major dramatic dispute. Yet the setting of the drama, its informing literary and operatic histories, and the physical failure of the singing voice all qualify any pretensions she has to preeminence. The title character, like the verse drama itself, ultimately confronts issues of reception: whether or not there is a place where she will be heard; and whether or not, having lost her original, operatic voice – in the case of the verse drama, the public voice of the stage – transmission will take place elsewhere.

These related issues of vocal audibility and posterity constitute the focus of this article, rather than the verse drama *per se*. In other words, I address form insofar as it participates metaphorically and metonymically in *Armgart*'s inquiry into and lament for lost or suppressed voices.[2] To some extent, such reading strategies also inform my treatment of textual details and characters, which I place in the contexts of Victorian domesticity and – especially – of music history. *Armgart* bears witness to the historical restructuring of the opera, to the aesthetic debates concerning interpretation of scores, and to the dilemmas of professional musicians whose talents or audiences failed them. But not only does the verse drama concern itself with contemporary musicians (Pauline Viardot-Garcia and Franz Schubert) and the fate of the individual; it evokes as well the demise of an entire aesthetic, baroque *bel canto* as performed by the castrato. Once the wonder of the Western world, the castrato's voice and artistry vanished from the opera houses by the early nineteenth century. As Eliot demonstrates, the prima donna subsequently took on the castrato's parts, most famously that of Orpheus, but the larger issue of the Orphic role in opera remained a contested one. Within the verse drama, Orpheus, the mythic musician whose voice acts profoundly on all sentient beings, acquires a considerably more humble position. Eliot's singer resembles both the other dramatic characters who strive to make their voices heard in the domestic context and the historical musicians (castrati, prima donnas, and composers) who struggled to establish themselves for posterity. Linking the private to the public and the fictional to the historical, *Armgart* functions as a powerful tribute to a range of people whose voices were lost or suppressed.

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IN RECENT YEARS, *Armgart* has garnered much innovative criticism; for my purposes, the commentaries on its voicing of gender and authorial concerns serve particularly instructive roles. One repeated reading involves an autobiographical emphasis on crisis, on Eliot's fears of loss of imagination and public voice as well as anxieties about the public impact of a voice belonging to a distinctly talented woman (Beer 210; Karl 468; Bodenheimer 20); equally, recent criticism favours readings of Armgart as a liberated or at least subversive portrayal of woman as artist (Leonardi and Pope 78; Rutherford 100). Bodenheimer, in her compelling article "Ambition and its Audiences," begins to interweave these concerns; she calls attention to the chastising plot and "voice of conscience" that Eliot deploys in virtually all of her literature featuring exceptional women, but Bodenheimer highlights as well the unusual liberties Eliot takes with Armgart: "She is to George Eliot what song is to her [Armgart], a channel for the direct expression of stifled but volcanic feeling; like the melodrama of opera, the poem allows George Eliot to dramatize strong versions of single emotions as her prose narratives [with their moralizing narrators] never do" (24). Sacrificed to Eliot's fears that the professional woman of rare talent might become obsessed with fame and indifferent to the needs of others, Armgart does lose her operatic voice, but fares better than most Eliot heroines in that she remains independent of patriarchal ties and resolves to reestablish herself in a modest position within the musical world.[3]

Quite justifiably, several critics commend the drama's conclusion in which Armgart overcomes her suicidal despair when admonished by her lame cousin Walpurga, whom Armgart has relied on thoughtlessly as a companion and servant (Leonardi and Pope; Pope; Bashant). I concur that, for once, Eliot allows the female artist to survive, if not flourish, and that the drama represents a partial merger of public and private concerns. Armgart will, in fact must, continue working in the public realm so that she may support herself and Walpurga, but the former prima donna rejects the "pauper's" life of selfless service recommended by her cousin (Leonardi 71; S. Brown 95). Armgart's swift rush of compassion, which prompts her to choose Walpurga's hometown as the place to reinvent herself musically as a teacher, conceivably indicates a chosen family and a meaningful private life – distinct from Armgart's derisive view of marriage in which the artist becomes a wife, singing merely to "inspire / [Her] husband reading news" (103). Pairing Armgart with Walpurga instead of with a husband, the drama's conclusion seems to fulfill calls by feminists such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays for supportive female communities in which women no longer derive their identities solely from love interests and sexual competition. The drama, however, has already shown the many tensions in the relationship between Armgart and Walpurga, and the frustrated singer's sudden decision to accommodate her cousin's longing for home is a plan that seems delicately poised between the possibilities of success or failure. The bond between the cousins evidently has been based on convenience (Armgart) and necessity (Walpurga) up until this time. For the unmarried prima donna, the female companion remained an important sign of deference to social views of decorum, even though this companion tended to be a paid subordinate. For the "lame girl," as Walpurga bitterly notes, few opportunities arise for any sort of work or affection: she shows concern for Armgart in part because it is neither solicited nor wanted elsewhere (78).[4] Other complications involve the operatic context. Throughout the drama, Armgart demonstrates her dedication to artistic excellence, a dedication that also entails a less attractive manifestation as rivalry with other singers. Her goal clearly involves contributing

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to and advancing the best of operatic culture. But her resolve to teach in Freiburg – a town the seasoned composer and singing teacher Leo explicitly characterizes as "too small" for significant operatic training (147) – threatens her with unsatisfying work, which, in turn, might revive her volatile, earlier responses to gender and circumstantial inequities, or, as undesirably, align her with Walpurga and resignation. The fate of the musician whose initial training and skills failed her or him was often quite harsh, and *Armgart* uses its title character to explore both literal and metaphorical voice problems experienced by those who failed to secure a prominent cultural position.

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THE BUSTS OF GLUCK AND BEETHOVEN in Armgart's salon offer a significant clue to the type of voice struggles informing the verse drama. Armgart studies the title roles in Christoph W. von Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* (1762) and Ludwig van Beethoven's *Fidelio* (1805), and these operas literally and symbolically indicate historical reconceptions of voice, both in terms of the relative authority accorded to composer and singer and of the social import of opera. During the eighteenth century, opera catered to the singer, and Gluck, probably at the instigation of his librettist Ranieri de' Calzabigi, attempted to circumscribe the liberties habitually granted to the vocalist (Howard, "The Libretto" 23; Bashant 227). Beethoven, a prolific composer of instrumental and choral works and one opera, received censure for his apparent refusal to follow operatic practice in accommodating singers' limitations (*Examiner* 388), the *Athenaeum* accusing him of being "rudely tyrannical" with voices (24 May 1851, 562). The composer's reputed lack of compassion for vocalists is also manifest in the (in)famous anecdote about Henriette Sontag and Caroline Unger pleading with Beethoven "to moderate the *tessitura* of certain passages of the Ninth Symphony and the *Missa Solemnis*." His response was "learn it" (qtd. in Pleasants 64).

The known and suspected causes of composers' confrontations with singers tend to occur at the intersection of divergent artistic conceptions and competitions for power and control; and, in order to situate the verbal contests in *Armgart* historically, I will trace in some detail the "path of their production" from the eighteenth-century singer's opera to the increasingly score-centered presentations of the nineteenth century (Kristeva 103). Up until and even beyond Beethoven's time, one of opera's primary conflicts involved *bel canto*, beautiful singing. Commonly described as an elegant, Italian vocal style characteristic of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries (*New Grove Dictionary of Opera*), *bel canto* also has been used as a general term for the singing of the castrati. Their baroque *bel canto* raised the ire of many composers, including Gluck, for historically (as glimpsed in *Armgart*) it entailed vocal licence. Ideally, castrati received intensive conservatory training involving not just every gradation of voice and expression, but also complete familiarity with scores and lyrics. Pier Francesco Tosi, himself a eunuch and a renowned teacher of castrati, composed a singing manual – *Observations on the Florid Song* – outlining the manifold expectations for a singer of distinction: mastery of ornaments such as *messa di voce* (swelling and then attenuating a note), *appoggiatura*, shakes or trills (eight types), graces, and divisions; moving recitative; varied arias with significant inventions in the repeated sections; facility in composition; and overall musical taste informed by ongoing study.[5] The details of castrato performances remained a primary concern throughout the eighteenth century, for the castrato was not confined to the role of a pleasing interpreter of set notes; instead he served as a

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co-creator of opera with the composer and generally had more theatrical authority and appeal than the latter. Operas were written to suit a particular singer and *tessitura*, and singers were granted extensive licence in embellishing the melodic line of the arias as they saw fit (Tosi 94). Additionally, they interpolated signature arias into new operas, providing drama through their expressive and technical skills. For Tosi, artistry had a shade more significance than voice, since he was aware of the abuses of singers. Summing up eighteenth-century grievances, he censured their lazy repetition of certain ornaments, stymieing the need for continual innovation, and their insertion of embellishments that astonished, but did not fit vocally, grammatically, or dramatically (154–67). But he also represented a popular conviction that continued to have some currency in the nineteenth century: that the composer provided the general and the singer the individual in opera (Paget 118).

Eighteenth-century discourses often (re)figured the castrato voice as pure voice, unbodied pleasure, unparalleled by tenors or female sopranos.[6] Charles Ancillon, whose *Eunuchism Display'd* deprecatingly outlines the monstrosity of castrated males, nonetheless excepts a few first-rate singers, rhapsodizing extensively about their art:

> I shall only say, that I know it to be fact, that there can be no finer Voices in the World, and more delicate, than of some Eunuchs, such as Pasqualini, Pauluccio, and Jeronimo, (or Momo,) and were esteemed so when I was in Rome, which was in the Years 1705 and 1706. . . . It is impossible to give any tolerable Idea of the Excellencies of these Three Celebrated Eunuchs, or the Beauty of their several Voices: In short, they are above Description, and no one can possibly entertain any Notion of them but those who have had the Pleasure to hear them. . . . [I]f Pasqualini was allowed to be the greater Master [in terms of execution], Pauluccio was allowed to have the finest Voice. This Eunuch who was then about 19 Years (and now about 30) was indeed the Wonder of the World. For besides, that his Voice was an Octave, at least (and I speak within Compass) higher than any ones else [sic], it had all the Warblings and Turns of a Nightingale, but with only this difference, that it was much finer, and did not a Man know the contrary, he would believe it impossible such a Tone could proceed from the Throat of any Thing that was human. Jeronimo, (or Momo,) had a Voice so soft, and ravishingly mellow, that nothing can better represent it than the Flute-stops of some Organ. (29–31)

Tributes to the beauty, compass, agility, and pathos of castrati voices abounded, tributes which – like Ancillon's – drew attention to the inadequacy of language when attempting to describe their ephemeral and exotic productions. In fact, the attitudes of castrati admirers remained quite constant throughout the century, including the self-reflexive turn which noted the dissimilarity between the listening experience and the written word. To compensate, critics evoked the supernatural ("Wonder") and the unnatural (a not-quite-human "Thing"), or they shifted from overfamiliar superlatives and adjectives to delineating the responses of audiences, a tactic which also became repetitive. Of the most esteemed singers of the mid- to late eighteenth century – Bernacchi, Farinelli, and Pacchierotti, for example – legends claimed that their voices moved audiences and even rival singers to weep with pleasure at vocal productions which left nothing to be desired.[7] Still more grandiose claims were made for the castrato voice in the earlier legend of Alessandro Stradella, a seventeenth-century composer and castrato who was reputed to have triumphed over aristocratic power and murderous bravos. In Stendhal's version, Stradella's vocal powers had qualified him to mix with upper-class Italians, whose welcome he repaid by eloping with Hortensia, a woman already involved with an aristocrat. Hortensia's incensed family hired bravos to murder the presumptuous singer, but when he sang to these career criminals, he moved them to tears and

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subsequently convinced them to aid him in his escape (235–37). The castrato who did not have the social right to engage in open heterosexual love possessed nonetheless a romantic appeal and a voice of transcendent value.[8]

The recreated body and voice of the castrato retained its fascination until the turn of the nineteenth century; for as Rodolfo Celletti posits, "virtuosity, the outcome at once of fantasy and of the search for sophisticated technical progress, is nothing more than the effort to conceive and bring into being something which goes beyond the reality of everyday life and the normal capacities of human beings, and therefore seems 'wondrous, wonderful'" (2). Correspondingly, the "castrato voice expresses the predilection of the late sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for unusual timbres, stylized and anti-realistic, a predilection in keeping with an aversion for the more commonplace and 'vulgar' timbres" of the female (mezzo) soprano or the male baritone and bass (Celletti 7). Yet the recreated body and voice of the castrato which rendered him an ideal representative of the super- or un-natural also made him vulnerable to accusations of perversion and counterfeiting. Defined by his song, the castrato became a favoured satirical object as the creator of florid song taken to the point of irrationality: "To become a virtuoso . . . [h]e must be an expert . . . at disregarding sense and mixing up letters and syllables in order to show off flashy passages, trills, appoggiaturas, endless cadenzas, etc" (Marcello 34: 388). Such assessments of embellishments as absurd were echoed in England by Addison and Steele, whose irritation was exacerbated by the foreignness of the language, while Wilkes, Bicknell, and the anonymous author of *The Remarkable Trial of the Queen of Quavers* typified those who further associated undesirable performances with castration itself. In each case, the writer expressed abhorrence of the surgically altered male, figuring him not only as a gender anomaly, but as one imperfectly human.[9] These critics could have highlighted the social and operatic exploitation that allowed for the castration of young boys; instead they presented the castrati as mentally and physically deformed and their song as disease-like, capable of infecting the nation with a taste for nonsense, madness, artifice.[10]

In multiple European nations, the grievance that the musical arts lacked substance and reason incited a plethora of documents by reformers, musicologists, and satirists, designed to refine a decadent art and public taste (B. Brown 1–25; Kimbell 224–37). Predictably, some composers entered the colloquies out of a desire to change their status in the operatic hierarchy and to present their music, as written, to the public. This collusion of power and aesthetics surfaces in Handel's reputed threat to throw the "recalcitrant" soprano Francesca Cuzzoni out the window (Berlioz, *Gluck* 29; Burney, *History* 2: 721 n.) and, in more sustained fashion, in Gluck and Calzabigi's reform writings and operas. Gluck, though also a composer of conventional opera, importantly provided seven reform operas which highlighted the poetic and dramatic fit between words and music, public entertainment and the ideal, but also supplied the rhetoric of reform, which possibly played an even greater role for future composers and teachers. As Gluck opines in the Preface to *Alceste*, his second reform opera with Calzabigi, the improvisations of singers have become exhibitionist displays which require artistic correction.

> When I undertook to write the music for *Alceste*, I resolved to divest it entirely of all those abuses, introduced into it either by the mistaken vanity of singers or by the too great complaisance of composers, which have so long disfigured Italian opera and made of the most splendid and most beautiful of spectacles the most ridiculous and wearisome. I have striven to restrict music to its true

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> office of serving poetry by means of expression and by following the situations of the story, without interrupting the action or stifling it with a useless superfluity of ornaments. . . . Thus I did not wish to arrest an actor in the greatest heat of dialogue in order to wait for a tiresome *ritornello*, nor to hold him up in the middle of a word on a vowel favourable to his voice, nor to make display of the agility of his fine voice in some long-drawn passage, nor to wait while the orchestra gives him time to recover his breath for a cadenza . . .. [I]n short, I have sought to abolish all the abuses against which good sense and reason have long cried out in vain. (rpt. in Einstein 98–99)

These claims hold some truth. Shortly after 1650, the aria and the duet came to dominate operatic structure, and some virtuosi readily divorced themselves from the whole of the opera, preoccupied with their own vocal abilities and with audience veneration. Count Algarotti (among many others) expostulates against singers who "with their passages, their trillings, and besides, with their splittings and flights of the voice . . . over-do, confound, and disfigure every thing: thus putting, as it were, the same mask on different compositions, they so manage matters, that all tunes appear to resemble each other" (62).[11] As in any art form that dominates for more than a century, baroque *bel canto* at points exhausted current invention, falling into repetition as well as exaggeration. By the second half of the eighteenth century, *bel canto* "attenuates one of its characteristic features, namely expressive ardour and sensibility, making up for these with a frenzied and technical prowess" (Celletti 107). Yet if the indulgences of certain virtuosi hampered the dramatic efficacy of opera, historically and in the context of Eliot's *Armgart*, composer and teacher demands for absolute fidelity to the score represent an over-correction directly tied to period anxieties about which voices should be preserved culturally and socially. Pachierotti, Rubinelli, and Marchesi, castrati who excelled interpretively and technically, reinvigorated *bel canto* (and its reputation) at the end of the baroque period and left their mark on prima donnas of the early nineteenth century (Burney, *General History* 2: 789, 902; Mount-Edgcumbe 130; Stendhal 351). But composer-singer relations already had begun to alter.

While the unique colour, range, and expressiveness of the singer's voice remained central to nineteenth-century opera, its emotional impact derived less and less from singer-generated ornaments or improvisations. Moreover, the signature aria, wittily called *aria di baule* or suitcase aria, was eliminated from the singer's travels (Stendhal 360). Voice gradually came into the service of set music and drama, rather than functioning as the drama itself. Romanticism (especially German) helped to bring about an increased respect for musical composition, and the cosmopolitan exchanges of musical ideas among nations allowed for new dramatic settings. Of particular significance, the French traditions of text-centred opera productively interacted with the Italian music focused on the voice and the German compositions with their detailed symphonic orchestration (Kimbell ch. 13; B. Brown ch. 1). In terms of salary and celebrity, the best singers retained their hold on the public, but their vocalizations took place in relation to a redefined musical-drama which limited vocal invention.

Armgart attests to the restructuring of opera and the curtailed role of the singer in the first scene exchange between the eponym and her voice teacher Leo – a former composer. Armgart, who has just performed as Gluck's Orpheus, conceives of the singer-composer relationship in terms of dissolved identities into a living art work, forever requiring the new voice to animate the musical score. Relating her tale to her waiting cousin Walpurga and would-be suitor Graf Dornberg, Armgart urges,

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> Tell them, Leo, tell them
> How I outsang your hope and made you cry
> Because Gluck could not hear me. That was folly!
> He sang, not listened: every linkéd note
> Was his immortal pulse that stirred in mine,
> And all my gladness is but part of him. (81)

This perspective merges eighteenth-century valorizations of the singers' opera with nineteenth-century deference to musical composition: in the latter case, "every linked note" of the Gluck score ties the performer to a past master whose immortality rivals the significance of the current vocalist. Aspects of *bel canto*, however, inform Armgart's interpretation of Orpheus: from her dignified assumption of the role of "demi-god" (87) – a staple in the baroque repertoire – to her expressive pathos and her improvised trill, Armgart revives choice features of a nearly extinct art. Of her overall performance Leo approves, yet he reprimands her with severity for her single embellishment, accusing her of pandering to an audience rather than attempting to enlighten it:

> Will you ask the house
> To teach you singing? Quit your *Orpheus* then,
> And sing in farces grown to operas,
> Where all the prurience of the full-fed mob
> Is tickled with melodic impudence:
> Jerk forth burlesque bravuras, square your arms
> Akimbo with a tavern wench's grace,
> And set the splendid compass of your voice
> To lyric jigs. Go to! I thought you meant
> To be an artist – lift your audience
> To see your vision, not trick forth a show
> To please the grossest taste of grossest numbers. (82–83)

Tricks, jigs, burlesques, and farces, these derisive characterizations of Armgart's trill as suited only to "low" culture mark the distance between eighteenth- and mid-nineteenth-century vocal art and the gradual erosion of *bel canto* as the focal point of operatic drama. Whereas Tosi's voice instruction manual characterizes the nightingale's trill as "exquisite" in its artistry and effect (28; cf. Ancillon 31), Leo rejects Armgart's explanation that she "trilled / At nature's prompting, like the nightingales," demanding "Are bird-beaks lips?" (83). The authority of the score, metonymically standing for the composer, repositions the performer as one who should employ voice and intelligence exclusively in the service of a highly scripted art and the elusive ghost of authorial intention. Such strict reforms function ironically rather than heuristically, though; for, in designing to curb an aesthetic that had become tiresomely repetitious (according to critics such as Gluck, Algarotti, and Marcello), reformers promoted an opera in which the dramatic action and linked notes could be endlessly re-presented in a consistent format.

Cogent reasons certainly existed for the protection of musical manuscripts. As Leo reminds Armgart, the brilliant and extremely prolific Franz Schubert "wrote for silence" during his lifetime, insofar as "half his work / Lay like a frozen Rhine till summers came /

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That warmed the grass above him" (142). Those of his compositions which came to the public's attention prior to his early death (at thirty-one) tended to be known only in his native Austria and some parts of Germany, and a number of these Schubert pieces received but a few performances. Schubert died in poverty and relative obscurity, but his international reputation, established soon after his death, meant the recovery or discovery of many of his works and his varied aesthetics. Even then, however, his operas and operettas never became popular. By contrast, some composers, such as the opera composer G. L. P. Spontini, achieved international success, but not a secure place in historical memory. In fact, the international context of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century opera, which involved Europe and, increasingly, Mexico and the United States, meant that a few composers from countries with established musical traditions (Italy, Germany, or France) tended to dominate the scene.

Eliot's fictional composer appears to have received the most fleeting attention of audiences or critics, and his sad recollections of his already neglected compositions compound his resigned prediction that they will remain unnoticed. The voicelessness imposed on Leo explains, if not justifies, his reproofs of Armgart and his defense of Gluck's score, even though the grounds he chooses for his argument carry more ideological than factual weight. His assertion, "It was not part of him [Gluck] – that trill you made / In spite of me and reason!," recalls the rhetoric of the Preface to *Alceste* (82); it also places Leo in the paradoxical position of taking refuge behind a changing score, a score that was partially determined by shifts in public taste and the availability and talents of the era's singers. Eighteenth-century composers, including reformers, balanced stringent demands for change with practical accommodations for singers. Authoritative poses under scrutiny, therefore, may yield surprisingly irresolute portraits of the opera in process. For instance, the debut of *Orfeo* met the standards of Gluck and Calzabigi not because they subdued a singer given to vocal display, but because Gaetano Guadagni, the chosen Orpheus, had already arrived at strict principles of vocal and dramatic efficacy – principles he had derived from David Garrick and which, coincidentally, proved amenable to the reformers' aims and views of *bel canto* (B. Brown 373; Howard, "The Libretto" 11). In addition, the reformers displayed their own flexibility, for they did not subject all singers to a single *Orfeo* score: after fashioning the original score for a mezzo castrato, Gluck transposed it for a soprano castrato (Giuseppe Millico) and then rewrote it as *Orfée*, inserting new arias, for a Parisian tenor.[12] It is precisely because of some of the unique vocal traits of the first performers of Orpheus that Gluck's opera poses difficulties for singers up to and including the present day. The institution of the castrato is obsolete, and modern tenors are rarely capable of singing the title role as written for the Parisian *haute contre* Joseph LeGros at an elevated tessitura, which displayed his exceptional high notes and obscured his weak middle range. One critic has commented on the irony that Gluck twice composed an opera for voices which ceased to exist in the nineteenth century (Howard, "From *Orfeo* to *Orphée*" 70); an equally important point is that his first reform opera continued to undergo revision and transposition to accommodate the available voices.

In the nineteenth century, Hector Berlioz entered into this process, reworking and amalgamating the Italian and the Parisian scores of *Orfeo* in order to adapt the opera for the female, dramatic mezzo soprano. Specifically, he designed it for Pauline Viardot-Garcia – the singer alluded to at the conclusion to *Armgart* – a first-rate Fidelio and perhaps the most famous Orpheus of the century. The collaboration of Berlioz and Viardot-Garcia overwrites, literally and figuratively, the castrato history and informs the relationship of Armgart and Leo,

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for the nineteenth-century *Orfeo* continues the previous century's debate about authority and artistry. In both the historical and the fictional representations, a male musical colleague of the cantatrice opposes her for daring to revive, to insert into the opera, ornaments belonging to the *bel canto* tradition. Assessing Viardot-Garcia's interpretation of Orpheus, Berlioz pays tribute to her voice, technique, sensibility, gestures, and facial expressions, all of which prove her rarity and distinction from the "vulgar singers" (14), and then adds a caveat:

> But why, after so much praise, should it now be necessary to reproach Mme. Viardot with a deplorable feature of her performance, occurring at the end of this air [J'ai perdu mon Euridice]? It consists of a change, produced by a holding note which she makes upon the high G, and which obliges the orchestra to stop, instead of proceeding precipitously towards the conclusion, *as Gluck had written*; and which leads to a modification of the harmony, as well as to the substitution of the chord of the dominant for that of the sixth upon the subdominant: in short, it is the contrary of *what Gluck intended*. Why should there also be some textual alterations; and a few misplaced roulades in a recitative to reproach her with? Alas, why! (*Gluck* 20–21; my emphasis)

"Why?" *is* the pressing question here. The status of Viardot-Garcia as an exceptionally intelligent woman and thorough musician – one who was a multilinguist, a proficient pianist, and a composer – won her the regard of the intelligentsia and of other musicians from multiple countries (FitzLyon 64–118). The exacting music critic Henry Chorley adds to this impressive list of abilities Viardot-Garcia's skill in florid song, in "grandeur of execution belonging to the old school, rapidly becoming a lost art" (237). His lengthy *Athenaeum* review of her Orpheus (as performed in Paris) gives further details of this nearly lost art, linking the singer's powers of ornamenting with profound emotional expression:

> The declamation, the expressive power, the limitless brilliancy of Madam Viardot as a singer, are known to every one familiar with her as a vocalist; but they have never possibly been put forth in one work so completely as in 'Orphée.' The *bravura* at the end of the first act would be an utterly hopeless attempt for any one else now singing. The well-known 'Che faro' . . . becomes what it is meant to be, – a wail of bitterest desolation and woe, so flung out by her above the corpse of the beloved one; thrice repeated, always in a different tone of woe. In brief, unanimous as praise has been, and highly wrought its epithets, on this occasion, the most highly wrought is not hyperbolical. (7 Jan. 1860, 23)

His verification of Viardot-Garcia as a musician in her own right helps to mark the boundaries beyond which the struggle over artistic standards becomes one of voice supremacy and preservation.

Neither Gluck nor Belioz suffered the extreme neglect Leo does, but Berlioz struggled for years to establish himself and witnessed public indifference to the opera he considered his masterpiece (*Autobiography*, *Gluck*). Like his historical analogue, Leo confronts the problem not just of rivalry among musicians but of competitive aesthetics. As H. Sutherland Edwards wryly observes of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century audiences, no one seemed to care to enjoy two distinct forms of music or performance (1: 212). At times aesthetic competitions resulted in an extended theatrical fracas, as when partisan enthusiasm for either Faustina Bordoni or Francesca Cuzzoni divided all of London. Though most frequently singers became the objects of public rivalries, and raucous claques would harass or promote a particular vocalist, voice problems extended across the musical domain. Certain styles of music never reached the stage, and Leo's anxiety and irritation about audience reception

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of music belonging to "high" rather than popular culture intimate the precariousness of an aesthetic not immediately comprehensible to the public. These compounded hints and outright debates comprise the structure and merit of *Armgart*, which demonstrates how each of its dramatic voices deliberately or inadvertently silences another. Goaded by public indifference, Leo idealizes Gluck's reform rhetoric rather than his diverse practice, like Berlioz associating the older composer with the universal: "truth of expression, purity of style, and grandeur of form belong to all time. Gluck's fine passages will always be fine" (Berlioz, *Autobiography* 2: 108). And the drive toward the universal and the pure coincide with Leo's attempt to silence Armgart's equally thoughtful artistry.

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IN SIMILAR FASHION, Armgart possesses a heightened awareness of public or domestic ideologies that seek to circumscribe her singing voice, yet until her voice trauma lacks insight regarding her own tendency to restrict the expressions or perceptions of others. Unaware of Leo's "heart half broken" because of his failed compositions or of Walpurga's resentment at being taken for granted, she figures her talents as all-encompassing (146): like the sun her voice contains life-giving, life-enhancing properties (92); like aristocracy or royalty she graciously fulfills her duties toward the public (100, 106); like the spiritual she illuminates the material world (91). Others, she presumes, find meaning through her performances. Note the proximity of the egoistic and the ethical in the following examples of her view of the stage: "[my] only self / Was consciousness of glory wide-diffused, / Music, life, power – I moving in the midst / With a sublime necessity of good" (91). Soon after this statement, she defends her pleasure in material gifts, asserting, "For what is fame / But the benignant strength of One, transformed / To the joy of Many?" (93). The idealism infusing her speech has an historical basis common to England and Germany, a belief or at least hope for the stage as a site of coincidence for the physical and the immaterial (and thus universal).[13] Vocal music's relationship to the infinite requires little explanation in reference to the legend of Orpheus, the singer whose affecting performances moved all sentient things, even the adamantine judges of the underworld. Only select prima donnas during the nineteenth century acquired reputations for communicating the ideal, but as multiple critics of Eliot's *Armgart* concur, this protagonist represents the exceptional, the woman with rare talents devoted to her art (Bodenheimer 8–11; cf. Brady, Karl, Beer). Both of the historical prima donnas referred to within the drama – that is, Wilhelmina Schroeder-Devrient and Pauline Viardot-Garcia – garnered reputations within artistic circles as privileged communicators of universal "truths." In turn, music critics promoted the artistry of highly cultivated singing-actresses, endeavouring to present them to the public as legitimate professionals and even as visionaries (FitzLyon 352–54). *Armgart* voices this historically important reading of the prima donna with its innovative apposition of respectability and publicity, while the compressed symbolism of the play continually indicates that voice possession as well as voice loss entailed struggle for nineteenth-century women.

With a singing voice, Armgart has the potential to be regarded as a culturally important figure, but also, from a conservative perspective, as a gender deviant. The Graf urges her to distinguish between "lyric passion" and a "life," by which he means domesticity as a woman's proper and substantial social work (102). Leo, who fully endorses the notion of art as vocation, insinuates Armgart's prostitution of herself in ornamenting her song, implicitly

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aligning himself with earlier critics who regarded the castrato's florid song as a nonsensical or deformed version of opera (83). And Walpurga, speaking openly after the voice crisis, depicts her prima donna cousin as a solipsistic and masculinized woman who, like the worst of the patriarchy, relies upon "slaves" whose individuality she fails to recognize (138). Armgart's notion of the artist as one who evokes the universal evidently meets with a mixed reception in her home, let alone in the general public where "Gossips . . . rate the price / Of such a woman in the social mart" (85). Moreover, when Armgart loses her role as a mediator between the stage and the immaterial, she learns that vicarious enjoyment of the voices of others may be unsatisfying or even painful.

The fate of Armgart, coming prior to the recording industry, resembles that of other female sopranos of and before her time and echoes, too, the generic loss of extemporized singing common to the baroque. As Armgart anticipates, even the persistent Graf who claims to love the woman rather than the prima donna does not renew his marriage proposal succeeding her illness. In her shrewd estimation,

> my charm
> Was half that I could win fame yet renounce!
> A wife with glory possible absorbed
> Into her husband's actual. (125)

To some extent, this dramatic situation overlaps with prima donna histories, since those who married well – married into gentry or aristocracy – usually did so while in full possession of their powers (Edwards 1: 234); music history does not record those whose potential was absorbed into a husband's actual prior to a stage career, but the prima donna voice certainly did attract attention. Edwards observes that "even" physically unattractive singers received marriage offers from the elite (1: 17), while a beauty such as Henrietta Sontag purportedly had innumerable "honourably disposed lovers at her feet" (Clayton 303). By in large, their marriages into society meant exchanging stage supremacy for private gentility of the sort the Graf wishes upon Armgart. In contrast, prima donnas who married men connected with the arts often enjoyed long careers. Yet even for these acknowledged professional women, the inevitable loss or attenuation of the singing voice appears to have been difficult. The example of Giulia Grisi is instructive. Along with her tenor husband Mario, she dominated the London opera scene for twenty-five years (Chorley 77), but shied away from retirement when age took its toll, thereby exposing herself to the amusement and exasperation of music critics who risibly commented on her many "farewell" performances (Christiansen 88). Most commonly, critics interpreted Grisi's tenacity in light of her notorious jealousy of the handsome Mario performing alongside other first-class (mezzo) sopranos, Pauline Viardot-Garcia in particular. Yet period critics readily acknowledged that jealousies and rivalries usually concerned the actual position of prima donna: the first lady of the stage, the queen of song, the bearer and creator of cultural meaning.

Armgart touches on the negative inflections of prima donna supremacy when the title character, resembling Grisi, resolves that no other singer shall take her place in performing Fidelio (114). This stereotype of singers jostling for preeminence, though, should be considered in conjunction with the ephemeral quality of the interpreter's art. In musical circles, a strong conviction prevailed that vocal art communicated differently than words.

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As Leo says of Armgart's triumphant debut, "Music has sounds for it – I know no words" (88). Nonetheless, words of critics and cultural memory alone preserved the prima donna's voice (until the first recordings of Adelina Patti in 1905). Without the ability to perform, the woman ceased to signify as a prima donna however brilliant her career had been. What after all was (and is) Orpheus without song? A susceptible, internal instrument, the voice figured simultaneously as hero and antihero of music histories, rife with accounts of singers whose voices failed them (permanently or temporarily), who cracked on a high note, or who canceled performances. Opera legends went so far as to suggest that some prima donnas sang themselves to death: the twenty-eight year old Maria Garcia Malibran, who collapsed after singing a concert, is the prime nineteenth-century example of this phenomenon. The many and varied reports of her disagree as to the details of the intervening incidents between her last performance and her death, respectively in April and September of 1836, but they all agree that her proclivity to sing, act, and live beyond her strength brought about her death (Clayton 351). From her childhood, Maria and her uneven voice were under the constant surveillance and tutelage of her violent father. Edwards remarks that it became commonplace for the neighbours to say, "It is nothing; it is only Monsier Garcia teaching his daughters to sing," when they heard screams from the Garcia household (1: 243). Maria's voice remained a problem, but the young Spanish singer had to cope with the additional problem of forcing her contralto voice up to the soprano parts. Music connoisseurs lamented this "insane longing" of contraltos such as Malibran, Grassini, and Alboni to "strain" their voices, damaging both high and low registers, but the high notes of the soprano were often written into the celebrated roles in which the prima donna would prove her equality or superiority to her rivals (*Fraser's* 1830, 51). Her voice was disciplined to sustain a high *tessitura*, sometimes at great expense to the individual singer, and the singer's impassioned histrionics and literal failure of voice marked the point at which the very public voice and the (potential) silence of the prima donna coincided.[14]

Again accounts of Malibran exemplify this collision, glorifying her voice as well as its demise. Some of the exact critics who express concern that she overtaxes herself also rank as unsurpassed her final concert and her supposedly dying voice: "Like the expiring flame, which is most brilliant at its last flicker, the voice of Maria Malibran was never more resplendent, never more pure or clear than in these her dying moments" (Clayton 359; cf. Edwards 1: 252–64; Cox 2: 23–25). Symbolically, at least, this interpretation is accurate in its equation of the death of the voice and that of the performer. Women might teach, host salons, or absorb themselves in the fashionable world after their stage career, but the powers of the "queen of song" could be transferred to her private life only partially and erratically.[15] For nineteenth-century singers of less acclaim than the Malibrans and Viardots, for example Cornélie Falcon and Josephine Fodor-Mainvielle, voice loss also comprised disappearance from public interest and records. The author of the 1865 memoirs *Queens of Song*, Ellen Clayton, relates that Fodor's voice fails twice during a Rossini opera, permanently silencing this singer. Along with the voice, Clayton asserts, Fodor lost "prominence" (218). More graphically, Clayton recounts the career of Falcon who, like Armgart, makes an affecting debut, reducing men "weary of dramatic emotion" to tears, but who contended with fatigue, illness – and the voice (324). Another singer who found herself vocally unable to complete an opera, Falcon reappeared after a rest, singing "veiled" and "stifled" notes in a "cracked voice," engaged in a "desperate agonizing struggle of Art against Nature" (328). Apparently, the singer did not triumph, for Clayton subsequently describes the known portion of Falcon's

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history as "too dark" for discussion and suggests that the one-time singer's ultimate fate is unknown: Falcon might have recovered her voice, she might live in Russia or Paris, or she might be dead (329). The woman disappears along with the voice.

Perhaps knowledge of the voice's fragility prompts Wayne Koestenbaum to suggest that the term *bel canto* "implies a foreboding that beauty is in decline" (158). This recent definition sums up in particular the attitudes of early-to late-nineteenth-century critics and afficionados who mourned the passing of more than individual singers. They lamented the demise of baroque *bel canto* and of the castrato's voice. Stendhal speaks of a lost art; and even more poignantly, Violet Paget, who wrote under the pen name Vernon Lee, lingers over words precisely to call attention to their inadequacy. Both the luxuriousness of her writing and the self-reflective technique evoke the century she longs to recapture:

> The eighteenth century required such a [superlative] development of singing; it deemed it absolutely indispensable; and in that day of artistic strength and riches, the genius spent in an extemporised vocal ornament which was never transmitted to paper, in the delivery of a few notes which lasted but a second; the genius squandered in the most evanescent performance, the memory of which died with those who had hear it – all this seemed no waste, and indeed it could well be afforded; but when we read of it – we, who can only read of it – we feel an undefinable sense of dissatisfaction, a wistful dreary sense of envy for what did not fall to our lot, and of pain at the thought that all that feeling, all that imagination, all that careful culture, has left no trace behind it. (120)

Though Paget concedes that few singers ever fulfilled the baroque ideal, she compellingly delineates the utter inaccessibility of past vocal art forms (118–23). In so doing, she joins the ranks of critics and amateurs from the eighteenth to the present century whose writing betrays opera culture's tendency to address itself as much to lost voices as it does to currently lauded ones. It is a culture always fearful that it is in decline, almost always certain of a past golden age of the voice, just out of reach (Rosselli 91).

In this doubly coded lineage of verifiable losses of singers and art forms and of an absence born of nostalgia and idealism, Eliot's choice of the prima donna and opera to represent social voice problems appears inspired. Armgart, though she idealizes her feminine voice as superior to "tenor or baritone," literally assumes a role first performed by castrati, the role of Orpheus (102, 104). According to legend, his most affecting songs follow the death of his wife, symbolically attaching song to trauma and loss. And of the many castrati and prima donnas who aspired to the more positive Orphic role in culture – that is, the role of the acknowledged, celebrated artist – but a handful garnered acclaim while the rest battled insignificance or deprecation during their lives. Armgart's history, too, remains a blank, not just because the drama ends so abruptly, but also because Armgart has not established herself as a full-fledged prima donna. She may be "the queen of song" in terms of her debut (Eliot 80), but audiences are changeable and forgetful, notably when celebrity is short-lived. Neither the present nor the historical aspire to retain memory of the mere potential of individuals, and, as I demonstrated earlier, those who experienced vocal failures early in their careers count as lost voices in multiple senses. Additionally, the ideologically opposed Walpurga and Armgart agree on the insignificance of women generally and each incisively notes the shock produced by ordinary women who presume to expostulate on issues of importance (125, 140). Both also acknowledge that voice failure renders Armgart one of the masses of "superfluous" women destined for a "pauper's heritage" (120, 136). The drama highlights

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such a reading in part by its setting in a private salon and by Walpurga's confrontation of Armgart as an equal, after years of mute service. To this the verse drama adds a myriad of images of deformity and loss, suggesting the redefinition of Armgart without a singing voice.

Following her voice-robbing illness, Armgart sees herself as a "mind" with "members lopped" (119); a mother clinging to the pain of her "misformed offspring" (124); a "torso of a soul" (125); a cripple (130); a sufferer on the rack, twisted and dwarfed into pettiness (134); a monster who writes with feet instead of hands (145). Given the requirements and history of the singing profession, these metaphors seem particularly apt. The demanding physicality of performance tends to occlude all but the able-bodied, while prejudice makes a "monster" of the disabled. During the Victorian period, dwarves and other "misformed" persons represented themselves in circuses; they did not represent the heroes or domestic characters of the serious stage.[16] Opera, of course, did make use of physical and gender anomalies, most notably the surgically altered castrati, but *Armgart*'s multiplied images of deformity signal the extremity of the title character's position: by the final scene, Armgart resembles not the castrato whose celebrated voice actually derived from his physical reconstruction, but, instead, the voiceless eunuch as well as the lame Walpurga. Lacking the coveted operatic voice, Armgart possesses no secure position in terms of the nuclear family or operatic culture. She had envisioned opera as an alternative to domestic feminine roles, as she indicates in her metaphoric placement of herself inside an operatic family: once the "bride" of art and "mother" of the child-voice (88, 124, 148), Armgart as a prima donna acquired cultural merit that exempted her from the usual productive-reproductive gender binary, enabling her instead to nurture her talent. The metaphor of family, however, underscores the fragility of both nuclear and operatic structures of relationship, for like the domestic woman Armgart finds herself in a classic nineteenth-century dilemma: she has lost her only child (voice) and been deserted by her faithless husband (art/its audience), who has already found love elsewhere.[17] And, as the drama's conservative speakers point out repeatedly, a lack of family ties constitutes a debility for women, a debility literalized in the lame and desexualized Walpurga. From the female singer's point of view, the loss of the operatic family and the child-voice comprises not only an individual but also a cultural maiming: the prima donna loses her status as a public creator of art (Rutherford 101). Armgart imagines that this lack of a cultural, public voice might drive women to madness or even induce them to commit murder (79).[18] Armgart herself contemplates suicide shortly after she loses her singing voice. Faced with such violent images, the affirmative readings of *Armgart*'s conclusion by critics such as Leonardi, Pope, S. Brown, and Bodenheimer deserve recollection, for these critics perceive Armgart and Walpurga's consciously restructured family as an alternative to the equally dire options of women responding to their "maiming" with docility or madness. Choosing to teach in her cousin's home town, Armgart wills herself to overcome her instinct that suicide constitutes an appropriate reaction to a severely contracted life (an attitude which coincides with Nightingale's in *Cassandra*). The qualified optimism of this ending might signal new fictional possibilities as well, what Rachel Blau DuPlessis terms "writing beyond the ending" of marriage or death (5).

I prefer this reading but cannot reconcile it to my satisfaction with the drama's many compromises. Resembling other verse dramas of roughly the same period, particularly Joanna Baillie's, *Armgart* firmly places its protagonist's ideological and practical struggles in relationship to contemporary society. Baillie, Daniel Watkins postulates, "does not treat human passion in the abstract but rather situates it among social and historical pressures of

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immense complexity, focusing a range of highly specific details and material situations that disclose the inner workings of social life" (40; cf. Bennett 229). In the closing scenes of the drama, these socially charged situations are not necessarily diffused. For example, Eliot's images of loss and deformity – images which bind *Armgart* to Victorian familial structures and to opera history – recur at the end of the drama when Leo proposes that Armgart compensate for her lost child-voice and vocal barrenness through adoption, endeavouring to "love / Another's living child" (148). The adoption metaphor misleads, though, since the child-voice does not exist apart from the "parent," confining all relations to indirect forms of contact. Armgart, if she even finds a talented singer to train, will occupy a tenuous family position as a second mother to a child belonging in the first place to a living woman. In terms of known family structures of the Victorian era, this position might betoken the nursemaid or governess, or perhaps the problematic unmarried relative, much like Walpurga, whose labour on behalf of another goes unnoticed. Thus, the metaphor of voice adoption works powerfully not as a resolution, but as a disturbing lament for the many lost Victorian voices: for all the culture that left little trace behind, a culture which Eliot depicts as domestic and musical, private and professional. While Eliot's literary conservatism in the treatment of women may become an irritant for readers of the present day – especially when Eliot's saintly or broken women find their fulfillment or solace in service to others – *Armgart*'s cogency derives precisely from the drama's meticulous representation of the embattled status of the individual voice. No one voice, not even the Graf's, has the precise effect its speaker desires; every one of the dialogues involves misunderstandings and rebuttals. Highlighting these charged encounters, *Armgart* functions paradoxically, giving expression to various types of voicelessness, including that of the verse drama which repeatedly confronts the possibility of its own silencing.[19]

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NOTES

1. Bashant also refers to the four main characters as engaged in a "contrapuntual quartet" (233).
2. See also the article by S. Brown, which discusses the relationship between form and content in *Armgart* and in Augusta Webster's *A Woman Sold*. While I disagree with her assumption that Romantic verse drama presents a "unified self" (105), I agree with her primary contention that Victorian women's verse drama both allows female characters to critique gender inequities and represents the limits placed on female action (104).
3. Booth does not discuss *Armgart* specifically, but her book on Eliot and Woolf studies extensively the two authors' complex approaches to the woman of exceptional talent or promise.
4. In response to the Graf's compliment of her "tender" and "rare affection" for her famous cousin, Walpurga replies: "Nay, I fear / My love is little more than what I felt / For happy stories when I was a child. / She fills my life that would be empty else, / And lifts my nought to value by her side" (78).
5. See Tosi's manual and Barbier's *The World of the Castrati* for in-depth discussions of eighteenth-century vocal art. I will be using the term "florid song" interchangeably with "*bel canto*." See also Stendhal – who claims that the art of *bel canto* came into existence in 1680 (351).
6. Mount-Edgcumbe describes Pacchierotti as "the most perfect singer it ever fell to [his] lot to hear" (12).

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7. See Burney's *General History* (2: 800), Mount-Edgcumbe (12), and Heriot (88, 170). The poet Rolli said of Farinelli, "I confess he has surprised me, and I feel that till now I understood only a fraction of what human song can be, whereas now I am glad to think that I have heard all that there is or can be" (qtd. in Streatfield 443).
8. Ancillon remarks that eunuchs are esteemed by "lewd Women, because they can give them all the Satisfaction without running any Risk or Danger" (207). Kelly's *Reminiscences* also confirms the attraction of castrati for audience members, including the mutual passion of La Marchesa Santa Marca and Pachierotti which led to a dual between the singer and a former lover of the Marchesa. Pachierotti, "being as good a swordsman as a singer[,] soon wounded and disarmed il Cavaliere," but eventually left Rome for fear of assassination (36). Kelly also writes of Rauzzini, who always performed women's roles, but whose "beauty was his bane! an exalted personage became deeply and hopelessly enamoured of him, and, spite of his talents, it was suggested to him that a change of air would be for the benefit of his health" (5). Casanova's *Life* also contains multiple accounts of the sexual escapades of castrati, though the accuracy of this source seems dubious.
9. The notion of counterfeiting also emerges in discussions of the castrati as actors and lovers. Wilkes insists that they merely "personate" heroic figures because they lack the capacity to feel (67), while Bicknell and *The Remarkable Trial* represent the castrati as bestial in performance (32; 140). *The Remarkable Trial* additionally denounces eunuch singers as practitioners of black magic and as "Swindlers in love" (34, 141), going so far as to attack them for the emasculation in which they had little or no say: "the Castrati are not what they seem. . . . If you take Signor Rascallini to a serious task, you will be sure of finding him a blunted sword, an old woman in masquerade, a pistol without balls, a pen without ink, a dog that cannot wag his tail, a pin which cannot prick . . ." (34).
10. Barthes's *S/Z*, Leonardi and Pope's *The Diva's Mouth*, and Gilman's "The Italian (Castrato) in London" all emphasize that the fears incited by the castrato were linked to his potential to expose the contingency of gender and sexuality.
11. Satirists also attack the "impertinencies" of the singer, who would bow and smile to the boxes, clarifying for occupants "that he is Alipio Forconi, the famous singer, and not Prince Zoroastro whose part he is playing" (Marcello 34: 389; Algarotti 58).
12. The French tolerated and even welcomed the castrati in concert venues, but the *Opéra* typically featured French compositions (*tragédie-lyrique*) and celebrated the French language and nation. Consequently, Italian singers and their embellished style were excluded from the *Opéra*. Gluck's reform operas, with their attention to drama, not only suited the *Opéra*, but also benefited from French views of music as the servant of words (*New Grove Dictionary of Opera*).
13. Dahlhaus (88), Grey (Chapter 1), and Abbate (16) offer musicological analyses of the perceived relations between the material and immaterial in the nineteenth century; Attali (Chapter 3) and Tambling (20, 33) offer cultural-theoretical approaches. Gallagher and Bulman specifically inquire into the public's and the press's role in promoting Jenny Lind (a prima donna who retired in the 1850s) as spiritual.
14. Clément's *Opera, or the Undoing of Women* extensively discusses this phenomenon of singing voices and the silencing of women.
15. Even the twentieth-century diva Maria Callas, who made many recordings and stayed a celebrity, felt that her vitality and divadom ended with her stage career: "Everything they want to know about me is there in the music," she informed Alan Sievewright, who interviewed her after her retirement: "Callas is dead" (Stassinopoulos 348).
16. O'Connor's *Raw Material* cautions against a simplistic view of the deformed bodies of the Victorian era as either trivialized entities or mere spectacles. As O'Connor persuasively demonstrates, diseased, deformed, or monstrous bodies significantly informed period perceptions of selfhood. On the other hand, Eliot's verse drama stresses that artistic (Armgart's) or literal (Walpurga's) maiming might confine individuals to unsatisfying social roles.

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17. The public will grieve to an extent, but, as Clément remarks, they grieve the loss of the child-voice, not the woman (31). See also Koestenbaum, who refers to the prima donna's voice as a "demanding child" (96).
18. Eliot's other prima donna, the Alcharisi of *Daniel Deronda*, compares life without song to the Chinese tradition of binding feet (694).
19. See Burroughs (87), Dowd (473), and Bennett (216) for discussions of the problems of the female author in relation to the verse drama.

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