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Devastating Diva: Pauline Viardot and Rewriting the Image of Women in
Nineteenth-Century French Opera Culture

Rebecca Bennett Fairbank

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Devastating Diva: Pauline Viardot and Rewriting the Image of Women in Nineteenth-Century French Opera Culture

Rebecca Bennett Fairbank

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Master of Arts

Historically vilified, the vocalizing woman developed a stereotyped image with the emergence of the prima donna in eighteenth-century opera. By the nineteenth century, the prima donna became the focal point for socio-cultural polemics: women sought financial and social independence through a career on the operatic stage while society attempted to maintain through various means the socio-cultural stability now threatened by women's mobility. The prima donna represented both a positive ideal for women as well as a great threat to western patriarchy. A discourse emerged in which the symbol of female independence and success—the prima donna—became the site of tactical control and containment. The prima donna stereotype, opera plot and music, and literature all presented the vilified image as a warning of the disaster awaiting women who overstepped the social boundaries established in the patriarchal image of ideal womanhood.

Pauline Viardot confronted this attempt at containment by fulfilling society's expectations of her as a woman and simultaneously confounding its presentation of women opera stars. Viardot performed the role of social woman: she married young, she raised a family, she held a salon, and she engaged in other approved social activities. Madame Viardot's acceptance and fulfillment of the roles established for her by her contemporary society provided her a unique freedom within society in which she could maintain a career on the operatic stage without succumbing to the traditional detritus of the popular press, literature or social ostracizing. She crafted her own image rather than allow society to stigmatize or vilify her.

Her success was chronicled in contemporary literature written by women who viewed prima donnas as spokespersons for the female plight. Much of this literature explores women's hopelessness and despair in the face of highly restrictive social codes. Prima donnas engaged in a very public career through which they established financial independence, professional success, and an identity literally shaped by their own voices. George Sand briefly explored the artist-woman's search for freedom and independence in her 1833 *Lélia*, but it was not until Sand met Pauline Viardot that she was able to create a heroine who could gain a respected position in society, enjoy lasting personal happiness, maintain social and financial independence, and who lived to enjoy the fruits of her labor. *Consuelo* stands as a permanent record of Viardot's impact on her contemporary society.

Pauline Viardot successfully revised the image of the prima donna and that of women in the process. Viardot navigated the centuries-old tradition which demonized publicly vocalizing women and created a new image of the woman-artist. An accomplished actress among other things, Viardot successfully performed the roles of social woman, inspiration of a literary heroine, and prima donna. It is her successful negotiation of these roles which allowed her to

carve out a unique position in her contemporary society, a position that allowed her to teach at the Paris Conservatory, support the careers of budding male musicians, garner the respect of royalty, publish and perform her own musical compositions, and live a long, fulfilling life. Letters addressed to Viardot, contemporary accounts by male musicians, and her immortalization in Sand's *Consuelo* all record the new image Viardot created: that of a respected member of society and operatic performer of great artistic and musical genius.

Keywords: Pauline Viardot-García, prima donna, *épouse et mère*, George Sand, opera, gender, diva, performance, women, Orpheus, women's literature, music, *Consuelo*, Romanticism, genius

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It is not often one stumbles across a fascinating research topic with so much still awaiting discovery. From my first brief encounter with Madame Viardot in an anthology of women composers, my respect for this nineteenth-century prima donna has continued to grow.

Deepening interest in her contributions to opera and to the lives of her contemporary women took me to Houghton Library where I had the great privilege of examining her journal and unfinished memoirs. The staff members at Houghton were extremely kind and helpful as I dug through boxes of then uncatalogued material newly acquired for the Pauline Viardot-García Collection. Thank you to the collection's curator, Leslie Morris, for making the materials available to me and for fielding various questions.

Many thanks are due to my committee. Professor Francesca Lawson demonstrated unfailing interest in this project and offered encouragement at every point along the way. Professor Lawson first introduced me to the theoretical models at work in this thesis and provided thoughtful comments as I found my own voice within already established scholarship on women in opera. My heartfelt thanks go to Professor Michael Call for sticking with me even when retirement beckoned. I appreciate his constancy and willingness to continue as chair of my committee. Professor Larry Peer's Romanticism seminar in 2011 confirmed my love for the nineteenth century and helped me better understand the *Zeitgeist* of Pauline's Europe.

Professor Margaret Higonnet helped me refine several concepts for this thesis, including one on identity creation through scrapbooking, which will make a belated appearance in a forthcoming article. I thank her for the time she took out of a busy schedule to meet with me and learn about my project.

Through weekly voice lessons with my voice coach, Mindy Ammons, I gained a better appreciation for Madame Viardot's commitment to artistry. I may never have the patience to practice as much as she did and I will never have her dramatic talent, but studying voice and preparing for a vocal recital in honor of Pauline has given me special insight to her love of music and her dedication to her art.

My mother-in-law, Jean Fairbank, and friend, Sara Culley each provided childcare at crucial periods in my thesis writing. The time they gifted me made this finished work possible.

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Without the constant support of my husband, I never would have finished this thesis in time. Thank you, Keith, for taking time away from your own studies to help me, for reading drafts of every chapter, for making the trek to the Orwig so I could have access to needed research material, for taking care of Rachel, and for your patience.

To my daughter, Rachel Ann, I dedicate this work. May you find your own voice and never stop singing.

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INTRODUCTION

Res est blanda canor: discant cantare puellae;

Pro facie multis vox sua lena fuit.¹

Singing is a seductive affair. Girls should learn to sing:

For many, their voice has been a better procuress than their figure.

Performing an occupation plagued by years of derision and containment of women and in a century renowned for the high concentration of women who dared to strive beyond society's established boundaries, Pauline Viardot-García successfully revised the image of the prima donna for herself while also inspiring contemporary women to create their own visions of the successful woman-artist.² Viardot first had to navigate a centuries-old tradition which vilified publicly vocalizing women. An accomplished actress among other things, Viardot performed the roles of social woman, inspiration of a literary heroine, and prima donna. It is her successful negotiation of these roles which allowed her to carve out a unique position in her contemporary society, a position that allowed her to teach at the Paris Conservatory, support the careers of budding musicians, garner the respect of royalty, publish and perform her own musical compositions, and live a long, fulfilling life. Letters addressed to Viardot, contemporary accounts by male musicians, her immortalization in George Sand's *Consuelo*, and Viardot's own writings about herself all record the new image she created and images she spawned (for herself, literary prima donnas, and real women): that of a respected member of society and operatic performer of great artistic and musical genius.

Viardot represents something of an anomaly in nineteenth-century opera culture. She achieved a great deal of success where other women in her same profession did not. Success here

¹ Ov. *Ars am.* 3.315–16. (All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own.)

² See app. 1 for a timeline of Viardot's life with an emphasis on her performance career.

is defined in terms of Viardot's accomplishments as a woman living within a particular social milieu, as an inspiration to other women in similar positions, and as a career woman. Viardot's "success" underlies the main point of this study: her impact on the standard image of the prima donna and her effective rewriting of that image. Much of the published scholarship on Viardot is simply biographical,³ often parroting the same anecdotes and superlative assessments of Viardot's character originally assembled in April FitzLyon's 1964 biography. Though many of these secondary sources will appear in this work as essential to providing necessary background to understand Viardot's success, primary source insights from letters, scores, and Viardot's diary will facilitate a more complete understanding of Pauline's engagement with the dominant gender ideologies of her time.⁴

Background to the Study

Pauline Viardot-García—opera star, composer, and professor in nineteenth-century Paris—has recently emerged as one of the most fascinating women musicians of the nineteenth century. Her career spanned multiple decades, geo-political boundaries, and language barriers. Viardot was born in France to Spanish immigrants. She spent much of her life traveling around Europe and fluently spoke French, Spanish, Italian, German, Russian, and English. She was a citizen of Europe, maintaining regular correspondence with friends in many different countries.

³ With the exception of Michael Steen's thorough critical biography *Enchantress of Nations, Pauline Viardot: Soprano, Muse and Lover* (Cambridge, UK: Icon Books, 2007) and the handful of theses and dissertations listed in Patrick Waddington's Pauline Viardot bibliography, *The Musical Works of Pauline Viardot-García (1821–1910): A Chronological Catalogue with an Index of Titles & a List of Writers Set and Composers Arranged*, http://dspace.ucalgary.ca/bitstream/1880/48502/3/Viardot_catalogue_2011.pdf. "The Diva Doesn't Die: George Eliot's *Armgart*" by Rebecca Pope provides one of the few existing critical analyses of Pauline Viardot's contributions to nineteenth-century opera culture. In *Embodied Voices: Representing Female Vocality in Western Culture*, eds. Leslie C. Dunn and Nancy A. Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

⁴ See app. 4 for a reproduction from Pauline's diary. Pauline Viardot-García, journal, 1863–1892, b MS Mus 264 (365), MS Mus 264: Pauline Viardot-García additional papers, 1838–1912, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

For the sake of a clearly delimited purpose, Viardot's cosmopolitanism will be taken in appropriate stride with analysis of her activities in Paris.⁵

Madame Viardot largely fell out of public memory following her death in 1910, perhaps because no aura of tragedy surrounded her life. It is just as true now as in the nineteenth century that tragic ends beget immortalization for a public figure. Maria Malibran, Pauline's famous older sister, secured her endearment in public memory when she had a child out of wedlock and died in the prime of life as a result of an equestrian accident. Modern musicians in the know, however, such as Marilyn Horne and Joan Sutherland, paid tribute to Madame Viardot in a question and answer session at the Juilliard School of Music in 1998 moderated by Will Crutchfield.⁶ Patrick Waddington, a professor in New Zealand who has worked on Pauline Viardot music scholarship for the past forty years, acknowledges the potential source of renewed interest in her life and work: "Although much remains to be done to situate Pauline Viardot fully in her time as a composer and to assess her relative stature, various publications and performances over the last few decades have brought her works into greater prominence."⁷ Such performances include the Newport Jazz Festival performance of Pauline's operetta *Cendrillon* in 1967 and Opera Rara's subsequent studio recording of the operetta for compact disc (1972).⁸ Other recordings of Viardot compositions including Marilyn Horne's 1966 LP *Souvenir of a Golden Era*, as well as *Chant d'Amour* (1996) and *Cecilia Bartoli—Live in Italy* (1998) by Italian

⁵ This study recognizes the impossibility of using the general term "France" to capture Viardot's social milieu. As a singing-actress, Pauline's home base was Paris, and Paris was not (and still is not) France. Thus her success in re-writing the image of the prima donna must necessarily stand in contrast to the social standards governing Paris at the time in question.

⁶ "Joan Sutherland & Marilyn Horne talk MANUEL GARCÍA and SINGING MANUALS," YouTube video, 7:10, posted by "primohomme," 10 January 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL49338AF5AFF5CC53>: clip 7.

⁷ Patrick Waddington, *The Musical Works of Pauline Viardot-García (1821–1910): A Chronological Catalogue with an Index of Titles & a List of Writers Set and Composers Arranged* (Pinehaven, New Zealand: Whirinaki Press, 2004), iii.

⁸ Waddington, *Musical Works* [online], 149. Waddington cites the Newport Jazz Festival performance as especially influential on the awakening of interest in Viardot.

mezzo-soprano Cecilia Bartoli, and *Pauline Viardot-García: Songs* (2000) by Gyorgi Dombradi and Lambert Bumiller, have brought Viardot to the attention of a worldwide audience. Bartoli's 2007 Maria Malibran tour complete with traveling museum exhibit also spawned interest in Maria as well as the García family in general.⁹ That same year (2007) Opera Rara released a compact disc set entitled *Pauline Viardot and Friends* while aspiring soprano Isabel Bayrakdarian produced her CD *Pauline Viardot-García: Lieder, Chansons, Canzoni, Mazurkas*. There appears to be a direct correlation between the increasing number of recordings of Pauline's music and the increased number of dissertations as well as scholarly treatment of Viardot in recent opera criticism books.¹⁰

Where Waddington focuses on Viardot's compositions and musical publications, scholars have begun and should continue to turn their attention to other fruitful areas of research. Houghton Library's recent acquisition of letters, music scores, sketchbooks, and Pauline's short but invaluable diary promises to provide a growing number of scholars with increased access to extant primary sources. Such new information will help expand the range of research currently emphasized. Hopefully such documents will also facilitate a deeper engagement with Pauline's rather unique position in nineteenth-century European opera culture.

This study is one of those Patrick Waddington might endorse "to situate Pauline Viardot fully in her time,"¹¹ though the focus is not so much on Pauline's musical compositions as it is on the bigger picture: what did it signify in French society for a prima donna to compose, perform her compositions publicly, and have them published in musical compilations? Most

⁹ Emily Harris, "Cecilia Bartoli: A Diva and Her Obsession," *NPR: All Things Considered*, 11 December 2007, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=16780429>.

¹⁰ See the 2011 online edition of Waddington's work (see intro., n. 5), which contains an updated listing of significant published works and theses treating Viardot (*Musical Works* [online], xiii–ix). To this list may be added Kandie K. Kearley, *A Bel Canto Tradition: Women Teachers of Singing During the Golden Age of Opera*, DMA (Cincinnati, OH: University of Cincinnati, 1998). The bibliography in Waddington's work contains a fairly extensive list of scholarship treating Pauline Viardot dating back to the nineteenth century.

¹¹ Waddington, *Musical Works* [print], iii.

books written on the topic of nineteenth-century European opera culture only mention Viardot in passing—as the younger sister of Maria Malibran or as an example of a prima donna who does not necessarily fit the mold described in such works.¹² I will also address the *why* of such claims: why was Madame Viardot so different from other prima donnas and how did that change her experience as a prima donna, as a woman in contemporary society, as a mother, wife, and teacher?

Previous scholars have also neglected to consider how Viardot’s performance and life example impacted opera culture, specifically literature. It is well documented that George Sand modeled her titular prima donna heroine, Consuelo, on Viardot.¹³ Scholars such as FitzLyon, Rutherford, and Lewis have written about the Viardot-Consuelo connection but have failed to extensively analyze how Sand’s prima donna differs from the nineteenth-century patriarchal image of the woman-artist in literature.¹⁴ Furthermore they neglect to analyze what I believe informs the crux of the matter: how Viardot’s example shaped the new image of the woman-artist as represented by Consuelo. No scholar has analyzed the impact of Pauline Viardot’s “success” as a prima donna from the point of view that it is fundamentally different from the achievements (and failures) of her predecessors or contemporaries. Additionally, no scholars have treated literature written by French women of the late nineteenth century about women opera singers in the same way modern scholars have examined comparable works by men.

¹² cf. Susan Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera, 1815–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 14, 45, 59, 101; Ethan Mordden, *Demented: The World of the Opera Diva* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984), 53, 238, 286; Linda M. Lewis, *Germaine de Staël, George Sand, and the Victorian Woman Artist* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 43, n. 43; Patricia Thomson, *George Sand and the Victorians* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 40, 219; Isabelle Hoog Naginski, *George Sand: Writing for Her Life* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 222.

¹³ See app. 5 for a listing of major works dedicated to and inspired by Pauline.

¹⁴ I deliberately chose “woman” over “female” with the goal of distinguishing between artists who are simply “feminine” and artists who are defined as women by their society. My choice draws heavily on the work of Judith Butler who might endorse the use of “woman” in place of “female” for the reasons stated above.

Pauline Viardot, or the Re-Presentation of the Prima Donna

Viardot's operatic experience represents an important lens through which to analyze the containment discourse and the prima donna. Viardot's specific experiences as prima donna and composer of no less than five operatic works—*Trop de femmes* (1867), *Le dernier Sorcier* (1867), *L'Ogre* or *Conte de fées* (1868), *Le Miroir* (1869), and *Cendrillon* (1904)—situate her in this important dialogue. Though Susan Rutherford and others¹⁵ have mentioned Viardot, they fail to do more than simply cite her as an example of an opera diva who did not incur the wrath of the popular press and who was generally respected as an upstanding member of Parisian society. Scholarship directly treating Viardot's participation in the larger discourse surrounding the prima donna deserves attention. Viardot may certainly represent an "envoiced" woman, but her influence reaches much further.¹⁶

Drawing on Judith Butler's work on performative versus ontological realities, I contend that Viardot specifically triumphed in three performances: embracing her contemporary society's normative coding of "woman," serving as the model for a literary heroine, and performing professionally as prima donna. Understanding Pauline's achievements in her personal life, contemporary literature, and her profession relies on a working knowledge of the major theories surrounding opera and its lead women. Chapter One will outline recent scholarship analyzing gender ideologies at work in opera. Opera theorists view the art form as either a patriarchal system designed to imprison women, whose voices and sexuality would otherwise throw society into chaos,¹⁷ or as an empowering vehicle through which women find the voice of authorship in

¹⁵ See intro., n. 5, 7.

¹⁶ Carolyn Abbate, "Opera; or, the Envoicing of Women," in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. Ruth A. Solie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

¹⁷ The "containment" camp includes: Catherine Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988); Mary Ann Smart, "The Lost Voice of Rosine Stoltz," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 6, no. 1 (March 1994); Wendy Heller, *Emblems of Eloquence: Opera and Women's Voices in Seventeenth-Century Venice* (Ewing, NJ: University of California Press, 2003); Linda P. Austern, "No

addition to financial success and independence.¹⁸ This study also explores the social and ideological limitations placed on women in nineteenth-century French opera culture while seeking to situate Pauline Viardot within the social and literary discourses surrounding the prima donna, most frequently the site of operatic and social polemics.

Chapter Two will explore Pauline's contemporary social milieu and the codes governing women's behavior. A brief background of Parisian social development beginning during the French Revolution is absolutely necessary to understanding the society into which Pauline was born, her parents' drive to find a place of belonging in that society, the emergent bourgeois ideal, and Pauline's navigation of the European social landscape. Chapter Three digresses to literature because of *Consuelo*'s interesting interplay with Pauline's life. Early in Pauline's career, just one short year after she became friends with George Sand, the latter began writing a novel for which Pauline would serve as the model for the heroine.¹⁹ Pauline and her husband looked forward to reading the latest installments of the novel in serial form and ample evidence suggests that the still young and impressionable prima donna deliberately modeled her own personal and professional development on the traits of her literary offspring. This conscious self-molding betrays Pauline's awareness of her position in society and as a career woman. Chapter Three will also analyze how Viardot's position as a respected member of French society (performing the role of "woman") and the early evidences of her consummate artistry (her opera career) allowed

women are indeed': The Boy Actor as Vocal Seductress in Late Sixteenth- and Early Seventeenth-Century English Drama," in *Embodied Voices*, eds. Dunn and Jones; Faye Dudden, *Women in the American Theatre: Actresses and Audiences, 1790–1870* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994).

¹⁸ The "liberation" camp includes: Abbate, "Envoicing of Women"; Dunn and Jones, *Embodied Voices*; Lowell Gallager, "Jenny Lind and the Voice of America" in *En Travesti: Women, Gender Subversion, Opera*, eds. Corinne E. Blackmer and Patricia J. Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995): 190–215; Rebecca Pope, "The Diva Doesn't Die"; Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988). We might also include several scholars and works in this list who/that do not come down definitively on one side or the other: Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*; Susan McClary, "The Undoing of Opera: Toward a Feminist Criticism of Music," foreword to *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, by Catherine Clément.

¹⁹ April FitzLyon, *The Price of Genius: A Life of Pauline Viardot* (New York: Appleton-Century, 1964), 113–14.

George Sand to at last craft a tripartite vision of the successful artist-heroine: a woman who is accepted in society, a heroine who breaks free from tokens of femaleness fabricated in a patriarchal discourse, and a prima donna who not only maintains a new positive image but lives to enjoy her career and the fruits of her artistry and genius.²⁰ Such an analysis allows us to effectively contrast male-authored images of women/the prima donna with women's representations of themselves in nineteenth-century opera culture.

The literary analysis of Chapter Three serves as the axis on which turns a complete understanding of Pauline's social, personal, and professional successes, not least of which is the literature she inspired. Viardot's participation in opera culture and Sand's novelization of Viardot's opera image will expose the means of gender dominance in French culture and bring women's rewriting of the popular prima donna stereotype to light. The prima donna image will come under special scrutiny in Chapter Four. The prima donna stereotype will serve as an excellent background to an exploration of the behaviors of Madame Viardot's contemporary prima donnas and set the stage for an analysis of her own performance as prima donna. Viardot's consuming concerns with artistry, her practice regimen, her training, contemporary accounts of her musical and artistic genius, all present a stark contrast to her contemporaries, who more often than not fit the prima donna stereotype and fell victim to its strictures.

Pauline Viardot, and women such as George Sand, deliberately responded to the male-constructed image of the dangerous prima donna, rewriting the diva and womankind in her own life, literary works she inspired, and in her musical performance and compositions. Viardot and those inspired by her transformed the popular male-constructed image of the prima donna—and

²⁰ Sand's *Consuelo* triumphs where so many other heroines and divas alike before had failed, even Sand's own heroines such as *Lélia* (1833) who ends up murdered, and *Indiana* (see chap. 3 for a more in-depth analysis of these failures). *Consuelo* succeeds in several ways, including by escaping the multiple stereotypes of the prima donna and socio-cultural codings for "female" behavior and activity.

of women—from female containment to a unique woman-constructed image of female empowerment.

CHAPTER ONE: THE PRIMA DONNA DISCOURSE

Nineteenth-century conceptions of the prima donna are infused with the historical dialogue centering on women. From ancient Greek and Roman writers, through Early Christianity and the Patricians, to Medieval and Renaissance Europe, to the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and Revolutionary period, male and even female writers have painted a diametric portrait of women in general. The popular image of the prima donna in French opera culture of the nineteenth century owes its existence to these long-standing gender discourses alternately glorifying, but mostly vilifying, the female sex. It is absolutely essential to understanding the point and worth of my thesis that the source of attitudes toward the prima donna, originating in ancient Greece and culminating in the nineteenth century's iteration of the dangerous woman be explored. The prima donna inherits attitudes toward women in general because she stands as a spokesperson of the female sex. Given the public nature of the prima donna's existence and the public use of her literal voice, she represents all women. Thus, historical, social, and literary attitudes toward all women, not just singing women, come under consideration.¹ The following paragraphs will predominantly discuss the image of the vilified woman (which includes women who sing, are silent, who speak, who only attempt to use their voices) while highlighting aspects of the glorified woman, which I label the propagandist patriarchal ideal.

Aside from biblical attitudes toward women, one of the most pervasive ancient constructs of vilified woman finds expression in Homer and many other sources as the siren: a fantastical

¹ Rebecca Pope states my case eloquently: "It is in this context that women writers have placed their female singers and privileged the diva as the woman who has, preeminently and indisputably, gained a voice.... Moreover, thanks to this singing voice, she has a 'voice' in the music she makes, in her own destiny, and in the larger world. A female success in a male realm, this privileged status gives her license to probe, revise, and even reject the traditional gender code." "The Diva Doesn't Die," 140. See also Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*, 34: "discussions of the prima donna at a philosophical or moralistic or conceptual level centred [*sic*] on the perception of the *cantante* as an agent of female potency. No other woman (except in the generic sense of Woman) in this era encompassed such a range of interpretative possibilities, was both so idolized and so despised; she was, in short, a living metaphor for her sex."

woman-beast whose body combines with other-worldly song to ensnare and destroy men. “Hers [the Siren’s] is the power to force men to listen, to abandon themselves against rational judgment to the insubstantial pleasures of things heard,” writes Linda Austern, a respected musicology professor at Northwestern who has written extensively on sirens and feminist criticism in music.² Inna Naroditskaya and Linda P. Austern note in their introduction to *Music of the Sirens* (2006) that, “The siren’s acoustic power and its capacity to affect the external world span centuries and cultures, ultimately encompassing both genders.” They also conclude, however, that, “In the transition from folk tale to literary narrative and back again, siren prototypes were often gendered and their ‘natural’ feminine qualities were reinforced. The most famous musical figures of this type are nearly always female....” Any male counterparts were most “often set in opposition to the destructive powers and false promises of the [women] sirens.”³ As the original singing woman, the siren appears to have constituted in many cultures the most obvious analogy to any woman who sang or performed music publicly.⁴ Austern posits several convincing arguments for why a woman making music has, through the centuries, incited fear and resulted largely in the attempted silencing of women. For one, “From Homer through Joyce and beyond, the siren has been connected to the ungovernable infinitudes of nature that menace civil artifice and self-restraint. The act of listening to music has likewise been linked to subjective displacement....”⁵ Patriarchal fear of losing control over self or social order would, in Austern’s

² Linda P. Austern, “‘Teach Me to Hear Mermaids Singing’: Embodiments of (Acoustic) Pleasure and Danger in the Modern West,” in *Music of the Sirens*, eds. Linda Phyllis Austern and Inna Naroditskaya (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 53.

³ Inna Naroditskaya and Linda P. Austern, “Introduction: Singing Each to Each,” in Austern and Naroditskaya, *Music of the Sirens*, 4.

⁴ “In Western cultures, where the siren has most often been a dangerously seductive water-woman whose song envelops its listener in an open void, both space and the immaterial art of music have most often been conceived as feminine. The woman musician becomes a siren, becomes sexually available....” Ibid.

⁵ Austern, “‘Mermaids Singing,’” 53.

assessment, explain the centuries-long control exercised over women and the use of their voices, both literal and metaphorical.

In contemporary and subsequent writings, such as those by Aristotle⁶ and physicians like Galen,⁷ women were painted as physiologically inferior to men,⁸ sexually voracious,⁹ and morally deficient. The “unanimous belief in the inferiority and inadequacy of women, in their shortcomings, deformities, and incompleteness, makes the thinking of the Greeks distinctly unpalatable.”¹⁰ Were the Romans any better? Women were consistently barred from religious performances except in specific circumstances¹¹ while sirens endured in literature such as Ovid’s *The Art of Love*: “Tradition had further reduced the creature to a common whore, luring men to shipwreck of (sexual) sin. This pragmatic connection became even clearer under the shadow of the Ovidian evocation of the sirens as embodiments of the erotic power available to any woman who would acquire musical skill.”¹² Women in ancient Rome were kept under close surveillance and required to wear veils when outside the home.¹³ Only some inherent distrust of women or deeply entrenched belief in their predisposition to bad behavior could have been the source for such restrictions.

⁶ “Aristotle...held that women are systematically inferior to men in every respect—anatomically physiologically, and thically—and that this inferiority is a consequence of their metaphysical passivity.” Giulia Sissa, “The Sexual Philosophies of Plato and Aristotle,” in *A History of Women in the West*, vol. 1, *From Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints*, ed. Pauline Scmitt Pantel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 51.

⁷ “The Hippocratic physicians, though prepared to concede that all individuals, male and female, produce identical, androgynous seeds, nevertheless maintained that the female portion of the seminal substance is intrinsically *less strong* than the male portion.” Sissa, “Sexual Philosophies,” 51.

⁸ Austern, “‘No women are indeed’,” 85; Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 4–5, 7; Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare’s England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 20–22; Lesley Dean-Jones, “The Cultural Construct of the Female Body in Classical Greek Science” in *Sex and Difference in Ancient Greece and Rome*, eds. Mark Golden and Peter Toohey (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 183–201.

⁹ Orgel, *Impersonations*, 63: this was a Renaissance concept.

¹⁰ Sissa, “Sexual Philosophies,” 51.

¹¹ John Scheid, “The Religious Roles of Roman Women,” 377–408 in Pantel, *Goddesses to Saints*.

¹² Austern, “‘Mermaides Singing’,” 80: see fn. 102. *Ov. Ars am.* 3.311–28.

¹³ Judith P. Hallett, “The Role of Women in Roman Elegy: Counter-Cultural Feminism,” in *Women and the Ancient World: The Arethusa Papers*, eds. John Peradotto and JP Sullivan (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 244–45.

The transition of vilified woman into Christian rhetoric found little to no impediments. “To the Christian culture that has dominated Western thought for close to 1,500 years, even the most fantastic tales and fabulous creatures could be drawn into the eternal drama of sin and salvation....”¹⁴ The siren (a demonic woman) was easily absorbed in Early Christianity, being an amalgam of Eastern traditions which included both Lilith, “both the first woman *and* the first monster,”¹⁵ and Eve. Gilbert and Gubar draw a valuable link between Lilith and vocalizing women arguing, “what her history suggests is that in patriarchal culture, female speech and female ‘presumption’—that is, angry revolt against male domination—are inextricably linked and inevitably daemonic.”¹⁶ Whether a woman is speaking or singing, vocalization in general poses a distinct threat. As for Eve, she who convinced man (through speaking) to defy God bequeaths disgrace to her daughters, as Tertullian reminds all women: “And do you not know that you are Eve? She still lives in this world, as God’s judgment on your sex. Live then, for you must, as an accused. The devil is in you.”¹⁷ Perhaps under the culturally ingrained influence of the siren, Church Fathers sought to limit women’s public persona and religious participation by exerting control over their voices. The Apostle Paul’s writings were interpreted in so far as to keep women veiled and silent in church: “Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.”¹⁸ Tertullian makes expectations of women very clear: “Women are not permitted to speak in church, much less to teach, bathe, make offerings, or claim for themselves any of the functions that properly belong to men....”¹⁹ Sirens appeared in church imagery as warnings both to women

¹⁴ Austern, “ ‘Mermaides Singing’,” 78.

¹⁵ Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), 35.

¹⁶ Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman*, 35.

¹⁷ Qtd. in Monique Alexandre, “Early Christian Women,” 409 in Pantel, *Goddesses to Saints*.

¹⁸ Qtd. in Alexandre, “Early Christian Women,” 410 and 425–26.

¹⁹ Qtd. in *ibid.*, 428.

and to men. “Whether winged, scaled, or both, what figured most about these monsters (and the universe was full of monsters and other marvels) was their femaleness and their song—and the danger posed by both to good Christian men.”²⁰ Women had to be silenced so as not to follow Eve’s footsteps and corrupt men or become demons themselves.

The high register of women’s voices was, on the other hand, celebrated and deemed indispensable in Christian liturgical practices from Medieval times, though the insurmountable problem of having actual women sing in church was solved with the use of boys whose natural “shrillness” closely mimicked women’s voices.²¹ Linda Austern describes “a culture in which the cardinal virtue of public female silence was so firmly entrenched that the soprano and alto voices of the church choir belonged exclusively to males, lest the sound of Eve’s descendants lure Adam’s fallen sons from their devotion to God.”²² Austern notes, additionally, “through the voice of an apparent man, woman, or artificial instrument, music was perceived to have the capacity to arouse the senses with a rhetoric far more powerful than speech alone....”²³ The same problem was also assumed for the English stage and solved in a similar fashion: by training and employing boy actresses. Late-Renaissance English theater thus also gave birth to its own volumes of musical polemics with writers staunchly defending the theater against myriad attacks on the potential for “musical ravishment” and emasculation.²⁴ Where social order in Renaissance England was concerned, one need only turn to John Knox’s²⁵ 1558 *A First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* to understand the dominant attitude toward women. Susan Gubar and Sandra Gilbert identify a female monster populating “the works of the satirists

²⁰ Austern, “‘Mermaides Singing,’” 70.

²¹ See Austern, “‘No women are indeed,’” 83–102 for a thorough analysis of the use of boy actresses and singers on the Elizabethan stage.

²² *Ibid.*, 84.

²³ *Ibid.*, 90.

²⁴ *Ibid.* See also page 89 for a sample diatribe by William Prynne.

²⁵ Whether Catholic, Protestant, or Calvinist, the consensus on the woman question appears to fall in line with Greek, Roman, and Early Christian attitudes.

of the eighteenth century in whose writings were embedded “the suggestion...that *all* women were inexorably and inescapably monstrous, in the flesh as well as in the spirit.”²⁶ And again, women combined with musical prowess spelled disaster: “In the first volume of his *History of Music*, published in 1776, Charles Burney suggests that it is not only muses who live in every era. Sirens, too, he tells us, appear whenever beauty and talent come together to attract us with their music.”²⁷ Note Burney’s pairing of body and voice/sound as this combination figures prominently in the threat posed by publicly vocalizing women in the nineteenth century.

Austern supplies an understanding of the progression from siren to diva in the eighteenth century:

With the colonial and materialist impulses of the early modern era came a renewed interest in describing, identifying, categorizing, and mapping the territory of sirens and their kin. This was not only the era of the ‘scientific revolution,’ but also a time of extraordinary redefinition of women’s social and professional roles and of an artistic and theatrical obsession with the sorceress, particularly singing on the operatic stage in works by such composers as Handel and Mozart. The double hybrid and bird-sirens lived on in artistic and mythographic [*sic*] tradition, but the one who survived into early scientific work was a water-dweller. (Her operatic counterpart—the musically virtuosic enchantress along the lines of Alcina, Armida, Medea, or the Queen of the Night—was, by contrast, physically all woman, ‘diva’ of the theatrical world.)²⁸

With the emergence of a new, exciting art form, stock images of women stood ready for use. The siren endured, easily transitioning into its obvious role as the lead female character in opera,

²⁶ Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman*, 30–31.

²⁷ Austern, “ ‘Mermaides Singing’,” 93.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 71.

whether a sorceress (Alcina of Handel's *Alcina*), a queen (Didone of the many Dido and Aeneas operas²⁹), or an uppity woman (Euridice of Gluck's *Orfeo*).

Just as the siren has its "safe" male counterpart in "[t]he positive, productive musical powers of legendary male figures, such as the mythic Orpheus or Arion and the biblical David,"³⁰ societies also constructed images of ideal women to which every woman was expected to conform. Scholars Susan Gubar and Sandra Gilbert helpfully distill the two archetypes in their 1979 book *The Madwoman in the Attic*, borrowing the appellation "the angel in the house"³¹ for the glorified woman and naming her evil twin "the madwoman in the attic."³² The "angel in the house" constitutes a vision of women's submission and domesticity, where the woman has mastered "the arts of pleasing men.... [I]n more worldly terms, they are the proper acts of a lady."³³ These images existed in the form of Homeric Penelopes who patiently wait for their missing husbands to return, the Roman matron,³⁴ and the Virgin Mary.³⁵ Both Greek and Roman writers found something in the female sex to celebrate; rather, what they wrote about women's valorous acts was meant as an instructive model for their contemporary women. Similarly, "the glory of Mary, the new Eve, reflected upon all women. Proclus of Constantinople praised her: 'Through Mary all women are blessed. No longer is the female accursed, because her race now

²⁹ "From Didone, Ottavia, and Messalina we learn about the incompatibility of female power and sexual autonomy, and hear demonstrated the apparent conflict between female chastity and vocal eloquence." Heller, *Emblems*, 295.

³⁰ Naroditskaya and Austern, "Introduction," 4.

³¹ Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman*, 22–25. The "angel in the house" specifically describes a Victorian ideal for women but serves here to capture the vision of the domesticated woman appearing through the centuries in various cultures.

³² *Ibid.*, 29–36. Gilbert and Gubar provide a helpful chronological record of the monster-woman, the antithesis to the "angel in the house."

³³ *Ibid.*, 24.

³⁴ Vestal virgins, Plutarch's virtuous woman, and figures such as Lucretia or Clelia figure into a completely Roman discourse on the eminent woman who was held up as a paragon of virtue and paraded by the orators, historians, biographers, and writers of literature as a moral exemplar. For more information on the glorification of women (or their positive portrayal as idealist propaganda) in ancient Rome see Pantel, *Goddesses to Saints*; Hallett, "Women in Roman Elegy"; Aline Rousselle, "Body Politics in Ancient Rome," 328–29 in Pantel, *Goddesses to Saints*.

³⁵ See Alexandre, "Early Christian Women," in Pantel, *Goddesses to Saints*.

has what it needs to surpass even the angels in glory.’”³⁶ Despite Mary somehow redeeming womankind, Early Church Fathers still found it necessary to provide instruction and wrote voluminous handbooks for women, which most frequently featured the word “virgin” in the title,³⁷ suggesting that one of the only ways to avoid the inexorable fate of all women was celibacy and devotion to God. Other notable women of the New Testament Gospels, like Mary Magdalene, became absorbed into the Christian liturgical canon, enshrined for all women to see and exemplify.

Gilbert and Gubar write of male writers’ fascination with the “angel” image and their propensity for borrowing her likeness for its eminent poeticism. The “angel’s” ultimate value lay in her submission: “Whether she becomes an *objet d’art* or a saint, however, it is the surrender of herself—of her personal comfort, her personal desires, or both—that is the beautiful angel-woman’s key act....”³⁸ Such a sacrifice entails a kind of death, according to Gilbert and Gubar, “For to be selfless is not only to be noble, it is to be dead.”³⁹ Thus, the angel in the house poses little threat to patriarchal order as she voluntarily relinquishes her “self” (i.e. personhood, desires, anything that that could potentially unbalance a household or society) in favor of domestic oblivion. Austern draws the same conclusion in her article “‘Teach Me to Hear Mermaides Singing’,” where even sirens have the opportunity to shed their demonic lives for angelic ones. “According to the sixteenth-century German physician and occult philosopher, Paracelsus (Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim), such water women were redeemable

³⁶ Ibid., 409.

³⁷ Ibid., 412–13.

³⁸ Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman*, 25.

³⁹ Ibid.

through marriage to a man from Adam's seed and his transfigurative [*sic*] love."⁴⁰ The price for such redemption is silence.

In order to mitigate the potential disaster awaiting society should women open their mouths, societies in the Early Christian world and Renaissance England took direct measures to control women's literal and metaphorical voices. Women were not permitted to speak or sing in church, few women attempted to vocalize through writing,⁴¹ and women were barred from secular public performance. Initially in Venice women performed in opera though their characters were carefully controlled representations "through which the polemic about women was waged.... The intellectual patricians who were the first generation of Venetian librettists incorporated their ambivalent attitudes in what were to become operatic conventions."⁴² Papal bans on women performing publicly increased interest in the seventeenth-century phenomenon of the castrato, who performed exclusively (to the exclusion of women) "in Rome and the majority of papal States...."⁴³ Women in France were permitted to perform in the theater, though "female voices were excluded from the music of the Chapel Royal for much the same reason that they were forbidden to sing in religious ceremonies in Italy."⁴⁴ Castrati inspired polemical responses in France and never became popular enough to supplant women in French opera. *Haute contres*, however, were employed to sing female roles such as the "cross-cast nurse" which "was a time-honored tradition...."⁴⁵ Though women were never barred from the operatic stage in France, role development for women through the eighteenth and into the nineteenth

⁴⁰ Austern, "Mermaides Singing," 82.

⁴¹ See Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman*.

⁴² Heller, *Emblems*, 1.

⁴³ Julia Prest, *Theatre under Louis XIV: Cross-Casting the Performance of Gender in Drama, Ballet and Opera* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 130.

⁴⁴ Prest, *Theatre under Louis XIV*, 138.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 149. "The closest the French operatic tradition comes to gender ambiguity is perhaps in its frequent use of the *haute contre*, a light tenor with a high range, close to that of the female contralto but with a very different vocal quality." *Ibid.*, 148.

centuries certainly affected public attitudes toward and social dialogue surrounding performing women.

The appearance of women on public stages in the seventeenth century and their (re)admittance to stages in England and Italy toward the end of the eighteenth century opened sore wounds originally cut in Greek mythological culture with the siren and possibly also the Maenads or Baccantes. What had been at stake for many years—the potential power women could wield through their vocalization—now confronted the Western patriarchal system with what could become a coup of the whole hierarchy of Western culture and society. The beauty and power of the treble voice—woman’s voice—was well recognized for its great expressive potential.⁴⁶ Also universally recognized was the power women could wield through their literal voices. Susan Rutherford identifies “the enticing, emasculating and fatal power of the female voice”⁴⁷ which could threaten to overturn the already delicate gender power-balance. Leslie Dunn and Nancy Jones offer a Freudian explanation for male concern with the female voice and its potential influence:

[C]haracterizations of listening as an erotic or infantile experience often assume a male listening subject, whether they take the form of patriarchal myth, psychoanalytic theory, or opera criticism. In this scenario of listening, everything seems to be at stake when women open their mouths, for this experience of loss

⁴⁶ Dunn and Jones, *Embodied Voices*, 7, 8–9; see Dunn, “Ophelia’s songs in *Hamlet*: music, madness, and the feminine,” in *Embodied Voices*, 50–64 for information on the fascination in which women’s voices are held. The treble voice was associated with God and the angels: see Austern, “‘No women are indeed’,” 83–102. Julia Prest also notes seventeenth-century desire for musical balance in church choirs leading to the use of boys and castrati where women were banned from public vocalization (*Theatre under Louis XIV*, 129). Mary Ann Smart asserts: “opera’s celebration of the female voice ensured that they were always in demand by the male-controlled operatic establishment, their timbres and ranges essential for the romantic struggle at the centre of most plots” (“Lost Voice,” 32). See also Michel Poizat, *The Angel’s Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera*, trans. Arthur Denner (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992).

⁴⁷ Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*, 36.

[of the ability to mediate libidinal drives with language] threatens the stability of the patriarchal order, indeed that of the male subject itself.⁴⁸

Women's literal voices, representing a significant threat to the dominant social order, became "stigmatized, ideologically 'marked,' and construed as a 'problem' for the (male) social critic/auditor, who demands concern if not control."⁴⁹ Mary Ann Smart argues that society not only recognized this threat but actively tried to mitigate the effects that a vocal and public career could have on the women performers themselves as well as on society: "The soprano's power—her economic, creative and sexual independence—seems to demand containment, and much of the rhetoric that surrounds her, whether in 'primary' sources, journalistic writings or biographies, attempts to control or limit her potential supremacy."⁵⁰ The prima donna (most often a soprano or mezzo-soprano), opera's leading female star, became the site of such polemics, likely because of what Faye Dudden calls "the body problem."

The concept of the "body problem" developed in Dudden's 1994 *Women in the American Theatre*, supplements an understanding of nineteenth-century concerns with women performing on public stages. Dudden's coinage exposes what many scholars, such as Dunn, Jones, Austern and more,⁵¹ accept as the viable explanation for why the combination of female voice and female body as brought together in public performance has inspired fear in societies all over the world for centuries. "Ever since women first appeared on stage they have been associated with sexuality and immorality.... Acting is linked to sexuality because it is an *embodied* art.... The

⁴⁸ Dunn and Jones, *Embodied Voices*, 9.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵⁰ Smart, "Lost Voice," 33.

⁵¹ "In the first volume of his *History of Music*, published in 1776, Charles Burney suggests that it is not only muses who live in every era. Sirens, too, he tells us, appear whenever beauty and talent come together to attract us with their music." Austern, "'Mermaids Singing,'" 93. Beauty and talent here equal body and voice. Mary Ann Smart also recognizes the essentiality of the union between body and voice in singers whose essence is otherwise lost if body becomes separated from voice; as in the case of dead singers whose voices have left no physical trace ("Lost Voice," 31–32).

woman who acts [or performs in an opera] is thus inherently liable, whatever her own intent, to become the object of male sexual fantasy and voyeuristic pleasure.”⁵² According with this line of argument, in Western Europe, the diva could potentially command great power but her sexuality, enhanced by appearance on the stage, must somehow be controlled. A desire, almost frenzy, to contain the now somewhat liberated female voice is clearly evidenced in the various methods devised to control and contain “the body problem” in nineteenth-century Europe.

Prior to the French Revolution, women entered French art as objects of the male voyeuristic gaze and conversation, as depicted in Fragonard’s *The Swing*, for example. Women were also pictured as objects of “male anxiety” according to Madelyn Gutwirth who analyzes women and femaleness before and during the French Revolution. In a “print entitled *She Fell, I Saw Her* ***” a woman has fallen from a donkey on her way to market.⁵³ A basket of produce splays out between her spread and flailing legs while two men look on and point at the woman’s unceremonious display. Gutwirth notes “a libertine ritual of humiliation of the object” in this and similar images. “Such male anxiety revolving around women’s sexuality as is expressed in libertine hostility surely springs as much from terror of their fertility, which is felt as uniquely ‘theirs,’ as of their sensual appetites, which men share but are reluctant to acknowledge.”⁵⁴ Eighteenth-century French attitudes toward women mirror those held in seventeenth-century England where women were artistically degraded or trivialized as a means of male domination and control.⁵⁵

⁵² Dudden, *Women in the American Theatre*, 2.

⁵³ Madelyn Gutwirth, *Twilight of the Goddesses: Women and Representation in the French Revolutionary Era* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992). See page 42, figure 6 for a reproduction of the print.

⁵⁴ Gutwirth, *Twilight*, 41.

⁵⁵ See Austern, “‘No women are indeed’,” 86 for Jacobean Thomas Gainesford’s unflattering description of women, which Austern notes closely resembles a Shakespearean monologue from *As You Like It*; see also 90–91.

Women in France came under special scrutiny during the French Revolution, which had initially promised social and political liberation for women. Notably, Parisian women marched on Versailles during the food riots on 5 October 1789, Olympe de Gouges published her *Declaration of the Rights of Women* in the fall of 1791, and the Society of Revolutionary Republican Woman was organized in February of 1793. When the Jacobins dissolved this radical-left women's organization it effectively signaled the end of women's political aspirations. Robespierre exiled women from public life on 20 December 1793. According to Gutwirth, art and poetry became effective means of vilifying the politically active woman while promoting the government's propagandist image of the ideal woman.

Gutwirth's extensive research reveals the popular use of a politically and culturally expedient image of demonized woman to serve as a warning to all French women not to trespass the socio-cultural boundaries set for them. These boundaries were alternately set in popularized images of the docile, domestic woman whose femininity (embodied by the breast) represented woman's valorized role as *épouse et mère*. Multi-breasted imagery such as *Égalité* by Rougement-Allais,⁵⁶ "...neutralizes the power of primary female allegorical figures by their discreet decorative reference to female fecundity. Not intrepid goddesses representing untamed powers, but emblems of a wild maternity contained, the multibreasted [*sic*] figures confirm the subordination of women's fertility to a masculine, statist project."⁵⁷ Male-constructed images of women from the French Revolution foreshadow the containment discourse perpetrated in nineteenth-century opera culture. Few women made substantial gains in professional development, financial independence or social mobility in nineteenth-century France without having to face extreme public scrutiny. Women constituted that other half of society whose

⁵⁶ Gutwirth, *Twilight*, 363, fig. 114.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 362.

mobility presented a constant threat to social, political, and cultural stability. The image of vilified woman became more prevalent as increasing numbers of women overstepped the bounds of approved social behavior; this occurred most frequently and most publicly on the stages of France, especially the operatic stage.

Images of women popularized in opera and literature deserve exploration and analysis as potential contributors to the act of containing women, specifically the prima donna. Theories abound regarding the metaphorical and literal domination of women in opera culture. In research completed by scholars⁵⁸ over the past thirty years, I have identified roughly three different methods by which society attempted to maintain the social status quo by containing its greatest potential threat: the prima donna, a clear representative of all women. First, through the stereotypical, negative image of the prima donna, women opera singers became stigmatized from the moment they began pursuing that career; these women frequently became indistinguishable from the characters they portrayed on the opera stage and likewise fulfilled tragic destinies. Additionally, popular criticism and social strictures demoralized and dehumanized performers such that they moved more easily in French subculture rather than in mainstream society.⁵⁹ Second, music and gender theorists such as Catherine Clément argue that women, almost always the victims in operatic plots, are also inherently contained by gendered musical structures that favor men.⁶⁰ Finally, literature of nineteenth-century Europe frequently set the diva as the erstwhile heroine who fits the stereotypical and tragic profile of the prima donna and is

⁵⁸ cf. Clément, *Undoing of Women*; Smart, “Lost Voice”; Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*; Mordden, *Demented*; Wayne Koestenbaum, *The Queen’s Throat: Opera, Homosexuality and the Mystery of Desire* (London: Penguin, 1994).

⁵⁹ Smart, “Lost Voice.”

⁶⁰ “But it so happens that chromaticism, this art of small intervals, is the law of musical composition in the *Liebestod* and in all of Wagner’s opera.... [It] is always associated with affliction, with suffering, with mourning and death.... Hence the charm of Wagner’s music is even more linked to death than its chromaticism implies, and only a woman can be its afflicted heroine....” Clément, *Undoing of Women*, 56–57. See also McClary, “Undoing of Opera,” xiii.

consistently contained within these male dominated texts.⁶¹ Understanding this pattern of containment in the nineteenth century will set in high relief Pauline Viardot's triumph over this system.

Patterns of Containment

This first method of containment, the stereotype, originated with the siren, as already discussed. Building on Christian associations of original sin with Eve in addition to the mythological siren, societies created a composite image of demonized woman.⁶² The combined result of the fallen woman stigmatized throughout the Christianized world mixed with the classical siren created a truly deadly image: deadly to men who listened to the siren's voice and deadly to women everywhere who embodied this inheritance. This image exists as both a visual and a textual/lingual image and was applied to real women. The universal female identity could not escape association with this textual and visual image. *Femme fatale* is but one iteration of this publicly circulated image; real women who tried to manage performance careers as actresses and/or singers were especially susceptible to associations with such socio-cultural baggage. The Eve/siren amalgamation stigmatized female vocalizing as dangerous and created a culture of fear toward women's voices. The siren became an archetype for "the enticing, emasculating and fatal power of the female voice"⁶³ and thus provided a desirable analogy to the prima donna for several reasons, not least of which was "the dominant society's coded fear and distrust of women."⁶⁴ Though visual representations of the siren took various guises from the fourth century onward, the analogy articulated the prima donna's "irresistible success" as the "power singer,"

⁶¹ See app. 3.

⁶² "Demonized" is used here as an adjective to describe the qualities associated with performing women. If you would like to consider the literal implications of this word choice, I use it not to ignore the equally well-documented existence of men demons, e.g. Satan, Mephisto, and others. Women were not necessarily singled out exclusively, though the historical lack of women's voices in the arts, literature, and historical texts may account for the prevalence and persistence of "demonized" women up through nineteenth-century western culture.

⁶³ Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*, 36.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

emphasized her ability to seduce the listener musically, and discredited her in society.⁶⁵ The successful performer (combining voice and body) became the favorite scapegoat for society in many time periods and countries. Words associated with the diva such as “virtuosa” became interchangeable with “prostitute” and “whore.”⁶⁶ As a performance medium, opera especially became a target of attack. Opera symbolized musical decadence and its leading star the ultimate manifestation of social degeneracy.

By the nineteenth century, real life prima donnas had inherited this historical and cultural image. Opera stars were compared to this popularized, negative image and further equated with sexual sin. An interesting twist in nineteenth-century perceptions of women on stage reveals that the public often blurred the line between fictional performance and reality. “As Clement implies in the few pages she devotes to singers, one method of containing divas, even punishing them for being necessary to our operatic fantasies, has been to subsume their biographies into the roles they play.... It is a gesture endlessly repeated, until singers’ lives begin to seem as alike as opera plots.”⁶⁷ It became a habit of contemporary critics, the public, and biographers to superimpose the plot and characters of opera onto the lives of its leading ladies.⁶⁸ “Take the case of French mezzo-soprano Rosine Stoltz,” Mary Ann Smart encourages readers:

attacked in almost every memoir of the mid-nineteenth century.... Perhaps more than that of any other nineteenth-century soprano, Stoltz’s biography falls into familiar patterns, endless rehearsals: of her outbursts and the people she offended,

⁶⁵ Ibid., 40.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 42. Men performers may have also suffered this stigma given the distrust in which Christianity held the performance arts. And yet promiscuous men have always been more acceptable than promiscuous women.

⁶⁷ Smart, “Lost Voice,” 33.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 33–34. Consider also John Roselli’s informative analysis of public attitudes toward prima donnas: problems with mixing in the company of singing women (43); “Women ought not to be on the stage at all: so many people thought, not just in Italy but throughout seventeenth-century Europe. Those who did make a public show of themselves were all suspected of being courtesans” (56); “to appear on the public stage meant, as in antiquity, that you were taken to be a high-class prostitute” (57) [*Singers of Italian Opera: The History of a Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992)].

the powerful men she married and had affairs with, the analogies between her life and the roles she played. The ‘real’ Rosine Stoltz...has been buried under the weight of plots.⁶⁹

Stoltz is only one of many prima donnas caught in this trap claims Smart, who also includes a brief but telling account of Maria Malibran’s own victimization under the weight of stereotype and plot projection.

Any study on Pauline Viardot would be incomplete without some mention of her older sister, Maria Malibran, who fulfills the stereotypical and tragic profile of the nineteenth-century prima donna. Maria Malibran received her most intense training from her father, Manuel García, a Spanish immigrant.⁷⁰ April FitzLyon records:

García had begun training Maria’s voice seriously in 1823, when she was fifteen.

He was an extraordinarily stern and harsh master.... The means he employed were drastic: Paer [a friend of the family], passing the Garcías’ [*sic*] house one day with a friend, and hearing anguished cries coming from it, said: “Don’t be afraid: it’s García hitting his daughter in order to teach her to hit the high notes better.”⁷¹

Once reproved by a family friend for his violent treatment of Maria, García replied: ““Yes, I know, people blame me, but it is necessary. Maria can only become a great artist at that price.

⁶⁹ Smart, “Lost Voice,” 33–34.

⁷⁰ Manuel García became a renowned tenor after moving with his family to Paris (1807) and studying in Italy for several years (1811–1816). In Italy, García made important connections to the musical world, including the establishment of a life-long friendship with Rossini, who wrote *The Barber of Seville*’s Count Almaviva for García. “Rossini found in García an ideal interpreter, and wrote for him, amongst other things, the part of Almaviva in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. The opera was first performed in Rome in 1816, and from that time on the names of García and Rossini were linked” (FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 17). “[H]er father was tenor Manuel García, who had a brilliant opera career that included many partnerships with Rossini, including the creation of the role of Count Almaviva in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*” (Jamée Ard, “The Eternal Diva,” *Opera News* 72, no. 4 [October 2007]: 51). Carolyn Shuster notes briefly that Pauline’s father was one of Rossini’s preferred singers (“Six Mazurkas de Frédéric Chopin transcrits pour chant et piano par Pauline Viardot,” *Revue de Musicologie* 75, no. 2 [1989]: 265, via JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/928886>). See also James Radomski, *Manuel García (1775–1832): Chronicle of the Life of a Bel Canto Tenor at the Dawn of Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Chapter five of this work discusses García’s friendship with Rossini in great detail.

⁷¹ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 19.

Her ungovernable character needs to be directed with an iron hand...’⁷² Though García cited Maria’s stubbornness and laziness as reasons for his harsh treatment, this anecdote illustrates not only the stereotype of the diva (lazy and in need of vigilant patriarchal guidance) but also male belief in the stereotype. That “ungovernable character” was well recognized by critics: “Malibran...was called ‘a creature of impulse...impatient of restraint’ by her contemporaries....”⁷³ Even FitzLyon’s choice of anecdote to characterize Malibran reveals how ingrained the prima donna stereotype really was, even up through the 1960s when FitzLyon’s work was published. When Maria made her debut as Desdemona in 1825 at the age of sixteen, her father played Othello opposite her. Clément uses this anecdote to demonstrate her point about opera undoing women: “Manuel García gave his daughter six days to learn that role. She did it. He warned her that if she was not perfect in the role...he would actually kill her, during the performance.”⁷⁴ The amount of control García exercised over his daughter reflects the attitude of fear apparent in patriarchal views of the diva. As Clément further argues, Malibran “played both her life and her voice in one body.”⁷⁵ With her hasty and loveless marriage to Eugène Malibran in 1826, her affair with Charles de Bériot beginning in 1830, and her tragic death after falling from a horse in England in 1836 at the age of twenty-eight, she lived out the roles she frequently portrayed on stage. Like a siren whose enchanting voice spellbound Europe, she eventually met the same romantic end as her stage characters.⁷⁶ The public did not necessarily have to manipulate this singer’s public image through negative association with her performed roles in order to contain her; frequently prima donnas lived up to the profile without any help, suggesting many women recognized and tried to maximize their sexual power.

⁷² Ibid., 25.

⁷³ Ard, “Eternal Diva,” 51.

⁷⁴ Clément, *Undoing of Women*, 29

⁷⁵ Ibid., 30.

⁷⁶ Fitzlyon, *Price of Genius*, 29, 33, 38.

Wayne Koestenbaum's confessional analysis of the opera diva and her (homosexual) fan base discovers new and interesting ways of reading the prima donna's performance in addition to the interaction between performance and "the real world." Analogies he draws between the diva and the homosexual male experience (of being closeted, coming out, living apart from mainstream society)⁷⁷ capitalize on the centuries-long tradition of female and prima donna Otherness, one basis of containment. While the type of fans Koestenbaum describes identify with the prima donna because of her containment, fans can also contribute to the containment pattern. Certain fan bases mourn with their favorite divas over vocal crises, career-ending performances, and death, but Koestenbaum hints at the darker side of fandom, the side where fans actively desire the death of the diva. Early twentieth-century prima donna Mary Garden inspired a fan infatuation so intense, the young woman carried a revolver backstage at a performance, possibly intending to shoot Garden; the girl later killed herself.⁷⁸ Writing of Maria Callas' last years, Koestenbaum admits, "Gay people have compensated for silence by enjoying the ironic or tragic transformation of power into pathos. We relish falls. Sublimity turns into degradation, and our interest quickens—not because we are sadistic sickos but because we like to see reputations...decompose."⁷⁹ This phenomenon—desiring the "fall," "degradation," "decomposition," death of the prima donna—continues to surface in twenty-first-century society. A season one episode of the 2009–2010 television drama, *Dollhouse*, situates itself within this very discourse. In episode three, a programmed woman (Echo) is hired to protect a popular singer/dancer from imminent death at the hands of an anonymous fan. The prima donna figure, Rayna (think Rianna or Beyonce), exasperatedly tells Echo she wants to die because she "just

⁷⁷ "[G]ay culture has perfected the art of mimicking a diva—of pretending, inside, to *be* divine—to help the stigmatized self imagine it is received, believed, and adored." Koestenbaum, *Queen's Throat*, 133.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 144.

wants to be free.” After a second attempt on Rayna’s life, security stops the concert and clears the building. Rayna is furious that she cannot give her fans the show for which they hunger. Echo confusedly tells Rayna, “people don’t want to see you die,” to which Rayna responds, “They love to see me die.”⁸⁰ Not only does Rayna feel constrained by stardom, but she has also bought into the tragic diva image and tries to make it self-fulfilling by communicating with her stalker about the details of his plan for her death.

In the reimagining of her 2009–2011 Monster Ball tour, Lady Gaga explored “fame worship” and performer paranoia, “by lying prone on the floor and shouting, ‘Scream for me. Do you want me to die?’” She also “feigned her own death during the set-closing ‘Paparazzi,’ and then signified her own rebirth with the encore....”⁸¹ By staging her own death as part of the concert choreography, Lady Gaga took control of the paranoia she had previously experienced. Taking control meant she could “die” on her own timetable in her own way and effectively manage her rebirth. Whether the fears that inspired her concert exploration were founded on threats or had anything to do with fans, the combination of fame worship with paranoia certainly indicates a concern on some level with fan participation in the life (and death) of the diva. Lady Gaga seems to be clued in to the containment discourse, especially considering the original name of the tour was “Fame Kills.” The fan element provides an additional layer within the social aspect of containment patterns in opera and women’s music performance.⁸²

Opera itself expresses the nineteenth-century desire to contain women, specifically the woman singer. Catherine Clément’s work on the “undoing” of women has formed the foundation

⁸⁰ Maurissa Tancharen and Jed Whedon, “Stage Fright,” *Dollhouse*, created by Joss Whedon, season 1, episode 3, directed by David Solomon, aired 27 February 2009, via Netflix.

⁸¹ James Montgomery, “Lady Gaga Brings San Diego a Feast for the Eyes and Ears: Monster Ball is a two-hour spectacle of crazy costumes, feigned death and a little geographical snafu,” *MTV News*, 20 December 2009, <http://www.mtv.com/news/articles/1628611/lady-gaga-brings-san-diego-feast-eyes-ears.jhtml>.

⁸² This element may not be unique to women. See the lyrics to the Rolling Stones’ song “It’s Only Rock and Roll (But I Like It)”: “If I could stick a knife in my heart/Suicide right on the stage/Would it be enough for your teenage lust/Would it help to ease the pain? Ease your brain?”

of almost all critical works on opera since its 1979 publication and 1988 translation into English. At the time, Clément's work filled a void in feminist musicological research.⁸³ Her ideas broke new ground, establishing the critical discourse for opera now engaging many scholars all over the world.⁸⁴ Though some of these writers counter Clément's arguments, her innovative work deserves summary here as several of Clément's theories and their counter arguments will come into play in later chapters.

Clément takes as the material for her study the libretto, the text of the opera, which she feels is the most overlooked element of the operatic performance. "In her careful analyses of operatic plots and characters, she presents what is finally a formidable, irrefutable indictment of at least the literary and theatrical dimensions of opera," summarizes Susan McClary.⁸⁵ It is in the libretto, suggests Clément, that women are most carefully controlled. In Clément's view, in no other art form are women more consistently degraded and made the sacrificial victims than in opera. Clément lays a striking image before the reader's eyes as she calls to memory the bodies of countless women littering stages across Europe: "Remember Butterfly, wrapped in a long red obi, she stabs herself and tears come to your eyes; Violetta falls, Mimi is silenced...."⁸⁶ But then the audience claps and cheers with great enthusiasm "before a woman who has just mimed her death."⁸⁷ Sadly, laments Clément, we do not understand that we are celebrating one of the greatest atrocities in society—the death and silencing of women.

⁸³ "Feminist criticism has been a central concern in literary, art, and film studies for nearly twenty years. This has not been the case, however, in music.... It is significant that the voices calling for a feminist criticism [within musicology] are those of well-established men. Women in musicology tend to read such appeals not as open encouragement but as taunts, as invitations to professional suicide." McClary, "Undoing of Opera," ix–x.

⁸⁴ "Today...we often find ourselves looking to the performing arts for new paradigms of how women and men can live freely and openly together. Traditional opera is not the answer, but neither is it irrelevant: our processes of reformulation demand a thorough critique of the prestigious models we have inherited through opera. Clément offers us the beginning of such a critique." Ibid., xviii.

⁸⁵ Ibid., xii.

⁸⁶ Clément, *Undoing of Women*, 43.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

As early as the seventeenth century, musicians were also already gendering musical elements to the detriment of women. “[T]heorist David Lewin has shown that Jean-Philippe Rameau justified his tonal theories in part by relying on shared cultural associations of melody with femininity, and solid harmonic grounding with masculinity.”⁸⁸ In Rameau’s model, he “posit[s] harmony as the generator—indeed, the progenitor—of musical reason, as that which keeps unruly, wanton melodies in check.”⁸⁹ Clément argues that similar theories abounded in nineteenth-century male operatic compositions where feminine musicality requires resolution and containment in the male elements. Chromaticism⁹⁰ has recently been recognized as a historical musical motif representing female eroticism. Chromaticism represents “the sultry, slippery, seductive female who taunts and entraps, who needs to be brought back under tonal domination and absorbed,” writes Susan McClary in her foreword to the translation of Clément’s work.⁹¹ It is, for instance, Carmen’s chromaticism that “renders her death musically necessary” at the end of Bizet’s opera.⁹² Opera “undoes” woman by writing characters and plots that require her death. By linking musical motifs to her seductive qualities that ultimately require her absorption in male tonal closure, opera effectively dominates and controls woman.

Literature abounds with vocalizing women characters, perhaps most frequently women of questionable moral character who use their musical prowess to devious ends.⁹³ Austern notes the appearance “of the attractively amoral or absolutely deadly woman who is ruled by her insatiable

⁸⁸ Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), xv.

⁸⁹ McClary, *Feminine Endings*, xv.

⁹⁰ “In modern music it refers to notes not belonging to the diatonic scale. They are indicated by *chromatics*. The *chromatic scale* is 12 ascending or descending semitones (sharps ascending, flats descending); “A style of composing using chromatic harmony.... The age of Romanticism explored chromaticism further because of a need for emotional expression....” *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music*, s.v. “chromatic” and “chromaticism.”

⁹¹ McClary, “Undoing of Opera,” xiii.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Though I have relegated Rutherford to the camp of scholars who analyze opera for its ability to empower women, her discussion, nevertheless, of what I call “prima donna literature” in *The Prima Donna and Opera* was absolutely essential to the formulation of my theory concerning literary containment.

sexual appetite and who attracts men through a glittering web of lies, deceit, and musical artifice” as “a stock archetype of English Renaissance fiction whose foremothers are the Sirens themselves.”⁹⁴ This archetype permeates western literature which borrowed heavily from contemporary gender and performance issues: authors wrote prima donnas as female-leads who overstep the bounds of acceptable socio-cultural behavior while their innate sexuality and successful careers threaten to tip the gender power balance. Appendix Three provides a chart listing major works of “prima donna literature.” Chapter Three will explore this theme in more detail with an extended analysis of E. T. A. Hoffmann’s *Rat Krespel* (1816) and women’s responses to his portrayal of a stereotypical prima donna. The emergence of the prima donna as a literary heroine exemplifies not only society’s fear but also its tactical control of the successful operatic star.

Against Containment

Not all musicologists and scholars, however, accept the arguments for containment at face value. Among the most notable scholars who have taken issue with various aspects of this “containment discourse” are: Carolyn Abbate, who argues for the empowering quality of the female voice; Dunn and Jones; and, in some cases, Susan Rutherford and Wendy Heller. A brief summary of the major counter arguments will get us on track to discover how Viardot manipulated the popular discourse surrounding the prima donna to set herself apart from her prima donna contemporaries.

Carolyn Abbate and Rebecca Pope specifically take issue with Clément’s argument, noting the major weaknesses associated with her choice of examples and her relative lack of actual music analysis. These scholars provide alternate interpretations to the position of the female singer-performer. Mary Ann Smart admits “Clément conveniently forgets comic opera, in

⁹⁴ Austern, “ ‘No women are indeed’,” 91.

which no one dies and the girl usually gets what she wants; and she gazes serenely past opera's impressive heap of dead tenors....”⁹⁵ Examples include perhaps Beethoven’s *Fidelio* where the prima donna dons masculine clothing in an attempt to rescue her husband from prison and execution; Rossini’s *La Cenerentola*; and Bellini’s *La Sonnambula*. Just as scholars concede that opera constitutes “a spectacle that objectifies women (indeed, aestheticizes their powerlessness), ...enforcing male power and sexual status quo” through plot,⁹⁶ Clément’s methodology can be applied to such comic operas. Such application reveals that the libretti and scores contain elements of containment: *Fidelio* never regains her complete feminine identity in the life of the opera while the finale crowd drowns out her voice; Cinderella marries the prince, reinforcing the hierarchical system of patriarchy; and Amina’s happiness depends on whether or not Elvino will forgive her for a mistake committed in complete innocence and totally out of her control.

Much more convincing counter-arguments come from Carolyn Abbate who questions “whether opera, far from being a revenge-tragedy that Catherine Clément calls ‘the undoing of women,’ is a genre that so displaces the authorial musical voice onto female characters and female singers that it largely reverses a conventional opposition of male (speaking) subject and female (observed) object.”⁹⁷ This, in part, hinges on how the musical composition itself functions with regard to the female voice. Abbate argues that opera allows the female voice an authorial status: it is the prima donna’s voice which brings the male-authored text to life while her

⁹⁵ Smart, “Lost Voice,” 33. “As Paul Robinson has said, however, it seems pointless to reproach Clément for choosing not to deal with comic opera (in which nobody dies) or to demand affirmative action (men die too! they die just as often!) for she is concerned not just *that* women die but exactly how those deaths happen, how they are treated within plots that, reflecting the social conditions of their time, treat women quite differently from men.” Abbate, “Envoicing of Women,” 253–54.

⁹⁶ Abbate, “Envoicing of Women,” 253. Abbate here has linked Clément’s work to that of Laura Mulvey as exemplified in her essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.”

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 228.

presence on stage and live singing reverse traditional gendering of subject and object.⁹⁸ In opera, the lead woman becomes the subject and the audience the passive object:

[L]istening to the female singing voice is a ... complicated phenomenon. Visually, the character singing is the passive object of our gaze. But, aurally, she is resonant; her musical speech drowns out everything in range, and we sit as passive objects, battered by that voice. As a voice she slips in the “male/active/subject” position in other ways as well, since a singer, more than any other musical performer, enters into that Jacobin uprising inherent in the phenomenology of live performance and stands before us having wrested the composing voice away from the librettist and composer who wrote the score.⁹⁹

Wayne Koestenbaum cites a notorious Callas performance from 1950 when she “unfurled a high E-flat without warning, dominating tenor and chorus at the end of the Triumphal Scene in *Aida*.”¹⁰⁰ The E-flat was not written into the score. By improvising her line and singing a higher note than sopranos typically perform at that moment in the opera, Callas effectively usurped the authorial voice. The sheer quality of the note, sung powerfully, also fulfills Abbate’s argument in that the woman singer most fully reveals her physical/aural presence by singing in her unique range. Hence, Callas’ E-flat becomes significant as an example of the power and indomitability of the female voice. Live performance makes all the difference, as Abbate has argued and Callas exemplified, where it allows the prima donna to have the final say in authorship: “Classical music may seem to demand servility of its performers, but with her high E-flat, Callas stopped

⁹⁸ “The central point about such genres [performed genre] is that the work does not exist except as it is given phenomenal reality—by performers. We might even say (in deliberately exaggerated terms) that the *performer* in some sense usurps the authorial voice.” *Ibid.*, 234.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 254.

¹⁰⁰ Koestenbaum, *Queen’s Throat*, 137.

serving.”¹⁰¹ Though Dunn and Jones seem wont to side with Clément, they do concede “the opera diva displays the most elemental and spectacular form of authority through her vocal dominance on stage, which transcends the narrative destruction of the opera heroine so strongly protested by Catherine Clément.”¹⁰² In her work *Unsung Voices*, Carolyn Abbate (one of the most vocal Clément opponents) argues, “there is also a radical autonomization of the human voice that occurs, in varying degrees, in all vocal music. The sound of the singing voice becomes, as it were, a ‘voice-object’ and the sole center for the listener’s attention. That attention is thus drawn away from words, plot, character...”¹⁰³ Abbate celebrates the power of music produced by a woman’s voice where historically, this power was so feared that societies attempted to negate it through the silencing of women.

With the proliferation of women’s writing in nineteenth-century France, French women responded to the propagandist ideal womanhood. Many potential women authors were silenced as a result of this warning to women who did not live up to the ideal.¹⁰⁴ Post-revolutionary France was further torn between tradition and progress, especially as women in multiple countries agitated for “women’s rights.” Denise Davidson argues that although formerly solid class and social boundaries were in flux following the French Revolution, “gender distinctions” became “particularly salient” methods for reestablishing a firm social structure. “Because gender seemed more ‘natural’ than other categories of differentiation, women’s dress, morals, education, and comportment emerged as central to the processes of observation and categorization that helped build a sense of how postrevolutionary [*sic*] society would operate.”¹⁰⁵ And even though

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Dunn and Jones, *Embodied Voices*, 10.

¹⁰³ Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 10.

¹⁰⁴ See Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman*.

¹⁰⁵ Denise Z. Davidson, *France after Revolution: Urban Life, Gender, and the New Social Order* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 2.

“the clear separation between a political public realm and an apolitical private sphere theoretically kept women from having political influence,”¹⁰⁶ learned French women certainly participated in the emerging feminist dialogue and may have directly responded to the image of women and the prima donna as it was used in patriarchal discourse. An analysis of French women’s literature exemplifying the problem explored in this thesis helps us today better understand nineteenth-century French women’s engagement with the various attempts at containment.

George Sand, one of the great champions of women in nineteenth-century France, was also close friends with Pauline Viardot. Sand’s whole life constitutes a study in how women attempted social ideological reforms, literature comprising one significant avenue.¹⁰⁷ Sand’s 1842 opera novel *Consuelo* forms a significant part of this study because Sand’s ideology combined with Viardot’s example (professionally, personally, socially) created a work that directly engages the issues at stake in this study: namely, how women directly responded to and attempted to transform the socio-cultural historical image of the prima donna. Other scholars have written about *Consuelo*, notably Linda M. Lewis in her 2003 book *Germaine de Staël, George Sand, and the Victorian Woman Artist*; Naginski’s *George Sand: Writing for Her Life* (1991); and Robert Godwin-Jones’ 1995 volume *Romantic Vision: The Novels of George Sand*. These works, however, limit their scope to issues other than the social and literary image of the prima donna. Lewis, for example, merely footnotes Pauline Viardot’s relevance to Sand’s *Consuelo* and consequently misses a great opportunity to answer the question of why Sand’s prima donna heroine does not look like the stereotypical and contained prima donnas of stage

¹⁰⁶ Davidson, *France after Revolution*, 5.

¹⁰⁷ In addition to publishing literature, Sand separated from her husband, took on a male name, frequently wore men’s clothing, wrote for a radical Left newspaper, supported the 1848 Revolution, and entertained a series of very public affairs with prominent men such as Alfred de Musset and Frédéric Chopin.

and literature.¹⁰⁸ Sand's novel challenges "the notion of the prima donna as erotic siren" and instead presents "the female singer's profession 'as sacred...the loftiest that a woman can embrace.'" ¹⁰⁹ Sand's choice to cast her new heroine as a diva allows the novel to function on multiple levels as it explores women's performance, whether in a performance career or in "performing" the behaviors expected of "woman."¹¹⁰

Theoretical Models

Judith Butler's work on gender as a performative reality rather than as a substantive ontology informs the theoretical model grounding such an interpretation. Butler argues for a separation of body and gender, a complete overhaul of traditional views which dictate gender as a substantive difference located in the human body:

[Ac]ts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality. This also suggests that if

¹⁰⁸ "Prévost notes that the character of Consuelo is based upon Pauline García, who specialized in the Rossini canon, and Corilla upon García's rival, Giulia Grisi." Lewis, *Germaine de Staël*, 43, n. 43. Naginski mentions Viardot but only in passing as the recipient of a letter. See Naginski, *Writing for Her Life*, 222. Robert Godwin-Jones forgoes any mention, however slight, of Viardot. See *Romantic Vision: The Novels of George Sand* (Birmingham, AL: Summa Publications, 1995). Béatrice Didier mentions that "Consuelo et Albert qui sont cependant largement inspirés par les musiciens réels qu'elle a connus: Pauline Viardot et Chopin." Didier, "Le personnage du musicien dans le roman français," *Œuvres et Critiques: Revue Internationale d'Étude de la Réception Critique des Œuvres Littéraires de Langue Française* 31, no.1 (2006): 77.

¹⁰⁹ Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*, 60.

¹¹⁰ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 136.

that reality is fabricated as an interior essence, that very interiority is an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse....”

Butler casts all humans as actors who perform behaviors and gestures socially coded to reveal a certain identity. According to her argument, femininity has no reality outside of the code of acts, gestures, or behaviors a given society or culture has embraced and defined as “feminine.”

This attitude helps explain the fluidity with which actors and singers on the Elizabethan stage exchanged gendered roles. Men and boys were readily accepted in either male or female roles for the same reason Judith Butler argues gender does not lay in biological difference. Linda Austern writes, “The resulting recognition of female characters completely by conduct and outward appearance, separated by established convention from physical reality, permitted a unique vision of women’s behavior that could be shattered or re-created through a single word or gesture.”¹¹¹ Performance, rather than physical biological markers, created the gender difference necessary to present female or male characters on stage. The performer thus developed dual identities, one as a real life person and one as the character he chose to inhabit.

This thesis embraces the similar duality of the prima donna who performs both the stereotype of “diva” (the historical Eve/siren) and the socio-cultural construct of “woman.” This study embraces Butler’s theory that acts, gestures, and behaviors play more crucial roles in the creation of gender than do biological markers. Where literature is concerned, Butler’s theory becomes all the more relevant. Artist-heroines necessarily play three roles: literary heroine, artist/prima donna, and social woman (the real life woman who, off-stage, has to live in her contemporary social milieu). It is the literary heroine’s navigation of her various roles that determines whether she achieves professional success, personal happiness, and/or survives as a

¹¹¹ Austern, “ ‘No women are indeed’,” 83. “Since femininity was so easily reducible to a set of actions and responses, especially when set against a masculine norm, it was easily reproducible by an actor whose natural tendencies were believed to be effeminate and whose additional training specialized in close mimicry.” Ibid., 86.

heroine (as opposed to becoming a tragic heroine). With an author in control of the character and plot, prima donna heroines' behavior, acts, and gestures in their various roles become that much more obvious as "performances" rather than as ways of "being." It is appropriate within the scope of this thesis to define the encoded socio-cultural behaviors, acts, and gestures that define "woman" or "feminine" or "diva" as a method of containment.¹¹²

Outside the pages of opera literature, real life prima donnas had the opportunity to perform according to normative standards or try to break free. Though society recognizes biological difference all too well in the case of prima donnas whose bodies and voices form the locus of voyeuristic pleasure, Pauline Viardot's performance of "woman" and "prima donna" both embraced and subverted normative behavior, ultimately undermining the socio-cultural codings of her time to create a new dimension for women and artist-heroines in literature. This new dimension might constitute a new, more fluid gender category.¹¹³

Balancing Containment and the Liberation of Women Through Opera

In summary, I acknowledge the difficulty in dismissing what has become an extremely well-documented theory—the "undoing" of women in opera—while agreeing with Abbate, Dunn and Jones that ample room exists for exceptions to the rule. This thesis on Pauline Viardot must accept both theories—the undoing of women, and the empowerment of women through their literal voices—in order to best analyze the experience of real and fictional prima donnas in nineteenth-century French opera culture. Some women became completely enveloped in the containment discourse described above; a few others, notably Pauline Viardot, escaped

¹¹² This thesis uses the terms "woman" and "feminine/female" to distinguish between biological women and other persons who, according to Butler's theories, could be described as feminine or female. At crucial moments in the thesis it behooves the reader to pay close attention to the use of "woman" in distinction to "feminine/female," especially as concerns nineteenth-century definitions of appropriate "feminine" behavior for women and Pauline Viardot's embracing or rejection of such social norms. Take special note where her behavior matches "feminine" standards" but her actions otherwise fall outside the scope of acceptable "female" employment.

¹¹³ See Martha C. Nussbaum, "The Professor of Parody," *The New Republic* (22 February 1999): 40.

association with the prima donna stereotype to carve out a unique position within society and the opera novel. They achieved positions of financial success, personal happiness, respect among male peers, and social acceptance (and even celebration). How did Pauline navigate the prima donna stereotype as compared with her contemporary prima donnas? How did her life example enable George Sand to create a successful opera heroine in 1842 when only a few years before Sand concluded *Lélia* (1833) by murdering her heroine?

CHAPTER TWO: THE SOCIAL WOMAN

Pauline Viardot, like every other prima donna, was born into a particular social milieu with delimited social spaces, hierarchies, wealth distinctions and disparities, and approved behaviors for both men and women within their respective classes.¹ Nineteenth-century France presents a somewhat convoluted social landscape, though a distinct order may be identified despite fairly regular political and social upheavals.² This chapter will explore Pauline Viardot's social milieu, its expectations of women, the emergent bourgeois ideal, and the placement of prima donnas and other career women within the social order. Despite restrictive social standards for women and the propensity of society to relegate career women to a social no-man's land, Viardot successfully navigated social expectations of her *both* as a woman *and* as a prima donna to achieve a well-respected position within mainstream society, while enjoying lasting personal happiness within her social and familial sphere.

Social Politics Formed During the French Revolution

The nineteenth century's emergent social organization was heavily influenced by propagandist ideals perpetrated in the closing years of the French Revolution and by the Napoleonic Code. During the French Revolution, various writers and the prevailing government launched a crusade to recapture a lost sense of womanhood. Women all over France were bombarded with visual and aural propaganda of the good-mother/bad-mother dichotomy, designed to inspire them to rise to their sacred calling to rear "a nation of courageous, democratic, liberty-loving men."³ In his speech "The Good Mother," C. du Laurent rebuked women for neglecting their husbands and offspring: "Since the laws would expressly forbid

¹ Consider the following sources on gender differentiation in nineteenth-century European society: Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-siècle Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Gutwirth, *Twilight*.

² Davidson, *France after Revolution*, 2.

³ Gutwirth, *Twilight*, 350.

women all forms of public participation, they must place their pride and their (mitigated) pleasures in the satisfaction of their spouses and their young: for this is what the Nation-as-Mother orders them to do.”⁴ Madelyn Gutwirth further summarizes the socio-political fate of French women: “After Thermidor...the regime of compulsory female conjugality was firmly in place, as it had been tending to become since well before the Revolution: the épouse et mère (wife-mother) was relentlessly installed as the sole acceptable ideal for women.”⁵ This ideal persisted even after the French Revolution. Women such as authoress Sophie Cottin in post-Revolutionary France suffered a sort of identity crisis within the “pronatalistic culture which valorized women according to their fertility and productivity....”⁶ Sophie Cottin felt compelled by her society to become a wife and mother but she had trouble conceiving and could never carry a child full term. Evidence of her struggle between fulfilling society’s expectations and carving out an independent identity for herself pervades her work. Meanwhile under Napoleon, harsher legal and social standards further marginalized women by encouraging “dichotomized gender roles,” excluding “women from the ‘public sphere’ and politics,” and establishing stiffer divorce laws favoring men.⁷ According to Denise Davidson, historians frequently compare French women’s apparent freedoms in the eighteenth century to their socially restricted status in the nineteenth century, when the clear separation between a political public realm and an apolitical private sphere theoretically kept women from having political influence. The dominant argument has been that the Revolution brought about women’s exclusion from the politicized public sphere, as evidenced by the 1793

⁴ Ibid., 348.

⁵ Ibid., 366.

⁶ Michael J. Call, “Measuring Up: Infertility and ‘Plénitude’ in Sophie Cottin’s *Claire d’Albe*,” *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 7, no. 2 (January 1995), 185.

⁷ Waltraud Maierhofer, “Napoleon and Women? Women against Napoleon!” in *Women against Napoleon: Historical and Fictional Responses to His Rise and Legacy*, eds. Waltraud Maierhofer, Gertrud M. Roesch, Caroline Bland (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2007), 12.

law banning women's clubs, and by women's subordinate status in the family as defined by the Napoleonic Code.⁸

Women were expected to meet an ideal of feminine docility and deference to father or husband; they were expected to fulfill an image of womanhood which dictated certain female characteristics and assigned their primary role as wife and mother.⁹

Social Topography in the Paris of Pauline's Time

Though France's social topography became a site of regular change with its various political upheavals from the initial reordering by the French Revolution through the more enduring changes occasioned by the Third Republic, Denise Davidson is quick to assert that gender emerged as "more 'natural' than other categories of differentiation" resulting in "women's dress, morals, education, and comportment" becoming "central to the processes of observation and categorization that helped build a sense of how postrevolutionary [*sic*] society would operate."¹⁰ Gender remained a constant in the midst of political and social flux. In early-nineteenth-century France, the primary role approved for women of all classes remained motherhood. In Paris, at least, these gendered social codes became organized within the framework of a burgeoning new middle class. Bourgeois ideals infused society, giving clear shape to the emerging post-revolutionary social order. Women of the middle and upper classes participated in salons, charity projects, and amateur music performance and artistic development. Each of these activities was sanctioned within the dominant social order.

⁸ Davidson, *France after Revolution*, 5.

⁹ Recent scholarly works on women in nineteenth-century France include: Susan K. Foley, *Women in France Since 1789: The Meanings of Difference* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Stephen D. Kale, "Women, the Public Sphere, and the Persistence of Salons," *French Historical Studies* 25, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 115–48; Martyn Lyons, *Readers and Society in Nineteenth-Century France: Workers, Women, Peasants* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

¹⁰ Davidson, *France after Revolution*, 2.

The Social World of the Prima Donna

Every prima donna, whether real or fictional, exists within a delimited world of social order, wealth disparity, and written as well as unwritten codes governing behavior across gender and class. The woman behind the opera star is almost forgotten because those who chose performance careers were frequently defined by their profession rather than as human beings. In her work *The Prima Donna and Opera*, Susan Rutherford identifies three categories of the prima donna image disseminated in the nineteenth century: the “*demi-mondaine*, professional artist and exalted diva.”¹¹ Nineteenth-century desire to categorize and restore order to society (perhaps especially in France) may certainly have driven efforts to block women opera singers into a specific social category. Their inheritance of the siren image most likely made *demi-mondaine* the obvious choice for social organization purposes.

The demi-monde, a kind of subculture that flourished in France during the days of the Second Empire, primarily consisted of

the *déclassées* or simply those women without class, victims of a scandal, divorcées, those separated from or abandoned by their husband or lover, merry widows, rich foreign women.... It included the ‘poor lionesses,’ described by Emile Augier, who depended on *galanterie* to be able to buy the clothes that tempted them. Finally, it included young women from the lower classes who had been launched.¹²

¹¹ Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*, 31.

¹² Alain Corbin, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 135: “Launched” refers to young women who had attempted stage careers but failed.

These women enjoyed great privilege and influence through their very public sexual relations with “eminent men of the day.”¹³ Also known as courtesans, demi-mondaines made their living by courting powerful and wealthy men who supplied funds to live lavishly: “[M]ost of them, at some time or other, enjoyed their own *hôtel*, perhaps their own *château*, their impeccable horses and carriages, their magnificent clothes and jewels.... They made their mark in the Bois de Boulogne, in their boxes at the theatre, at Longchamp, Vichy, Baden, sometimes further afield. They constituted a class apart, an extraordinary sorority.”¹⁴ Among women who played the courtesan for pleasure (rather than for gainful employment), Joanna Richardson includes Rachel,¹⁵ who made her theater debut around the same time Pauline made her public singing debut, and “Sarah Bernhardt, who declared: ‘I have been among the great lovers of my time.’”¹⁶ Rutherford posits, “other singers similarly straddled uneasily the fault lines between ‘diva’ and ‘whore’.”¹⁷ Unfortunately, Rutherford provides no additional explanation for why the “diva” should become interchangeable with the “whore” other than the propensity of some prima donnas and actresses to live the lives of courtesans. Alain Corbin and Joanna Richardson present compelling evidence in the form of additional information about social conventions and prostitution in the nineteenth century that clarifies why prima donnas were so readily labeled as “whores.”

The sirenic image discussed elsewhere in this thesis certainly fits into the discussion of how prima donnas “straddled uneasily the fault lines between ‘diva’ and ‘whore’.” Specific nineteenth-century sociological developments, however, contributed significantly to society’s

¹³ Joanna Richardson, *The Courtesans: The Demi-monde in Nineteenth-Century France* (New York: World Publishing Company, 1967), 3.

¹⁴ Richardson, *Courtesans*, 3.

¹⁵ A stage actress born Elisa Félix who used the name “Rachel” as a stage name throughout her career.

¹⁶ Richardson, *Courtesans*, 4.

¹⁷ Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*, 32.

tendency to categorize women performers as socially disreputable. Women opera singers fell into a social conundrum occasioned by the glorification of *épouse et mère* which endured from the end of the French Revolution, through the Napoleonic Code, and well into the nineteenth century. Alain Corbin argues that the glorification of the *épouse et mère* model established a standard for all women to be and be seen as paragons of purity and virtue. This had the negative effect of making them inaccessible as partners in achieving sexual satisfaction; hence the growth of prostitution in the nineteenth century as a viable means of sexual fulfillment for men.¹⁸ With this shift in social ideology (where sex in marriage becomes closely bound up with duty rather than pleasure), any woman appearing in public who was not attached as “wife and mother” automatically fell into the other category for women—objects of sexual desire/prostitutes and, therefore, members of the demi-monde. No wonder prima donnas, who performed on public stages and literally put their sexuality on display, evoked this widespread social attitude. As Rutherford points out, many prima donnas’ everyday activities and behavior including sex scandals, temper tantrums, illicit affairs, unseemly public behavior, out-of-wedlock pregnancy, and more only encouraged the social stigma to stick.¹⁹

It also did not help that a good number of the demi-mondaines came “from the ranks of the *bourgeoisie populaire*, young women who had reached a certain educational level without being able to take up an honorable profession. Very often this category included unsuccessful theatrical artists who had been forced to turn to *galanterie* as their main means of subsistence.”²⁰ Otherwise respectable young women who had been educated and had attempted careers in the theater (and maybe even the opera house), fell easily into prostitution as their only viable means of securing a livelihood. If the general public were aware of the frequency with which failed

¹⁸ Corbin, *Women for Hire*, 194–95.

¹⁹ Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*, 31–32.

²⁰ Corbin, *Women for Hire*, 135.

performers resorted to prostitution, certainly it would have reinforced the connection between actresses/singers and prostitutes. Also of interest is the rise of *beuglants*, where patrons enjoyed musical performances from young women before being served in a private dining room. Significantly, the women performing in these establishments were initially enticed by the promise of becoming “artistes”; their contracts, however, made their actual vocation clear: that of prostitute.²¹ The prima donna’s association with the demi-monde was in many ways self-fulfilling. Not only did her public position and behavior encourage the appellation “whore,” but the propensity of failed performers to fall into prostitution made it a veritable likelihood (in the mind of society) that all prima donnas were members of the demi-monde. No wonder, then, that “the nomenclature ‘prima donna’ was used as a synonym for ‘prostitute’” and “in Italy that terms ‘virtuosa’ and ‘prostitute’ were similarly interchangeable.”²²

The prima donna’s difficulty in moving past demi-mondaine status is understandable when the association between her public position and prostitution was all too clear. When the very circles many prima donnas moved in evoked the courtesans and mistresses of the elite, when musicians appeared on stages contractually as prostitutes, any prima donna seeking social respectability faced an uphill battle. The next several paragraphs will explore the social machinations of nineteenth-century prima donnas as a backdrop to analyzing Pauline Viardot’s contrasting behavior and her social success.

Pauline’s contemporary prima donnas and immediate successors engaged in various levels of socially unacceptable behavior that only served to reinforce the prima donna stereotype and relegated these women to the ranks of Corbin’s *déclassées*. Maria Malibran presents a desirable first case study since she was Pauline’s older sister and her behavior differed widely

²¹ Ibid., 171–74.

²² Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*, 42.

from Pauline's.²³ While the family was introducing Grand Opera to America in 1826, Maria engaged herself to and married Eugène Malibran. Within months she had left her husband and returned to Europe to continue her opera career. Although her initial movements in Europe show some concern for social respectability, she quickly revealed what became common behavior for her: fighting against the established social order.²⁴ Maria then went to live with an old family friend (Mademoiselle Naldi) who represented the ideal social behavior for a prima donna: she had some success as a prima donna, she married Count Sparre, she became Countess Sparre, then she quit the theater forever.²⁵ Maria, on the other hand, had some success as a prima donna, married, left her husband in America to continue her career in Europe, achieved widespread fame, fell in love with Charles de Bériot, divorced her husband, had de Bériot's child, and then married de Bériot. From Pougin's timeline and record of Maria's success in Europe following her return from America in 1826, it appears Maria travelled mostly on her own, made friends with whomever she pleased,²⁶ conducted her own negotiations,²⁷ and generally disregarded social convention.

Rosine Stoltz provides another interesting case study of a prima donna who lived outside mainstream society and whose behavior reinforced the stereotype applied to career women.

Deliberately obscuring her origins with frequent name changes and imagined biographical

²³ Arthur Pougin, *Marie Malibran: histoire d'une cantatrice*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1911), 55. Malibran's early biographer Arthur Pougin describes Maria's temperament as eccentric. Her father thought her lazy and undisciplined.

²⁴ Pougin, *Marie Malibran*, 46. Maria lived with her husband's sister for several months to prevent social fallout but moved away as quickly as possible due to some disagreements about how Maria should conduct herself. "Maria ne tarda pas à être mécontente de la famille de M. Malibran. Elle se plaignait de la tutelle hostile à laquelle on voulait soumettre sa personne et son argent..." [It did not take Maria long to become discontent with Monsieur Malibran's family. She complained of the hostile guardianship to which they wanted her to submit her person and her money...].

²⁵ "Plus âgée de quelques années que la fille de García, elle s'était intéressée à elle et l'avait prise en affection. Lorsque Mme Malibran, mariée, revint d'Amérique à Paris, elle retrouva son amie, mariée aussi, ayant épousé le comte de Sparre et, par suite, quitté le théâtre" [Many years older than García's daughter, she interested herself in (Maria) and took a liking to her. When Madame Malibran, married, returned to Paris from America, she found her friend, also married, having married the count of Sparre and subsequently quit the theater]. *Ibid.*, 45.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 63–64.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 56–58, 60.

details, Rosine Stoltz lived entirely within a fantasy world of her own creation.²⁸ She married and divorced several different times,²⁹ famously carried on an affair with the director of the Paris Opéra (Léon Pillet),³⁰ had children out of wedlock,³¹ and “wrote a pamphlet on spiritualism, *Dictées spirites...*”³² Stoltz’s affair with Pillet inspired some of the most vitriolic attacks against her character as well as widespread criticism.³³ Despite the flair with which she lived her life and the excitement she inspired in the press with her affairs and temperamental outbursts,³⁴ “she ended her days alone at the Hotel Bellevue near the Opéra; according to one report, only two mourners followed her body to the grave... Stoltz was buried in the cemetery for the poor at Pantin, just outside Paris.”³⁵ How Stoltz lived out her days provides useful insight into her social standing: the fact that very few if any people participated in her funeral and that, regardless of how wealthy she reportedly died, she was buried in the cemetery for the poor, reveals she had no social standing in her contemporary society.

Ellen Clayton, Susan Rutherford, and John Roselli supply additional examples of the social activities of Pauline’s contemporary prima donnas. Giulia Grisi, Pauline’s devoted rival, began her career on the stage by signing a contract with Lanari (who turned out to be a profiteer)

²⁸ Smart, “Lost Voice,” 41–43.

²⁹ M. Lescuyer prior to 1836 (ibid., 43); prince of Lesignano in 1872 on his deathbed (ibid., 41); Emmanuel-Charles-Louis Godoy, prince de Bassano in 1878 (ibid., 45); mistress to the Emperor of Brazil, then married a baron, a count and a prince (ibid., 38, n. 22).

³⁰ “Romanticising biographers drew from this plot many ingenious and unlikely connections, but the most popular subsumed Stoltz into the labyrinthine institutional intrigues of the Opéra, as the spoilt protégée of the Opéra’s director, Leon Pillet. References to her as ‘la favorite’ were a convenient and not-too-libellous shorthand for the protection she was said to receive from the ‘king’ of the Opéra. A typical insinuation was as understated as the report in *La France musicale*: ‘Mme. Stoltz has departed for Baden-Baden; M. L. Pillet accompanies her’. A more savage reference appeared, not surprisingly, in the satirical journal, *Le Charivari*, which called Stoltz the ‘surintendante’ of the Opéra.” Smart, “Lost Voice,” 37.

³¹ “In articles published between August and November of 1842, Champein accused Stoltz of eloping to Brussels with a fellow voice student, and of bearing and abandoning two children in 1833 and 1834.” Ibid., 41 and 37, n. 18.

³² Ibid., 41, 46.

³³ Pillet maintained his post as director of the Opéra while continuing to court and bend to the demands of Stoltz, receiving his own share of the criticism. Many blamed the Opéra’s decline in the 1840s on Pillet’s attachment to and preference for Stoltz. See Ibid., 38.

³⁴ Ibid., 40.

³⁵ Ibid., 46.

without her father's consent for six years of work. Within a few years she was forced to abscond to Paris to escape the contract.³⁶ Grisi married a French gentleman in 1836 after she had established her career in 1833 and only months following a narrowly avoided attack by a stalker.³⁷ Certainly the prima donna's public visibility placed her in an unsavory social position. The protection afforded by a father or husband would have precluded the appearance of vulnerability and possibly prevented such actions. Even after her marriage, Grisi inspired character attacks in major newspapers such as the London *Standard*, which described her "contemptuously...as a foreign 'singing woman' when it reported the duel fought over her by Lord Castlereagh and her husband Vicomte Gérard de Melcy...."³⁸ Grisi's marriage to de Melcy ended in separation and alimony payments to her husband.³⁹ She eventually took up with the tenor Mario.

Several prima donnas also exhibited their disregard for "bourgeois notions of female decorum" in their character portrayal on stage.⁴⁰ Giuditta Pasta daringly took on the role of Otello for her benefit in 1828 "but the innovation was not liked."⁴¹ Maria Malibran attempted the same experiment in 1831 without success; she was also criticized for brandishing two pistols at the governor during *Fidelio* whereas Wilhelmina Schröder Devrient's violent shaking in the same scene inspired the audience to praise her very feminine (and socially appropriate) impersonation of the role.⁴² Courtesan lifestyles,⁴³ affairs, marriages and divorces, and out-of-wedlock pregnancies were all more common among prima donnas in the seventeenth and

³⁶ Ellen C. Clayton, *Queens of Song: Being Memoirs of Some of the Most Celebrated Female Vocalists who Have Performed on the Lyric Stage from the Earliest Date of Opera to the Present Time* (1865; repr., Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1972), 365, 368–69.

³⁷ Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*, 149–50.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 31–32.

³⁹ Roselli, *Singers of Italian Opera*, 182; Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*, 153.

⁴⁰ Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*, 15.

⁴¹ Clayton, *Queens of Song*, 261; Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*, 245.

⁴² Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*, 264; Clayton, *Queens of Song*, 289.

⁴³ See Roselli, *Singers of Italian Opera*, 61–63 for specific examples of prima donna courtesans.

eighteenth centuries according to John Roselli, who also argues that a marked improvement in prima donnas' social standing occurred in the nineteenth century. On the other hand, Roselli acknowledges continued widespread concerns about prima donnas' moral character and social respectability: a frequent requirement of a prima donna's marriage was that she quit her career,⁴⁴ while "as late as 1841" a prima donna's "morals and conduct" had to be formally vouched for by a respectable man.⁴⁵ Prior to 1850, London drawing rooms maintained tangible boundaries, "separating the artists' corner from the guests and making them feel like zoo exhibits."⁴⁶ Apparently they felt the need to maintain the distinction between artists and respectable members of mainstream society.

*Serving the "nineteenth-century cult of morality and respectability"*⁴⁷

Though French society underwent many transitions immediately following the French Revolution, historian Denise Davidson suggests social differences began to settle into a normative hierarchy by the 1820s. The demi-monde became part of this order and career women seemed to happily participate in the "approved" subculture. At least, many performed to social expectations by living the prima donna stereotype. In his 1859 tribute to Pauline, Liszt wrote of the prima donna, "she will hold a position apart from others [other women musicians] by force of the variety of her talents, her equal mastery of Italian, French and German art, her extraordinary cultural accomplishments, the nobility of her character and the purity of her private life."⁴⁸ Liszt's portrait of Pauline's noble character and "purity of private life" contrasts sharply with the image of the socially inferior prima donna. How did Pauline inspire such reverence for her moral

⁴⁴ Ibid., 182.

⁴⁵ "Such was the ill repute of women singers in general that even the dazzling technicians of serious opera had to be recommended (when it was at all possible) for the excellence of their morals and conduct...." Ibid., 60.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 182.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 67.

⁴⁸ Pauline Viardot-García, "Pauline Viardot-García to Julius Rietz: Letters of Friendship," trans. Theodore Baker, in *The Musical Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (July 1915): 352.

character and social uprightness? Pauline Viardot's navigation of the Parisian and European social stages reflects a concern with normative and approved behavior for women. Her behavior and choices in regards to socially coded activities betray a conscious effort to align herself with the most respectable, mainstream levels of her contemporary society and at the same time demonstrate an unusual level of social success, here defined as Viardot's transcendence of social restrictions placed on women and prima donnas in the nineteenth century.

April FitzLyon asserts that Manuel García (père) exerted the greatest parental influence on Pauline, and this may well explain her drive and devotion to maintaining a position in respectable society. Manuel García, born an orphan, lacked no small degree of personality or talent. When he and Joaquina Siches (Pauline's mother) moved to Paris in 1807, Manuel ingratiated himself into the middle class. By the time Pauline was born in July 1821 and christened on August 29, García had made substantial social and musical connections such that he could choose Princess Pauline Praskovia Galitzine (Countess of Schonvalsh) and Ferdinando Paer as his newborn daughter's godparents.⁴⁹ FitzLyon notes the symbolism of these choices, so obvious in retrospect, but is at a loss to explain why Manuel would have chosen the Russian Princess aside from her support of the arts. The princess "was a society lady, whose husband belonged to a notable Russian family.... [Her] salon in Paris was a meeting place for writers, artists and musicians; she played a prominent part in that Franco-Russian cultural and intellectual exchange...."⁵⁰ One explanation born out by additional evidence is that García was intensely concerned with social station and being accepted in reputable social circles. García sought status and respect both in his chosen profession and in society. García's training in Italy, undertaken at an older age than most of his contemporary tenors, brought him into contact with Giovanni

⁴⁹ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 15. Ferdinando Paer worked as the director of the Théâtre Italien in Paris from 1812–1823. See also Clayton, *Queens of Song*, 398.

⁵⁰ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 15.

Anzani who “not only...develop[ed] García’s voice to its fullest extent; he also laid the foundation for García’s own exploits into the realm of vocal pedagogy, which continue to bear fruit to the present day.”⁵¹ Rossini became one of his closest friends and collaborators, writing the role of Count Almaviva for García. In 1814, “King Murat named García first tenor of his chamber and chapel in Naples”⁵² due to his performance and compositional successes in Italy. Once he returned to Paris, García became a celebrated tenor. When that star began to fade, García envisioned a new, grand opportunity for himself and his family. His moves to Paris, Italy, and America all evidence his drive for improving his art, but also for doing something grand with his life which generations to come would remember—being responsible for the premiere of Italian opera in New York City certainly ranks among his many outstanding accomplishments as a musician.

Above all, García concerned himself with musicianship (for which he had had excellent training in Seville⁵³) and carefully crafted dramatic performance. García envisioned great things for his children. Each of them underwent intense musical training from young ages, beginning with Manuel (fils) and Maria in Naples in 1811: “for them” García engaged “the best teachers of piano and theory.”⁵⁴ He was strict, but he was committed to giving his children the skills necessary for them to surpass even his own accomplishments as a musician and artist. The underlying concern with social station I observe in García’s movements becomes most apparent in his interactions with Maria. FitzLyon posits that Maria’s hasty marriage to Eugène Malibran in New York City in 1826 served “as a means of escape.... Her childhood and youth with her family had not been happy; her wayward, proud and headstrong character was unable to submit

⁵¹ Radomski, *Manuel García*, 104.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 109.

⁵³ “His musical training at Seville in counterpoint, keyboard, and violin had given García the sound musicianship that was the hallmark of his style: extreme flexibility and precision, faultless intonation.” *Ibid.*, 103–4.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 104.

to her father's harsh and sometimes brutal discipline."⁵⁵ The rift that developed between father and daughter seems to mirror the tension between the patriarchal order and aberrant women. Maria quarreled frequently with her father both before and after her 1826 marriage. "When it became evident that Maria was expecting a child [by Charles de Bériot], another quarrel broke out.... Far from sympathizing with her predicament, García closed his house to her and refused to see her."⁵⁶ García believed Maria had brought great shame on the family, further evidencing his concern with social stature.

Pauline was at an impressionable age, and it is likely that the bourgeois aspect of her character stemmed from her memories of the fuss the family made over Maria's illicit affair. When she became pregnant they were horrified, and their paranoid fear of scandal was something that had a great effect on Pauline's adult moral attitude. Even when she became a member of the theatrical profession herself, she valued respectability to an inordinate extent. To her, social acceptance was essential, and she held herself aloof from colleagues with loose morals. All her life, she had a strong sense of self-preservation, and a resolute will power, and there is little doubt that these were inculcated by Maria's fall from grace, and the reactions of her parents.⁵⁷

Certainly out-of-wedlock pregnancy was looked down upon in nineteenth-century France (though as a prima donna, Maria fulfilled many expectations with her radical behavior) and no one seems to have been more mortified than her father, the Spanish orphan who had achieved both position, respect, fame, and some amount of wealth in his profession.

⁵⁵ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 24.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁵⁷ Barbara Kendall-Davies, *The Life and Work of Pauline Viardot-García*, vol. 1, *The Years of Fame, 1836-1863* (London: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2003), 9.

Records and memories of Pauline indicate that her natural disposition differed widely from Maria's. A Madame d'Agoult wrote "to Liszt that Pauline seemed to her to be 'noble and proud', that she had the air of being '*une demoiselle du très grand monde*'." Delacroix wrote that Maria was never noble and she was "totally lacking in the ideal."⁵⁸ Pauline was her father's favorite from a very young age and Pauline "felt what amounted to hero-worship for [her father]."⁵⁹ In the section of her diary entitled *Souvenirs*, Pauline sketches a portrait of her father's character that aligns with FitzLyon's assessment of their relationship; Pauline wrote: "il avait une facilité extrême pour tout a qu'il voulait faire. Il serait devenu peintre, écrivain, guitariste, violoniste [*sic*], flutiste...."⁶⁰ García, according to Pauline, was also a great composer. Pauline's penchant for hard work earned her the nickname "the ant"; García maintained that Maria could "only become a great artist at" the price of harsh discipline while Pauline needed "only a silken thread." "I have never scolded her, and yet *she* will get on."⁶¹ Pauline proved an apt and engaged pupil. She had had little formal vocal training when she made her debut in 1837 aside from what she had absorbed from sitting in on her siblings' lessons and the lessons her father gave various students before his death in June 1832.

Pauline moved from one parent's guidance to the other's at that point, and apparently treated her mother with the same respect and obedience that had been so characteristic of her. Following Maria's death in 1836, Pauline remembers "Le jour où j'ai eu 16 ans, maman m'a dit d'essayer ma voix. On la trouva bonne 'à présent tu va fermer du piano et tu va te mettre à

⁵⁸ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 71.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 18. Pauline's hero worship exposes the delicate balance of the argument I try to make: Pauline voluntarily submits to the patriarchy and, through her compliance, gains the freedom to subvert specific aspects of the patriarchal social order.

⁶⁰ Pauline Viardot-García, journal, 1863–1892, b MS Mus 264 (365), MS Mus 264: Pauline Viardot-García additional papers, 1838–1912, Houghton Library, Harvard University. The collection of which this is a part is hereafter cited as PVG add. papers. "He had an extreme facility for everything he would try. He could have been painter, writer, guitarist, violinist, flautist...."

⁶¹ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 25.

chanter.”⁶² Despite Pauline’s love of the piano and great desire to become a concert pianist, she complied with her mother’s wishes and trained for three months before her debut vocal concert on 13 December 1837. The early chapters of Pauline’s career are peppered with the influence and advice of her managers, her mother and her brother-in-law. As Rutherford points out, any prima donna desiring to maintain a respectable social image required a manager, preferably a father but mothers and other family members could help as well: “Chaperonage was a primary aspect of the stage mother’s responsibilities, as a means of protecting the singer herself from unwanted sexual advances and also her reputation from scurrilous gossips.”⁶³ While at times her mother and Charles de Bériot’s advice and musical selections were not always appropriate for Pauline’s voice and consequently may have stymied a faster development into the star her sister had become,⁶⁴ Pauline maintained the approved social standing for a young girl in her position. FitzLyon paints a portrait of Pauline’s youthful awkwardness and its charm, also contrasting her behavior with that of the expectation set for women in theater: “Pauline, strictly brought up in the Spanish [*sic*] manner, was, in spite of her chosen career in the theatre, very young and innocent.”⁶⁵ Pauline did not actively seek to overthrow parental guidance (unlike Maria) and only began to assert her own taste when she made the socially sanctioned transition into marriage.

George Sand met Pauline sometime in 1839, perhaps through Louis Viardot himself who had been a friend and advisor to Maria Malibran (prior to her death in 1836) and was later

⁶² Pauline Viardot-García, “Souvenirs,” in Pauline Viardot-García, journal, PVG add. papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University. “The day I turned 16 years old, mother told me to try my voice. She found it good [and told me] ‘you will close the piano and apply [your energies] to your voice.’”

⁶³ Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*, 128.

⁶⁴ “Pauline’s first public concert in Paris took place 15 December 1838 at the Théâtre de la Renaissance.... The music chosen for her—probably by her mother and Charles de Bériot—was unsuitable and second-rate.... The orchestra accompanied her badly.” FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 50–51.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 79.

responsible for Pauline's 1839 contract to perform at the Théâtre Italien in Paris.⁶⁶ At least until 1844 (when Sand and Pauline had a falling out over several misunderstandings),⁶⁷ Sand enjoyed considerable influence over Pauline, seventeen years her junior, in whom Sand "sensed...a kindred spirit whom she could understand, and who could understand her."⁶⁸ The two exchanged letters regularly and addressed each other in consistently affectionate terms. Sand took an intense interest in Pauline's career and professional development, she wrote articles about Pauline in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*,⁶⁹ and in 1841 began her new novel about a prima donna modeled on Pauline's example. Recognizing great genius in Pauline, Sand also found in her the embodiment of her vision of the ideal artist. Letters from Sand to Pauline are filled with praise and encouragement, and the expression of artistic ideals. According to FitzLyon:

Although during the nineteenth century many artists abandoned conventional morality and *bourgeois* security in the names of Freedom, Love and Art, Pauline was not among them. 'La vie de bohème' held no charm for her, and she seems to have agreed with the idea which George Sand had preached to her—although George had not practised [*sic*] it herself—that in the security of a conventional *bourgeois* life an artist can best develop his or her talents and follow his high calling.⁷⁰

The bourgeois ideal of which FitzLyon speaks captures the time honored roles of *épouse et mère* for women. It also denounced activities that challenged this model and condemned behavior that countered the ideal of feminine weakness, docility, and submission.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 68.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 173.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 76.

⁶⁹ See issue from 14 February 1840.

⁷⁰ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 189. For information on the life of the artist, "la vie de bohème," and a brief description of Sand's exemplary participation in that life, see Anne Martin-Fugier, *Les Romantiques: Figures de l'artiste, 1820–1848* (Paris: Hachette Littératures, 1998), 18–23.

Soon after Pauline's début at the Théâtre Italien in Paris (October 1839), Pauline's mother and George Sand orchestrated her marriage to Louis Viardot. Having a husband was the next step to social conformity, and for her mother it was of the utmost importance that Pauline "be protected both morally and financially."⁷¹ Viardot proved an excellent match. In George Sand's estimation Louis "could give Pauline...affection, security, moral support—but above all, security, both emotional and material."⁷² At the advent of his marriage, Louis Viardot quit his job as director of the Théâtre Italien so as not to create conflicts of interest—contrast this behavior with that of Léon Pillet and Rosine Stoltz discussed earlier in the chapter where the impresario and prima donna's personal relationship interfered with the smooth and successful running of the Opéra. In addition to pursuing his hobbies in hunting, translation, literary publication, and politics, Louis overtook management of Pauline's career from her mother. Ample evidence reveals, however, that Pauline participated fully in directing her development as a musician, sometimes orchestrated her own negotiations,⁷³ and even travelled without her husband to various musical engagements.⁷⁴

As George Sand hoped, "Louis Viardot was the right man to serve as a background to Pauline's artistic career...."⁷⁵ Pauline's insistence on using her socially appropriate moniker "Madame Viardot" for all posters, programs, advertisements, publications, and announcements highlights her commitment to the social order: wife first, professional artist second. Critics all followed suit, referring to Pauline as Madame Viardot in their reviews, correspondence, and

⁷¹ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 81.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Pauline clearly deferred to her husband in negotiations for the most part, as was socially acceptable; even when it seemed Louis' lack of initiative for the 1842–43 season had cost Pauline several rumored opportunities for career advancement. *Ibid.*, 120.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 90. Sand accompanied Pauline to a concert in Cambrai in August 1840.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 81–82.

other publications.⁷⁶ Perhaps driven by her father's desire for social respectability, her predisposition to obedience, a lasting sense of the shame Maria had brought on the family,⁷⁷ and the influence of George Sand, Pauline accepted the social position afforded by her marriage to Viardot and outwardly manifested her voluntary participation in the dominant social order with the use of her husband's name. Unlike the Giuditta Pastas who used their maiden name, the Rosine Stoltzs who made up stage names, or the Malibrans who at once achieved and then discarded social position by assuming the title "la" Malibran, Pauline made her position amply clear with her firm insistence on using the simple but socially marked "Madame Viardot."

With this foundation in place, Pauline was free to pursue her career and devote herself entirely to her art. "There was never any question at this stage between her marriage, her home-life and her career: her career came first, meant everything to her, and occupied all her time and energies." Louis had two ageing sisters who "were quite willing to run their brother's home for him" while Pauline expressed no interest in "domestic problems, in the small details of house-keeping or, for that matter, in small babies. She was content to leave these things to others..."⁷⁸ No one seems to mind that Pauline took little or no part in running her household (at least, FitzLyon makes no mention of any voiced public social concern); she had already fulfilled the barebones requirements for respectable social standing by marrying, taking her husband's name, and producing a child, Louise Pauline Marie born on December 14, 1841. This fulfilled what Anne Higonnet describes as the "most mimetic" of "female obligations": "according to the tenets of nineteenth-century feminine pedagogy, a mother inculcated in her daughter the roles of

⁷⁶ See Henry F. Chorley, *Thirty Years' Musical Recollections*, 2 vols., Da Capo Press Music Reprint Series (New York: Da Capo, 1984 [London: Hurst and Blackett, 1862]) and articles in the *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris*, e.g. Maurice Bourges, "Sixième Concert du Conservatoire," *Revue* 10, no. 12 (19 March 1843): 5; Maurice Schlesinger, "Chronique étrangère," *Revue* 10, no. 50 (19 December 1843): 6.

⁷⁷ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 34.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 110.

daughter, wife, and mother. This reproduction of ideology was intended to maintain women within domestic confines.”⁷⁹ While Pauline did not take an active role in the rearing of her oldest daughter, the fact that Pauline had a daughter seems to have been enough to satisfy this “female obligation” placed upon her by society to promote and propagate the social ideal of *épouse et mère*. Though Pauline’s lack of involvement in family life later became problematic (mostly privately with Louise’s feelings of bitterness), she eventually bore three more children, all of whom grew to adulthood with excellent musical and artistic training to raise families of their own. This adherence to social custom was noted publicly in an obituary commemorating Pauline’s death in 1910, evidencing the value society still placed on the roles of wife and mother.⁸⁰

In addition to her musical craft, Pauline spent ample time in other areas of personal refinement bearing society’s stamp of approval for appropriate women’s activities. Initially trained as a pianist, Pauline continued practicing and playing throughout her life.⁸¹ She also trained on the organ and is one of few people to have had an organ installed in her home.⁸² Pauline enjoyed considerable talent in painting and sketching which she developed on her own, according to Ellen Clayton, who (in 1865) published a collection of biographical sketches of the major women singers from the beginnings of opera to 1865.⁸³ Sketching and watercolors constituted two more approved activities for women. Several sketchbooks, collections of

⁷⁹ Anne Higonnet, “The Other Side of the Mirror,” in *Perspectives on Morisot*, ed. T.J. Edelstein (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1990), 73.

⁸⁰ The first paragraph of this obituary includes the following focal points: “In 1840 Pauline García married the distinguished impresario and art-critic Louis Viardot, and she became the devoted mother of several children of conspicuous musical talent.” Qtd. in Viardot-García, “Letters of Friendship,” 350.

⁸¹ Her training began in Mexico City with “Marcos Vega, organist of the Cathedral.” Clayton, *Queens of Song*, 398. She then trained with Meysenberg, Liszt, and Anton Reicha. *Ibid.*, 402–3.

⁸² Viardot-García, “Letters of Friendship,” 366–67, 368; FitzLyons, *Price of Genius*, 380. Clara Schumann apparently coveted Pauline’s “magnificent organ.”

⁸³ Clayton, *Queens of Song*, 403.

watercolors, and a costume design booklet all survive in the Viardot collection at the Houghton Library.⁸⁴

Pauline participated in social activities sanctioned within the scope of the bourgeois ideal including salons. Salons were especially important to aspiring artists who also desired to obtain respectable social standing. “The best-known form of elite sociability, salons, which were the intellectual gatherings held by women...evolved in form over the course of the nineteenth century” from a centuries-long tradition.⁸⁵ Significantly, one of Pauline’s first vocal performances took place during a salon hosted by Madame Jaubert at the home of the Belgian Minister in Paris during the autumn of 1838.⁸⁶ Anne Martin-Fugier demonstrates through the use of anecdotes in her *Les salons de la IIIe République* how the nineteenth-century French salon served aspiring singers and actors. By performing at a salon, individuals gained entrance to respectable society. As Martin-Fugier writes, “cette participation à un spectacle d’amateurs est un véritable sésame.”⁸⁷ Martin-Fugier provides ample evidence to prove that salons not only provided rising stars with a devoted following but also orchestrated socially advantageous marriage contracts⁸⁸ and provided artists with a social standing.⁸⁹

Pauline’s salon debut certainly accomplished several of these goals. According to April FitzLyon, association with Madame Jaubert provided Pauline with a sort of protector who took serious and educated interest in Pauline’s professional development. The salon debut also

⁸⁴ See Pauline Viardot-García, [*Costumes*] album, 1840–1843 and n.d., b MS Mus 264 (357), PVG add. papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University; Pauline Viardot-García, *Costumi* sketchbook, 1858 and n.d., b MS Mus 264 (360), PVG add. papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University; Pauline Viardot- García, *Sketchbooks and Watercolors*, n.d., b MS Mus 264 (355, 361), (356, 359) PVG add. papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

⁸⁵ Davidson, *France after Revolution*, 142 and 132: “Salons brought wealthy men and women together to discuss literature, philosophy, and politics....”

⁸⁶ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 45–46.

⁸⁷ Anne Martin-Fugier, *Les salons de la III^e République: art, littérature, politique* (Paris: Perrin, 2003), 264. “[T]his participation in a spectacle of amateurs is a veritable ‘open sesame.’”

⁸⁸ Martin-Fugier, *Salons*, 265–66.

⁸⁹ See *ibid.*, 263–97 for the complete discussion.

provided Pauline with her first circle of devoted followers, “amateurs of music who could appreciate Pauline’s gifts, some artists who would make good listeners, and some people of influence who could help the young singer.”⁹⁰ “Pauline had made influential friends, and the news of her success before this private, but very discerning audience would help to create a favourable [*sic*] atmosphere at her first public appearance.”⁹¹ This group (which included “Maxime Jaubert, the Musset brothers, Prince Belgiojoso, Berryer, [Auguste] Barre”) formed a “defensive league” around Pauline in the words of FitzLyon. They would jump at any chance to hear Pauline sing; “should Pauline deign to ask them, they would give her advice about her career; and they did all they could to make her life in Paris agreeable, and her artistic success as great as possible.”⁹² Alfred de Musset, for example, wrote several poems and articles celebrating Pauline’s debuts.⁹³ Others of her early admirers, including Musset, would write favorably (but honestly) in the leading papers about her performances; they were also well positioned to deflect any gossip that might crop up around their protégé.

Sometime after her marriage, Pauline began holding a salon of her own which continued at various times and places as the Viardots moved between Paris, their country home (Courtavenal), and residences abroad.⁹⁴ FitzLyon gives no indication that it was by any means as consistent or historically influential as, maybe, the salon of Madame de Staël. Anne Martin-

⁹⁰ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 45.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ See Musset’s article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* (1 January 1839) which concluded with his poem, *Sur les débuts de Mesdemoiselles Rachel et Pauline Garcia*.

⁹⁴ “Every Thursday there was a musical evening at our house, and whoever had made himself a name in literature or art came to it” Héritte-Viardot, *Memories and Adventures*, trans. E.S. Bucheim (London: Mills & Boon, 1913), 43. Rachel Harris speaks briefly of Thursday night salons and Sunday matinees at the Viardot home in her dissertation “The Music Salon of Pauline Viardot: Featuring her Salon Opera *Cendrillon*” (PhD diss., Louisiana State University, 2005), 14–21. For further information on participants’ experiences at the Viardot salon, see Marie Anne de Bovet, *Charles Gounod: His Life and His Works* (London: Hathi Trust, 1891); Jules Massenet, *My Recollections*, ed. Henry V. Barnett (Boston: Small, Maynard, 1919); Stephen Studd, *Saint-Saëns: A Critical Biography* (London: Cygnus Arts, 1999); Jean-Michel Nectoux, ed., *Gabriel Fauré: His Life through His Letters*, trans. J.A. Underwood (New York: Scribner, 1984).

Fugier, however, makes clear that regardless of regularity, “La première fonction d’un salon est de créer un lien social entre artistes, de permettre de goûter le bonheur de se retrouver entre soi.”⁹⁵ Building on social and artistic connections made at her 1838 salon matinée, Pauline collected many influential friends around her who were all too happy to spend an evening in her home listening to new talent, hearing one of their friends debut a new musical piece, playing charades or other games, or discussing the latest artistic (and political) developments. A salon could do as much for the attendees as for the hostess in the way of signifying social and intellectual standing as Martin-Fugier argues.⁹⁶ Salons provided Pauline with an environment in which she could shine. FitzLyon describes several qualities Pauline refined over several years to captivate still more loyal friends and followers: “With her enormous, dark eyes under heavy, hooded lids...she had a strange, exotic charm, which was heightened by the vividness of her personality.... Everything about her was original: her looks; her deep seriousness as an artist, combined with her vivacity as a person; her many other talents apart from her genius for music; and her strangely aristocratic bearing....”⁹⁷ By 1859, Pauline’s “Thursday matinées were always a social and artistic event; her drawing-room, decorated with splendid pictures from her husband’s collection, full of eminent people from the worlds of art and literature, and resounding with wonderful music, was a centre of attraction in the Paris of her day.”⁹⁸ Pauline not only carried herself as a respectable and respected member of society, but she conformed to every socially dictated (and optional) requirement for the position to which she aspired.

⁹⁵ Martin-Fugier, *Salons*, 139. “The primary function of a salon is to facilitate a connection between artists, to enable a taste of the happiness found with each other.”

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 140: “Un salon pouvait être un espace productif pour l’esprit: échange d’idées, ouverture, communication. Cela tenait évidemment à la qualité des interlocuteurs, de la maîtresse de maison en particulier” [A salon should be a productive space for the intellect: the exchange of ideas, *ouverture*, communication. This followed from the quality of the participants, the mistress of the house in particular].

⁹⁷ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 49.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 366.

Pauline further participated in conventional charity work, which Davidson identifies as a distinctly “upper class” pursuit: “[C]harities allowed women of the upper classes to socialize together while demonstrating their organizational skills and interacting with the ‘deserving poor.’”⁹⁹ Pauline’s first public concert on December 13, 1837 with Charles de Bériot in Brussels was actually a benefit for the poor.¹⁰⁰ On May 3, 1849, a Eugène Scribe (an opera librettist) organized a charity concert to support the poor,¹⁰¹ at which Viardot performed and likely used some of her own musical transcriptions of Chopin’s work.¹⁰² Viardot “avidly promoted Russian music in the West from the time of her debut in St. Petersburg throughout the remainder of her life. She often organized concerts to raise money for Russian causes, including the formation of a Russian library in Paris.”¹⁰³ Pauline also performed in three successive charity concerts at the Gewandhaus in Leipzig to benefit the poor (February 11, March 7, April 10, 1858).¹⁰⁴ Such charity work “in her life beyond the opera house” surely earned Viardot the “social standing and respect—a dignity, perhaps—that had been denied to her sister Maria” and to many other prima donnas.¹⁰⁵

Subverting the Norm

The lack of scandal surrounding Pauline’s life (except for some gossip surrounding her relationships with Ivan Turgenev and Charles Gounod which I will discuss later) speaks to her acceptance in mainstream society. As I have demonstrated, both Pauline’s family while she was

⁹⁹ Davidson, *France after Revolution*, 14.

¹⁰⁰ Clayton, *Queens of Song*, 404.

¹⁰¹ Studd, *Saint-Saëns*, 21.

¹⁰² The Chopin mazurkas transcribed and reworked by Viardot (who also added lyrics) “étaient destinés à être entendus dans les salons musicaux à Paris au XIX^e siècle. Pauline Viardot a chanté plusieurs de ses transcriptions dans une matinée musicale et dramatique au profit des pauvres...” [were destined to be heard at the music salons in nineteenth-century Paris. Pauline Viardot sang many of her transcriptions at a musical and dramatic matinee to benefit the poor...]. Shuster, “Six Mazurkas,” 274.

¹⁰³ Ard, “Eternal Diva,” 54.

¹⁰⁴ Viardot-García, “Letters of Friendship,” 355.

¹⁰⁵ Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*, 59.

young and the mature Pauline showed consistent concern for normative social values. Pauline's natural disposition for obedience to authority which she exemplified as a young woman, her contentment to have the appropriate manager for her performance career (first her mother and brother-in-law, then her husband), and her deliberate conformity to the social expectations defined for women of the middle class all reveal her willingness to play by the rules as well as her success in doing so. After the Viardots moved to Baden-Baden in 1863, "Pauline very soon established herself as one of the reigning hostesses there and did so in a society composed principally of an international European aristocracy, which would not normally have accepted a singer into its midst."¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, "Her Saturday 'At Homes' were attended by the cream of Baden society, and by many of the crowned heads of Germany."¹⁰⁷ Royalty no less than members of the middle class happily maintained correspondence with her, invited her to social functions, and demonstrated lifelong devotion to her. FitzLyon asserts "It was probably this [aristocracy of the spirit], together with her intelligence, which made so many great and distinguished men and women of her day seek her company and value her friendship."¹⁰⁸ Consider the invitation Pauline received from Queen Victoria's palace to perform at a private concert in May 1839.¹⁰⁹ During her first operatic seasons in Russia, Pauline received valuable gifts and personal attentions from the Czar.¹¹⁰ Later in life, Pauline and her oldest daughter

¹⁰⁶ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 378.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 379.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁰⁹ "Talked of García wishing to bring her mother with her, as she was so young. Lord M. said that formerly that was not allowed in the Green Room... At half past ten we went into the Saloon when the Concert began.... I was delighted with García, who will I think surpass her poor sister, for her low notes equal her's and her high notes are superior...." See Victoria, journals, vol. 10, 13 May 1839, Queen Victoria's Journals, Bodleian Library, Oxford University, via <http://www.queenvictoriasjournals.org>, 208–10.

¹¹⁰ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 149. Nicholas I personally decreed the punishment for a rogue journalist and declared that "no outsiders should be allowed to attend" Pauline's rehearsals prior to her Russian premiere in 1843. "During a performance of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* on 27th November Pauline created a sensation by singing a well-known Russian song in Russian.... The Emperor himself, who was present, applauded 'like a madman'...." *Ibid.*, 156. See also *ibid.*, 203: "Wild rumours were circulating in the Russian capital about her—that the Emperor had given formal

Louise received personal correspondence from Augusta, the Queen of Prussia, who demonstrates a friendly concern for and interest in the family.¹¹¹

Once Pauline had established herself on the proper footing in society, despite being a career woman *and* a public singer, she was able to undermine the very regulations she outwardly followed. To begin, Pauline's husband dedicated himself to her career rather than demanding she quit the theater as was commonly expected of prima donnas. Their marriage bears all the hallmarks of adherence to social standards¹¹² except that Louis Viardot quit his own job in order to support Pauline's career.¹¹³ Louis pursued his former hobbies including hunting, literary translation, radical politics, and newspaper editing, but Pauline's career was the central focus of their lives. For instance, Louis became Pauline's impresario after their marriage.¹¹⁴ Although "husbands attracted particular scorn, because [they] disrupted the conventional gender models...by being financially dependent on their wives' success," Louis does not seem to have minded taking up his new role nor does he appear to have been looked down upon within his social milieu.¹¹⁵ Twenty-one years Pauline's senior, Louis most likely was viewed as a fatherly

orders that she should be engaged at any price, that she would be offered 30,000 roubles to induce her to return to Russia, and so on."

¹¹¹ See Augusta, consort of William I, to Pauline Viardot-García, 12 February 1874, b MS Mus 264 (1), PVG add. papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University; Augusta, consort of William I, to Louise Héritte-Viardot, 30 March 1867, b MS Mus 264 (1), PVG add. papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University. Louise also remembers in her *Memories and Adventures* (24): "Sometimes we were invited by the Princess of Prussia, afterwards the Empress Augusta. I was stood on the table and had to sing Spanish duets with my mother or else a solo, such as 'Ah, non giunge' from the *Sonnambula*, and I had to sing it with all the runs."

¹¹² Whereas most of her contemporaries married late in life or divorced their first husbands after their careers took off, Pauline married young, within months of beginning her career on the operatic stage.

¹¹³ Only one other nineteenth-century husband comes to mind who did the same thing: Berthe Morisot's husband Eugène Manet.

¹¹⁴ Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*, 121. In order to advance their careers, prima donnas needed contracts to be negotiated. Rutherford asserts that the nineteenth-century looked most favorably on fathers taking over management of their daughters' careers. "Only the father of the prima donna could behave in a manner more appropriate to the century's ethos, by ensuring his daughter's protection and—at the same time—selling her as a commodity." Prima donnas performing their own negotiations was frowned upon and evoked the negative siren/prima donna stereotype. Pauline had her initial training from her father but he was already dead by the time her career began. Her next option included her mother, an experienced professional singer, and her brother-in-law, Charles de Bériot, who could easily fit in the approved father category.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 120–21.

figure, rather than as an emasculated husband.¹¹⁶ In another subversion of the social code, Louis does not seem to have dominated or attempted to control Pauline in any way; he seems to have done his best to provide her with personal support (in addition to keeping up appearances) without infringing on her artistic genius. In fact, George Sand blamed Louis' lack of active management, maybe even laziness, for costing Pauline several possible contracts for the 1842–1843 opera season.¹¹⁷ Perhaps recognizing his importance to Pauline's career—that it was both socially preferable and professionally necessary for a man to conduct business with the opera house¹¹⁸—Louis finally rose to the challenge and secured a contract with the Théâtre Italien for 1842–1843. Louis, as was seemly, travelled with Pauline to her various engagements but was also content for her to travel with her mother, George Sand or some other trusted friend, and later by herself.¹¹⁹ Pauline's income supported the family, allowing them to buy their home in Paris on the Rue de Douai, their country home Courtavenel (which cost 130,000 francs),¹²⁰ and later their home in Baden-Baden. Pauline also bought gifts for her husband, including the autograph manuscript of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, their favorite opera.¹²¹ In these various ways (her husband dedicated himself to her career, she called the shots in her career, she supported the

¹¹⁶ “The shadow of the siren emerges again in the notion that marriage to a working prima donna constituted a form of emasculation...” Ibid., 150.

¹¹⁷ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 120.

¹¹⁸ Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*, 121, 124. “In the nineteenth century the legal position of women singers was ruled by different versions of the Napoleonic code, which had been adopted in nearly all the Italian states. According to the more pedantic writers on theatrical law, this meant that a woman could not sign contracts without her husband's consent (or, if an unmarried minor, her father's). Though the code allowed married women in business to act on their own, this—according to the pedants—could not apply to singers, because the ‘dangers and seductions’ of the theatre, the ‘nomadic’ and peculiarly independent character of the singer's life, threatened family life and morality; on these grounds a husband would even be entitled to break a contract he had previously approved.” Roselli, *Singers of Italian Opera*, 66–67.

¹¹⁹ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 90 (Sand accompanied Pauline and Louis to a concert in Cambrai); *ibid.*, 294 (Pauline travelled to Moscow on her own); *ibid.*, 323 (Pauline made a tour of Northern Europe, Warsaw, Berlin and Leipzig from 1857–1858 without her husband).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 171.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 339–40. Pauline paid 5,000 francs for the manuscript, which the British Library had thought too high when originally offered the manuscript.

family), Pauline subverted the norm and still maintained the respectable social standing and respect for which she consciously strove.

I have already discussed how Pauline's activities in personal refinement and social intercourse followed the prescribed models for women of the middle class. What remains to be understood, however, is that even in these approved activities Pauline transgressed the boundaries by incorporating her "domestic talents" into her career, a veritable public display.

Amateur singing was commonly regarded as an appropriate activity for women in the nineteenth century, constituting a respected domestic talent. "Echoes of women singing resonate through the journals, letters and memoirs of the period. Rich or poor, they sing alone, or with family and friends, or in an infinite variety of larger social gatherings."¹²² Training on the piano was also common for middle- and upper-class women who then used their drawing rooms as private performance venues.¹²³ These domestic personal refinements remained approved activities until money entered the equation. The difference between the domestic diva and the professional prima donna was the exchange of money as compensation for performance.¹²⁴ Pauline trained on the piano and organ and frequently played for friends at home—completely within approved models for the domestic ideal. As April FitzLyon frequently recounts, however, Pauline also employed her instrumental training by accompanying herself on the piano at public concerts.¹²⁵ Contrary to a prior understanding of dominant social attitudes toward women

¹²² Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*, 71.

¹²³ "The extraordinary growth of domestic music-making within the middle and upper classes during the nineteenth century (reflected in increased sales of instruments, printed music and tuition) was fuelled in part by the perceptions of its role in building the new bourgeois society." Ibid., 47. An October 1800 article in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* describes how music making is a specifically female role within the domestic sphere and can contribute to advantageous social matches, while also reflecting on the gentility of the family. Ibid., 48.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 77. Rutherford describes situations in which amateur singers performed with professionals.

¹²⁵ See the following references on Pauline accompanying herself and performing her own compositions in public: FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 229 (12 May and 12 July 1848 concerts); 294, accompanied herself at Moscow concerts (1853) and performed her Chopin arrangements; 301. Pauline spontaneously ordered a piano-forte be rolled out so she could meet the requests for encores even after the orchestra had left; she accompanied herself singing a "French

performing music in public (beyond what has just been discussed as appropriate venues for the ideal of amateur music making), the public and music critics responded favorably to Pauline's displays. Vasili Petrovich Botkin, previously unconvinced about Pauline's talent, apologized to Turgenev for doubting Pauline's abilities after hearing her perform at a concert in Moscow in 1853:

‘I only now understand your words,’ Botkin told Turgenev ‘Those who have not heard Madame Viardot at the piano...can have no conception of her’. Botkin, like Turgenev, considered that Pauline's art was at its highest when she was divested of all the trappings and illusions of the theatre, and simply accompanied herself at the piano, when, ‘like a naked Venus, radiant with only her own eternal beauty... Viardot is sure to leave her listeners with an empty place in their hearts.’¹²⁶

Even though society dictated that the drawing room was the most appropriate place for women to display their (amateur) musical training, Pauline's concert piano performances did not result in social snubbing or bad press. On the contrary, many considered her talent to be in its fullest force when she simply sang and accompanied herself.

Pauline also used her talent for sketching as an integral part of her career on the stage. Huge costume departments within theaters did not exist in the nineteenth century as they do today.¹²⁷ Frequently, singers were responsible for supplying their own costumes. Though this issue will come under more detailed discussion in Chapter Four, it bears mention here as an

romance and two Spanish airs.” Clayton, *Queens of Song*, 408. See also Pierre Azoury, *Chopin through His Contemporaries: Friends, Lovers, and Rivals*, Contributions to the Study of Music and Dance (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 161: 29 June 1848 Pauline performed her Chopin mazurka arrangements at [Buckingham] Palace. Azoury, *Chopin*, 162: 7 July 1848 Pauline performed at Chopin's matinee recital in London. See Viardot-García, “Letters of Friendship”: Pauline performed her Chopin Mazurka arrangements and a piece of her own composition at a soirée held in her honor around 23 December 1858 at Altenburg (Germany).

¹²⁶ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 294.

¹²⁷ The Metropolitan Opera in New York City spends roughly \$1 million on costuming for every production with roughly 20 productions per season. See: Nina Munk, “The Met's Grand Gamble,” *Vanity Fair*, May 2010, 3. <http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/features/2010/05/metropolitan-opera-201005>. Accessed 19 January 2013.

important example of how Pauline's personal refinements (e.g. sketching) moved past the socially approved private domestic sphere into public display. In addition to painting for pleasure and sketching for fun as part of her salon's favorite "Portrait Game," Pauline employed her artistic talents in designing her own costumes. Pauline researched historical dress for several roles and sketched out designs for her characters' stage costumes.¹²⁸ When Pauline appeared on stage, her otherwise private sketches became very public displays.

As regards social intercourse, Pauline was well received within the middle class and by members of the upper class, including royalty, as already observed. Occasionally, however, social situations required improvisation and some wit in order for Pauline to obtain the respect her daughter Louise believes Pauline and other "refined, cultured" artists deserved.¹²⁹ Louise Hérítte-Viardot shares an amusing anecdote to highlight her point. In this situation, Pauline had performed "at the Court of some petty German princess" and was invited to attend the princess the next day.

Her Highness was most gracious, and even dismissed her lady-in-waiting, so as to be alone with my mother. After the audience my mother played a little trick on her Highness. She went backwards to the door, in accordance with the laws of etiquette, made her curtsy, and tried to open the door. She seemed to be very awkward, for in spite of all her efforts she could not turn the handle, and at last her Highness opened the door with her own hands, to the intense astonishment of

¹²⁸ See app. 2 for samples of Pauline's designs.

¹²⁹ "Why is it that in certain parts of the Continent artists do not occupy the social position to which they have a right? We are told that it is because they are often uneducated, conceited, and have bad manners. I grant that this is often the case, but there are many refined, cultured people among them. They are famous, they are admired, yet every petty squire, every new-made lieutenant thinks he has a right to look down on them or patronise [*sic*] them." Hérítte-Viardot, *Memories and Adventures*, 150.

the courtiers in the ante-room, at this sign of favour [*sic*], and my mother was escorted out with deep bows.¹³⁰

A German court, even of a “petty” princess, would have been more highly regulated than the society in which Pauline moved. Without betraying her own “aristocratic bearing” or outwardly breaking the conventions of the court, Pauline still managed to subvert the court’s social hierarchy.

One additional way in which Pauline accomplished more than her contemporary prima donnas was in holding friendships with men without being subjected to intense, negative gossip. Certainly Pauline interacted with prominent men of her day in the approved salon setting. She also, however, frequently received visits from and maintained long-lasting friendships with men. Pauline’s marriage to Louis Viardot set her on the appropriate social footing for even meeting most of these men, and it was the outward appearance of her marriage that by and large prevented the gossip which usually accompanied non-marital relationships between men and women.¹³¹ Through Louis, Pauline met the painters Ary Scheffer (with whom she had a strong father-daughter relationship until his death),¹³² Eugène Delacroix,¹³³ and Jean Auguste Ingres.¹³⁴ George Sand’s connections also introduced Pauline to influential people who became the friends of her early adulthood such as Chopin. But it was Pauline’s performance career which secured her the most unusual friendships (for her time period) and devoted followers, who visited her

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 149.

¹³¹ Certainly the demi-monde exists outside this model, as does “la vie d’une artiste.” The focus here revolves around the more mainstream middle and upper classes which concerned themselves with social respectability and which determined many of the written and unwritten codes governing respectable society.

¹³² For more information on Pauline’s friendship with Ary Scheffer see: FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 93–94, 197, 240, 279–81, 286–87, 303–6, 314, 324–27, 329; Viardot-García, “Letters of Friendship,” 362–65.

¹³³ For more information on the Viardot’s friendship with Delacroix see: FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 71, 94–95, 105, 121, 305; Patrick Waddington, “Pauline Viardot-García as Berlioz’s Counselor and Physician,” *The Musical Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (July 1973): 390.

¹³⁴ For more information on the friendship with Ingres see: FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 89, 93–95.

regularly in her home, consulted with her on their projects, and remain indebted to her for their own careers and lasting fame.

For the ease of discussion, I have broken Pauline's friendships into three groups. These groups highlight slight variations in the types of friendships Pauline maintained with men and will serve to illustrate the unusual nature of her social intercourse. The first group, musical friendships, looks at her relationships with Liszt, Chopin, and Meyerbeer. The second group, musical and personal interests, explores her relationships with Turgenev, Berlioz, and Julius Rietz, in which Pauline shared strong personal connections with the men in question. This group comprises relationships which tread on dangerous social ground. Yet, Pauline's management of these relationships illustrates not only her careful adherence to at least the spirit of the social code, but also her success in achieving more socially than her contemporary prima donnas. Finally, the third group analyzes Pauline's patronage relationships with such musicians as Gounod, Fauré, Massenet, Benjamin Godard, and Camille Saint-Saëns. Though it was not completely out of the question for a professionally successful woman musician to provide advice or networking opportunities for aspiring musicians, it was highly irregular for a woman musician to fund full stage débuts of an unknown male composer's work, to be consulted regularly in her home on male compositions, and to obtain contracts for unknown composers. Pauline did endure some gossip that circulated about her and two of her male friends. Despite the gossip (which constitutes a point for containment), the evidence overwhelmingly argues in favor of Pauline's social acceptance and her subversion of the social code for women of her time.

Pauline's musical friendships (within the first group) were built on mutual respect for musicianship and genius. Nothing about them suggests the friendships extended beyond the acceptable boundaries for non-marital relationships. Pauline came into contact with Franz Liszt

while still a young woman. She took piano lessons from him for some length of time and could not help but develop a girlish crush on him.¹³⁵ Later in life, Liszt and Pauline met again under different circumstances. Pauline had established her career, was married, and was well respected in her profession. The two developed a fairly standard friendship, meeting frequently according to April FitzLyon.¹³⁶ Liszt eventually volunteered to manage the staging of Pauline's operetta *Le Dernier Sorcier* in Weimar with professional singers in 1869.¹³⁷ Chopin became another of Pauline's musical friends, though her relationship with Chopin was more personal. The two respected each other's musicianship and in four summers spent at Nohant, they had frequent opportunities to play the piano together, compose music, and form lasting personal bonds.¹³⁸ Chopin became a great devotee of Pauline's performance career, attending her concerts and shows,¹³⁹ and planning his concerts around her schedule so she could perform with him.¹⁴⁰ Pauline in turn received pointers on the piano and highly valued Chopin's opinion of her musical compositions.¹⁴¹ In letters to George Sand, Pauline refers to Chopin by any number of nicknames that seem to have originated with Sand's family, including Chip-Chip. When Chopin passed away in 1849, the funeral organizers asked Pauline to be the alto soloist for a performance of

¹³⁵ Clayton, *Queens of Song*, 402. Azoury, *Chopin*, 152. Azoury claims the lessons lasted two years but his interpretation and presentation of other events in Pauline's life casts doubt on this claim.

¹³⁶ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 336–37.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 395. See also references to Liszt in letters Pauline wrote to Julius Rietz: Viardot-García, "Letters of Friendship."

¹³⁸ "During Chopin's seven summers at Nohant, Pauline was to go there four times, spending some two to three weeks each time: in 1841, 1842, 1843, and 1845. It was during these visits that Chopin came to know her informally and intimately.... In the field of music making, they liked to sight-read scores of favorite composers." They also may have enjoyed "discussions on Mozart (their common passion, particularly his *Don Giovanni* and *Requiem*), Bach, eighteenth-century Italian opera and *bel canto* songs, and piano lessons (which were more pianistic advice than formal lessons given to Pauline by Chopin which inspired the well-known sketch of both of them at Nohant drawn (and wrongly dated!) by Maurice Sand." Azoury, *Chopin*, 154–55.

¹³⁹ See *ibid.*, 154, 161 for more information on the frequency with which Chopin attended Pauline's shows and concerts.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 155. One such concert was given 21 February 1842. In January 1843 they performed together at the Rothschild's soirée. They also performed together on 7 July 1848 at a matinee recital in London. *Ibid.*, 162.

¹⁴¹ "In his letter to his family about a week later [15 July 1845], he mentioned the songs of Pauline that gave him great pleasure: 'She sang me the Spanish songs she has composed in Vienna last year; she promised she would sing them to you. I am very fond of them and I doubt whether one could hear or think of anything better of their kind.... I have always listened to them with rapturous pleasure.'" *Ibid.*, 160.

Mozart's *Requiem* at his funeral. This friendship, like that with Liszt, did nothing to trespass acceptable social bounds for non-marital relationships. It remains interesting, and unusual, that male musicians like Liszt and Chopin¹⁴² held a woman (Pauline Viardot) in such high esteem as to maintain life-long contact, do anything they could to promote her career and development as an artist, and make public their respect for her.¹⁴³

The second group of friendships, which included both musical and personal interests, remains a distinguishing feature of Pauline's social accomplishments. Whereas someone like Rosine Stoltz attracted unsavory gossip and underwent severe criticism for her extra-marital relationships, Pauline escaped nearly unscathed despite what were obviously non-standard friendships for her time and social milieu. The first of these began toward the end of 1843 when Pauline made her Russian debut at the Imperial Theater in St. Petersburg. Ivan Turgenev became one of four devoted young men who would entertain Pauline in her dressing room following her performances.¹⁴⁴ He offered his services as a Russian tutor¹⁴⁵ and eventually became quite intimate with Pauline and her family. In some cases, Pauline's memory lives brightest through her association with Turgenev, who is regarded as one of the great patriarchs of modern Russian literature. In their frequent correspondence, Turgenev and Pauline often consulted one another on their work, with Turgenev sending her chapters of his books and threatening to scrap the project if Pauline found it wanting.¹⁴⁶ Scholars and biographers have spilled much ink speculating on the real nature of Pauline and Turgenev's relationship. April FitzLyon makes their relationship a focal point of her biography and would have readers accept her assertion that the two had an

¹⁴² This list of musical friendships could also include Anton Rubinstein (FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 381–82), Brahms (ibid., 380), Felix Mendelssohn (ibid., 134), Meyerbeer (ibid., 133, 223, 238), and Robert Schumann.

¹⁴³ See Liszt's tribute to Pauline in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, no. 5 (1859); Chopin and Pauline performed together in public at least twice: 21 February 1842 and sometime in January 1843.

¹⁴⁴ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 163–64. The four young men brought her a bearskin rug and each man sat on one of the four paws, thus earning their collective nickname, "the four paws."

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 157.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 222.

affair, even though she herself states that no clear evidence for such a claim exists.¹⁴⁷ Louise Hérítte-Viardot staunchly denies any sexual involvement between Pauline and Turgenev,¹⁴⁸ going so far as to say that her mother and father actually viewed his more intimate associations with their family as annoyances (such as Turgenev moving in with the family in Paris and not paying an agreed sum in rent while taking over more bedrooms than were initially offered).¹⁴⁹ Regardless of who is right about the more sordid details of this friendship, it was recognized as being highly unusual and sparked some gossip. I will discuss below how Pauline, despite the gossip, escaped containment to maintain her respectable social standing.

Pauline, intensely interested in appropriate social behavior, certainly recognized the risk she was taking continuing such an unusual friendship. April FitzLyon quotes a letter from Pauline to her friend Julius Rietz, in which she credits her determination and will power with being able to overcome temptation.¹⁵⁰ What “temptation” this refers to is unclear, but the temptations (whatever they were) and the risk were not enough to prevent Pauline from forming more of these highly irregular friendships, including with Hector Berlioz and Julius Rietz. The composer Hector Berlioz suffered from an anxious disposition and an inferiority complex. He had been friends with the Viardots for many years when his condition took a turn for the worse between 1858 and 1859. His second wife proved intolerable, his son was having problems in his employment, he felt unappreciated in his own profession, and pan-European war seemed imminent.¹⁵¹ Berlioz visited doctors but, “More than ever he needed a spiritual doctor and a warm and understanding confidante. He turned for these to Pauline Viardot.”¹⁵² Pauline invited

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 187.

¹⁴⁸ Hérítte-Viardot, *Memories and Adventures*, 77–81.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 79.

¹⁵⁰ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 189.

¹⁵¹ Waddington, “Counselor and Physician,” 384.

¹⁵² Ibid.

Berlioz to visit her at Courtavenal in July 1859 but it was not until she extended her second invitation in September that he finally acquiesced. The two demonstrated a marked concern for appearances as Berlioz “thought Pauline was alone” while, on the other hand, “she had at least two guests and a dozen members of her own household with her at the château.”¹⁵³ Pauline never would have made the invitation if she were alone. As it happens, when Berlioz finally did arrive at Courtavenal on September 18, 1859, he was not only ministered to by Pauline but also by her husband Louis who “nobly went up [in the evenings] to hear the unappreciated genius pour out his interminable complaints.”¹⁵⁴ In the midst of Berlioz’s two-day convalescence at Courtavenal, he declared his passionate love for Pauline. As Patrick Waddington describes: “She was rather experienced in the art of taming passion (it was, she told Rietz, her destiny to tend sick hearts), but whereas with her other admirers it had usually been enough for her to interpose vague moral scruples, or the superior requirements of her vocal art, with Berlioz evasion looked hazardous.” In her evaluation of the situation, Pauline felt it necessary to “compromise” and she “cheerfully agreed to [Berlioz’s] outrageous request” that she force her way into his room in the event of danger.¹⁵⁵ It was better to placate an ill, raving man, than stand imperiously on the moral high ground. Pauline’s excellent judgment and her devoted friendship shine. As the historical record indicates, nothing ever came of Berlioz’s request.¹⁵⁶

What could have become an extremely awkward situation was quickly glossed over with Pauline and Berlioz’s collaboration on the Gluck revival. They poured over the music and libretto for *Orphée*, looking for ways to meet Carvalho’s requests (the impresario funding the

¹⁵³ Ibid., n. 4.

¹⁵⁴ Waddington, “Counselor and Physician,” 388, 389.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 390.

¹⁵⁶ FitzLyon also provides a report of Pauline’s friendship with Berlioz and her ministrations to him. See *Price of Genius*, 347–49.

show) without damaging Gluck's integrity.¹⁵⁷ "Not only did he instruct her to gargle out the aria [Cupid's grotesque aria, "Soumis au silence" from Act I] with all the cynicism at her command, and write 'some pretty concoction of vocal exercises' which would bring the house down at the end of Act I; he even suggested a conclusion to the 'stupendous cadenza' which she composed...." Berlioz also brought out two acts of his latest opera-in-progress, *Les Troyens*, to obtain Pauline's opinion. "There were, it was true, 'a few passages of a shocking and misplaced extravagance,' and she did not shrink from pointing these out. Berlioz immediately agreed to make changes in them all."¹⁵⁸ Berlioz's wholehearted acceptance of Pauline's opinion and advice demonstrates the trust and respect he held for her as a musician. Eighteenth-century Italian opera had been prone to intimate collaborations between the composer, librettist, and performers but by the nineteenth century, that trend diminished to the point where composers and librettists dreaded input from the performers, especially the prima donna.¹⁵⁹ Based on the evidence provided by Patrick Waddington, Pauline worked on an equal footing with Berlioz: she had already been chosen to play Orpheus and now, even though she would be the prima donna, Berlioz insisted on, encouraged, and welcomed her collaboration. Unusual indeed.

As for Berlioz's lovesick heart, following the great success of *Orphée*, he seems to have cured himself of his dependence on Pauline. He became jealous of her popularity and success, and ended up alienating her through extreme coldness and refusing her participation in the staging of *Les Troyens*.¹⁶⁰ Could Berlioz's behavior be construed as a type of containment where the prima donna suffers at the hands of the man? I think not, given the continuing success of her career and her widespread popularity. Rather, Berlioz's falling out of love moved the two

¹⁵⁷ Studd, *Saint-Saëns*, 56.

¹⁵⁸ Waddington, "Counselor and Physician," 391, 393.

¹⁵⁹ Consider the issue of Donizetti's mental breakdown, historically blamed on Rosine Stoltz. See Smart, "Lost Voice," 32–34.

¹⁶⁰ Waddington, "Counselor and Physician," 397.

friends' relationship safely back into appropriate social bounds. Their intimate correspondence ended at this time, though Berlioz never lost his respect or admiration for Pauline. The relationship was highly unusual for Pauline's time and social standing, especially given Berlioz's dependence on her, her ministrations to him, and their close collaboration on a high-profile musical project. Despite the risks associated with such a close friendship, Pauline managed it skillfully: no gossip appears to have started or spread and the friends parted ways at an appropriate moment.

Pauline's intimate friendship with Julius Rietz once again demonstrates careful observance of social custom. If she behaved inappropriately with Turgenev, at this point she appears to have learned how to avoid suspicion and maintain appropriate social boundaries by keeping her male friend at arm's length: the two only corresponded through formal letters and they only wrote each other until their mutual needs had been met. Julius Rietz, a well-known conductor and composer in Germany, first met Pauline when he conducted several charity concerts in Leipzig in early 1858 in which Pauline performed.¹⁶¹ "[H]is enemies were many, and his friends few. Very sensitive to criticism, he gradually accumulated an uncomfortable fund of bitterness, augmented by disappointments and family troubles and reduced only now and then by a keen sense of humor."¹⁶² Rietz was in need of a kind friend and Pauline stepped up to meet his need.

While performing at Weimar's Grand-ducal Opera House in December 1858, Pauline and Rietz began a prolific correspondence lasting several months. The discussion here may appear a little one-sided since only Pauline's letters to Rietz have been published, but the information available still provides us with enough details to satisfy the analysis of their unusual relationship

¹⁶¹ Viardot-García, "Letters of Friendship," 353, 355.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 354.

and how it remained above social censure. To begin, Pauline's forthrightness¹⁶³ is balanced by her assertions of her husband's complicity in the friendship. Pauline proposes to visit Rietz, because she was heading back to Leipzig from Weimar for a concert, and assures her friend that social conventions have been considered and met: "Ich habe ausser der Depesche einen Brief an Louis geschrieben und habe ihn gesagt, dass ich Sie besuchen will. Und ich weiss, dass er sich darüber freuen wird—denn er sieht es gerne, dass ich meine Freunde aussuche und lieb habe."¹⁶⁴ Pauline also wrote glowingly of her husband, encouraging Rietz to brighten at the prospect of meeting such a good man.¹⁶⁵ Pauline shared her opinions about current musical taste and trends in these letters while also indulging in some personal introspection, including intimate memories of her father, her friendship with and respect for Art Scheffer, and her own internal battles: "J'ai eu des découragements d'artiste, des sortes d'anéantissements de toutes mes facultés.... J'ai manqué devenir folle."¹⁶⁶ Pauline also sent Rietz gifts of autograph scores from her extensive collection and Rietz responded by finding and sending a Bach score which she had mentioned

¹⁶³ December 1858, Pauline commiserates with Rietz: "Sie sind ganz allein ohne mich, schreiben Sie—aber Sie sind ja nicht ohne mich—meine treuste Freundschaft schwebt fortwährend um Ihnen herum, meine Gedanken haben einen lieben Ruhepunkt bei Ihnen...." Then Pauline reproaches Rietz for being so negative which represents a huge liberty considering their genders, the time period, and how early it still was in their friendship: "Oui, vous avez mené jusqu'à présent une *vie d'orphelin*, vous vous êtes fait une philosophie tant soit peu amère qui tend à vous isoler de plus en plus, à faire le vide autour de vous. Quelle erreur! vous si bon, vous qui avez en vous toutes les qualités du cœur et de l'esprit, vous les refoulez maussadement au fond du mépris de vos semblables en général et des Leipsicois en particulier, et vous vous rendez malheureux avec *obstination*. Cela n'est pas bien, c'est de l'injustice envers les autres et surtout envers vous même, ce qui m'importe infiniment plus. Je suis heureuse de vos lettres-elles renferment des trésors de fraîcheur et d'affection" (ibid., 359). "Yes, hitherto you have led the life of an orphan, you have woven yourself a philosophy tinged with bitterness which tends to isolate you more and more, to set you apart from others. What a mistake! you who are so good, and possess every gift of heart and mind, you repress them beneath a sullen disdain of your kind in general and of the Leipzigers in particular, and make yourself unhappy of set purpose. That is not right; it is unjust toward others and especially toward yourself, which concerns me infinitely more. I am happy in your letters—they are fraught with treasures of refreshment and affection" (ibid., 358).

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 359. "Besides the telegram I have written a letter to Louis, and told him that I want to visit you. And I know that he will be glad to hear it-for it gives him pleasure when I choose my friends and love them" (ibid., 358).

¹⁶⁵ "Sie müssen ihn kennen lernen, Sie werden ihn gewiss als einen vortrefflichen edlen Mann erkennen. Er sieht sehr kalt aus, ist es aber nicht.—Sein Herz ist warm und gut, und sein Geist ist mir sehr ueberlegen—Er betet die Kunst an, versteht gründlich das schöne, das Erhabne" (ibid., 359). "You will certainly appreciate him as an admirable, whole-souled man. He looks very cold, but he is not so. His heart is warm and good, and his mind is far superior to mine. He worships art, and thoroughly appreciates the beautiful and the sublime" (ibid., 358).

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 363. "I have felt the discouragements of an artist, a sort of paralysis of all my faculties.... I have become wellnigh insane" (ibid., 362).

she longed to add to her collection.¹⁶⁷ The level of intimacy the friends shared is evidenced by Pauline's impertinent accusation that Rietz refused an invitation to visit Courtavenal because of his wife:

was Sie mir geschrieben haben sind alle schlechte Vorwände—Sie hätten 3 Tage, 3 lange, schöne Tage mit mir erleben können, und Sie haben es nicht...heraus mit dem Wort, *gewagt!* fürchteten Sie sich etwa vor der Frau? Wenn das der Fall ist, warum haben Sie es nicht geschrieben? Ich kann keinen anderen Grund zu Ihrem Nichtkommen finden und *verstehen*. Ich bin diesmal wirklich auf dem Punkt böse mit Ihnen zu werden....¹⁶⁸

This is strong language for a woman friend to use, especially in that she took it upon herself to censure a male friend. Rietz continued writing, however. He also promised in a subsequent letter to visit Courtavenal the next year. Their correspondence petered out by mid-1861, though they continued to exchange infrequent letters until Rietz's death in 1877. Scholars like Theodore Baker and April FitzLyon maintain a positive view on the friendship, never intimating that anything untoward occurred between Pauline and Rietz.

The intimacy of the relationship manifest in Pauline's forthright language and the personal information shared marks it as a virtual anomaly in the nineteenth century. Given Pauline's profession, she would have made an easy target for gossipmongers. Her moral uprightness and commitment to social convention, however, is clearly evidenced: Pauline's friendship with Rietz was no secret to her husband; he in fact endorsed it. Rietz and Pauline

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 364–65.

¹⁶⁸ Viardot-García, "Pauline Viardot-García to Julius Rietz: Letters of Friendship (Concluded)," trans. Theodore Baker, *The Musical Quarterly* 2, no. 3 (October 1915): 41. The letter is dated 20 September 1859. "[A]ll the reasons you wrote me are nothing but bad excuses. You might have spent three days, three long, lovely days, with me, and you did not-out with the word!-dare to! Can you have been afraid of the woman? If that was the case, why didn't you tell me so? I cannot think of any other intelligible reason for your not coming. This time I have positively arrived at the point of being angry with you...." Ibid., 40.

wrote formal letters (a social convention) and rarely met in person, and Pauline had already established an impeccable moral character for herself. Given the socially appropriate framework within which Pauline established this friendship, any deviation from convention went unnoticed.

The final group of unusual social relationships was made up of young men with whom Pauline formed patronage relationships.¹⁶⁹ Just as Julius Rietz had received his first professional appointment with Mendelssohn's help,¹⁷⁰ musicians such as Gounod, Fauré, Massenet, Benjamin Godard, and Camille Saint-Saëns all found a concerned, informed, and dedicated patron in the form of Pauline Viardot. Pauline did not have a monopoly on musical genius or on the resources necessary to helping unknown musicians get their start—certainly the women running Paris's major salons at this time also played similar roles—but it remains unique among prima donnas that Pauline performed this social function for Fauré, Massenet, and Saint-Saëns.

Fauré's biographer Jean-Michel Nectoux writes that, "The seal of Parisian approval was symbolically granted to the young musician with his admission in 1872 to the capital's principal musical *salon*, that of Pauline Viardot."¹⁷¹ Besides being briefly engaged to Marianne Viardot (Pauline's youngest daughter), Fauré was on excellent terms with the Viardot family and dedicated many musical pieces to Pauline, Louise, Claudie, Paul, and Marianne.¹⁷² Fauré later wrote a "warm personal tribute" to Pauline in the *Figaro* upon her death.¹⁷³

Pauline met Jules Massenet around 1872 and he quickly became part of the Viardot's Thursday evening salons. Massenet had not yet made a name for himself despite some public performances of his work.¹⁷⁴ It seems Pauline was always ready and willing to boost the career

¹⁶⁹ For information on how Pauline's growing fame as a prima donna influenced her role as a patron see FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 259.

¹⁷⁰ Viardot-García, "Letters of Friendship," 353.

¹⁷¹ Nectoux, *Gabriel Fauré*, 27.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁷³ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 465.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 435.

of promising young musicians. One evening after Massenet performed “some extracts from his oratorio, *Marie Magdeleine*, a work which had never been performed in public” at the Viardot’s, Pauline set about staging a public recital of the work. “*Marie Magdeleine* was first performed on Good Friday, 11th April, 1873, at the Odéon, with Pauline Viardot in the title rôle....” Not only did Pauline provide the impetus and organizational skills, but she also lent her own fame to the production through her performance. “The work, a subtle blend of religion and eroticism, attracted a great deal of attention, and proved to be a turning-point in Massenet’s career.”¹⁷⁵

Pauline’s refined musical taste and eagerness to support musicians of promise also aided Saint-Saëns, who became a devoted friend to Pauline. Spanning nearly forty years, their friendship and patronage relationship resulted in many enjoyable hours playing music together, discussing Bach, and advancing Saint-Saën’s career.¹⁷⁶ The two first met when Saint-Saëns was only fourteen and performed at a charity concert with Pauline (3 May 1849).¹⁷⁷ Eventually, the young man became a regular at Pauline’s Thursday salon where he made many useful contacts.¹⁷⁸ The Viardots introduced Saint-Saëns to Rossini who took a liking to the young man, inviting him to his own Saturday night soirées where Saint-Saëns made additional important musical connections.¹⁷⁹ Saint-Saëns accompanied Pauline at concerts, joined the family and several other French expatriates in the London exile of 1870,¹⁸⁰ and received help and encouragement from Pauline. But even in 1874 Saint-Saëns had yet to accomplish public fame while the major theater producers regularly passed over his suggestions for new works and

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 436. See, for example, a letter from Massenet to Pauline dated 23 February 1889. Jules Massenet to Pauline Viardot-García, 23 February 1889, b MS Mus 232 (9), MS Mus 232: Pauline Viardot-García papers, 1836–1905, Houghton Library, Harvard University. The collection of which this is a part is hereafter cited as PVG papers.

¹⁷⁶ Studd, *Saint-Saëns*, 21, 100.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 21.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 27.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 45.

¹⁸⁰ See *ibid.*, 83, 100 for more information on Saint-Saëns’ intimacy with the Viardots and for a sketch of what their Thursday salon and Sunday “at homes” were like.

refused to stage his latest compositions.¹⁸¹ Saint-Saëns' opera *Samson et Dalila*, in process for many years and still not performed, received “an unexpected airing” thanks to Pauline’s insistence and social/professional connections.¹⁸² “She took the initiative in trying to create interest in the opera by arranging a private performance of the second act in the garden of a friend’s house at Croissy.... She invited Olivier Halanzier, director of the Opéra, and the event went ahead on 20 August 1874.”¹⁸³ Pauline went so far as to provide sets and costumes for the performance. Though this did not lead to the staging of Saint-Saëns’ opera, it demonstrates Pauline’s influence and commitment to promoting new musical talent.

Just as the attendees at her salon debut supported her burgeoning career, Pauline worked tirelessly to use her fame, musical training, social standing, and influence to make a positive impact on the careers of others. Unusually, this group included exclusively men and stands out as one of Pauline’s great social accomplishments. No other prima donnas had such a widespread impact—let alone any impact—on the professional success of so many nineteenth-century male musicians.

Gounod provides a final example within Pauline’s circle of protégés. Pauline accomplished more for Gounod than perhaps any of her other rising musicians, but in this case, her help inspired some little gossip that must be examined as a possible counter-argument to Pauline’s social success. Pauline had originally met Gounod on her honeymoon to Italy in 1840. They were reintroduced in 1849 after Pauline’s great success in *Le Prophète*, when all sorts of budding musicians were sent to her for advice.¹⁸⁴ On Pauline’s advice and the strength of her influence in Paris, Gounod began writing his first opera with a libretto provided by Emile Augier

¹⁸¹ See *ibid.*, 56–57, 96–97 on Saint-Saëns’ professional disappointments.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 100.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 100–1.

¹⁸⁴ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 259.

(who did it as a favor to Pauline), and a promise from Nestor Roqueplan that it would be performed at the Paris Opéra so long as Pauline was performing in it.¹⁸⁵ Gounod and his mother moved for a time to Courtavenal in 1850 at the Viardot's insistence (Pauline always insisted on Courtavenal's health benefits) and *Sapho* finally premiered on 11 April 1851.¹⁸⁶ *Sapho* only ran for seven performances in Paris that spring and no more than a handful in London. Most critics praised Pauline's performance as the title heroine, though Gounod himself complained of her performance and found someone else to perform the role for two shows in Paris in the autumn: "So far as Gounod was concerned, she had served her purpose."¹⁸⁷

What followed in Pauline and Gounod's relationship raises some question as to whether Pauline's adherence to social conventions and her subversion of them truly escaped public notice. FitzLyon briefly notes, "There is no evidence that Pauline's enthusiasm for Gounod was based on anything more than a keen admiration for his musical gifts.... Yet there had apparently been gossip about their relationship...."¹⁸⁸ This gossip came back to haunt Pauline. When Gounod became engaged to Anna Zimmermann in 1852, a series of unfortunate events left a cold rift between the Viardots, Gounod, and the Zimmermann family who had known Pauline all her life.¹⁸⁹ Following a dinner party in celebration of the engagement, Pauline tried several times to host the Zimmermanns and Gounod at her home without success—they cancelled every time at the last minute. Gounod had also insisted that his wedding would only take place when the Viardots could attend (Pauline had just given birth to Claudie in May), but then held the wedding just days after Pauline had given birth and could not leave her home. When the Viardots sent a

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. See, for example, a letter from Gounod to Pauline dated 20 August 1851. Charles Gounod to Pauline Viardot-García, 20 August 1851, b MS Mus 232 (4), PVG papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

¹⁸⁶ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 261–64, 273.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 275.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 264.

¹⁸⁹ A letter dated 1830 from Pauline to Juliette Zimmermann resides in the Theatre Collection at Houghton Library in which the then Pauline García accepts an invitation to visit her friend. Pauline García to Juliette Zimmermann, 1830, TS 515.51.709 1830, Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

wedding gift of inkstand and bracelet, Gounod returned the bracelet the next day. Hurt, disappointed, and outraged, Louis consulted with Ary Scheffer on the appropriate course of action for this gross insult; the two dispatched letters to Gounod, Louis Viardot's indicating that his house was now closed to Gounod.¹⁹⁰ Gounod visited Ary Scheffer immediately and revealed "that his fiancée's family had, for some time, been concerned about an anonymous letter and alarmed by gossip, both slanderous and injurious, about himself and Pauline...."¹⁹¹ Scheffer made the conditions of a reconciliation clear, that Gounod write a letter of apology and visit Pauline "within the time-limit prescribed for such calls by social convention."¹⁹² Anne Martin-Fugier's insight into social convention helps us understand the seriousness of Gounod's slight: "Les visites que devait faire une femme d'après manuels de savoir vivre étaient légion."¹⁹³ Gounod wrote the letter but never paid the visit. Louis sent Gounod's father-in-law a copy of the correspondence that had passed between himself and Gounod as Scheffer had threatened.

Does this sad series of events indicate that Pauline was not as exceptional as her contemporary prima donnas? Was Pauline just as prone to social containment? Certainly her professional position and her subtle subversion of normative behavior for women (inviting Gounod to her home, becoming his patron, getting his opera staged) made her an easy target. Her handling of the situation, however, reflects her consistent moral uprightness and overall respect of social convention. Pauline had the appropriate social structures in place with which to defend herself—her husband and his friend—and all social protocols for redress were followed. What is more, the gossip never gained traction beyond the Zimmermann family, who finally recognized "that all the gossip about Pauline was pure slander." Louis further ensured this by relating the

¹⁹⁰ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 286.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 286–87.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 287.

¹⁹³ Martin-Fugier, *Salons*, 100. "The visits a woman should make following the manuals of conduct were legion."

details of the events to several close friends who could deny the gossip and defend Pauline if it became necessary.¹⁹⁴ Finally, Gounod eventually repaired the friendship during the London exile of 1870. Letters extant in the Pauline Viardot-García Collection at Houghton Library confirm this.¹⁹⁵

Pauline Viardot engaged with her society's ideal for women by performing the appropriate normative behaviors. Her parents' own social performance and expectations for Pauline certainly exercised a great deal of influence over her early behavior and set a trajectory for her life. George Sand's documented influence on Pauline also cannot be taken for granted where Pauline's later mature social decisions are concerned. Pauline's own mature choices to deliberately exemplify the bourgeois ideal and perform the roles approved for women reveal her conscious engagement with social patterns and deliberate manipulation of them. Pauline performed "woman" with exactness: She married, she raised a family, she cultivated her talents for piano and organ playing as well as painting and sketching, she held and attended weekly salons, and often participated in charity work. By embracing normative behavior for women, Pauline became accepted and respected in mainstream society. Through this acceptance and respect she escaped the stigmatization of the diva. In fact, Pauline herself comments on the standard expectations for prima donnas of her time and reveals her conscious attempts to keep herself aloof from the stigma:

In Paris ist es mir unmöglich was Gutes zu leisten—ich müsste schlechte Musik
hübsch singen (ich hasse das Hübsche in der Kunst), und noch andere Sachen
thun die ehrliche Frauen nicht thun sollten. Ach, liebster Freund, Sie haben keinen

¹⁹⁴ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 287.

¹⁹⁵ See two letters from Gounod dated from 1872 and 1886: Charles Gounod to Pauline Viardot-García, 1872, b MS Mus 232 (4), PVG papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University; Charles Gounod to Pauline Viardot-García, 1886, b MS Mus 232 (4), PVG papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Begriff von der *Unwürde* die jetzt in der Kunst u. ueberhaupt in dem öffentlichen Leben hier herrscht—ich kann es nicht sehen ohne dass sich mein Herz nicht schwer fühlt. Fast alle Sängerinnen sind *Courtisanes*.¹⁹⁶

Pauline recognized and deplored the moral decrepitude of her colleagues. She continues with her own vision of her ideal life: “Paris ist kein Ort für mich—Wir leben ein sehr ruhiges Leben—das ist mir gerade so angenehm.”¹⁹⁷ Through her careful observance of social norms, Pauline did accomplish her ideal life with her normative family gathered around the fire in the salon and time to devote to the pursuit of true art. With social requirements met, Pauline was then able to subvert the norm: her husband dedicated himself to her career without taking control or dominating her; she held and was invited to the most exceptional salons and society events of her time; she maintained long standing friendships with men other than her husband; she collaborated with male composers on high-profile musical projects; she launched the careers of many now famous male composers such as Saint-Saëns, Massenet, and Gounod; she taught at the Paris Conservatory;¹⁹⁸ and she composed, performed, and published music for both private and public performance.

¹⁹⁶ Viardot-García, “Letters of Friendship,” 367. “In Paris it is impossible for me to do anything satisfactory—I should have to sing bad music prettily (I hate prettiness in art), and do other things that honorable women ought not to do. Ah, dearest friend, you have no idea of the baseness which rules here now in art and in every sphere of public life—I cannot see it without feeling heavy at heart. Nearly all the women-singers are *courtisanes*.” Ibid., 366.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 367. “Paris is no place for me.—We live a very quiet life—that suits me exactly.” Ibid., 366.

¹⁹⁸ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 436. Though only a passing reference, the fact that Pauline taught at the Paris Conservatoire is worth mentioning as one of her important accomplishments. See also Michael Steen’s *Enchantress of Nations* (376) for more information on Pauline’s stint as a professor at the Conservatoire.

CHAPTER THREE: VOCALIZING WOMEN;
THE PRIMA DONNA AS LITERARY HEROINE

Pauline Viardot provided the exemplary material for the first successful artist-heroine in women's literature. George Sand's adaptation of Pauline to literary heroine came at the beginning of Pauline's career, before Pauline had achieved what proved her greatest professional successes.¹ Sand's portrayal of Pauline in the guise of Consuelo subsequently altered how Pauline viewed and eventually presented herself as an artist.² This literary analysis will only serve to enhance appreciation of how Viardot negotiated social expectations and historical as well as literary stereotypes to mould her own image and present a new kind of prima donna. Consider first, however, Viardot's influence on women authors who, inspired by her, used literature as a platform from which they directly responded to the man-created image of the stereotypical prima donna and created their own visions of the successful vocalizing woman.

The prima donna as literary heroine serves as a spokesperson for every woman who seeks a voice both literally and metaphorically. Prima donnas not only broke many social rules (by not marrying nor raising children and by using their bodies as the means of securing financial gain), but also their very prominent public positions as singers (who had and publicly exercised their voices) made them obvious and ideal representatives for every other woman who sought a voice,

¹ See Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (New York: Routledge, 2006) for an interesting discussion of the adaptation of professional artists as literary characters. See also Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006) for information on adaptation as a theoretical model.

² Only the first two volumes of Sand's eventual three-volume work come under consideration in this study. The first two volumes of *Consuelo* comprise the original body of work Sand set out to write when she chose Pauline Viardot as her model for the titular heroine. Volume three only appeared after the enormous success of the first two volumes was confirmed. For this reason, volume three may be viewed as an extension and derivation of the first two volumes rather than as a work based on Viardot's life example. Where this thesis concerns itself specifically with Viardot's influence on the recrafting of a literary heroine, volumes one and two of *Consuelo* provide the only sensible material for analysis. Analysis of the work as a whole finds place in Isabelle Naginski's brief but intriguing criticism in *George Sand: Writing for Her Life*, as well as in articles by various authors. Cf. Naginski, *Writing for Her Life*, 90–220; Françoise Escal, "La musique est un roman: *Consuelo* de George Sand," *Revue des Sciences Humaines* 205 (1987): 27–54; Madelyn Gutwirth, "Corinne and *Consuelo* as Fantasies of Immanence," *George Sand Studies* 8 (1986): 21–27; Marilyne Lukacher, "*Consuelo* ou la défaite politique de la femme," *George Sand Studies* 12 (1993): 36–45.

either literally or metaphorically. The authors who come under consideration in this chapter each present their own iteration of the vocalizing woman as heroine. The characters created fall along binary lines, with some prima donna heroines representing the age-old stereotype and others representing a new vision of women's artistry. No vast generalizations such as "a handful of women rewrote the image for all women" will suffice here except to argue that the women authors who recreate the prima donna in literature, thereby rewrite the image for themselves—the character they created and themselves as authors (another type of vocalizing woman)—and for real women engaged in the socio-literary discourse. Considering the early attempts of women authors to craft a successful artist-heroine and what I argue is their failure, what occasioned the success of Sand's later heroines who achieve financial independence, personal happiness, and who do not die? From where did these authors obtain their inspiration for successful prima donna characters?

Linda Lewis completely misses the opportunity to answer such questions in her 2003 work on Staël and Sand. Her study establishes a heritage of artist-heroines beginning with Staël's *Corinne* and Sand's *Consuelo* serving as the matriarchs of the *Künstlerroman* tradition in nineteenth-century women's literature. "The French novelists Staël and Sand created the female myth that was to become the counterpart of Romanticism's...myth of artistic manhood."³ According to Lewis's analysis, Staël and Sand along with their respective heroines inspired generations of British women to create their own artist-heroines who could fictionally engage dominant gender ideologies (i.e. "man does not require woman to create art, while woman cannot possibly become a true artist"⁴) and achieve success. Lewis does recognize that success and failure both play roles in these *Künstlerromane*: "both Germaine de Staël's *Corinne* and

³ Lewis, *Germaine de Staël*, 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*

George Sand's *Consuelo*, as well as many of their successors, do 'make' it—at least in the sense of artists who are brilliant and ambitious, fascinating and famous. Granted, some female artists fail...but many 'awaken' to stardom within texts that are their own histories."⁵ Lewis argues that the "success" of early heroines in the genre relates to an optimism with which the matriarchs Staël and Sand infected their followers. The optimism seems to have burned out, however, by *fin-de-siècle* literary productions: "If fictional New Women artists do publish or perform, they usually have to settle for scaled-down versions of greatness.... [T]heir husbands, brothers, fathers, and lovers stifle their creativity and burn their books.... [T]he enduring image of the fin-de-siècle's female *Künstlerroman* is that of a drowning woman...."⁶ And that should remind us of the closing scene of many operas.

Lewis's work exposes a series of unanswered questions regarding the woman-artist's success or lack thereof. For instance, why and how does Sand's 1842 heroine *Consuelo* achieve greater success than her predecessor *Corinne* (1807)? What does that success look like and why is it greater than *Corinne*'s? Why and how does Sand's 1842 artist-heroine succeed where the author's first artist-heroine (*Lélia*, 1833/1839) as well as other Sand heroines ultimately fail (e.g. fail to triumph over circumstances, fail to achieve independence, and/or die)? Sand's choice to cast her 1842 artist-heroine as a prima donna should have ensured failure, given the precarious situation of the historical prima donna who at once attained coveted female independence but lost it and its power through society's various means of containment. The ultimate unanswered question is, while Sand inspired other women authors, who inspired her?

Pauline Viardot's high visibility and extensive friendships and social connections provided her a unique position in nineteenth-century Europe as an exemplar to women,

⁵ *Ibid.*, 6–7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 250–51.

demonstrating that a vocalizing woman could be socially, personally, and professionally successful all at the same time. George Sand found in Pauline Viardot the embodiment of the serious and successful woman-artist. Sand seized on Pauline's example to create her own vision of the prima donna heroine, a heroine who represented the hopes and aspirations of real women in Sand and Viardot's contemporary society.

The Prima Donna as Frankenstein's Monster

The prima donna character originates in literature as a product of man's creation (see Chapter One). Bermani's *Clelia* (1844) was only one of several literary divas exemplifying the socio-historical stereotype discussed at length in Chapter One. Where French literature is specifically concerned, one of the earliest appearances of a prima donna heroine occurs in E. T. A. Hoffmann's 1816/17 novella, *Rat Krespel*. Béatrice Didier argues in her article "Le personnage du musicien dans le literature français" that Hoffmann's literature, while technically German, pervaded French literary markets. His musician characters had a marked effect on the development of musician characters in contemporary French literature; Didier cites several Balzac works specifically.⁷ Also a professional musician, Hoffmann created musician characters that most likely reflect a deeper engagement with contemporary discussions surrounding music, society, and gender.⁸ *Rat Krespel's* prima donna heroine, Angela, fulfills the diva stereotype while her daughter, Antonia, tries to fulfill social expectations of women and reflects more of the opposing "angel in the house" character. Hoffmann's novella seems to engage with the socio-historical prima donna discourse and ultimately contributes to the reinforcement of patriarchal ideals, thereby containing the women of the text. The fates of both women seem designed to deter real life women from even contemplating a life of public vocalization.

⁷ Didier, "Personnage," 76.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.

In engaging the prima donna discourse, *Rat Krespel* reveals that “the need for...control was imperative because prima donnas are invariably drawn as being possessed of extraordinary will power and determination.”⁹ Elements of containment discourse abound on multiple levels in Hoffmann’s text, providing insight into how society may have viewed the emergence of women on stage and then attempted to maintain the existing social gender balance. In the novella, Krespel becomes entranced by and marries a devastatingly beautiful Italian soprano, Angela, who exemplifies the characteristics of the Eve/siren archetype:

Angela sich weder vom Theater noch von den Namen, der die berühmte Sängerin bezeichnete, trennen.... Mit der tollsten Ironie beschrieb Krespel die ganz eigene Art, wie Signora Angela, sobald sie seine Frau worden, ihn martete und quälte. Aller Eigensinn, alles launische Wesen sämtlicher erster Sängerinnen sei, wie Krespel meinte, in Angelas kleine Figur hineingebannt worden.¹⁰

The temperamental prima donna becomes even more apparent when Angela, “die Zärtliche zu spielen,” suddenly becomes enraged at Krespel and smashes his violin.¹¹ Justifiably, this portrayal of Angela reads as a warning against the possible consequences “of female ambition and achievement.”¹² Angela refuses to be contained by social mores as evidenced in her behavior towards her husband following their marriage. Thus she becomes a threat to the established

⁹ Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*, 43.

¹⁰ E.T.A. Hoffmann, “Rat Krespel,” Arts and Humanities Research Center of Dartmouth College, 1997–2010, accessed 4 January 2013, http://annotext.dartmouth.edu/display/display_text.php?text_id=34&from_lang=de&to_lang=en. “Angela did not wish to part from the theater nor surrender the name under which she had become famous.... Angela plagued and tortured him as soon as she became his wife. Krespel felt that all the selfishness and all the petulance that resided in all the prima donnas in the world were somehow concentrated in her little body.” E.T.A. Hoffmann, “Councillor Krespel,” [1817], trans. L.J. Kent and E.C. Knight in *Tales*, ed. Victor Lange (New York: Continuum Publishing, 1982), 94.

¹¹ Hoffmann, “Rat,” n.p. Hoffmann, “Councillor,” 95: “playing the affectionate wife....”

¹² Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*, 43.

social order. Standing still for a moment, Krespel summons his strength and hurls Angela through a window before fleeing the scene. Significantly:

Signora sei nämlich nach Krespels heroischer Tat wie umgewandelt; von Launen, närrischen Einfällen, von irgendeiner Quälerei ließe sie durchaus nichts mehr verspüren, und der Maestro, der für das nächste Karneval komponiert, sei der glücklichste Mensch unter der Sonne, weil Signora seine Arien ohne hunderttausend Abänderungen, die er sich sonst gefallen lassen müssen, singen wolle. Übrigens habe man alle Ursache, meinte der Freund, es sorgfältig zu verschweigen, wie Angela kuriert worden, da sonst jedes Tages Sängerrinnen durch die Fenster fliegen würden.¹³

Krespel's expression of male dominance and violence solved the problem of the prima donna, in a sense, tranquilizing the behaviors deemed most obnoxious and threatening in the opera star both fictional and real. The narrator even celebrates the act of violence against Angela as a "heroischer Tat": "heroisch" because Angela the prima donna, whose only characterization in the story is of a petulant, wanton woman who disturbs the socio-cultural status quo, is finally subdued and reined into the patriarchal order. Hoffmann's assertion that Krespel's successful tactic must be kept secret suggests that prima donnas throughout Europe were viewed in a similar light as the fictional Angela and that society actively worried about the problem of the prima donna and how to contain her.

¹³ Hoffmann, "Rat," n.p. "As a result of Krespel's heroic deed, she seemed transformed; no longer was there evidence of her former capriciousness or willfulness or of her old teasing habits, and the *maestro* who had composed the music for the next carnival was the happiest man under the sun, for the Signora was willing to sing his arias without a thousand changes to which he would otherwise have had to consent. All in all, there was every reason for keeping secret the method by which Angela had been cured; otherwise primadonnas [*sic*] would come flying through windows every day." Hoffmann, "Councillor," 95.

Krespel further reflects contemporary social attitudes toward prima donnas and the power of the female voice in his fascination with violin construction. Throughout the text, violin music is equated with the literal female voice; violins and the female voice share a similar quality and emotion. Consider also how the shape of a violin mirrors an idealized woman's body shape. Krespel's violin making, however, involves taking apart violins to see how each is uniquely constructed. The dismembered violin becomes a symbol of the control he attempts to exert over the singer/prima donna. Krespel further demonstrates his control by using violin music to replace the voice of his daughter, Antonia. Antonia's otherworldly singing exacerbates an existing heart condition that will ultimately kill her.¹⁴ Additionally, when Krespel begs Antonia never to sing again despite the sublime pleasure he feels at the sound of her voice, it is almost as if that pleasure, surging emotion, exerts too much power over him and he must regain control by cutting off the source.¹⁵ He certainly fears his daughter's death but even more so he fears what Antonia's voice does to him (the loss of control), the power it wields over him and over her own body. Antonia's "death by singing" confirms the precarious position of the prima donna not only in the fictional world of *Krespel* but also in contemporary society. She seems too powerful to be allowed complete freedom of vocalization, requiring careful management and control.

Men were not the only authors, however, who persisted in portraying the stereotypical prima donna, perpetrated the containment of women in literature, or promoted the ideal of the domestic, silent woman. Madame de Genlis made a case for the quality of women's writing and the virtues of the heroine in her 1811 *De l'influence des femmes sur la littérature française*.

¹⁴ Hoffmann, "Councillor," 96, 98.

¹⁵ Hoffmann, Rat, n.p.: "Der Klang von Antoniens Stimme war ganz eigentümlich und seltsam, oft dem Hauch der Äolsharfe, oft dem Schmettern der Nachtigall gleichend. Die Töne schienen nicht Raum haben zu können in der menschlichen Brust. Antonie, vor Freude und Liebe glühend, sang und sang alle ihre schönsten Lieder, und B... spielte dazwischen, wie es nur die wonnertrunkene Begeisterung vermag... Endlich sprang er auf, drückte Antonien an seine Brust und bat sehr leise und dumpf: "Nicht mehr singen, wenn du mich liebst—es drückt mir das Herz ab—die Angst—die Angst—Nicht mehr singen." (For the English see Hoffmann, "Councillor," 97.)

Genlis ends up buying into the social code for women, insisting that women have special qualities that allow them to serve as models of “sublime heroism,” qualities such as “l’imagination, la sensibilité, [et] élévation de l’âme.”¹⁶ These qualities certainly distinguish women from men for they are coded as distinctly feminine. Such socio-cultural gender codings limit women to only “approved” characteristics. Sophie Cottin is one of the last authors studied in Madame de Genlis’ work, but it is Cottin’s last two novels which she celebrates as providing the best examples of heroines or ideal women.¹⁷ *Mathilde* (1805) is the best of Cottin’s works according to Genlis: “on y trouve...des sentimens nobles, délicats, généreux,” all qualities Madame de Genlis labels feminine and, therefore, appropriate for a woman author and her women characters to express.¹⁸ *Mathilde*, the sister of Richard the Lionheart, falls in love with a Muslim crusader. When both her betrothed and her true love die, Mathilde retires to a convent. *Elisabeth ou les Exilés de Sibérie* (1806) again expresses “les sentimens les plus purs, l’amour maternal, [et] l’amour filial.”¹⁹ Though Elisabeth makes a long trip across Russia by herself (perhaps not the best activity for a young woman), her pure motive in trying to win the grace of the Czar for her exiled father casts her as an ideal woman. Mathilde and Elisabeth both exemplify the dutiful *épouse et mère* image which includes their filial devotion and the extreme manifestation of it: Mathilde to her brother and Elisabeth to her father.

¹⁶ Stéphanie Félicité, comtesse de Genlis, *De l’influence des femmes sur la littérature française, comme protectrices des lettres et comme auteurs, ou, Précis de l’histoire des femmes françaises les plus célèbres* (Paris: Maradan, 1811), iii–iv, via Google Books. “[I]magination, sensibility, [and] elevation of the soul.”

¹⁷ “[L]es deux derniers romans de madame Cotin [*sic*] sont infiniment supérieurs à tous ceux des romanciers français...” [The two final novels of Madame Cottin are infinitely superior to all the French romances...]. Genlis, *Influence des femmes*, vii. *Claire d’Albe* seems to disgust Genlis: “Ce roman est à tous égards un mauvais ouvrage, sans intérêt, sans imagination, sans vraisemblance et d’une immoralité révoltante...” [This novel is in every way a terrible work, without interest, without imagination, without relation to reality, and of a revolting immorality]. *Ibid.*, 346.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 364–65. “There we find sentiments noble, delicate, generous....”

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 365. “Sentiments most pure, maternal love [and] filial love.”

Women in French Literature: Early Attempts to Rehabilitate the Prima Donna as Heroine

On the other side, several women authors attempted to break free from both the ideal image of womanhood and the archetype of vilified woman, most frequently embodied as a prima donna. Such literature centered generically on women's rights, and almost without exception the "heroines" within this literary conversation fail to achieve their goals of freedom, independence and/or happiness. A brief analysis of several exemplary works sets the success of Sand's *Consuelo* in relief and aids an understanding of how Pauline Viardot contributed to the creation of a successful woman-artist heroine.

Prior to the publication of Sand's *Consuelo*, French women including Sand grappled with the social order in their literature, exploring specifically the dichotomy of genders, and approved acts and behaviors for women. Sophie Cottin's *Claire d'Albe* shocked audiences in 1798 with its heroine battling the conflict between her personal happiness and the welfare of her family. Though not a singer and not attempting a professional career on the stage, Claire engages in a social-psychological struggle between her initial complicity in the patriarchal ideal and her awakening to an alternative life outside the social order. Claire eventually breaks with her family to pursue her husband's adopted son, Frédéric, but her liberation is short-lived; Claire dies on the tomb of her father after consummating her love for Frédéric. Claire not only cannot escape the psychologically embedded values of the patriarchal order, but she is also ostracized by her family and society and has no alternative but to die—the world has no place for a woman who attempts to lead a life independent from her husband, father, or mainstream society.

In her article "Le personnage du musicien dans le roman français," Béatrice Didier cites Staël's *Corinne* as the first example of a woman writer introducing a woman-artist heroine into the literary tradition of artist-heroes in French literature as begun with Diderot's *Le Neveu de*

Rameau. Staël's work incorporates what was then a new style within the artist-hero genre, that of the artist biography. Didier writes, "*Corinne* (1807) envers qui toute la génération suivante sera redevable: Corinne est poétesse et musicienne, elle est l'image de la femme créatrice...."²⁰

Madame de Staël's eponymous Corinne breaks female conventionality by living alone in Italy as a sort of crowned poet-laureate, without a past, without parents, free to come and go as she pleases, and adored in her social sphere. The conflict between Italian and English social custom becomes embodied in the conflict between the artist-heroine and her love for the Englishman Oswald. Corinne as the embodiment of Italy should read like Venetian opera culture of the eighteenth century while English culture encompasses a strict, cold, patriarchal social order. Corinne falls to a similar fate as Claire, but dying instead of a broken heart when the man she loves cannot bring himself to dismiss a social and familial duty by marrying her. As soon as Corinne abandons her independence by accepting her love for Oswald and pinning all her hopes on marrying him, she is no longer able to function: she stumbles confusedly around outside Oswald's home, becomes deathly ill, and stops writing and singing in the months leading up to her death. Not only does Corinne die (a clear indication of failure as defined in this thesis), but she also allows herself to be silenced. The transformation from successful public *cantatrice* to heartsick, silent invalid is perhaps more tragic even than Corinne's eventual death. Silencing and death constitute the ultimate methods of containment. In this sense, Corinne the artist-heroine fails to escape the containment discourse (exercising her voice and living to enjoy the fruits of her professional success constituting escape) and meets the same tragic end as her operatic and real-life counterparts.

²⁰ Didier, "Personnage," 75. "The generation following would be beholden to *Corinne* (1807): Corinna is poetess and musician, she is the image of the female creator...."

Rewriting the Literary Woman's Spokesperson

Women authors following Staël's example utilized the prima donna/singing woman as a heroine for her obvious position as a vocalizing woman and representative of every woman who desired to have and exercise her own voice. For these women, the act of writing was the first step to cultivating their literal and metaphorical voices. George Sand perhaps represents the ideal woman author for this study, not just because she based one of her heroines on Pauline Viardot. Sand involved herself in major radical political movements of the time and frequently used her literature as a platform from which to fictionally engage real-life social and political issues. Sand goes beyond treating simple literary stereotypes, much like Staël who sought to affect change in her contemporary society. In her 1842 preface to *Indiana*, Sand states her goal in writing such a novel: "[J]'ai écrit *Indiana* avec le sentiment...profond et légitime, de l'injustice et de la barbarie des lois qui régissent encore l'existence de la femme dans le mariage, dans la famille et la société."²¹ Here Sand openly admits to using literature as a public platform in the hopes that at some point these appalling socio-political conditions will change for women. The relative failure of Sand's early heroines seems to reflect the hopelessness of the situation. Take for example *Lélia*, published in 1833. Sand creates an artist-heroine who fulfills the expectations of the siren and ends up murdered. Isabelle Naginski situates *Lélia* in Sand's *noire* period.²² Sand's *sensibilité noire* investigated, among other issues, "the question of rebellion—literary, metaphysical, personal—which gives the fictional output of the 1830s a decidedly nihilistic outlook. Atheism, hopeless love, philosophical despair, suicide, and death loom over the blue

²¹ George Sand, *Indiana*, ed. René Bourgeois (Grenoble, France: Éditions Glénat, 1996), 35. "I wrote *Indiana* with the profound and legitimate feeling of the injustice and the barbarity of the laws that govern the existence of woman in marriage, in the family, and in society."

²² Naginski, *Writing for Her Life*, 5.

and black periods.”²³ Violent death at the hands of a man represents the symbolic death suffered by women who are prevented from exercising their voices whether in opinion sharing or through the more drastic means of public musical performance. Voice plays an important role in *Lélia* as the heroine seeks to develop herself in typical *Bildungsroman* fashion. Tellingly, Lélia’s singing voice eventually exposes a cruel trick she has played on her former lover, Sténio: having spent the night with a woman he thinks is Lélia, Sténio awakes to hear the real Lélia singing in a gondola floating far from the apartment where the masked woman lay.²⁴ Lélia finally meets her fate at the hands of the priest, Magnus, who strangles her with his rosary.²⁵ This effective “silencing” recalls mainstream Christianity’s demonization and attempted silencing of vocalizing women.²⁶ Despite the seeming failure in her early novels to achieve any great victories for womankind, Sand asserted in the preface to *Indiana* that she would continue to fight this battle while the breath of life remained in her: “Liberté de la pensée, liberté d’écrire et de parler, sainte conquête de l’esprit humain!”²⁷ Sand’s vision of women freely writing and speaking is arguably realized in her 1842 novel, *Consuelo*.

The nine-year lapse between *Lélia*’s silencing and *Consuelo*’s success allowed for Sand’s transition into what Naginski calls her white period, a late phase of Sand’s work envisioning “a now hopeful moral universe.”²⁸ The 1840s white period “finds Sand moving away from a poetics of destruction and toward the articulation of a personal life-affirming mythology.”²⁹ *Consuelo* and its sequel, *La Comtesse de Rudolstadt*, are part of this white period project. Certainly the main character’s personal, social, and professional successes reflect Sand’s more hopeful vision

²³ Ibid., 7.

²⁴ George Sand, *Lélia*, ed. Pierre Reboul (Paris: Édition Garnier, 2004), 219. For the English see: George Sand, *Lélia*, trans. Maria Espinosa (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 145.

²⁵ Sand, *Lélia*, 323–24; Sand, *Lélia* [trans.], 229–30.

²⁶ See chap. 1.

²⁷ Sand, *Indiana*, 35. “Freedom to think, freedom to write and to speak, holy victory of the human spirit!”

²⁸ Naginski, *Writing for Her Life*, 5.

²⁹ Ibid., 7.

for women. But what could account for the drastic change in treatment of a prima donna heroine between the publication of *Lélia* in 1833 and the publication of *Consuelo* in 1842? What is more, Sand revised *Lélia* in 1839, “already incorporat[ing] aspects of Sand’s white period” as reflected in the rewriting of the prima donna’s fate: instead of a tragic murder, *Lélia* undergoes a mystical conversion and retires as abbess of a convent. But this revised ending, while keeping *Lélia* alive, does more to fulfill the propagandist ideal for womanhood by taking the celibacy track rather than marriage and silence than it does to fully liberate the woman to equal footing with men. Sand scholars repeatedly cite the influence of her real life, her friends and their interactions, on her novels and it is only too likely that a change in Sand’s life best explains her new vision of the prima donna as captured in *Consuelo*.³⁰ The change, I argue, is that Sand became close friends with Pauline Viardot in 1841, a real-life prima donna who challenged the discursive stereotype so ingrained in society and prevalent in contemporary literature, even in Sand’s own works such as *Lélia*. Finding embodied in Pauline her vision of the successful woman-artist, Sand finally realized her hopes for women and found the exemplar she needed to create a literary heroine of the same stature. By capturing Pauline’s success in literary form, Sand could best propagate it across Europe and inspire other women with her message.

Pauline Viardot and the Successful Artist-Heroine

Before jumping into an extended analysis of *Consuelo*, it will be helpful to review similar scholarship already completed by Rebecca Pope in her article “The diva doesn’t die: George Eliot’s *Armstrong*.” Pope argues that Pauline Viardot’s influence was crucial to the creation of George Eliot’s successful artist-heroine *Armstrong*: “If we accept her as the exception to the conventional Eliot heroine, we might begin to explore the possibility that the writer was able to

³⁰ Scholars taking the biographical approach to Sand’s works include: André Maurois, *Lélia; ou, La vie de George Sand* (Paris: Hachette, 1952); Lewis, *Germaine de Staël*, 42; Naginski deliberately avoids the “biographical fallacy,” focusing instead on the Sandian text (Naginski, *Writing for Her Life*, 10–13).

depart from her standard heroine in *Armgart* because she had before her the model of Pauline Viardot's achievement, devotion to her art and, perhaps most important of all, survival."³¹ Textual analysis completed by Pope demonstrates how the character of Armgart reflects Viardot's real-life empowerment. Pope establishes a clear link between Armgart and Pauline, citing Armgart's lack of beauty,³² the importance of Gluck's *Orpheus* to the singer's career,³³ and Armgart's transition from singer to voice teacher.³⁴ Building on common biographical details, Pope presents a thorough analysis of how Pauline's example made Eliot's Armgart come to life.

To begin, Armgart identifies with Viardot "in [her] refusal to divide herself and her energies—"I will live alone and pour my pain / With passion into music," she declares.

Armgart's determination recalls the dedication Sand so respected and admired in Viardot, who worked to extinguish all her passions save her passion for music because she believed that artistic achievement required that the artist become indifferent to all save her/his art."³⁵

Furthermore, Eliot's literary diva recognizes the inherent power of her female voice because it cannot be duplicated or displaced.³⁶ "To have such a voice, she implies, frees her from the strictures and demands of the traditional gender code."³⁷ Armgart accordingly uses her voice to

"alter or supplement the [male-authored] text."³⁸ One exemplary episode in *Armgart* recalls

Berlioz's complaints that "Viardot had altered words in the libretto and added roudes that he

³¹ Pope, "The Diva Doesn't Die," 151.

³² *Ibid.*, 145.

³³ *Ibid.*, 140–42, 145.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 150.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 147. Unlike Viardot, Armgart repeatedly refuses offers of marriage because she knows full well "they carry with them the expectation that she give up her career" (*ibid.*, 146). The refusal to marry reflects more of the stereotypical nineteenth-century diva exemplified by Hoffmann's Angela, and yet Armgart still reflects Pauline's single-mindedness and complete devotion to her career. Husband, children, and friends all came second to Pauline's profession (*ibid.*, 144).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 146.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 146–47.

had not written into his rescoring of *Orpheus*....”³⁹ The evidence of Armgart’s personal empowerment as a reflection of Viardot’s real-life accomplishments is clearly illustrated when “Armgart’s singing teacher, Leo, complains that during a performance she had deliberately sung notes which ‘Gluck had not written, nor I taught’.”⁴⁰

Pope fails to comment on the importance of Armgart achieving success by playing a male character on stage.⁴¹ Just as Pauline Viardot was celebrated for her sexless, androgynous voice and made her fame through playing Orpheus and other pants roles, Armgart similarly achieves vocal performance success through a male role—it is the male role that allows her to make her female voice audible.⁴² Arguably, Armgart ultimately undermines the masculine through her cross-dressing, which is unable to stifle the performance of her uniquely female voice. And as proved true for Viardot, “Armgart sees her voice as an empowering female difference in contention with patriarchy.” The power of the female voice becomes a mode of redress to patriarchal containment.⁴³

George Eliot does not appear to have had the same close, personal relationship with Pauline that George Sand enjoyed, though that does not lessen the inspiration Eliot took from Pauline’s example as a woman-artist.⁴⁴ The nature of Sand’s relationship with Pauline, on the other hand, is reflected in the manifestation of Sand’s firsthand knowledge of Pauline’s personal, public, and professional lives on the pages of *Consuelo*. Only months after George Sand and Pauline struck up a friendship, Sand began writing a novel whose title character would be

³⁹ Ibid., 147.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 149.

⁴² “But the history of Gluck’s *Orpheus*, as I suggested above, is one of gender reversal and slippage, and this, coupled with the poem’s emphasis on the female voice, reminds us that Armgart, consistently associates this very freedom, independence and power not with the masculine role, but with her female voice. A woman acting the manly part suggests the extent to which gender is a role, a ‘performance.’” Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 146.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 145. Eliot and Viardot were friends, however: “they were close enough for Viardot to visit the writer at home when Eliot was too depressed to leave the house....”

modeled on Pauline. “[T]he fact that George [Sand] had found the incarnation of so many of her ideas in Pauline determined her heroine’s profession, nationality, and physical appearance.”⁴⁵ Regardless of the documented fact that Sand modeled the work on Viardot (and consequently dedicated the novel “*A madame Pauline Viardot*”⁴⁶), the nature of Viardot’s example and its effect on what Isabelle Naginski names as one of Sand’s masterpieces is at the crux of the matter.⁴⁷ But how does *Consuelo* benefit from Viardot’s influence? How is it that Pauline’s mediating influence was necessary for Sand to rewrite the prima donna heroine? Consuelo embodies many of the traits considered as womanly or comprising the character of the ideal woman. But is Consuelo really the image of ideal woman? Does she embrace domesticity and silence, or celibacy and devotion to God? Not entirely. Just as Pauline Viardot carefully balanced adherence to social expectations of women with a very successful opera career (i.e. she had a public following, critics loved her work, and she maintained social respectability), Consuelo balances approved traits of the ideal woman with her musical talent and performance career to trump the stereotypical diva image while also rejecting complete fidelity to patriarchal ideals of womanhood. In breaking down the prima donna stereotype, Sand through her prima donna heroine presents a new vision of the woman-artist: socially, personally, and professionally successful.

Sand provides her ideal artist Consuelo with a fitting contrast, mirroring the historically grounded dual image of women, as perpetuated in dialogue surrounding the prima donna. Linda Lewis describes the polarities exhibited by the artists populating the pages of *Consuelo*: these artists are “professional and amateur, lazy and diligent, inspired and insipid, some who sing for

⁴⁵ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 114.

⁴⁶ George Sand, *Consuelo: La Comtesse de Rudolstadt*, eds. Simone Vierne and René Bourgeois (Meylan, France: Les Éditions de l’Aurore, 1983), 1:41.

⁴⁷ Naginski, *Writing for Her Life*, 7. April FitzLyon deems *Consuelo* “one of [Sand’s] finest works” (*Price of Genius*, 114–15).

the glory of God and others who are ruled by the lust for glory, some who prostitute their art and others who honor the divine afflatus as a gift of the divinity.”⁴⁸ Consuelo’s nemesis, Corilla, represents all the characteristics of the “lazy,” “insipid” artist, thus fulfilling the prima donna stereotype. The juxtaposition of Consuelo with Corilla embodies the dichotomy of the “angel in the house” and the “madwoman in the attic,” or the ideal woman and the vilified woman/siren. Corilla easily becomes jealous, is quickly won by flattery, and “ses caprices...ruinent” the theater. The directors of the theater want desperately to replace Corilla who “est fatiguée, sa voix se perd...le public est bientôt dégoûté d’elle.”⁴⁹ Corilla feels entitled to maintain her position as prima donna assoluta; as soon as Consuelo begins her career at the same theater, Corilla begins plotting to destroy the new star. Corilla admits to Anzoletto that she is jealous of Consuelo and determined not to let Consuelo eclipse her years of experience and success.⁵⁰ In the end, Corilla nearly sabotages her own career when she gives birth to the tenor Anzoletto’s illegitimate child. Consuelo ultimately saves her rival’s career by keeping Corilla’s secret.

Théophile Gautier—a French art critic, writer, and contemporary of Pauline—lamented the caprices of his contemporary divas and divos, highlighting the succession of capricious stars: “nous ne partageons pas à cet égard les terreurs des dilettanti. Le roi est mort, vive le roi! Après Pasta, Malibran; après Malibran, Grisi; après García, Rubini; après Rubini, Ronzi; après Taglioni, Elssler; après Elssler, Carlotta.—Personne n’est indispensable, et tout le monde se remplace!”⁵¹ The fictional Porpora, Consuelo’s voice teacher modeled on a real eighteenth-century pedagogue, presents an even more forceful disgust for capricious stars and their

⁴⁸ Lewis, *Germaine de Staël*, 42.

⁴⁹ “[H]er caprices ruin us...” “This prima donna is tired, her voice is gone...the public is already degusted with her.” Sand, *Consuelo*, 1:76.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1:142–43.

⁵¹ Théophile Gautier, *Histoire de l’art dramatique en France depuis vingt-cinq ans* (Leipzig, Germany: Édition Hetzel, 1858), 2:165. Gautier names prima donnas Pasta through Grisi, tenors García through Ronzi, and dancers Taglioni through Carlotta.

intrigues: “Mais les artistes! tous lâches, tous ingrats, tous traîtres et menteurs. Qu’on ne m’en parle pas.”⁵² Much like Krespel in Hoffmann’s tale, Porpora threatens drastic action: “Je ne veux jamais en voir un franchir le seuil de cêtte chambre. Si cela arrivait, vois-tu, je le jetterais par la fenêtre à l’instant même.”⁵³ Sand may be channeling Hoffmann in this dialogue, but suffice it to say, she was aware of the reputation of prima donnas and their precarious position in regards to social acceptance. Sand’s ideal artist-heroine, Consuelo, channels neither Angela nor Antonia. Pauline Viardot’s example provided an alternative to the two traditional extremes.

Corilla’s supremely stereotypical behavior contrasts sharply with that of Consuelo. Consuelo assiduously avoids even the appearance of evil: when the patron negotiating her opera contract (Count Zustiniani) tries to flatter her vanity, she deflects his praise, refuses his gifts, and stops his sexual advances dead in their tracks.⁵⁴ The stereotypical concern for contracts, liaisons, and a strong fan base, which absorbed many divas in real life and figure prominently in the fictional Corilla’s concerns, do not find place in Consuelo’s consciousness. Sand establishes Consuelo’s genuine modesty and humility from the first pages of the novel when her singing master lets on that only one of his students possesses even a hint of modesty paired with prodigious talent.⁵⁵ When Porpora reveals the name of the student, Consuelo’s classmates are taken aback that the maestro should deign to favor the ugly, Spanish, orphan, gypsy girl (reminiscent of the many contemporary accounts of Viardot’s ugliness). Without saying a word, Consuelo follows the directions of the maestro to sing the *Salve Regina* before leaving school for the day. “Without fear, pride, or embarrassment” Consuelo begins to sing, filling the cathedral

⁵² “But artists! All loose, all ingrates, all traitors and liars. Don’t talk to me about them.” Sand, *Consuelo*, 2:162.

⁵³ “I never want to see one [an artist] cross the threshold of this room. If one comes, watch, I will throw him/her out the window in an instant.” Ibid.

⁵⁴ Sand, *Consuelo*, 1:72–73; 132–34.

⁵⁵ “ ‘Car c’est la seule de ma classe qui ait de la modestie...’ ” [She is the only one in my class who has any shred of modesty...]. Ibid., 1:41.

with “the most beautiful voice that had ever resounded.”⁵⁶ Consuelo approaches singing with childlike innocence and without the airs of the haughty, self-assured diva.

An early description of Consuelo’s performance of prima donna both raises and answers the question of how she balances diva-dom with her embodiment of the ideal woman. Porpora organizes an informal audition for Consuelo, whose retiring innocence prevents her from seeking out a musical career on the stage. Convinced that Consuelo can become a great artist if she will engage in an operatic career, Porpora invites the leading impresario, Count Zustiniani to the cathedral where Consuelo will perform as the lead soloist in a regular service. Despite being given money with which to buy a new dress, shoes, and appropriate accessories, Consuelo chooses to wear a simple black church dress, no makeup, and no powder in her hair.⁵⁷

Consuelo’s choice symbolically aligns her character with one version of the patriarchal ideal for women: that of the nun, the celibate and/or virginal woman devoted to God. As discussed in Chapter One, Early Church Fathers placed a high value on the Virgin Mary’s redemptive power over women to reclaim them from Eve’s shadow. The condition of such redemption cannot go overlooked—virginity or celibacy effectively neutralizes the sexual power feared in women. How interesting then that Sand worked incrementally toward redeeming the prima donna—a representative of the fallen woman—in her literature first through Lélia murdered and then

⁵⁶ “Consuelo sans rien répondre, sans montrer ni crainte, ni orgueil, ni embarras, suivit le maître de chant jusqu’à l’orgue, où il se rassit et, d’un air de triomphe, donna le ton à la jeune élève. Alors Consuelo, avec simplicité et avec aisance, éleva purement sous les profondes voûtes de la cathédrale, les accents de la plus belle voix qui les eût jamais fait retentir. Elle chanta le *Salve Regina* sans faire une seule faute de mémoire, sans hasarder un son qui ne fût complètement juste, plein, soutenu ou brisé à propos...” [Without responding, without show or nervousness, neither pride nor embarrassment, Consuelo followed the master to the organ where he sat and, with an air of triumph, gave the note to the young student. Consuelo, with simplicity and great ease, raised her pure voice. The accents of the most beautiful voice resounded through the expanse of the vaulted cathedral. She sang the *Salve Regina* without making a single mistake of memory, without hazarding a sound that was not completely justified, full, supported or voiced at just the right time]. She follows all the maestro’s directions with the innocence of a child: “ce que la science, l’habitude et l’enthousiasme n’eussent pas fait faire à un chanteur consommé: elle chanta avec perfection” [this is science, habit and enthusiasm alone would not have made the consummate singer: she sang with perfection]. Ibid., 1:43.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 1:98–99.

converted to monasticism, and then by turning to Consuelo, who both embodies and defies the patriarchal ideal to great effect. Consuelo's nunlike appearance at her audition makes her public presence palatable and easy to accept, and it neutralizes fear of the vocalizing woman occasioned by the overwhelming display of sexual power inherent in women's musical performance.⁵⁸ Thereby made innocuous in society, Consuelo gains mobility and freedom to pursue her career. Indeed, as Linda Lewis highlights, "Porpora defines freedom for Consuelo as the single life, informing her that when she gives herself away, she loses her divinity—suggesting of course that she must be a *virgin* Pythian...."⁵⁹ Not only does the nun alter ego ("the single life") provide Consuelo with the freedom she requires to become a great artist, it also provides her with the social status necessary for escaping social stereotypes and containment.

Sand's use of monastic characteristics to establish Consuelo with a safe social status is not without precedent. Significantly, at the dawn of Pauline's career, Théophile Gautier situated her in the prima donna discourse, invoking sacred imagery to describe Pauline's debut on the Parisian stage. In October 1839, Gautier wrote of Pauline's debut: "La quinzaine a été des plus splendides en fait de débuts lyriques; il y a eu une conjonction d'astres mélodieux qui ne se reproduira pas de longtemps dans le ciel musical.—Une étoile de première grandeur, une étoile à sept rayons, a brillé sa charmante lueur virginale aux yeux ravis des dilettani du Théâtre-Italien...."⁶⁰ "Sa charmante lueur virginale" prefigures the description of Consuelo's informal audition at the church: "Un feu divin monta à ses joues, et la flamme sacrée jaillit de ses grands yeux noirs, lorsqu'elle remplit la voûte de cette voix sans égale et de cet accent victorieux, pur,

⁵⁸ Lewis notes the example of Consuelo's nunlike simplicity as a benchmark for later heroines such as George Eliot's Dorothea from *Middlemarch* (1872). Lewis, *Germaine de Staël*, 164.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁶⁰ Gautier, *Art dramatique en France*, 1:304. "The fifteen-year-old had the most splendid of lyric debuts; there was a confluence of melodious stars [heavenly bodies] that has not occurred in a very long time in the musical universe. A star of first-class grandeur, a star with seven rays, straddled her charming virginal glow on the happy dilettants of the Théâtre Italien...."

vraiment grandiose, qui ne peut sortir que d'une grande intelligence jointe à un grand cœur."⁶¹

Sand likely read Gautier's reviews: in addition to writing novels she was an art critic and wrote for various reviews and newspapers including the *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris*.

Additional descriptions of Consuelo from the audition align closely with Gautier's first review of Pauline in 1839. Gautier writes of "La simplicité d'attitudes, la finesse des mouvements, la sveltesse de galbe, naturelles à mademoiselle Pauline García, ajoutaient à l'illusion et la complétaient."⁶² Sand describes how Consuelo's "large front semblait nager dans un fluide céleste, une molle langueur baignait encore les plans doux et nobles de sa figure sereine et généreuse."⁶³ Finally, Gautier celebrates the quality of Pauline's voice and its effect on the listener: "Elle possède un des instruments les plus magnifiques qu'il soit possible d'entendre. Le timbre en est admirable, ni trop clair ni voilé. Ce n'est point une voix métallique comme celle de Grisi; mais les tons du médium ont je ne sais quoi de doux et de pénétrant qui remue le cœur. L'étendue est prodigieuse."⁶⁴ Sand seems to draw from these very characteristics for Pauline's literary alter ego: "Il y avait en elle quelque chose de grave, de mystérieux et de profond, qui commandait le respect et l'attendrissement."⁶⁵ Pauline provided both inspiration and exemplary material for Sand's new woman-artist.

Regardless of whether Sand was familiar with Gautier's enthusiasm for the young, virginal prima donna, Sand herself certainly recognized those qualities in Pauline. In a letter

⁶¹ Sand, *Consuelo*, 1:100. "A divine fire mounted in her cheeks, and the sacred flame erupted from her large dark eyes, while her voice, without equal and with victorious accents, filled the vault, pure, truly grand, which could only come from a grand intelligence joined to a good heart."

⁶² Gautier, *Art dramatique en France*, 1:305. "The simplicity of attitudes, the finesse of movements, the slenderness of form, natural to Pauline García, add to the illusion and complete it."

⁶³ Sand, *Consuelo*, 1:100. Consuelo's "prominent brow seemed to swim in a celestial fluid, a soft languor bathed the sweet and noble features of her serene and generous figure."

⁶⁴ Gautier, *Art dramatique en France*, 1:305. "She possesses one of the most magnificent instruments ever heard. The timber is admirable, not too light nor too dark. It is also not a metallic voice like Grisi's; but the medium tones have something of sweetness and penetration that moves the heart. The hearing of it is stupendous."

⁶⁵ Sand, *Consuelo*, 1:100. "There was something in her of gravity, of the mysterious and the profound, that commanded respect and responsive emotion."

dated June 1842, Sand celebrated the young female artist who was “chaste et modeste, dépourvu d'intrigue et d'impudence.”⁶⁶ Sand further concluded that Pauline was “la première, la seule, la grande, la vraie cantatrice” with a divine mission “de le répandre, de le faire comprendre et d'amener les récalitrants et les ignorants à un instinct et à une révélation du vrai et du beau.”⁶⁷ Building on Pauline’s “virginal glow,” her sweet, penetrating voice, and her artistic supremacy, Sand attached additional sacral qualities and monastic imagery to complete her vision of the woman-artist. With Pauline’s example providing a foundation, Sand could then build a believable prima donna who at once aligns with (nun-like appearance, modesty, humility) and subverts (Consuelo pursues an opera career) the characteristics of the ideal woman. By establishing Consuelo as a retiring virgin with monastic dedication to God and to her art, Sand effectively neutralizes Consuelo’s womanly sexuality, positions her in mainstream society, and sets her on track to become not just a prima donna but a true artist of great genius, like Pauline.

Consuelo’s performance of “social woman” mirrors Pauline’s own. Consuelo has “tact, good sense,” rejects untoward sexual advances, and respects class distinctions by employing coded social behaviors to show appropriate deference.⁶⁸ Furthermore, Consuelo allows for the appearance of male influence in her life through her singing teacher Porpora, her childhood protector Anzoletto, her opera patron Count Zustiniani, and later Count Albert. Such career management emphasized in the text reinforces the importance to nineteenth-century sensibilities that men manage prima donnas’ careers as discussed in Chapter Two. A male presence (preferably in the form of father or husband) was essential for deflecting gossip about a prima

⁶⁶ George Sand, *Correspondance*, ed. Georges Lubin (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1964), 5:705–6. “[C]haste and modest, free from intrigue or impudence.”

⁶⁷ Sand, *Correspondance*, 5:705. “The first, the only, the great, the true woman-singer” with a divine mission to “spread among recalcitrants and the ignorant, to make them understand, to bring them to an instinct for and a revelation of the true and the beautiful.”

⁶⁸ Sand, *Consuelo*, 1:105, 132.

donna's behavior and/or sexual activity. Consuelo welcomes the male influence and the safety it provides. She ultimately chooses Porpora, the father figure, as her exclusive manager and protector. In addition to securing the appropriate relationships for her career, Consuelo demonstrates the best manners and attitudes for respectable social intercourse. When Porpora helps Consuelo escape from Venice, he reassures the family that takes her in that on account of "la douceur et de la dignité de son caractère" they need not have any fear of admitting her to their intimate circle; they will "voir jamais commettre une inconvenance, ni donner la preuve d'un mauvais sentiment."⁶⁹ Prior to the development of Consuelo's propriety and good taste, Gautier celebrated Pauline's excellent taste as manifest at her debut: "Mademoiselle García, avant qu'elle eût ouvert la bouche, avait déjà un avantage énorme; elle était arrangée avec un goût bien rare aux Italiens, qui semblaient s'habiller au vestiaire des chiens savants...."⁷⁰ Pauline carried herself with dignity and manifested sensible good taste in not only her career but also her social interactions, much like Consuelo did.

Sand seems to stray from Pauline's example where marriage and the bourgeois ideal are concerned. While Consuelo maintains her virginal quality throughout the novel, shunning sexual advances made by unscrupulous men and not having occasion to marry, Pauline married at a very young age. In her contemporary social climate, Pauline's marriage was a necessary step to ensuring her a respectable social standing. Pauline fulfilled the bourgeois ideal with her marriage and motherhood, maintaining the appearance of ideal womanhood. Did Pauline thereby fall short in Sand's eyes? Did her marriage compromise the virginal qualities celebrated early in her

⁶⁹ "Vous ne le serez pas moins de la douceur et de la dignité de son caractère, et vos seigneuries pourront l'admettre dans leur intimité sans crainte de lui voir jamais commettre une inconvenance, ni donner la preuve d'un mauvais sentiment" [You will not find the sweetness or the dignity of her character wanting; and, your lordships, you will be able to admit her to your intimate circle without fear of ever seeing her commit an impropriety, nor give proof of ill-advised sentiment]. *Ibid.*, 1:195.

⁷⁰ Gautier, *Art dramatique en France*, 1:304. "Mademoiselle García, before she even opened her mouth, already had an enormous advantage. She was arranged with such good taste so rare for the Italians, who seem to clothe themselves in the garb of trained dogs...."

career? Not necessarily. Louis Viardot's advanced age set him up more as a father figure and may even have enhanced the appearance of Pauline's fresh, pure, virginal quality. In Sand's ideal universe, women artists may not have needed to marry, but eventually, Consuelo fulfills even that social requirement for the ideal woman. Consuelo marries Count Albert at the end of the novel. The marriage constitutes a parody of accepted social behavior in that Count Albert lays on his deathbed and insists on marrying Consuelo so as to provide her with a social title and wealth. This fulfills Judith Butler's suggestion that successful parodies of traditional gender values can create new gender categories, thereby subverting the norm.⁷¹ Fitting to her character, Consuelo only relents and agrees to Albert's plan because she wants to fulfill his dying wish: she does not agree to the plan because she harbors secret social ambitions (cf. Rosine Stoltz's marriages to men of title). This token nod to fulfilling social expectations for women through marriage only enhances Consuelo's freedom and independence. In nineteenth-century France, there was no better social position for a woman than that of widow. Sand thereby uses the social code to subvert itself, empowering Consuelo with a social standing that afforded women the greatest level of freedom and independence in Sand's contemporary society. Similarly, Pauline achieved freedom from containment and freedom to pursue her artistic career through adherence to her contemporary society's expectations for women. Sand builds on this within the flexibility of a fictional world to allow Consuelo a different kind of success that placed her on a kind of equal social footing with men.

An exemplary woman—pious, modest, gracious, kind—Consuelo obtains a title, social standing, and wealth through her marriage to Count Albert. Claire and Indiana can both lay claim to such social advantages and Corinne enjoys great wealth and respect among her native

⁷¹ "Butler does claim, though, that we can create categories that are in some sense new ones, by means of the artful parody of the old ones." Nussbaum, "Professor of Parody," 40.

countrymen. Consuelo, however, achieves what the other heroines do not: life. She obtains a freedom and independence unique to French heroines and is able to keep and enjoy it. The first words of the conclusion to Sand's innovative novel succinctly capture her heroine's success: "Consuelo, se voyant libre,"⁷² tends to her new family before leaving the castle as the Countess of Rudolstadt. Though Pauline had a living husband and a child within one year of her marriage, her example of modesty, innocence, fresh purity, artistic genius, and conformity to social expectations for women provided a necessary springboard for Sand's vision of a woman-artist who could obtain respect in her contemporary society, maintain a successful performance career, and enjoy the fruits of her success.⁷³

Sand's achievement in *Consuelo* both fulfills Genlis' requirements for the heroine and accomplishes the more radical goals of works such as *Claire d'Albe* and *Corinne*. As Maxime Prévost asserts, Consuelo is one of "deux héroïnes chargées d'une force subversive."⁷⁴ Subversive as a heroine, as an artist-heroine created by a woman, and because she does not align with the traditional "cantatrice charnelle" of men authored texts.⁷⁵ According to my own analysis, Consuelo subtly defies the patriarchal social and cultural order established in the text. I have already reviewed the ways in which Consuelo performs "prima donna" and "woman," which satisfy Madame de Genlis' standards of propriety. But the fact that she successfully pursues an operatic career and obtains enormous personal freedoms is certainly a subversion

⁷² Sand, *Consuelo*, 2:375: "Consuelo, finding herself at liberty...."

⁷³ See Sand, *Correspondance*, 5:706 where Sand describes Pauline's "incroyable bonté de cœur, votre inépuisable charité, votre absurde modestie" [unbelievable goodness of heart, your unending charity, your absurd modesty] and the impossibility of Pauline lowering herself to "la jalousie et la malveillance de vos basses rivales et de leurs plats amants" [the jealousy and malevolence of your bass rivals and their day-to-day lovers].

⁷⁴ One of "two heroines charged with subversive power." Maxime Prévost, "Portrait de la femme auteur en cantatrice: George Sand et Marceline Desbordes-Valmore," in *Masculin/féminin: Le XIX^e siècle à l'épreuve du genre*, ed. Chantal Bertrand-Jennings, À la Recherche du XIX^e siècle, ed. Andrew Oliver (Toronto: Kelly Library [Centre d'Études du XIX^e Siècle Joseph Sablé], 1999), 121–36. The other heroine is la Domenica from Marceline Desbordes-Valmore's work *Domenica* (see app. 3).

⁷⁵ See Prévost, "Femme auteur en cantatrice," 122 for her commentary on the tradition of "la chanteuse d'opéra" [the woman-singer of opera] in Romantic literature and 123 for information on "la création collective qu'est la cantatrice charnelle..." [the collective creation that is the carnal woman-singer...].

because she exceeds expectations and subverts the dominant social and literary order further in her “sublime heroism.” Sand constantly reminds readers that Consuelo is a hero in every sense of the word, including her reversal of the traditional objectification of the diva;⁷⁶ heroism establishes Consuelo as a proactive subject. Now that I have established the stereotype of the prima donna and how Viardot and Consuelo escape it, and the social code for women and how both Viardot and Consuelo subvert it, the way in which Viardot “enabled [Sand] to create in *Consuelo*...her most attractive heroine” becomes strikingly clear.⁷⁷ Without Viardot’s example, Consuelo could have ended up like most other French literary heroines: dominated, damned or dead.⁷⁸

The best discussion of Consuelo’s heroism deals with one central episode from the novel, that of her descent into “la pègre.” When Count Albert disappears from the family castle after hearing Consuelo sing, she makes it her personal mission to find him. Consuelo rightly deduces the key to solve the mystery of his disappearance and, in an act of great courage, she descends the secret stair in a garden well down to a subterranean passage. Consuelo’s descent into “la pègre” marks a defining moment in the woman and the prima donna’s life, tying her irrevocably to the mythological Orpheus and thereby embedding her in the ancient myth of the powerful artist/musician. This scene represents a great triumph for Sand’s artist-heroine, establishing Consuelo on equal footing with men artist-heroes.

Determined to find Albert after he disappears, feeling some sense of responsibility for his disappearance, Consuelo deduces that the garden well outside Albert’s room is key. She hides out near the well that night and is rewarded with the mysterious and sudden appearance of

⁷⁶ See *ibid.*, 122–23 for a description of the female opera star as object.

⁷⁷ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 114.

⁷⁸ Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*, 43. Rutherford contends (after what appears to be a fairly thorough review of opera literature) that, “Only the heroine of James Huneker’s *Painted Veils* (1920) is allowed a long a lustrous career—although it is clear that damnation awaits her at its end.”

Zdenko in the garden. She discovers the stairway winding down the well and courageously descends. Nearly drowning, Consuelo still forges onward obeying “la voix de Dieu qui m’inspire, et à sa main qui me pousse avec une force irrésistible.”⁷⁹ The religious element adds a sense of feminine propriety and divine manifest to Consuelo’s manly courage which might otherwise appear inappropriate in a heroine. She also exhibits appropriate feminine delicacy in being unable to exert herself as long or as hard as men. Throughout this episode, Consuelo demonstrates a “grandeur d’âme” Genlis so highly values in both heroes and heroines.⁸⁰

In an Orphic allusion admitted in the narration, Sand’s heroine succeeds in saving a man where the mythic Orpheus fails to save his wife. Sand writes: “Comme les héros fabuleux, Consuelo était descendue dans le Tartare pour en tirer son ami, et elle en avait rapporté l’épouvante et l’égarement.”⁸¹ This role reversal embraces Consuelo’s established purity, the purity that endows her voice with its salutary qualities and then consecrates her selfless effort to rescue Albert. Consuelo’s consummate musicianship, like Orpheus’, allows her to descend through the subterranean passage to find Albert. Orpheus the man, through weakness of resolve, fails to save Eurydice. Consuelo the woman, in her purity and determination, succeeds where the man cannot. Her heroic deeds set her apart from previous heroines—heroines who rebel against the norm but are then subdued by death or re-appropriation into the dominant social order.

Women writers found Orpheus a desirable analogy for many reasons. First, men had long utilized the myth in their artistic creations as the ultimate example of the power of music and/or art; by usurping the mythological figure for their own use, women writers could embed themselves in the cultural tradition with its historical precedent and garner the symbol’s power

⁷⁹ Sand, *Consuelo*, 1:313. “...the voice of God which inspires me, and His hand which pushes me with irresistible strength.”

⁸⁰ Genlis, *Influence des femmes*, iv.

⁸¹ Sand, *Consuelo*, 1:373. “Like the mythic heroes, Consuelo descended into Tartarus to retrieve her friend, and she felt terror and bewilderment.”

for themselves.⁸² Second, the Orpheus figure belies certain androgynous qualities with which women can more easily identify. The woman-artist trying to establish a place for herself within a patriarchal system would see androgyny as a middle ground that was neither masculine nor feminine, therefore existing outside of the patriarchal hierarchy that subjugated women to an inferior status.⁸³ Likewise and thirdly, women artists may have envisioned themselves as being in a sense “dead,” not really existing, not recognized as existing on the same level as men. By claiming Orpheus as their symbolic embodiment, these women could then garner the power necessary to raise themselves and their art from the dead. No longer would women have to remain in the shadows of men artists as inferior people and inferior creators: they could legitimize their art and raise it to an equal level on par with men’s artistic production.

Consuelo’s Orphic success requires an additional reading in light of scholarship reviewed in Chapter One. McClary, Dunn and Jones, and Rutherford write about the fear singing women inspired in men and society, describing the wanton melodies of the sirens,⁸⁴ and the enticing, emasculating effects of opera.⁸⁵ Significantly, Consuelo unintentionally throws Albert into his strange frenzy. He hears her from a different part of the castle and the sound of her voice draws him to the room where she is singing and giving his cousin a voice lesson. Albert, in a trance under the influence of the music, speaks incoherently, obviously agitated and enthused. He disappears almost immediately following this seeming encounter with a siren, descending to a subterranean cavern reminiscent of Beauvoir’s feminine cave.⁸⁶ But unlike the sailors lured to

⁸² Pope asserts as much in her analysis of the influence of Pauline Viardot and Gluck’s *Orpheus* on Eliot’s poem *Armstrong*. “The Diva Doesn’t Die,” 149–50.

⁸³ “The diva’s ‘voice’ in women’s writing, then, is both a mode of and a metaphor for female empowerment in a culture that traditionally places women on the side of silence.” *Ibid.*, 140. See *ibid.*, 149–50 for Pope’s discussion of gender bending in Gluck’s *Orpheus*.

⁸⁴ McClary, *Feminine Endings*, xv; Dunn and Jones, *Embodied Voices*, 9.

⁸⁵ Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*, 36.

⁸⁶ “Woman is the *Mare tenebrarum*, dreaded by navigators of old; it is night in the entrails of the earth. Man is frightened of this night, the reverse of fecundity, which threatens to swallow him up.... under his feet there is a

their deaths in the sea's deep expanse, Albert is not forgotten or destroyed. The apparent siren, Consuelo, having driven him to the deep, then reclaims him in a bold act of heroism. Sand here effectively re-appropriates the siren, turning patriarchal imagery on its head.⁸⁷ Unlike the true sirens or stereotypical prima donnas, Consuelo takes responsibility for her voice and for those who hear it, saving any who succumb to its power.

One telling episode from the closing pages of *Consuelo* seems to celebrate Consuelo's heroism and thus her success as a female protagonist. In a moment of frustration at the lack of hardiness or courage in the men of the house, a doctor serving the family with whom Consuelo lives embraces Consuelo's role reversal. He exclaims, "Il n'y a ici que deux hommes: c'est la chanoinesse et la Signora [Consuelo]!"⁸⁸

Myth Creation: New Women, New Prima Donnas

Responding to the figure of the artist-heroine as created in men's literature, Sand crafted a new image of the prima donna in her 1842 work *Consuelo*. More than simply creating a literary character, Sand crafted "the female myth that was to become the counterpart of Romanticism's Prometheus/Icarus myth of artistic manhood."⁸⁹ This new myth inspired and encouraged subsequent generations of women authors to envision their own artist-heroines.⁹⁰ "[T]he novelists George Eliot and Geraldine Jewsbury and the poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning—inspired by the French matriarchs Germaine de Staël and George Sand—believed in the

moist, warm, and darkling gulf ready to draw him down; in many a legend so we see the hero lost forever as he falls back into the maternal shadows—cave, abyss, hell." Qtd. in Austern, "'Mermaides Singing,'" 56. This concept has ancient origins. In books one and five of the *Odyssey*, the sirenic Calypso has lured Odysseus to her cave and keeps him captive, preventing him from doing anything manly. Hom. *Od.* 1.14–15, 55–57; 5.61–62.

⁸⁷ "Especially during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when Western men most made the siren their own creature, women came to re-claim her as their heritage. Women's re-appropriation of the male-created siren increased steadily throughout both centuries, perhaps as part of the global reclamation of femininity from male dominance and impersonation." See Naroditskya and Austern, *Music of the Sirens*, 10.

⁸⁸ Sand, *Consuelo*, 2:376. "There are only two men here: the canoness and the Signora [Consuelo]!" The physician had previously remarked: "Voilà des gens sans force et sans courage!" [Here are men without virility or courage!]

⁸⁹ Lewis, *Germaine de Staël*, 3.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 8–9.

possibility that a female artist might soar.”⁹¹ I contend, however, that where Staël’s *Corinne* demonstrates “that the woman as artist cannot have it all,” Sand’s *Consuelo* illustrates the opposite and more hopeful message—that the woman as artist can have almost everything she and her literary creators desired.⁹² Sand failed at this in her 1833 *Lélia* but by 1842 she could finally envision what that success looked like and how it could be achieved. The motivating force behind Sand’s new vision was occasioned by her new friendship with Pauline Viardot, an exemplary prima donna on the brink of a long opera career and poised to achieve what other women only dreamed of. Close parallels between Pauline’s character, behavior, and performance qualities and those of *Consuelo* provide ample evidence to argue that Pauline’s example was absolutely necessary to the creation of a successful artist-heroine.

Beyond the inspiration and example Pauline provided, Sand incorporated her now crystallized ideas about the ideal artist to create a new prima donna and a new heroine in French literature. *Consuelo* treats her voice as a gift from God to be used for art and in service to humanity. Her voice, described as heavenly and “without equal,” becomes endowed with salutary and redemptive qualities. A dying man at *Consuelo*’s audition proclaims the effect of her singing a miracle, and later in the novel the troubled Count Albert of precarious mental health is completely overcome by the sound of her voice. In a semi-mystical haze, Count Albert declares *Consuelo* is the consolation God has promised him.⁹³ “[U]ne grande intelligence jointe à un grand cœur”⁹⁴ provide the source of *Consuelo*’s heavenly voice, modesty, dedication to art, and genuine concern for others. These characteristics modeled on Pauline Viardot’s own good nature, talent, artistic dedication, abhorrence of scandal, and genuine kindness, in addition to

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 251.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 29.

⁹³ Sand, *Consuelo*, 1:256.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:100. “[A] grand intelligence joined to a noble heart.”

Consuelo's piety establish her as a new prima donna, the anti-diva.⁹⁵ This success is further wrapped in Consuelo's heroism.

Sand's deliberate participation in gender discourse and her significant use of the prima donna, the spokesperson of women, to establish her female myth through *Consuelo* was largely made possible through her intimate first-hand knowledge of nineteenth-century opera obtained through her friendship with Pauline Viardot. But Sand wrote *Consuelo* early in Pauline's career, using Pauline's example as a springboard rather than for extensive biographical source material. Pauline in turn was so taken with her literary protégé that she modeled her own behavior and professionalism on Consuelo's example.⁹⁶ This conscious effort of self-creation forms part of the discussion in the following chapter which will explore how Pauline's professional performance created a new vision of the prima donna.

⁹⁵ That is not to say Pauline was not religious, only that *Consuelo* represents an extreme piety aligning with her nunlike qualities established throughout the text. cf. *Ibid.*, 1:29, 98, 100, 313 for examples of Consuelo's piety and her association with divinity.

⁹⁶ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 114, 117–18.

CHAPTER FOUR: RE-PRESENTING THE PRIMA DONNA

Pauline moved in a social sphere mostly unique for any prima donna. Certainly she inhabited a realm common to artists and the emerging bourgeois figure: she associated most intimately with other composers, musicians, writers, painters, and those interested in the arts. But this group also included the wealthy, such as salon mistresses and even royalty. Pauline and her daughter, Louise, received invitations to take tea with Empress Augusta and her daughter and later exchanged the formal written niceties of gratitude and hope for future visits.¹ By all accounts, Pauline carefully lived up to the social expectations placed on a woman in her position, the position being wife to a respected gentleman and mother of eventually four children. Pauline's professional status as a prima donna did give rise to several ugly encounters with social snobbery and inquisitive press but hardly on the scale of a Rosine Stoltz or Maria Malibran. Pauline played her social/personal roles according to her contemporary society's rules and she garnered great respect. Her profession, instead of hindering her socially or personally, instead opened wide vistas of learning and experience in which Pauline excelled.

With sufficient background knowledge of the prima donna stereotype, of nineteenth-century French social expectations for women, and of Sand's woman-artist vision as modeled on Pauline's early career, the significance of Pauline Viardot's performance of her profession becomes clear: she re-imagined and re-presented the prima donna. While Pauline's contemporary prima donnas became embroiled in petty disputes, rivalries, and the pursuit of fame and popularity, Pauline emerged as the antithesis to the stereotype: meek, humble, perspicacious, mindful of social codes, and completely dedicated to the pursuit of artistry with genius. An analysis of Pauline's artistry, her professionalism, and her musical genius reveals how Pauline

¹ Augusta, consort of William I, to Pauline Viardot-García, 12 February 1874, b MS Mus 264 (1), PVG add. papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University; Augusta, consort of William I, to Louise Héritte-Viardot, 30 March 1867, b MS Mus 264 (1), PVG add. papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

consciously and deliberately crafted her own public image in opposition to the prima donna stereotype.

Beyond conscious effort in defying the prima donna stereotype, Pauline was lucky to be born into a musical family. The nineteenth century appears to have had the most disdain for upstart women who sought fame and fortune on the stage.² Women who were born into a family profession had a significant advantage in the profession while inheriting social position and connections. These women inevitably fared better in the public eye. With her prestigious name attached to all she did, Pauline García did not have to fight her way into the musical world. Once her path was chosen, her mother and her famous brother-in-law easily planned concerts and arranged for her performance at notable salons. If there was a “correct” way for women to become opera singers, Pauline modeled the process. In addition to her easy movement into the world of public musical performance, Pauline maintained the appropriate career management as discussed in Chapter Two. With her mother, brother-in-law, and eventually her husband providing at least the appearance of approved management practices for a woman, Pauline lithely surmounted the initial hurdles to presenting a new image of the prima donna. As numerous biographies, letters, and contemporary critical reviews attest, Pauline then dedicated her life to her art. She succeeded in re-writing the prima donna image through her artistry, professionalism, and genius.³

² Chorley’s scathing comments about Madame Medori’s shameless self-promotion and pretensions to some operatic throne without the talent or skill to support such a claim reflect this disdain as well as the prevalence of upstart prima donnas. Henry F. Chorley, *Thirty Years’ Musical Recollections*, ed. Ernest Newman (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926), 331–32.

³ See also chap. 2, “Superdivas and superwomen,” of Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*, 58–89 for its discussion of *Consuelo* and the influence of prima donnas on nineteenth-century notions of womanhood.

Points of Departure: Channeling Consuelo

The best evidence of Pauline deliberately crafting her own image as a prima donna and as a woman is her invitation to Julius Rietz to read *Consuelo* if he wants to truly understand Pauline.

[I]ch fürchte dass Sie mich noch nicht gut genug kennen um es ohne Vorurtheil zu hören. Fürchten Sie sich nicht—es ist nichts *böses*, es ist nur characteristisch und würde vielleicht helfen manches in mir zu verstehen was Ihnen zuweilen unbegreiflich vorkommen mag. Soll ich's sagen?... nein, heute nicht und doch... es machte mir Spass... lesen Sie noch einmal den ersten Theil *Consuelo*—ich will sehen ob Sie die andere Ähnlichkeit mit mir finden.⁴

April FitzLyon suggests that Pauline actually modeled herself on the eponymous heroine.⁵ Given Pauline's tender age when Sand wrote *Consuelo*, not only was Pauline impressionable but she also had her life and career ahead of her. Letters Pauline wrote to Sand indicate Pauline's fascination with the novel; in one letter, Pauline indicates that she and Louis impatiently awaited the next serial installment.⁶ Considering the importance to this study of identifying ways in which Pauline consciously molded her character and public image, let us take *Consuelo* as a point of departure from which to begin an analysis of Pauline's conscious effort to defy the prima donna stereotype and present a new and different image. Pauline's total devotion to art,

⁴ Viardot-García, "Letters of Friendship," 375. "I am afraid that you do not yet know me well enough to hear it without prejudice. Do not be alarmed-it is nothing bad, it is only characteristic, and might possibly help you to understand much in me which may sometimes appear inexplicable. Shall I tell you?... no, not to-day; and yet... how I should like to-well, read over the first part of *Consuelo*; I shall see if you can discover the other similarity with me." Ibid., 374.

⁵ "Perhaps, as a result of reading *Consuelo*, Pauline followed these precepts more consciously and more deliberately in the future. Certainly in her letters she was often to express herself in a way which is reminiscent of the book, and certain actions in her subsequent life seem to be consciously or unconsciously modelled [*sic*] on those of *Consuelo*." FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 118.

⁶ Ibid., 113.

her belief in the artist's responsibility to the public, and her elevated notion of the holy artist all appear to have been reciprocally modeled on Consuelo.

“‘If you want to be an artist,’ Pauline told one of her pupils, ‘try to be indifferent to everything except your art.’”⁷ Important life decisions early in Pauline's career had been taken with this necessity in mind, to allow her complete and total immersion in her art. Marriage to Louis Viardot, an established gentleman twenty years Pauline's senior, enabled such total devotion: “[George Sand] was aware that Pauline was not in love with [Louis Viardot].... But she may have sincerely believed that...Viardot could give Pauline happiness—happiness of a kind; affection, security, moral support—but above all, security, both emotional and material, security which would enable Pauline to devote all her thoughts and all her energies to her art.”⁸

Completely immersed in her performance career, Pauline spent little to no time engaged in domestic responsibilities such as household management or child rearing.⁹ Pauline's mature decision to maintain her total devotion to art may have been modeled on Consuelo's single-minded focus. From the outset of the novel Consuelo demonstrates artistic devotion to the exclusion of other interests. Her meager apartment is full of old music on loan from Porpora and she studies her music long into the night.¹⁰ “Often she is seen in study, rehearsal, and practice or heard lecturing Anzoleto or Joseph Haydn on the necessity of discipline in their musical craft.”¹¹ Consuelo avoids various social encumbrances to keep herself at liberty to pursue her art, such as

⁷ Ibid., 209.

⁸ Ibid., 81.

⁹ See chap. 2.

¹⁰ Sand, *Consuelo*, 1:72. Among Consuelo's few apartment decorations is “un gros tas de vieille musique rongée des vers”; “la table était couverte de musique.” Instead of going to sleep, “elle ralluma sa lampe, s'assit devant sa petite table, et nota un essai de composition que maître Porpora lui avait demandé pour le jour suivant” (ibid., 73).

¹¹ Lewis, *Germaine de Staël*, 64.

her refusal to marry.¹² “Sand illustrates through Consuelo that the great artist is not free to live for pleasure and fame, to please herself, or to devote herself to ephemeral goals.”¹³ Similarly, Pauline consciously denied herself personal indulgences that would have interfered with her art. April FitzLyon argues from evidence in Pauline’s letters that this “exercise of will power” was specifically designed to keep her aloof from entanglement with Turgenev.¹⁴ Giving in to her alleged feelings for Turgenev would have resulted in scandal (and fulfillment of the prima donna stereotype) and would have seriously interfered with her artistic pursuits. In 1844 Pauline wrote to George Sand about following the inner conscience of the artist in deciding to perform *Norma* against the advice of her friends.¹⁵ Written after Pauline had read *Consuelo*, this letter possibly demonstrates Pauline’s conscious effort to emulate Consuelo’s total devotion to art.

Pauline further developed a strong belief in her responsibility to the public as an artist. Early in Pauline’s career she demonstrated a complete disregard for the public when she refused calls for an encore.¹⁶ Evidence suggests that Pauline revised her opinion of the public as a result of George Sand’s influence. In a June 1842 letter to Pauline, George Sand lamented that “la France et l’Angleterre sont trop blasées et trop corrompues dans leur goût.” She counseled Pauline, “vous avez pour mission de le répandre, de le faire comprendre et d’amener les récalcitrants et les ignorants à un instinct et à une révélation du vrai et du beau.”¹⁷ This same belief in the artist’s responsibility to the public infuses *Consuelo*.¹⁸ Not coincidentally, later in life Pauline sacrificed personal comforts and responsibilities to serve the public according to the

¹² “Porpora teaches Consuelo that liberty is the only happiness, the only necessary attribute for the artist to flourish.” Ibid., 54. Consuelo ends up marrying Albert but only because he is dying and, once dead, will leave her unencumbered, still free to pursue her art.

¹³ Ibid., 56–57.

¹⁴ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 189, 280–81.

¹⁵ Ibid., 182.

¹⁶ Ibid., 65. Pauline refused encores so as not to interrupt the dramatic flow of the opera.

¹⁷ Sand, *Correspondance*, 5:705. Addressed from Nohant. The editors posit the letter was written between 25 and 28 June 1842.

¹⁸ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 117.

Sand/*Consuelo* vision. For instance, “the serious illness of her son Paul, during which he nearly died, coincided with her performances of *Orphée*; it was a cruel strain. Pauline continued to sing, believing that an artist’s first duty is to the public....”¹⁹ This dedication to the public contrasts sharply with her pre-*Consuelo* disregard for the audience and suggests that Pauline revised her attitude to align with the ideal expressed by Sand in letters written to Pauline and in *Consuelo*.

Finally, Pauline eventually saw herself as fulfilling the holy artist ideal espoused by George Sand and explored in *Consuelo*. *Consuelo* represents one type of artist on whom “genius [falls] unbidden” and who “prove[s] worthy of the gift. For art is not only *Consuelo*’s gift, it is also her vocation, her calling.” *Consuelo* stands in contrast to another type of artist who “squanders the divine afflatus by sloth and profligacy.”²⁰ Anzoleto, an early example of the profligate “artist,” fails to obtain Porpora’s tuition: “le professeur a également oublié le bel Anzoleto, vu qu’il ne l’avait trouvé, après un premier examen, doué d’aucune des qualités qu’il exigeait dans un élève.”²¹ The qualities Anzoleto lacks include natural intelligence, seriousness, patience, modesty, and commitment to his art. Anzoleto sings casually, whenever it pleases him, and dreams of celebrity rather than working diligently towards artistry.²² In contrast, *Consuelo* is “studieuse et persévérante, vivant dans la musique comme l’oiseau dans l’air.” For her, life has no meaning unless she is penetrating “les mystères de l’art.” *Consuelo* is one for whom “le travail est une jouissance, un repos véritable.” She works for hours on end to overcome weaknesses and hone her craft.²³ Later in the novel, Albert voices Sand’s vision of the artist serving humanity.²⁴ Writing to Pauline in June 1842, Sand shared her vision of the artist’s high

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 365.

²⁰ Lewis, *Germaine de Staël*, 64.

²¹ Sand, *Consuelo*, 1:55.

²² “Sa vanité a pris un autre essor. Il rêvait le théâtre et la célébrité....” [His vanity was of a different sort. He dreamed of the theater and of celebrity....] *Ibid.*, 1:82.

²³ *Ibid.*, 1:83.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:415–18.

calling, that they have “une mission divine.”²⁵ Sand “envisaged Pauline as a dedicated priestess, a person set apart, whose sacred rôle it was to serve humanity.”²⁶ Pauline herself embraced this identity, letting it guide her through moments of doubt and encourage her fidelity to her sacred calling.²⁷

Artistry

Where “[a]spir[ing] to artistry was considered both unnatural and unwomanly,” Pauline Viardot set herself apart from the ideal womanhood celebrated by patriarchy as well as from her contemporary prima donnas who by and large aspired to fame and fortune instead.²⁸ An 1888 letter addressed to Pauline from composer Benjamin Godard begins, “Voici, chère et grande artiste.”²⁹ Skimming through letters in the Pauline Viardot-García Collection at Houghton Library reveals that this quality of address was not unique to letters Pauline’s friends, colleagues, and even rivals wrote her. Her lifelong dedication to art certainly earned her this revered respect. In contrast to most of her contemporary prima donnas, Pauline initiated her career with intense musical training already completed. Her father had begun her training at a young age, hiring the best piano, theory, and composition teachers money and influence could afford. While the family finished its operatic tour of North America, six-year-old Pauline took lessons from Marcos Vega, organist of the Mexico City cathedral.³⁰ Once the family returned to Europe, she studied pianoforte with Meysenberg and learned counter-point and composition from Anton Reicha at the Paris Conservatoire.³¹ As her talent at the piano increased, Pauline accompanied

²⁵ Sand, *Correspondance*, 5:705.

²⁶ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 81. See Steen, *Enchantress of Nations*, 254 for an excellent discussion of the artist’s holy calling.

²⁷ Steen, *Enchantress of Nations*, 88–89.

²⁸ Lewis, *Germaine de Staël*, 2.

²⁹ Benjamin Godard to Pauline Viardot-García, 10 October 1888, bMS Mus 264 (20), PVG add. papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

³⁰ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 26.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

her father's voice lessons with his students.³² Ellen Clayton marvels that Pauline, "Conscious herself of a decided talent for the piano-forte," "[she] devoted three years to finger exercise alone."³³ In her early teens she took piano lessons from Franz Liszt.³⁴

Intense musical training begun at a young age provided Pauline with knowledge and skill surpassing many of her later opera colleagues. Her family nickname "the ant" underscores her commitment to hard work and her diligence in obtaining the skill and knowledge after which she thirsted.³⁵ Though saddened when her mother closed the piano, ending any hope of pursuing a career as a concert pianist, Pauline threw herself into vocal training at the tender age of fifteen.³⁶ Pauline's training was unique for a prima donna. Of Pauline's contemporary singers, only Fanny Persiani had a musical parent.³⁷ Pauline had not one musical parent but a seeming army of artists dedicated to training her. After the death of her father, of the family members who "remained to help and guide her at the beginning of her career," "all three were experienced musicians."³⁸

Contemporary critics recognized the difference extensive training made to Pauline's performance; her training ultimately distinguished her from her colleagues as an accomplished musician. Henry Chorley, the eminent English music critic who was also friends with Pauline and saw her perform many times, lamented Johanna Wagner's lack of training, complaining, "Before she was heard in London—in the year 1853—I had an opportunity of studying her talent in the Prussian capital, and of finding it in no respect equal to the reputation so loudly

³² Ibid., 30. Pauline recalls this herself in her "Souvenirs" found in her diary. "J'avais tant chanter avec papa dans mon enfance et j'avais accompagné tout les leçons que je savais très bien comment je devais étudier." Viardot-García, "Souvenirs," in Viardot-García, journal, PVG add. papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

³³ Clayton, *Queens of Song*, 402.

³⁴ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 37.

³⁵ Ibid., 25.

³⁶ Pauline records this moment in the "Souvenirs" section of her diary: "Le jour où j'ai eu 16 ans, maman m'a dit déssayer ma voix. On la trouver bonne 'à présent tu va fermer du piano et tu va te mettre à chanter'." Viardot-García, "Souvenirs," in Viardot-García, journal, PVG add. papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

³⁷ Clayton, *Queens of Song*, 414: Persiani's father was the tenor Tacchinardi.

³⁸ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 40.

trumpeted.—She was one of the many who sing without having learned to sing.”³⁹ Any person can open her mouth and let out sound—and from Chorley’s critique it appears as if many prima donnas did just that—but to have a carefully honed and refined vocal instrument required training. Gautier celebrated this quality in his review of Pauline’s October 1839 debut at the Théâtre Italien: “Sa voix est merveilleusement posée; l’intonation pure et juste. La note est toujours attaquée avec une grande netteté, sans hésitation ni port de voix. Cette dernière qualité est *rare et précieuse*. Elle est excellente musicienne....”⁴⁰ Pauline’s rare technical achievements in voice production made a striking contrast with the all too common lack of training, lack of taste, and lack of artistry exhibited by her contemporary prima donnas.

Not only training but also diligent practice was necessary to achieve true musicianship. Susan Rutherford provides insight into the habits of nineteenth-century prima donnas, most of whom appear to have taken their talent for granted:

Some pupils realised [*sic*] too late the dangers of following their own enthusiasms rather than their tutor’s cautious counsels, as the anonymous pupil of Viardot mentioned earlier demonstrates: Viardot, she wrote, ‘did all she could for me; gave me reasonable music to sing, and made me understand what I was doing. If only I had been a more sensible pupil I should have profited immeasurably.’ Frequently, novice singers were either unaware of the degree of time and effort that needed to be invested in their voices, or they had an inflated idea of their vocal talents.⁴¹

³⁹ Chorley, *Musical Recollections*, 2:176. Chorley voices a similar complaint about Madame Tedesco on whom “never was voice more completely thrown away.... Hers was a voice that can never have studied...” (Chorley, *Musical Recollections* [1926 ed.], 332) and about Johanna Wagner whose “voice had not been rightly trained” (*ibid.*, 359).

⁴⁰ Gautier, *Art dramatique en France*, 1:306. (Emphasis added.)

⁴¹ Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*, 101–2.

Many women wasted time entertaining dilettantes, maintaining robust social calendars, and engaging in other questionable activities.⁴² Music critics were especially unappreciative of the obvious lack of preparation displayed by some singers, leading Chorley to wonder, “When will artists begin seriously to study, before they present themselves to be judged?”⁴³ In contrast to this stereotypical behavior, Pauline devoted all her energies to her art. Many contemporary sources and later biographies note that “[h]er voice, originally somewhat harsh and unmanageable, had been tutored into perfect pliancy and beauty.”⁴⁴ Performing *Il barbiere* and *La Cenerentola* in Vienna in 1843, Pauline charmed audiences with “[l]’agilité de [sa] voix, qui va à l’incroyable, la sureté dans les intonations les plus audacieuses, le charme ravissant, voilà ce qui domine dans le chant de Mme Viardot....” The Viennese critic notes how “elle doit électriser, transporter, enthousiasmer, lorsqu’il s’y joint le goût le plus pur et la plus étonnante délicatesse d’exécution.” The source of such “virtuosité,” clarifies the reviewer, “c’est uniquement le résultant de l’étude, et pour cela on ne peut jamais lui prodiguer assez d’éloges.”⁴⁵ What remains unsaid is that no singer could accomplish Pauline’s triumphant performance without practice or regular vocal exercise.

Later in life, Pauline noted in her diary how crucial practice was to maintaining command of her voice: “Quand je n’ai pas travaillé ce que je chante, je ne suis pas maîtresse de ma voix.

⁴² Such behavior is most extreme in the fictional representations of prima donnas presented as a means of stereotyping and discrediting women, for example, Clelia of Bermiani’s short work (Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*, 28). Like any fictional work, however, the behavior is grounded in real-life examples: see *ibid.*, 111, 145–46; Elizabeth Forbes, *Mario and Grisi: A Biography* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1985), 42.

⁴³ Chorley, *Musical Recollections*, 1:174.

⁴⁴ Clayton, *Queens of Song*, 403.

⁴⁵ Qtd. in “Nouvelles,” in *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris* 10, no. 19 (7 May 1843): 6. “The agility of [her] voice, that trends toward the unbelievable, the surety of her most audacious intonations, the ravishing charm, here is what dominates the singing of Madame Viardot....” “[S]he must electrify, transport, enthuse, while joining there the most pure taste and the most amazing delicacy of execution.” The source of such “virtuosity is the result of study, and for this we cannot lavish enough praise on her.”

Elle tremble et ma respiration ne suffit pas.”⁴⁶ Pauline maintained a dedicated practice regimen, even pulling out vocal exercises her father had written for her “whenever she felt the need for some really difficult and profitable work....”⁴⁷ Modern reprints of vocal training books published by Pauline testify to her belief in the power of practicing.⁴⁸

As further proof of her exceptional devotion to artistry in operatic performance, Pauline conducted extensive costume design and role research.⁴⁹ While Pauline was in her prime and performing on stage, opera houses did not have dedicated costume designers or huge wardrobe departments. Singers were responsible for furnishing their own costume wardrobes.⁵⁰ Given her penchant for hard work in addition to her natural intelligence, Pauline researched historical costume for her roles. Gautier repeatedly praised Pauline’s costuming in his reviews, paying compliments “à madame Pauline García de la manière intelligente dont elle avait arrangé son costume. La tunique bleue, à étoiles d’argent, le pantalon assyrien et le manteau blanc étaient portés par elle avec beaucoup de convenance.”⁵¹ Lest anyone mistake Gautier’s comments as stock praise given to all the singers he reviewed, consider his attack on Madame Albertazzi’s costuming in the same opera: “Pourquoi madame Albertazzi, qui est une jolie voix et une jolie femme, s’était-elle accoutrée, dans son rôle d’Arsace, d’un costume qu’on ne peut mieux comparer qu’aux costumes romains de Chicard aux bals de la Renaissance: un pantalon blanc,

⁴⁶ Viardot-García, “Le 12 Juillet 1863. Bade,” in Viardot-García, journal, PVG add. papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University. Pauline’s words are transcribed faithfully from the diary, including all grammatical and spelling errors. “When I have not worked at my singing, I am not master of my voice. It trembles and my breathing is not sufficient.”

⁴⁷ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 30.

⁴⁸ Pauline Viardot, “An Hour of Study: Exercises for the Voice,” bks. 1 and 2 (Boca Raton, FL: Kalmus, 1985).

⁴⁹ A watercolor sketchbook of Viardot’s costume designs still exists. Cf. Viardot-García, *Costumes* album, PVG add. papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

⁵⁰ Steen, *Enchantress of Nations*, 52.

⁵¹ Gautier, *Art dramatique en France*, 2:282. Gautier wrote this review of the 19 October 1841 performance of *Sémiramide*. Gautier complimented “Madame Pauline García or the intelligent manner in which she arranged her costume. The blue tunic, with glittering coins, the Assyrian pantaloons and the white mantel suited her [character] extremely well.”

une blouse de gamin de Paris et un casque de pompier?”⁵² To a critic like Gautier who valued the whole effect of opera with its combination of music, drama, dance, and visual art, thoughtful costuming did not go unnoticed.

Nor did careful attention paid to role interpretation. In December 1839, Pauline performed Rosine in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. Gautier’s chapter headings indicate the art form (Italiens), the performer of note (Mademoiselle García), and the opera (*Le Barbier de Séville*). But here Gautier included a note of interest following the name of the opera: “le vrai caractère de Rosine.”⁵³ Seemingly blind to everything and everyone else who performed in the opera the night of December 2, Gautier focused his review on Pauline and her fresh take on the character of Rosine. Prior to Pauline’s performance in this classic mezzo role, it was customary (and indeed ingrained tradition) “de voir représenter Rosine comme une soubrette égrillarde, effrontée, qui ne respire que malice et tromperies....”⁵⁴ But the source material for Rossini’s opera, Beaumarchais, did not support such a reading. “Even at this age,” FitzLyon writes, “Pauline took a great deal of trouble to study the literary sources of the parts she played.... This was a great innovation in opera, and one which Pauline’s rivals, such as Grisi and Persiani, were unlikely to copy.”⁵⁵ Gautier describes the Rosine of Beaumarchais, only to conclude, “C’est de cette manière que mademoiselle Pauline García a pris le rôle, et nous trouvons qu’elle a eu raison: l’ingénuité, la candeur confiante, l’entraînement heureux et facile, ou, si vous voulez, la

⁵² Ibid., 2:165. 9 October 1841 performance of *Sémiramide*. “Why would Madame Albertazzi, who has a pretty voice and is a pretty woman, accouter herself in the role of Arsace in a costume we would do better to compare with the costumes of the Chicard Romans at Renaissance balls: a white pantaloon, a blouse of a Parisian boy and a kitschy headpiece?”

⁵³ Ibid., 1:331. “[T]he true character of Rosine.”

⁵⁴ Ibid., 1:332. It was customary “to see Rosine represented as a ribald wench, cheeky, breathing nothing but malice and deceit....”

⁵⁵ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 73. See app. 2 for reproductions of Pauline’s costume designs.

légèreté du premier âge, voilà le fond du caractère de Rosine.”⁵⁶ Pauline maintained such practices throughout her career, for instance, taking the time during her preparation for the Gluck *Orphée* revival to study “the classic sources [for her character] and...[sketch] her whole costume herself.”⁵⁷ Critics in Saint Petersburg reviewing Pauline’s 1843 *Desdemona*, recognized the effect of her research: “M[adame] a merveilleusement compris le grand po[et] et le grand compositeur. Elle a été la Desdemone de Shakespeare de Rossini. Son jeu tragique est parfait, excellent, et son cha[nt] dans ce rôle de Desdemone, est le complet triomphe de l’art.”⁵⁸ Only Pauline’s first-hand reading of Shakespeare could have provided the insight necessary for such a triumphant performance.

Pauline’s scholarly efforts and intelligent approach to her art applied to role creation as well. When a prima donna was hired to perform a role in a new opera, she was said to have created the role. This applied whether the opera was specifically written for her (as in Bellini’s *Norma* for Giuditta Pasta,⁵⁹ Meyerbeer’s *Le Prophète* for Pauline Viardot) or not. Regardless, the prima donna was put in a position to improvise and revise, to produce and create.⁶⁰ Susan Leonardi is quick to assert that opportunities to create an operatic role empower women performers. She writes, “this function of the diva as improviser and reviser leads to a second use of ‘voice’—that is, participation, control, power, creation. Divas in these texts have a voice in the production of an opera, in the interpretation of an aria, in the creation of a character. Unlike most

⁵⁶ Gautier, *Art dramatique en France*, 1:332. “It is in this manner that Mademoiselle Pauline García presented the role, and we find that she had good reason: the artlessness, the confident purity, the happy and easy trainability, or, if you like, the levity of first youth—that is the true nature of Rosine’s character.”

⁵⁷ Héritte-Viardot, *Memories and Adventures*, 102.

⁵⁸ Maurice Schlesinger, “Chronique étrangère,” *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris* 10, no. 50 (19 December 1843): 6. Saint Petersburg, 11 November 1843. “Madame has brilliantly comprehended the great poet and the great composer. She was the *Desdemona* of Shakespeare [interpreted through] Rossini. Her tragic acting is perfect, excellent, and her singing in the role of *Desdemona* is the complete triumph of art.”

⁵⁹ Clayton, *Queens of Song*, 265.

⁶⁰ Susan J. Leonardi, “To Have a Voice: The Politics of the Diva,” *Perspectives on Contemporary Literature* 13 (1987): 69. “Eva Rieger claims that we tend to make too rigid a division between reproductive and productive, between ‘uncreative performance and creative composition’, and that ‘in reality this division is a blurred one’.”

women, they have power; they are in control.” While Leonardi speaks for the divas of literature, her assertion holds true for real-life prima donnas. Contemporary evidence demonstrates the power Pauline wielded through her acts of improvisation and revision, especially as manifest in her role creation. Pauline created the role of Fidès in *Le Prophète* (1849), uniquely appointed to add “the character of the Mother” to the operatic repertoire. Henry Chorley firmly asserted that only Pauline could have managed the role:

Her remarkable power of identification with the character set before her, was in this case aided by person and voice. The mature burgher-woman, in her quaint costume; the pale, tear-worn devotee, searching from city to city for traces of the lost one, and struck with a pious horror at finding him a tool in the hands of hypocritical Blasphemy—was till then a being entirely beyond the pale of the ordinary *prima donna*’s comprehension....⁶¹

Note here the inherent comparison of Pauline to her contemporary prima donnas. Chorley effectively denigrates Pauline’s colleagues who according to him could in no way even understand the character of Fidès, let alone adequately represent her on stage. Chorley continues describing the requirements of the character, “one to the presentation of which there must go as much simplicity as subtle art—as much of tenderness as of force—as much renunciation of Woman’s ordinary coquettries, as of skill to impress all hearts by the picture of homely love, and desolate grief, and religious enthusiasm.” Chorley identifies “subtle art” and “the renunciation of Woman’s ordinary coquettries” as additional requirements for the successful creation of Fidès, all of which Chorley identifies with Pauline to the exclusion of all other prima donnas. All of what Chorley provides as the “correct” interpretation of the role is actually a description of what Pauline presented in her creation of it.

⁶¹ Chorley, *Musical Recollections*, 2:94.

Gautier likewise celebrated Pauline's creation of Fidès, sparing space in his multi-page review of the opera for an analysis of Pauline and Roger's performances. Of Pauline, Gautier wrote, "Madame Viardot-García, qu'on savait éminente cantatrice...a composé le rôle de Fidès avec beaucoup d'art et de sentiment. Son extérieur et son costume [était] très-artistement arrangés...."⁶² Ever the connoisseur of the grand art in its totality, Gautier praised Pauline's costuming in addition to her artistic and wholly satisfying presentation of the role. Completely ignoring Madame Castellan, who created the role of Berthe, except to comment on how well her voice blended with Pauline's in their duet, Gautier later credited the success of the work to Pauline who "a créé le rôle de Fidès avec un profond sentiment musical et dramatique, auquel nous avons rendu pleine justice; elle l'a chanté avec une énergie, une intelligence et une passion qui n'ont pas peu contribué à la réussite de l'œuvre de Meyerbeer."⁶³ Chorley felt that all other singers who attempted the role of Fidès fell woefully short, to the detriment of the opera. "There *can* be no reading of *Fides* save hers; and thus, the opera...has languished when others have attempted her part—either by copying, as did Mdlle. Wagner and Madame Stoltz—or by attempting, as did Madame Alboni, to carry it through musically, leaving all the dramatic passion and power wisely untouched."⁶⁴ Only Pauline's supreme artistry could carry such a demanding and unique role, perhaps leading even Meyerbeer to address her as "Ma chère et illustre Fidès!"⁶⁵ Finally, Viardot's artistry when applied to the right music "established [for her] a reputation

⁶² Gautier, *Art dramatique en France*, 4:92. "Madame Viardot-García, who we know as the eminent woman-singer...presented the role of Fidès with much art and soulful insight. Her exterior and her costume were very artistically arranged...."

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 4:84, 172: Writing in May 1850, one year after the premiere, when other singers were attempting the role of Fidès. Madame Viardot "created the role of Fidès with profound musical and dramatic insight, to which we have done full justice; she sang with energy, intelligence, and passion that in no small way contributed to the success of Meyerbeer's work."

⁶⁴ Chorley, *Musical Recollections*, 2:94–95. "It is not too much to say, that this combination to its utmost force and fineness was wrought out by Madame Viardot, but (the character being an exceptional one) to the disadvantage of every successor."

⁶⁵ Giacomo Meyerbeer to Pauline Viardot-García, n.d., b MS Mus 232 (10), PVG papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University. "My dear and illustrious Fidès!"

different from, and superior to, that of any other *primma* [*sic*] *donna* within the compass of these recollections.”⁶⁶

Pauline further demonstrated a uniquely deliberate approach to the operatic profession in her devotion to achieving artistry rather than stardom. So many prima donnas sought fame and fortune without considering the work, the practice, the dedication to music it would require to achieve even such superficial goals.⁶⁷ The impresario Mapleson conceded at the writing of his memoirs that there were few singers without affectation or caprice, two qualities inextricably bound up with the prima stereotype.⁶⁸ Many women did become wildly popular, whether they actively sought fame or not. Such prima donnas courted legions of fans who often rabidly defended their star against any real or perceived rivals.⁶⁹ Pauline established a completely different and deliberate approach to the public from the outset of her career. In the midst of performing the second act of *Otello*, Pauline was encored. FitzLyon records that “Pauline, not wishing to interrupt the dramatic action of the play, refused to comply with the audience’s demands, and went straight on with the opera.”⁷⁰ Pauline demonstrated a daring resolve and conscientiousness not common to prima donnas whose primary concern was for personal success

⁶⁶ Chorley mentions “music till then neglected.” Chorley, *Musical Recollections*, 2:53. A March 1843 review from the *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris* provides specific insight to Chorley’s comment: “Remercions Mme Viardot de nous rendre les suaves inspirations du génie mélancolique de Pergolèse; ce style simple et touchant est aujourd’hui trop peu commun pour ne pas accueillir avec faveur toutes les tentatives qui ont pour but de le remettre en vogue, et des interprètes du talent de Mme Viardot sont bien faits pour la reconquérir” [Thanks to Madame Viardot, who returns to us the sweet melancholy genius of Pergolesi’s inspiration. This simple, touching style is today all too uncommon, and is therefore unable to affect a favorable reception for attempts aimed at bringing this style back into fashion; the talented performances of Madame Viardot, however, are perfectly suited to reconquer it]. Maurice Bourges, “Sixième Concert du Conservatoire,” *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris* 10, no. 12 (19 March 1843): 5.

⁶⁷ See Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*, 101–2. Even Giuditta Pasta could not afford to rest on her laurels when the rise of Malibran and Sontag threatened Pasta’s “supremacy.” Clayton, *Queens of Song*, 262.

⁶⁸ James Henry Mapleson, *The Mapleson Memoirs: The Career of an Operatic Impresario, 1858–1888*, ed. Harold D. Rosenthal (New York: Appleton-Century, 1966), 63.

⁶⁹ See FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 90 and 125–26 on the rivalry between Grisi and Viardot carried out by their respective fans. Consider how Maria Malibran thrilled the public with her exuberance and flamboyance, as well as with her rivalry with Henrietta Sontag (cf. *ibid.*, 72–73). See also *ibid.*, 177 on the rivalry between Madame Castellan and Pauline as carried out by their fans.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 65.

and “getting as much personal glory as possible....”⁷¹ Critics more than appreciated her artistic integrity, including Alfred de Musset, George Sand, Chopin, Henry Chorley, and Théophile Gautier. Pauline rarely if ever figured the public’s demands into her performance, “making no concessions to popular taste.”⁷² Her diary reveals that Pauline cared little for the public, choosing for instance to ignore the reputation of her sister, focusing instead on Maria’s artistry. In her “souvenirs” of Maria, Pauline recalls preparing to play a role from *La Sonnambula* and asking herself what Maria had done in the same role, attempting to recreate her sister’s lithe, dancelike movements.⁷³ Chorley regretfully admits that Pauline’s initial seasons met with “questionable success” but that she was immensely appreciated “most largely among the musicians, and the poets, and the persons of highest culture and intelligence” wherever she sang.⁷⁴ These same critical fans recognized that often Pauline did not receive the acclaim she deserved. In his February 1840 review of Pauline’s *Desdemona*, Gautier suggested that neither Pauline nor her co-star (Rubini) received the applause they merited for their performances in Rossini’s *Otello*.⁷⁵

When Pauline made her debut, she “put all the other singers on their mettle, and inspired Grisi, who was extremely lazy, to exert herself rather more than usual.”⁷⁶ Perhaps Grisi had read Gautier’s October 1841 review of *Sémiramide* in which Grisi’s beauty was merely a byline to descriptions of Pauline’s consummate musicianship: “Mademoiselle Grisi a reparu dans tout l’éclat de sa beauté, avec toute la puissance de ses moyens...” Gautier added, “on lui a jeté des bouquets, dont plusieurs sont tombés sur madame Pauline Garcia,” as if to warn the diva Grisi

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Viardot-García, journal, PVG add. papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

⁷⁴ Chorley, *Musical Recollections*, 2:51.

⁷⁵ Gautier, *Art dramatique en France*, 2:26. “Peut-être n’a-t-on pas applaudi comme ils le méritaient, ces deux grands artistes; il est vrai que la salle renfermait encore plus de dilettanti chorégraphiques que de dilettanti musicaux” [Maybe they were not applauded like they should have been, these two grand artists; it is true that the hall contained more dance aficionados than musical].

⁷⁶ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 67.

that her stardom was none too secure.⁷⁷ Regardless of how the Parisian public viewed Pauline, both her colleagues and art critics recognized her budding artistry and genius; she was a force to be reckoned with.

Professionalism

Pauline performed “prima donna” with great professionalism, clearly evidenced in her treatment of fellow singers, impresarios, composers, and conductors as well as in her approach to rivalries and disputes. As already explored in Chapter Two and reinforced above, Pauline was well integrated into musical society. Her closest friends were musicians and literati, including music and art critics. Pauline’s stage colleagues embroiled themselves in petty disputes and rivalries. Remember Rosine Stoltz whose insistence on playing the lead in Meyerbeer’s new opera halted work on the same and led to her impresario paramour’s retirement from the theater at which the opera was to be performed.⁷⁸ Consider also the behavior of Madame Grisi who was resolved “not merely to have and to hold her own, but to take from others all that could interfere with her supremacy....”⁷⁹ In sharp contrast to this stereotypical diva behavior, Pauline operated with great respect for her colleagues. In 1847 while performing *Robert le Diable* in Berlin, Pauline’s co-star became ill and could not perform her Isabella to Pauline’s Alice. “Pauline...decided to take both parts herself” and, accordingly, the show went on. The public, “suitably impressed,” “wanted her to repeat her double performance every day.” Any other prima donna, as evidenced above, would have readily exploited the public’s enthusiasm. Pauline, however, was more concerned about offending her fellow singer than about her own self-

⁷⁷ “Mademoiselle Grisi appeared in all her stunning beauty, with all the power of her means... [The audience] threw bouquets, though many were intended for Pauline García.” Gautier, *Art dramatique en France*, 2:282. “Madame Pauline García est une musicienne consommée...” [Madame Pauline García is a consummate musician...].

⁷⁸ Vincent Giroud, *French Opera: A Short History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 144.

⁷⁹ Chorley, *Musical Recollections*, 2:183.

aggrandizement and popularity; she politely refused to repeat the performance in order for her co-star to resume her position as Isabella.⁸⁰

Just one year later, the London opera season bristled with the competition between opera houses which advertised their contracted singers as enticements to the public. Pauline sang with the Covent Garden company, and though Grisi joined the same, “[t]he old rivalry between Pauline and Grisi flared up again, and Pauline was not exaggerating when she told George that she had a real ‘*lega italiana*’ against her.”⁸¹ When Pauline performed with Grisi’s husband, Mario, in *Les Huguenots* to great acclaim, Grisi devised a malicious plan to ruin Pauline’s benefit night. Mario called in sick and “intimated that Grisi would gladly appear in *Norma* for Pauline’s benefit....”⁸² The benefit was not cancelled, nor did Pauline reciprocate the snub; instead, she simply found another tenor to take Mario’s place, the French tenor Roger who sang in French while the rest of the cast sang in Italian. Meanwhile backstage, Pauline worked on memorizing the French so that by the second half of the opera she and Roger could sing in the same language. “The audience’s excitement was inflamed by this feat, and by the superb performance which Pauline and Roger gave; the artists received a more rapturous reception than ever before.”⁸³ Grisi’s attempt to thwart Pauline’s success only served as a catalyst to a great display of musical genius on the operatic stage.

Genius

Almost universally, Pauline’s contemporaries revered her as a musical genius. This appellation was not lightly bestowed nor was it summarily awarded to every person who opened his or her mouth on a stage. Chorley, one of Pauline’s great critics and admirers, readily stated

⁸⁰ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 204.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 227.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 228.

that Henrietta Sontag “had not Genius,” while even though Pauline was only eighteen the year of her debut in London, Chorley recognized in her the mark of greatness: “[She] appeared, in her girlhood, for the first time on any stage, as *Desdemona*, with an amount of musical accomplishment, and of original genius, the combination of which was unique.”⁸⁴ “Genius” held a very specific meaning in nineteenth-century Europe. While Angela Esterhammer argues that the definition of genius varied between European countries, improvisation and virtuosity both figured consistently as defining characteristics. Hegel specifically valued the live production of art so common to “musical forms like Italian opera, in which the composer leaves room for the performer to share in the process of live composition through displays of virtuosity.”⁸⁵ Emmanuel Godo provides a more poetic definition of Romantic genius: “Le génie...est une forme de fragilité savamment entretenue, une obstination à se défaire de toute protection et à se présenter nu face au monde pour mieux le réfracter, en traduire, musicalement, la vérité fugace.”⁸⁶ Romanticism celebrated the individual and his creative powers. Improvisation was key to this early nineteenth-century conception of genius. Chopin, for instance, never played his works the same way twice: each performance was a unique expression of his mood and artistic vision, a veritable outpouring of creative energy.

Similarly, reviews of Pauline laud her improvisation and her virtuosity, signs of her artistic genius and intellect. In early performances of *Il barbiere*, Pauline surprised her critics by singing “des romances très-originales, de la composition de sa sœur, et un air espagnol très-piquant, en s’accompagnant elle-même au piano” in place of the air *Tanti palpiti* which was

⁸⁴ Chorley, *Musical Recollections*, 1:172.

⁸⁵ Angela Esterhammer, *Romanticism and Improvisation, 1750–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 5.

⁸⁶ Emmanuel Godo, *Une grâce obstinée: Musset* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 2010), 87. “Genius...is a form of carefully cultivated fragility, a determination to rid oneself of any encumbrances and to present oneself to the world prepared to best refract, in musical translation, volatile truth.”

traditionally performed.⁸⁷ “[H]er singing in ‘La Cenerentola’ could not be exceeded for invention and brilliancy of style.” In this 1841 performance of *La Cenerentola*, Pauline adapted her voice to match the “musical whisper” of her male co-star without compromising her own talent: “but, for the *final rondo*, she had already invented that reading, and those admirably ingenious changes, (changes not so much allowed as demanded by Signor Rossini’s music)...”⁸⁸ Both Gautier and Chorley felt strongly that Pauline “sent et comprend les grands maîtres, et sait les rendre dans toute leur pureté originelle....”⁸⁹ In the comparison with her contemporary prima donnas, Pauline stood in her own class. According to one critic, “Elle est apparue au milieu de nous à l’époque la plus heureuse de son talent. Nous retrouvons en elle la grâce de la Sontag, l’art de la Catalani, la fougue chaleureuse de la Pasta, la méthode unique de sa sœur, élevée à l’école de Garcia.”⁹⁰ Pauline was the total artist: her colleagues could each boast one peculiar talent while Pauline combined all the same talents with her own intellect and hard-won skill. Indeed, contemporary prima donnas were left to mimic her as best they could. Pauline’s “ingenious changes” to the final rondo in *Cenerentola* were “quietly appropriated by less imaginative singers;—to name but one—Madame Alboni.”⁹¹ According to Chorley, prima donnas had an especially hard time performing the role of Fidès following, as they did, on the heels of Pauline’s supreme creation. “Madame Grisi—always active and intelligent in adopting what she had seen more original artists [Viardot] do—attempted the character, without

⁸⁷ Gautier, *Art dramatique en France*, 1:332. 2 December 1839. She sang “some very original romances, composed by her sister, and a piquant Spanish air while accompanying herself on the piano....”

⁸⁸ Chorley, *Musical Recollections*, 1:195. He describes performances completed in 1841. See app. 1.

⁸⁹ Gautier, *Art dramatique en France*, 1:332. She “feels and understands the great masters, and knows how to render them in all their original purity....”

⁹⁰ Schlesinger, “Chronique étrangère,” 6. St. Petersburg; 11 November 1843. “She appeared in our midst at the happiest apex of her talent. We find in her the grace of Sontag, the art of Catalani, the fiery ardor of Pasta, the unique method of her sister, brought up in the school of Garcia.”

⁹¹ Chorley, *Musical Recollections*, 1:196.

success.”⁹² Note here the qualities associated with these prima donnas: “less imaginative” and not “original.” Without bluntly stating it, Pauline’s contemporary prima donnas did not have her originality, innovation, taste, or intelligence. Ellen Clayton (Pauline’s contemporary biographer) admirably summarizes what constitutes Pauline’s original presentation of “prima donna”:

By [1848] the great genius of Madame Viardot had matured, and a volume might be filled with the criticisms written on her voice, her acting, her original conception. Even those judges ordinarily most stern seemed to have scarcely any thing but praise to offer to Madame Viardot. She was admitted to be, as one able critic acknowledges, ‘a woman of genius peculiar, inasmuch as it is universal.’ Never was prima donna more fortunate in satisfying even the most exacting.⁹³

The Akademisches Singverein inducted Pauline as an honorary member after her move to Weimar. Her title as an inductee read “Artis musicae lumen ac deus cantandi arte [a luminary of the art of music and a god in the art of singing].”⁹⁴ Thus, Pauline, a woman and a prima donna, obtained the most respected standing in nineteenth-century European Romantic circles.

Counterarguments

Pauline Viardot cannot, however, be completely divorced from the prima donna discourse. Contemporary criticism starkly demonstrates that she was not a stereotypical prima donna, and yet her voice still maintained the power traditionally feared in women’s vocalizing. Ellen Clayton cites one critic’s record of the effect Pauline’s voice had on the listener: “You care little or nothing for the mechanism, or rather for the weakness of the organ; you are no longer a critic; but spell-bound under the hand of genius, moved by the sway of the enthusiasm that

⁹² Ibid., 2:102.

⁹³ Clayton, *Queens of Song*, 410.

⁹⁴ Nicholas G. Zekulin, *The Story of an Operetta: Le Dernier Sorcier by Pauline Viardot and Ivan Turgenev* (Munich: Verlag Otto Sagner, 1989), 62.

comes from the soul—abashed in the presence of intellect.”⁹⁵ Genius and intellect notwithstanding, Pauline’s voice, like the siren’s, held sway over her audience, abashing them, unleashing the “enthusiasm of the soul,” making them forget themselves. Though this critic was hardly complaining, others did protest to various ways in which Pauline asserted her power in a male-dominated field. Berlioz, for instance, eventually fell out with Pauline after asserting his own superiority in their friendship. Pauline had worked with Berlioz extensively on the Gluck revisions in preparation for the Paris revival of *Orphée*, as described in Chapter Two.⁹⁶ When Berlioz went to stay at Courtavenal, he also brought manuscript pages from his original work, *Les Troyens*, on which Pauline made many critical comments and suggestions for improvement. When their Orpheus project was finally performed, “Berlioz’ own account...is not without some critical observations....” He disapproved strongly “of her unjustified pausing on top G towards the end of Orpheus’s lament in Act III, adding roulades to one of the recitatives and altering certain words.”⁹⁷ Jealous of Pauline’s success in *Orphée*—she appears to have stolen the limelight and at the cost of infidelity to Gluck⁹⁸—angry about her publication of variations on *Orphée* (citing his disapproval of revising Gluck),⁹⁹ and perhaps still smarting at her criticisms of *Les Troyens*,¹⁰⁰ Berlioz coldly ended their previously warm and close friendship while exhausting Pauline’s previous sympathy for him.¹⁰¹ Did Berlioz’s eventual coldness towards

⁹⁵ Qtd. in Clayton, *Queens of Song*, 411.

⁹⁶ Pauline’s hand-written manuscript of lines from Gluck with her revisions written in survives in the Houghton Library’s collections. Pauline Viardot-García, Gluck *Orphée* manuscript, n.d., MS Mus 232 (71), PVG papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

⁹⁷ Eve Barsham, “Berlioz and Gluck,” in “The Opera in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Orfeo*, ed. Patricia Howard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 96.

⁹⁸ Berlioz wrote to Royer, “Absolute fidelity of interpretation is as necessary for the operas of Gluck as it is for the works of great dramatic poets, and it is just as senseless and revolting to pervert his melodies and recitatives by adding notes and changing final cadences as it would be to add words and change rhymes in the verse of Corneille.” Waddington, “Counselor and Physician,” 395.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 397.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 392–93.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 397.

Pauline stem from “authorial rage...spring[ing] from resentment at a second voice who completes the work in her (or his) own interpretation?”¹⁰²

Gautier raised similar concerns in his 1839 review of Pauline’s performance in *Il barbiere*. After celebrating Pauline’s fresh and “correct” interpretation of Rosine, Gautier questioned whether her ornamentation threatened the fidelity of Rossini’s composition. Ordinarily, “on laisse...aux chanteurs le choix des floritures, des points d’orgue, des trilles et de toutes ces arabesques capricieuses qui voltigent et s’enroulent autour de la note, sans l’effacer et la faire perdre de vue....”¹⁰³ But Gautier wonders if this is not unwise, considering the prima donna’s display on December 2: “toutefois, mademoiselle Pauline s’est peut-être montrée un peu trop prodigue d’ornements, et, quand on chante du Rossini, déjà si fleuri et si abondant par lui-même, il faut en être sobre....”¹⁰⁴ Though Gautier then dismisses his objection, qualifying Pauline’s embellishments as products of her great understanding of the masters, embellishments initiated by the prima donna still caused concern in nineteenth-century composers and conductors. The key here is to understand attitudes toward authorship and concerns with the dominant voice. In the nineteenth century, the standard voice was man’s: the voice of authorship, of authority, of dominance. A prima donna performing a role and adding to or taking away from the male-authored text raised issues of creation and interpretation and the question of who maintained the dominant voice.

¹⁰² Abbate, “Envoicing of Women,” 235.

¹⁰³ Gautier, *Art dramatique en France*, 1:332–33. “...we leave...to singers the choice of ornamentation, points of singing, trills, and all the capricious arabesques that flutter and twine about the note, without obliterating or obscuring it....”

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:333. “...each time, Mademoiselle Pauline presented perhaps too liberal ornamentation; when singing Rossini, there is already ample ornamentation, thus he should be sung soberly....”

Theories of Authorship: Usurping the Male Authorial Voice

All of Berlioz' (and Gautier's) complaints about Pauline's stereotypical prima donna behavior find convincing redress in modern feminist theories of authorship espoused by Leonardi, Dunn and Jones, and Abbate.¹⁰⁵ Woman's voice constitutes an empowering difference;¹⁰⁶ its unique timbre cannot be displaced by a male voice;¹⁰⁷ when a woman opens her mouth in opera, the sound batters the listener.¹⁰⁸ In the exercise of her voice on a public stage, "the prima donna, as she reproduces a character (usually a woman created by a man), can improvise—and thus revise." Leonardi makes clear that revision and improvisation should not be regarded as lesser arts; "this function of the diva as improviser and reviser leads to a second use of 'voice'—that is, participation, control, power, creation."¹⁰⁹ Through not only her role creation, interpretation, and improvisation, but also through her original compositions, Pauline effectively usurped the male authorial voice and became an author in her own right.

Many examples exist of Pauline's empowerment through the exercise of her voice. Her arrangements of Chopin's mazurkas provide an obvious example in which a woman revises a man's composition, adds words to it, and publishes it with her own name in the place of authorship.¹¹⁰ In a reverse of the previous example, Pauline participated in a popular nineteenth-century composition technique of writing music for existing poetry. Schubert's "Lieder" comprise one of the most enduringly popular collections in this genre, but Brahms, Fauré, and many other men likewise participated. Pauline and Clara Schumann, both women, exemplify an additional means of usurping the male authorial voice by giving voice to men's poetry. Pauline's

¹⁰⁵ Leonardi ("Politics of the Diva"), Dunn and Jones (*Embodied Voices*), and Abbate ("Envoicing of Women") all write about woman's voice and authorship.

¹⁰⁶ Abbate, "Envoicing of Women," 234.

¹⁰⁷ Dunn and Jones, *Embodied Voices*, 10; Abbate, "Envoicing of Women," 228.

¹⁰⁸ Abbate, "Envoicing of Women," 254.

¹⁰⁹ Leonardi, "Politics of the Diva," 69.

¹¹⁰ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 229.

compositions within this genre accomplish two types of displacement: first, a woman establishes a musical voice for the poem; second, when a woman performs the piece (Pauline performed her compositions in public¹¹¹), that singer then also provides a “voice” for the performance of the work. For her song “Haï Luli!” Pauline used several stanzas from Xavier de Maistre’s *Les Prisonniers du Caucase*. Rather than maintain the integrity of Maistre’s text, Pauline borrowed non-sequential stanzas, left out whole lines of text, and even switched the order of concluding lines for two stanzas. In her song, Pauline used Maistre’s stanza beginning “Je suis triste” for the first verse, but instead of concluding the musical idea of the refrain with the last line (“Qu’il fait triste sans son ami”) of the stanza in question, she switched it with the concluding line (“Où donc peut-être mon ami?”) of the next stanza.¹¹² “Haï Luli!” thus exemplifies in yet another way how a woman composer revises a male-authored text.¹¹³

Pauline came under scrutiny from critics for the embellishments and ornaments she improvised during performances, typical of prima donnas. Both Gautier and Berlioz complained about Pauline in this regard. But, as Leonardi suggests, such behavior constitutes an act of creation on the part of the woman performer. Pauline’s placement on the stage as interpreter of a given role also placed her in the position to determine what text and what music would be brought to life. In accordance with her consummate musicianship, Pauline wrote out her cadenzas for various roles and kept them in a book of sheet music.¹¹⁴ The act of writing is a bold action within the feminist discourse surrounding authorship: Pauline clearly asserted her

¹¹¹ See chap. 2.

¹¹² Xavier de Maistre, *Les prisonniers du Caucase* (Boston: 1865), *Hathi Trust Digital Library*, via Brigham Young University Library, accessed 25 April 2013, <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/>, 20-21.

¹¹³ See Waddington, *Musical Works* [online], 49–69 for a listing of Pauline’s extant compositions with notes on which pieces and collections were published in her lifetime (of which there are many).

¹¹⁴ See Gioacchino Rossini with revisions by Pauline Viardot-García, *La Cenerentola* manuscript, 27 August 1853, b MS Mus 264 (288), PVG add. papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University, for Pauline’s *Cenerentola* cadenza labeled “Paris 27 août 1853.” See also Collection of vocal cadenzas, n.d., b MS Mus 264 (102), PVG add. papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University, for the book containing Pauline’s hand-written cadenzas for a Zingarelli opera, *Otello*, *Semiramide*, *Le Barbier*, and *Beatrice di Tenda*.

authorial voice by writing her own revisions to the men-authored operas she performed and then by performing her revisions on a public stage, thereby giving them an additional voice.¹¹⁵

Certainly every prima donna's embellishments are covered within this feminist theory of authorship. What sets Pauline apart from her contemporaries, however, is the frequency of her authorship and contemporary recognition of its artistic motivation, as opposed to self-interested showing off. Gautier followed up his complaint with praise for Pauline's artistry, allowing her excellence and genius to make her an exception to the rule where containment discourse is concerned.

In yet another act of revision and creation, Pauline collaborated with many male musicians on their work. In addition to working with Berlioz on the Gluck revisions and commenting on initial drafts of *Les Troyens*, Pauline published a sheet music collection of variations on *Orphée*. As Charles Gounod worked on his first opera *Sapho* at the encouragement of the Viardots, Pauline likewise made revisions on his work.¹¹⁶ Composer Henri Reber also consulted with Pauline on his compositions; in one particular letter he discusses his gratitude for and use of her ideas. "J'ai fait le changement que vous m'avez communiqué avant hier sur 'comment la France a su revivre'"¹¹⁷ Beyond simply accepting or rejecting Pauline's advice, Reber carries on a conversation with someone he respects and considers at the very least an equal; the object of his admiration and professional gratitude just happens to be a woman and, surprisingly, a prima donna, too.

¹¹⁵ Such a performance might constitute what Judith Butler calls "repetition with a difference." See Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

¹¹⁶ An autograph page with Pauline's corrections is housed at Houghton Library, preserved for all to view evidence of female revision of male-authored texts. See Charles Gounod with revisions by Pauline Viardot-García, *Sapho* manuscript, n.d., b MS Mus 232 (75), PVG papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

¹¹⁷ "I made the change you had communicated to me yesterday about 'how France was able to regenerate'" Henri Reber to Pauline Viardot-García, 1841–1846 and n.d., b MS Mus 264 (55), PVG add. papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Pauline's revisionary and creative work, to which all prima donnas had access according to Leonardi, et al, does not look like the violent coup so often despaired of in the prima donna discourse. She was neither the Angela of Hoffmann's *Rat Krespel* who drove her maestros crazy by insisting on "a thousand changes" to their work;¹¹⁸ nor was she a Rosine Stoltz infamously precipitating Donizetti's mental breakdown with her capricious demands on the composer's "artistic dignity."¹¹⁹ Instead, men composers sought her out and valued her contributions to their work. Critics found her role interpretations original and even great masters, like Chopin, celebrated her powers of composition. Chopin reportedly enjoyed her arrangements of his mazurkas very much.¹²⁰ Critics also recognized and celebrated Pauline's authorial prowess, writing that "Meyerbeer in *Le Prophète* owed at least as much to Pauline as he had owed to Nourrit when writing *Les Huguenots*" given the "many musical and artistic changes" she introduced "for the better into the opera."¹²¹

Finally, Pauline composed a body of original work not common for her contemporary prima donnas, nor for women of her time. Perhaps the most significant compositional contribution Pauline made to the world in light of authorship theories are her five operatic works *Trop de femmes* (1867; librettist: Turgenev), *Le dernier Sorcier* (1867; librettist: Turgenev), *L'Ogre* or *Conte de fées* (1868; librettist: Turgenev), *Le Miroir* (1869; librettist: Turgenev), and *Cendrillon* (1904). Pauline collaborated with Turgenev on the first four works but penned her own libretto for *Cendrillon*. These works were originally only intended for performance in the

¹¹⁸ Hoffmann, "Councillor," 95.

¹¹⁹ "Many times Mme. Stoltz, who at that time had supreme power at the Opéra, created difficulties for Donizetti that deeply wounded his artistic dignity. For example, in the fifth act, Mme. Stoltz refused to remain on stage while [the baritone, Paul] Barroilhet sang his beautiful offstage barcarolle. The success that he could not fail to enjoy with this melody aroused her jealousy.... One evening, Mme. Stoltz insisted that Donizetti cut out one strophe of this barcarolle; the maestro, furious, grabbed his score, threw it down on the stage, and rushed out, hurling some most colourful curses at the singer." Qtd. in Smart, "Lost Voice," 34.

¹²⁰ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 96.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 239.

drawing room or the little theater Turgenev built in his Baden house. However, word about Pauline's charming salon operas got around, and the audience had to be enlarged from Pauline's children and pupils. "The Queen of Prussia heard about the first of these operettas—*Trop des Femmes* [*sic*], and expressed a desire to see it; from then on the performances became one of the major artistic and social events of the Baden season."¹²² Pauline obtained a voice through her compositions and their public performance amplified it. *Le dernier Sorcier* received a more professional staging in Weimar in April 1869, partly through the support of Pauline's old friend, Franz Liszt.¹²³ A program from the performance is preserved in Pauline's scrapbook for *Le dernier Sorcier* which also includes a hand-written manuscript of the operetta.¹²⁴ In 1889, *Le Dernier Sorcier* was staged in Paris.¹²⁵ With the exception of *Le Miroir*, the music and libretti for Pauline's operettas still exist and are performed today. What a testament to the power of Pauline's voice that it still resonates almost one hundred sixty years after her retirement from the stage. No other prima donna of Pauline's time can claim such power or enduring legacy as preserved in her own creative works.

Cendrillon: Variations On a Male-Authored Fairytale

Throughout her life, Pauline composed music for public and private performance. Her final long work, a salon operetta based on the Perrault fairytale *Cendrillon*, was published in 1904 following its premiere salon performance; it was quickly forgotten. *Cendrillon* has only recently enjoyed renewed interest from the musical world: The 1967 performance of Viardot's *Cendrillon* at the Newport Jazz Festival preceded a compact disc recording of the operetta in 1972 and a newer recording in 2000 from Opera Rara. As an example of an operatic composition

¹²² Ibid., 394.

¹²³ Ibid., 395. See also Zekulin, *Story of an Operetta*.

¹²⁴ Pauline Viardot-García, Ivan Turgenev's *Le Dernier Sorcier* scrapbook and score, n.d., b MS Mus 264 (85), PVG add. papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University (bound manuscript with program inside).

¹²⁵ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 456.

by a woman and former prima donna, *Cendrillon* merits individual analysis with modern theoretical models. A brief analysis of the libretto, authored by Pauline, demonstrates the unique female voice applied to this traditionally patriarchal moral tale.¹²⁶ Drawing on comparative analyses of Pauline Viardot's source material—Perrault's 1697 *Cendrillon* and the Rossini/Ferretti 1817 opera *La Cenerentola: ossia La bontà in trionfo*—provides insight to the unique treatment by women of texts with established cultural meanings.¹²⁷ Viardot's treatment of the Cinderella character, her use of a stepfather versus a stepmother, and her choice of gender for the story's authoritative moral guide reflect not only the influences of her source material but also demonstrate Viardot's vision of womanhood, and her privileging and empowerment of the mother as moral superior and social guide.

Perrault's original text of the *Cendrillon* story, published in 1697 as part of a collection of stories with morals, privileges a dominant patriarchal social order. The narrative revolves around disruption of this order and the eventual return to social and moral balance. Disruptions find embodiment in the stepmother and her daughters whose "caractère orgueilleux, hautain et jaloux" matches the demonic woman stereotype discussed in Chapter One.¹²⁸ *Cendrillon* represents the opposite stereotype, fulfilling the image of idealized womanhood: she is humble and patient, but also sad. When the fairy godmother appears, she demands in return for help that *Cendrillon* "continue à être bonne et sage..."¹²⁹ There is apparently no room for improvement in *Cendrillon*'s behavior: she must only *continue* in her current excellent behavior. *Cendrillon*'s slippers, a gift from the godmother on condition of obedience, represent Cinderella's adherence

¹²⁶ This is not a musicological analysis; it is purely an analysis of the text as narrative.

¹²⁷ Though Viardot was friends with Massenet who also wrote a *Cendrillon* opera, Viardot's operetta bears little resemblance to Massenet's fantastical version. More likely, Viardot drew on Rossini's opera, which she performed many times in the title role, and Perrault's fairytale, given as she was to extensive reading and research.

¹²⁸ Charles Perrault, *Cendrillon*, ed. Fr. Wentzel (Paris: J. Wentzel, 1868), *Gallica*, Bibliothèque nationale de France, via Brown University Library, accessed 5 April 2013, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5846867t>. "...proud, haughty, and jealous character..."

¹²⁹ Perrault, *Cendrillon*, 3. "[C]ontinue to be good and wise..."

to the dominant social order and moral standards imposed by the fairy godmother. This is borne out in the text when Cendrillon “quitta le bal” [leave the ball] on time and without hesitation the first night, “comme elle l’avait promis à sa marraine” [as she had promised her godmother], but then breaks her promise the second night.¹³⁰ The cost of Cendrillon’s negligence is one of her slippers, the symbol of her obedience to social mores. The slippers also stand as markers of her purity and her status as an exemplar of ideal womanhood. With the loss of the slipper due to disobedience, Cendrillon is temporarily displaced and the social order is once again disrupted. Only marriage to the Prince can restore Cendrillon’s position and social balance. Hence, the Prince travels around with the slipper whose curious size will ensure that the proper owner is found. Cendrillon’s stepsisters, “orgueilleuses et ambitieuses comme leur mère,” try desperately to fit into the slipper. “Mais, hélas! la malencontreuse pantoufle se trouvait trop mignonne en tout sens pour pouvoir être chaussée par l’une ou l’autre des deux sœurs.”¹³¹ Obviously, women who do not embody the ideals of womanhood cannot gain acceptance into the dominant social order, represented by the slipper fitting. Cendrillon, modest and blushing, takes but a moment to slip on “la pantoufle qui allait parfaitement à son pied mignon et élégant.”¹³² The Prince, by presenting Cendrillon with her missing slipper, restores her to her position as moral exemplar and permanently absorbs her into the social order through marriage, the epitome of patriarchal social institutions. Fittingly, the fairy godmother as agent of this order declares her satisfaction

¹³⁰ Ibid., 4, 6. The second night of the ball, Cendrillon forgets her promise to la marraine: “Après s’être laissé entraîner par le plaisir de la danse au milieu de ce monde brillant et dans ces salons magnifiques retentissant d’une musique enivrante, Cendrillon entendit tout-à-coup sonner minuit” [After she had been entranced by the pleasure of dance in the midst of this brilliant world and the magnificent salons resounding with intoxicating music, Cendrillon heard the clock strike midnight]. Ibid., 6.

¹³¹ “[P]roud and ambitious like their mother....” “But, alas! The unfortunate slipper was too petite in every sense to be the shoe of either of the two sisters.” Ibid., 7–8.

¹³² “[T]he slipper that perfectly fit her petite and elegant foot.” Ibid., 8.

with Cendrillon who “méritait, par ses souffrances passées, le bonheur qui l’attendait.”¹³³

Happily ever after only applies to Cendrillon and the Prince, purveyors of the social order.¹³⁴

With this reading of Perrault’s story in mind, the later Rossini/Ferreti and Viardot variations on Cendrillon’s character, the use of a stepfather versus and stepmother, and the gender of the godparent take on greater significance.

To begin, slight differences in the portrayal of Cendrillon indicate Rossini and Viardot’s empowerment of the heroine. In Perrault’s version Cendrillon never acts without authorization, either from her stepmother, fairy godmother, or (later) from the Prince. Additionally, nothing in the text suggests that Cendrillon is capable of imagining a different life for herself. Though sad because of the way she is mistreated, she remains at the mercy of circumstance and fate, powerless to imagine or affect any change. In contrast, both the Rossini and Viardot versions employ a ditty that Cendrillon sings at the beginning of the operas. A story within a story, these ditties briefly describe the plot of a prince seeking a bride. More than simply providing additional music, these ditties establish a new facet to the character of Cendrillon, representing her ability to imagine alternative realities. Whereas in the Perrault version, Cendrillon submits to whatever fate or circumstance imposes on her and never envisions or seeks an alternative, in the Rossini/Ferreti and Viardot iterations, Cendrillon has the power to dream and imagine a different life outside the one she is currently living, as manifest in the singing of a ditty. Viardot makes an additional change to the ditty, separating her operetta distinctly from Rossini’s. The ditty in the Rossini/Ferreti opera summarizes the plot of the opera and foreshadows the eventual happy ending: “[The prince] rejected good looks and ostentation, and in the end, chose an

¹³³ “[M]erited, for her past sufferings, the suitable reward of happiness.” Ibid., 9.

¹³⁴ The stepmother and stepsisters, who do not fulfill social expectations nor fit the image of ideal womanhood, “n’assistèrent point à cette cérémonie; elles étaient tombées malades de dépit et de jalousie” [did not attend the ceremony; they had fallen ill from spite and jealousy]. Ibid., 10.

innocent and virtuous lady for his bride.”¹³⁵ Viardot’s ditty seems to mock the happy ending trope: “[Le Prince] voulait une princesse qui fut riche comme lui!... Il était grincheux, colère, et quelque peu contrefait, outre ça goutteux, ma chère, et de lui l’amour fuyait!”¹³⁶ The normally romantic hero takes the brunt of humorous abuse. By mocking the prince, on whose valorous actions the happy ending usually relies, Viardot effectively undercuts the romantic poignancy as well as the reinforcement of the social order usually embodied in the happy ending trope. Viardot’s ditty is sung unaccompanied and endures repeated interruptions with Cendrillon singing one or two lines and then inserting spoken commentary. The effect thereby created matches that created in Shakespeare’s *Otello* when Desdemona continually interrupts her Willow Song. Linda Austern argues that the interruptions and lack of instrumental accompaniment preserve not only the privacy and intimacy of the moment, but also the femininity of the character singing. Where accompaniment and sustained melody would elevate the singing to public performance, the lack of instrumentation as well as the spoken commentary punctuating the ditty emphasize Cendrillon’s purity and socially appropriate behavior.¹³⁷ Such an effect doubtless matched the intimacy of the salon setting for which Viardot’s operetta was written. While Viardot’s operetta empowers Cendrillon, it also enhances through musical means the goodness of character shared by Perrault and Rossini/Ferreti’s version.

The use of a stepmother versus a stepfather in the three versions of *Cendrillon* under consideration raises interesting questions, such as, who is responsible for reproducing the social ideology of ideal womanhood? Perrault’s fairytale, in its use of the stepmother as the wayward

¹³⁵ Burton D. Fisher, ed., *Rossini’s La Cenerentola*, Opera Journeys Libretto Series (Miami: Opera Journeys, 2006), Ebrary, Brown University Library, accessed 5 April 2013, <http://site.ebrary.com.revproxy.brown.edu/lib/brown/docDetail.action?docID=10188414>, 5 (act 1, scene 1).

¹³⁶ Pauline Viardot-García, *Cendrillon: Opéra comique en 3 tableaux* (Paris: Miran, 1904), 4 (act 1, scene 1). “[The Prince] wanted a princess who was as rich as he!... He was crotchety, prone to tantrums, and false, also gouty, my dear, and his love fled from him!”

¹³⁷ See Austern, “‘No women are indeed,’” 98–102.

parental guardian, establishes the dominant social attitude in answer to the previous question: women, mothers, are supposed to inculcate in their daughters “the roles of daughter, wife, and mother.”¹³⁸ Thus, the stepmother’s vanity, pride, and domineering behavior are that much more outrageous as she reproduces not domestic subservience in her daughters but her own nasty traits; and she shirks her responsibility to her stepdaughter.¹³⁹ Rossini’s choice to cast the aberrant parent as a stepfather reflects cultural changes to childrearing ideologies and introduces issues of violence toward women. Rossini/Ferreti’s libretto establishes men as the heads of families, reasserting patriarchal authority. Cenerentola’s behavior throughout the opera must then be judged to a different standard than Perrault’s story—any action Cenerentola takes must necessarily conflict with the orders given by her stepfather (such as Cenerentola asking him to take her to the ball).¹⁴⁰ But Don Magnifico has disrupted the patriarchal social balance by denying Cenerentola her role as a daughter. Refusing to claim her as a daughter, Don Magnifico repeatedly threatens Cenerentola with physical abuse and even denies her very existence to the prince and his retinue.¹⁴¹ One of a woman’s most important duties in Rossini/Ferreti’s contemporary society included the demonstration of filial piety. The lack of a natural parent makes Cenerentola a social nonentity so that, while she may demonstrate great virtue and goodness, she can never achieve the exemplary status of Perrault’s Cendrillon. Only a man, in the form of a “fairy godfather” (Alidoro), can provide Cenerentola with a father figure to legitimize her existence and restore the balance of patriarchal authority.¹⁴² Alidoro accomplishes

¹³⁸ Higonet, “The Other Side,” 73.

¹³⁹ “Cette veuve et ses deux filles avaient su dissimuler jusqu’après le mariage leur caractère orgueilleux, hautain et jaloux...” [This widow and her two daughters concealed their proud, haughty and jealous character until just after the marriage...]. Perrault, *Cendrillon*, 2.

¹⁴⁰ “Signore, una parola: in case di quel Principe un’ora, un’ora sola portatemi a ballar.” Fisher, *Rossini’s La Cenerentola*, 17.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 18. In response to Alidoro’s announcement that three sisters are listed on the register of eligible maidens and the Prince’s request to see the third sister/daughter, Don Magnifico lies, “Ella morì!” [She died!]

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 20.

his goal by orchestrating Cenerentola's marriage to the Prince. Rossini's use of the stepfather thus creates an opera plot revolving around the reestablishment of patriarchal social order.

Viardot's operetta maintains the gender swap of the stepparent introduced by the Rossini/Ferreti version but with a few changes and to slightly different effect. Viardot's stepfather, Baron Pictordu, discloses in an aria that he was formerly a green grocer.¹⁴³ This invention adds to the ridiculousness of the character who makes a joke that living in France made it possible for him to assume the identity of a Baron and no one is the wiser. Later, the Prince's servant, Barigoule, recognizes the Baron from his past life and reveals that the Baron also served a prison sentence. One possible way to see Viardot's innovation is as an undermining and rejection of patriarchal authority: if the baron is a fake, then he is a fake father to whom Cendrillon owes neither allegiance nor deference. In fact, the Baron himself forbids Cendrillon to call him father, thereby absolving Cendrillon of any filial responsibility and making her responsible for herself.¹⁴⁴ Humorously mocking the sham patriarch has its final say in the closing scenes of the operetta when Viardot reduces the Baron to the position of suppliant. Whereas in the Rossini/Ferreti opera Cenerentola begs the Prince to forgive her malicious relatives, in Viardot's retelling the Baron and his daughters must ask forgiveness and humble themselves; Cendrillon modestly acknowledges her newfound love and change in fortune but is not forced (by the librettist) to meekly approach her tormentors and subserviently plead for their love. Thus, in the changes from Perrault to Rossini to Viardot, Cendrillon/Cenerentola transforms from submissive domestic with a good heart, to domestic with a good heart at loggerheads with patriarchy, to Viardot's vision of the empowered woman who exemplifies goodness and ideal womanhood in every other way.

¹⁴³ Viardot-García, *Cendrillon*, 19–20 (act 1, scene 10).

¹⁴⁴ Pauline Viardot-García, *Cendrillon: A Chamber Opera in Three Acts by Pauline Viardot* (London: Opera Rara, 2000), 54–55).

Given my reading of Perrault, which serves as a foundation for this analysis, the fairy godparent is the protector of social order. In Perrault, la marraine acts as an agent of the overarching system, sent to restore balance and reward Cendrillon for her obedience to social mores. La marraine asks Cendrillon to “continue à être bonne et sage,” that Cendrillon continue doing what society expects of her as a woman. Appropriately, Perrault matches the gender of the fairy godparent with the gender of Cendrillon’s stepparent. La marraine is the obvious replacement for the stepmother who shirks her social stipulated parental responsibilities. Thus, Cendrillon receives her moral guidance and tuition from a different mother figure, but a mother all the same. In keeping with Rossini/Ferreti’s change from stepmother to stepfather, the gender of the fairy godparent likewise changed. The godparent, cast in Rossini/Ferreti as Alidoro the philosopher, reflects Enlightenment privileging of the rational, yet the character maintains some semi-mystical and divine elements as expressed in Alidoro’s aria about God looking down compassionately on Cenerentola.¹⁴⁵ What better way to embed a patriarchal dominance than to have the godfather, Alidoro, act as an emissary of God. Alidoro’s instructions to Cenerentola to “let her thoughts vanish” and to “come with me and don’t be afraid! I will teach you,” further demonstrate the patriarchal emphasis of *La Cenerentola*.¹⁴⁶ Strangely, Viardot chooses to mix genders in her *Cendrillon*. The stepfather carryover from Rossini’s opera is matched not with a godfather but is paired with a fairy godmother! Rather than have a godparent of the same gender step seamlessly into the shoes of the wayward stepparent, Viardot jars expectations by sending a fairy godmother to right the stepfather’s wrongs. In so doing, Viardot establishes matriarchal tones to her operetta. Additionally, la marraine of Viardot’s operetta tells Cendrillon, “crois en

¹⁴⁵ “Là del ciel nell’arcano profundo, del poter sull’altissimo Tronoveglia un Nume.... Fra la cenere, il pianto, l’affano, ci ti veded, o fanciulla innocente” [There, in Heaven’s mysterious depths, an omnipotent God sits on His high throne.... Innocent young girl, He sees you among the cinders, and He sees your tears]. Fisher, *Rossini’s La Cenerentola*, 20.

¹⁴⁶ “Sublima il pensiero!... scoprirvi non dovrete. Amor soltanto tutto v’insegnerà.” Ibid.

moi...écoute et obéis.”¹⁴⁷ La marraine invites Cendrillon to believe in her, the godmother. She doesn't say that in either Perrault or Rossini. In Perrault la marraine says “be good.” In Rossini Alidoro says, “let me do the thinking and teaching.” Viardot's change in dialogue represents a change in ideology. In the previous versions, Perrault's fairy godmother represents the state sanctioned moral code while Rossini/Ferreti's philosopher represents social mores embedded in and overseen by patriarchy. In Pauline's version, the fairy godmother invests herself with authority; rather than simply representing an exterior order, she reclaims the role of mother from patriarchy and identifies herself as the source of power. Furthermore, it is a fairy godmother who reins the stepfather back into harmony with the social code. In the final scene of the operetta, focus shifts completely to la marraine who takes leave of the ensemble and admonishes everyone, “Comptez toujours sur ma puissance.”¹⁴⁸ La marraine's soaring B5b with modulation down to G5 in the final line, “soyez heureux” [be happy], floats above the ensemble voices, enveloping their sound with her own expression of dominance as the one who has restored social order.¹⁴⁹

Through her empowering portrayal of Cendrillon and her privileging of the mother as moral superior and guide, Viardot presents a new and uniquely feminine reading of the Cinderella story. Furthermore, humor plays an important role in subverting the patriarchal overtones of the more traditional moral tale told in both Perrault and Rossini/Ferreti's versions. Perrault's lack of humor reinforces his story's purpose as a teaching aid for children. Besides the situational humor inherent in disguises and role swapping within the Rossini/Ferreti version, audience members were also expected to find humor in Don Magnifico's threats of violence

¹⁴⁷ Viardot-García, *Cendrillon*, 29 (act 1, scene 14). “[B]elieve in me...listen and obey.” Viardot-García, *Cendrillon: A Chamber Opera*, 62.

¹⁴⁸ Viardot-García, *Cendrillon*, 83–84 (finale). “Always rely on my power.”

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 85–86.

against Cenerentola. Pauline uses humor consistently throughout her operetta to undermine patriarchal authority. Her mockery of the “happily ever after” trope in act one, scene one exposes distrust of the ideal patriarchal relationship where a knight rescues a helpless woman from her unfortunate life. Instead, a powerful matriarchal figure in the person of la marraine, empowers Cendrillon to take action and change her fortunes. Finally, Viardot’s humorous treatment of the stepfather through his back-story as a green grocer and former convict, as well as through his final supplicating act completely undercuts any authority he might have wielded. Viardot reinforces the empowerment of women in her operetta by positioning la marraine as the moral superior who reins the deviant father figure back into the social order.

*“The diva’s final power”*¹⁵⁰

Another area in which Pauline succeeded in escaping association with the prima donna stereotype was through passing her voice on to others.¹⁵¹ Leonardi identifies teaching voice lessons as a means of reproducing one’s voice by helping others develop and exercise their own voices.¹⁵² Rebecca Pope argues that Armgart’s role as a voice teacher also allows for her continuing participation “in the production of art” following retirement from the stage, while also preserving for her “the freedom and independence she has always associated with her female voice.”¹⁵³ Teaching voice lessons became a fairly common practice among opera singers, both men and women alike. Jenny Lind and Mathilde Marchesi gave lessons. The famous bass, Luigi

¹⁵⁰ Leonardi, “Politics of the Diva,” 71.

¹⁵¹ Angela Cofer and Kandie Kearley each offer detailed analyses of Pauline’s contributions to vocal pedagogy. See Angela F. Cofer, *Pauline Viardot-García: The Influence of the Performer on Nineteenth-Century Opera* (Cincinnati, OH: University of Cincinnati, 1988); Kearley, *Bel Canto Tradition*. Robyn A. Stevens’ dissertation *The García Family: Romanticism’s Premier Musical Dynasty; Their Legacy as Performers, Composers and Pedagogues* (College Park: University of Maryland–College Park, 2005) also explores Pauline’s work as a voice teacher. For examples of Viardot’s personal influence on fellow artists see Appendix Five for a chart listing the many works written for, dedicated to, and modeled on Pauline Viardot.

¹⁵² Leonardi, “Politics of the Diva,” 71.

¹⁵³ Pope, “The Diva Doesn’t Die,” 150.

Lablache, gave Princess, and later Queen, Victoria voice lessons.¹⁵⁴ Pauline's father, founder of the García school of music, imparted his knowledge and practices to all three of his children, all of whom sang opera at least for a time. Pauline's brother, Manuel, Jr., became one of the most respected and sought after voice teachers of the nineteenth century. Among his most famous pupils are Jenny Lind and Mathilde Marchesi, the latter going on to develop her own teaching methods and eventually publishing vocal exercises for wider public use. Appendix Six contains a flowchart identifying the generations of singers influenced by the García family, including Pauline who also undertook teaching voice lessons. FitzLyon records that during the Viardot's time in Baden-Baden, "the number of Pauline's pupils greatly increased. They came from all over Europe, from Prussia, France, Norway, Italy.... Pauline looked after her pupils' welfare as well as their musical education...."¹⁵⁵ Certainly Pauline's teaching was not unique among her contemporary prima donnas, though the scope of her teaching and the publication of her vocal exercises for public use does set her apart. Susan Leonardi identifies teaching music lessons as "the final power of the diva" "to change the lives of those who hear her, but especially to change the lives of other women, to give them a voice in all senses."¹⁵⁶ Within modern theoretical contexts, providing other women with a voice constitutes an enormous coup of polarized gender roles and patriarchal expectations of women.

Pauline surpassed her fellow prima donnas in her extensive work with men musicians. She literally gave Gounod a voice by arranging for the public performance of his first opera; when Saint-Saëns was an obscure composer, she organized the first public performance of his oratorio *Maria Magdeleine*; she provided Berlioz and Benjamin Godard with critical advice and intellectual support on their compositions. Pauline literally gave voice to many of these men's

¹⁵⁴ Victoria, journals, vol. 10, 10 April 1839, p. 29 and vol. 11, 14 June 1839, p. 57.

¹⁵⁵ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 381.

¹⁵⁶ Leonardi, "Politics of the Diva," 71.

compositions. She sang the title roles in Gounod's *Sapho* and Saint-Saëns *Maria Magdeleine* and *Samson et Dalila*. Without Pauline's encouragement, personal backing, or performance, these works may never have been written or even heard.¹⁵⁷

Where Pauline did not consciously take advantage of her position or influence, she had devoted admirers who were all too aware of the issues at stake for women. By virtue of their public personas, prima donnas represented the aspirations of women, making them an obvious choice for literary heroines: "it makes sense...that women writers such as George Eliot and George Sand in the nineteenth century and Willa Cather and Marcia Davenport in the twentieth, choose an opera singer as heroine: she is (as they are or aspire to be) a female success in a male world..."¹⁵⁸ George Sand and George Eliot, contemporaries of Pauline Viardot, wrote several iterations of the prima donna heroine. It was not until Pauline entered the picture that the fortunes of their heroines changed for the better. These women, hungry for a model of hope, adapted Pauline's narrative of success as the foundation for their heroines Consuelo and Armgart—in sum, a new heroine who freed herself from patriarchy, achieved financial success, independence, and happiness, and who lived to enjoy it.

Conclusion: Professional Success

In her performance of "prima donna," Pauline Viardot was almost unrecognizable when compared with her contemporary singers. Divas such as Julia Grisi exemplified the prima donna stereotype; she was regarded as "ignorant and uneducated; she [also] had a fiery temper."¹⁵⁹ Prima donnas engaged in various intrigues over dressing rooms, prime billing, and other "conveniences" to which they felt entitled.¹⁶⁰ One "Madame Grassier was a remarkable person,

¹⁵⁷ See chap. 2 for a more detailed discussion of Pauline's work as a patron.

¹⁵⁸ Leonardi, "Politics of the Diva," 65.

¹⁵⁹ Héritte-Viardot, *Memories and Adventures*, 88–89.

¹⁶⁰ Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*, 164.

capricious, passionate, frivolous, quite unreliable. She was the cause of many little scenes of excitement and jealousy.”¹⁶¹ Hector Berlioz further described divas as “charming monsters” culpable for “every conceivable blame.”¹⁶² Through her artistry, professionalism, and genius, Pauline presented an entirely different image of the prima donna. Born into a musical family, Pauline entered the musical world from a sense of familial tradition but more with the desire to create music and be a great artist. She devoted herself to her art, practicing regularly, attending rehearsals, and always seeking to improve herself. Critics highlighted “her intelligence, musicianship, discipline, and devotion to her art”¹⁶³ in contrast to her colleagues: “[U]nlike so many vocalists who have achieved fame, she [Pauline] was also a cultured musician whose natural endowments had been wrought to the highest expression, both as a creative and executant artist.”¹⁶⁴ Contemporaries and biographers describe Pauline as possessed of a warm, charming personality, “less wild than her sister.”¹⁶⁵ She was described as “self-controlled and calm,” exhibiting a great desire to learn.¹⁶⁶ Pauline researched the literary sources for her operatic roles, reading the material in its original language whenever possible (she was fluent in French, English, Spanish, German, and Italian; she also studied Russian, Latin, and Greek). Critics praised her costuming, all of her own designs researched from costume books and whatever historical sources she could find.

In terms of professionalism, rather than concern herself with tearing others down or with trying to maintain a fleeting sense of superiority over her colleagues, Pauline focused on her own artistic presentation and performed marvelous feats in the process, including memorizing the

¹⁶¹ Hérítte-Viardot, *Memories and Adventures*, 89. Mme. Grassier joined Pauline Viardot, Julia Grisi, and several other singers on an operatic tour of England and Ireland. Viardot’s daughter Louise accompanied the tour as an observer and musician.

¹⁶² Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*, 163.

¹⁶³ Pope, “The Diva Doesn’t Die,” 143.

¹⁶⁴ John M. Levien, *The García Family* (London: Novello and Company, 1932), 23.

¹⁶⁵ Steen, *Enchantress of Nations*, 50–51.

¹⁶⁶ FitzLyon, *Price of Genius*, 25.

French version of *Les Huguenots* backstage in the midst of performing the Italian version. She treated her fellow singers, composers, conductors, and impresarios with respect. Widely hailed as a genius, Pauline embodied the Romantic ideal of the intellectual improvisator spewing forth original, creative work. A possible counterargument to Pauline's anti-diva behavior might include her (sometimes unwanted) ornamentations and embellishments. Gautier vindicates Pauline in this regard, concluding that although she maybe embellished too much, she still presented an excellent understanding of the masters' works and all her improvisations were extremely skilful and in good taste. Finally, the counterargument powerfully demonstrates Pauline's embeddedness in modern feminist theories of authorship. Pauline's literal singing voice empowered her in several ways, not least of which was the power it gave her to revise male-authored texts.¹⁶⁷ The exercise of her literal voice on stage further brought her to the attention of other artists and placed her in a position of influence on men composers, including Gounod, Berlioz, Meyerbeer, and Saint-Saëns. Pauline also taught voice lessons for many years, preserving her voice by passing it on to others. In a magnificent combination of artistry and genius, Pauline further exercised her voice through her extensive œuvre of musical compositions. Pauline's operetta, *Cendrillon*, revises the male-authored moral tale of reward for good girls who follow patriarchally encoded rules. In Viardot's version, the fairy godmother acts as the moral agent who calls a deviant father figure to task and empowers Cendrillon to take responsibility for herself. Rebecca Pope rightly asserts, "No mindless bird of song or stereotypical diva was Viardot."¹⁶⁸ Through her artistry, her professionalism, her genius, and the exercise of her empowering voice, Pauline effectively presented a new vision of the prima donna and successful woman-artist.

¹⁶⁷ Leonardi, "Politics of the Diva," 69.

¹⁶⁸ Pope, "The Diva Doesn't Die," 143.

CONCLUSION

In a century of social and political upheaval gender differences were reinforced as a means of restoring some sense of order and stability. The spread of opera at this time resulted in increasing numbers of women leaving the domestic sphere to which they had been assigned, and embarking on professional singing careers. Given the very public nature of professional operatic performance, women singers attracted social markers that identified them with prostitutes, courtesans, and the historically pervasive image of vilified woman, an outgrowth of the ancient sirens, maenads and bacchantes, combined with Early Christianity's belief in woman's fallen nature. Singing on stage further exhibited women's inherent sexual power, magnified by the seductive lure of music. Several attempts at containing the perceived risk to social stability posed by prima donnas appears in: media efforts to perpetuate centuries old stereotypes of dangerous women; in the unabashed gendering of operatic music and plot structures to control, dominate, and kill women; and in nineteenth-century literature employing a prima donna heroine who typifies the stereotype and is then reined into the dominant social order. Real life prima donnas contended with these attempts at control, though many ended up fulfilling expectations by flamboyantly living the stereotype, by dying young and forgotten, or by forsaking their careers for titled marriages and re-absorption into the dominant social order.

But what happened to the promise of freedom, independence, and financial security touted by a successful operatic career? Nineteenth-century women, frequently intellectuals like aspiring authoresses, looked to the prima donna as a beacon of hope for repressed women, as the model and exemplar of what women could potentially achieve beyond the narrow frame of existence crafted by patriarchy. Literature became a mode of redress for women seeking a voice

in a society that “placed women on the side of silence.”¹ Such writers turned to the prima donna as an ideal heroine since “the female opera singer...is the woman who, for these women writers and for their characters, has preeminently and indisputably a voice.”² In Pauline Viardot these women found a model of the successful modern woman—success Pauline achieved not just in spite of but precisely because she was a prima donna. Pauline’s profession provided public visibility and recognition for the skills of a true artist and genius so highly valued in European Romanticism at the time. Rather than succumbing to the attempts at containment made on all prima donnas, Pauline defied stereotypes, surmounted chauvinist opera plots and music, and lived to change the lives of contemporary women through her indomitable example of success.

One of these women, George Sand, preserved the early promise of Pauline’s example in her novel *Consuelo* by modeling the titular heroine on Pauline. Not coincidentally, the writing and publication of *Consuelo* signified an important transition in Sand’s work from her blue and black periods of hopelessness in women’s plight to the utopian literature of her later fictional output. Not surprisingly, this transition also coincided with Sand and Pauline’s budding friendship. Sand found in Pauline the ideal exemplar of a woman who had and used her literal voice, thereby garnering power. Through Pauline’s adherence to social and normative values, she achieved social position and respect despite also pursuing a career on the operatic stage. Viardot (and by extension, *Consuelo*) defied prima donna stereotype in the performance of ideal womanhood. Such adherence to social norms while simultaneously breaking them in the pursuit of a questionable career constitutes the artful parody of the system. In so doing, they transcended society’s attempted patriarchal dominance to garner respect as human beings, achieve dignity, obtain influence in their professions, and enjoy freedom and life. By adapting Pauline’s life to

¹ Pope, “The Diva Doesn’t Die,” 140.

² Leonardi, “Politics of the Diva,” 66.

novel form, Sand finally crafted a work of literature in which her heroine, a prima donna representing all women, achieved women's wildest aspirations and lived to enjoy the fruits of her success.

But how far reaching was the influence of Pauline's success? In her lifetime, the opera enthusiast and prima donna biographer, Ellen Clayton, celebrated Pauline with personal detail not afforded the other women in her study. Clayton wrote in 1865:

Madame Viardot, in private life, is loved and esteemed for her pure and cultivated mind, her amiable temper, the suavity of her manner, and her high principles, as she has been admired by the public for her genius, her voice, and her dramatic power, and respected for her punctuality and willingness to oblige. She had never ceased to be a favorite, but always retained her supremacy, spite of the most attractive novelty or the most brilliant rivalry.³

That supremacy was apparently short-lived. Despite Pauline's reputation and brilliance, despite the great esteem in which critics and royalty held her, she faded from public memory. Marix-Spire, one of the pioneers in Viardot scholarship, addressed this very paradox in her 1959 critical volume of unpublished letters written between Pauline and George Sand. "Mais le plus troublant, le plus douloureux aussi, celui qui nous a semblé le plus digne d'être isolé et étudié, c'est le problème même de Pauline, pourquoi et comment cette cantatrice, la plus grande cantatrice du [dix-neuvième] siècle, est passée à côté de son destin français."⁴ Perhaps this is because Pauline's success in rewriting the prima donna only mattered to a small group of people such as George Sand and George Eliot who adapted Pauline's example of success to their fictional

³ Clayton, *Queens of Song*, 412.

⁴ Thérèse Marix-Spire, *Lettres Inédites de George Sand et de Pauline Viardot, 1839–1849* (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Latines, 1959), 10. "But the most troubling aspect, the most tragic, too, which we seemed to us the most worthy to isolate and study, is the problem of Pauline herself, why and how this singer, the greatest singer of the [nineteenth] century, was passed aside by her French destiny."

works. When the public stopped reading Sand and neglected *Armgart*, the world also lost its record of Pauline's inspiring influence.

Even in Pauline's lifetime women around her failed to achieve her same kind of success. Her daughter Louise entered a musical composition in the exclusive *Prix de la ville de Paris* contest. The prize selection came down to two entries, Louise's *The Feast of Bacchus* and Benjamin Godard's *Tasso*. "The jury could not make up their minds to which of the two they should award the prize, till suddenly some one exclaimed: 'We can't possibly give the prize to this work. I know the writing. It's by a woman, and it would be a disgrace to us if we awarded the prize to a woman.' So Godard obtained the prize, which made him known...."⁵ On a later occasion, Louise went looking for a published copy of one of her own compositions at a music shop in Baden-Baden. "I...asked for the *Spanish Quartet* for piano and string instruments by Madame Hérítte-Viardot. 'We haven't got it,' was the reply. 'But it's in the window. Here, this.' I was told with a significant smile: 'Oh, that isn't by a woman. A woman can't compose a quartet!'"⁶ Such negative public attitudes toward women engaging in the very same activities for which Pauline gained recognition and respect are reflected in women's literature toward the close of the nineteenth century.⁷ Despite the progress represented in the mid-century works of Sand (*Consuelo*) and Eliot (*Armgart*), "the enduring image of the fin-de-siècle's female *Künstlerroman* is that of a drowning woman...." Linda Lewis explains, "If fictional New Women artists do publish or perform, they usually have to settle for scaled-down versions of greatness.... [T]heir husbands, brothers, fathers, and lovers stifle their creativity and burn their books.... Besides, they are initiated into a competitive system in which success too often requires stepping

⁵ Hérítte-Viardot, *Memories and Adventures*, 106.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁷ See also Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity*, 181–82 for more evidence of the persistence of denigrating attitudes toward women into the twentieth century.

over the bodies of their fallen sisters.”⁸ Did Pauline in fact fail rather than succeed in rewriting the image of women in nineteenth-century French opera culture? Perhaps more accurately Pauline did not fail where her own career and life are concerned. She exemplified the normative values of womanhood, lived the idealized bourgeois life as *épouse et mère*, she held a salon, and she engaged in charity work. Through her precise adherence to the superficial requirements of social standards, Pauline was then able to subvert the norm. She carried on a successful opera career, she acted as patron to many still famous male composers, she passed on her voice to others through vocal education. Combining her belief in the bourgeois ideal with her professional role onstage, Pauline also presented a new image of the prima donna: that of an inspired woman-artist, a veritable Romantic genius on par with the most revered men of the age. Her example of success in a male-dominated world also presented contemporary women such as Sand and Eliot with a glimmer of hope. Thus, Pauline’s life represents a victory, however small or short-lived, for the empowerment and envoicing of women.

⁸ Lewis, *Germaine de Staël*, 251, 250.

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APPENDIX ONE: PAULINE VIARDOT-GARCIA TIMELINE

<i>Year</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Family Events</i>	<i>Performances</i>	<i>Concurrent Historical Events</i>
1775		Manuel père born		
1801		Louis Claude Viardot born		
1805	17 March	Manuel fils born at Zafra in Catalonia		
1807		Manuel père and Joachina go to Paris		
1808	24 March	Maria Felicia García born in Paris		
1811		Garcías go to Naples		
1816		Garcías return to Paris	Manuel père creates Count Almaviva in Rossini's <i>Il Barbiere</i> in Rome	
1821	19 July	Michelle Ferdinande Pauline García born in Paris		
1824			Maria García debut in Paris music club	
1825	7 June		Maria debut as Rosina in <i>Il Barbiere</i> at His Majesty's Theatre in London	
	October to November	García family travels to New York for North and Central American opera tour		October 26: Erie Canal officially opened
	7 November	García family		Lorenzo Da

		and troupe lands in New York		Ponte (Mozart's librettist) meets the family at the docks
1825 to 1826			<i>Don Giovanni</i> and operas by Manuel García performed to wide acclaim; first time Italian opera had been performed in the United States.	
1826	23 March	Maria marries Francois Eugene Malibran at St. Peter's church in New York		
1827		Maria returns to Europe; Garcías move on to Mexico following success in New York.		
1828	Autumn ?	Garcías begin trip back to Europe; attacked by brigands in Mexico.		December: Elections in Mexico lead to political upheaval
1829	March	Garcías arrive in Paris		
1832	2 June	Manuel père dies in Paris		
1833		Maria gives birth to her only child, son of Charles de Bériot		
1836	14 August	First piano concert, with Charles de Bériot and Maria Malibran		
	23 Sept	Maria Malibran dies		
1837	13 or 15 Dec		Pauline's first	

			concert as a singer (benefit for the poor in Brussels)	
1838	Spring/summer		Pauline concert and German tour	
	Autumn		Pauline concert in Paris at home of Belgian minister, salon of Mme Jaubert	
	15 Dec		Pauline first public concert at the Théâtre de la Renaissance	
	Dec/Jan?		Performed at concert put on by "La France Musicale"	
1839	9 May		Debut in London: Rossini's <i>Otello</i> (Desdemona at Her Majesty's Theatre)	
	15 June		<i>La Cenerentola</i> (Rossini)	
	8 October (<i>Otello</i>) Autumn to Winter 1840		PVG debut in Paris at the Théâtre Italien: <i>Otello</i> (Desdemona); <i>La Cenerentola</i> (Angelina) (Rossini); <i>Il Barbiere</i> (Rosina)	
	Benefit night		<i>Tancredi</i>	
1840	April 18	PVG marries Louis Viardot		
	12–18 Aug		Pauline concerts in Cambrai	
1840	12,15 Dec		One of the alto soloists in a performance of Mozart's	

			<i>Requiem</i> at the Opéra (12 Dec) and then at the Église des Invalides on the return of Napoleon's ashes to Paris (15 Dec).	
1841	7 February		Concert at Conservatoire (Handel and Mozart)	
	March		London season: March 11/16, Orazia in <i>Gli Orazi ed i Curiazi</i> ; Tancredi in Rossini's <i>Tancredi</i> with Persiani; Romeo in Bellini's <i>I Capuletti</i> ; Cimarosa opera	
	September	Louis founds the <i>Revue Indépendante</i> with Pierre Leroux	Pauline performs at Three Choirs Festival in Gloucester	
	31 October		Pauline performs as soloist for new Rossini work <i>Stabat Mater</i> per Rossini's request	
	14 December	Daughter Louise Pauline Marie born		
1842	21 February		Concert with Chopin in Paris	
	12 April		Concert at Thalberg	
	21, 23 April		Concerts at Bourdeaux	
	April		Concert tour of Spain: <i>Otello</i> , <i>Il Barbiere</i> , <i>Norma</i>	

	June		Madrid: <i>Otello</i> Grenada: <i>Il Barbiere</i> and <i>Norma</i>	
1842 to 1843	Autumn to Spring		Contracted for Théâtre Italien season: <i>Semiramide</i> , <i>Arsace</i> ; secondary roles in <i>Cenerentola</i> , <i>La Gazza Ladra</i> , Fioravanti's <i>La Cantatrici Villane</i> ; one lead role in <i>Tancredi</i>	
1843	April to July		Contracted to perform in Vienna season; performs also in Prague, Berlin, Leipzig: Rosina in <i>Il Barbiere</i> (debut April 19)	
	September		Contracted for the opera season (1843–44) at the Imperial Theatres in St. Petersburg: <i>Il Barbiere</i> , <i>Otello</i> , <i>La Sonnambula</i> , <i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i>	
	3 Nov		Opening night of <i>Il Barbiere</i> in St. Petersburg	
1844	?		Performed in Vienna	
	Autumn to Spring		Contracted again for the Russian season (1844–45): <i>Cenerentola</i> , <i>La Sonnambula</i> , <i>Don Pasquale</i> , <i>L'Elisir d'Amore</i>	1844 to 1849: French Industrial Exhibition staged on Champs-Élysées

	21 October		<i>La Sonnambula</i>	
	30 November		Performed the title role of Bellini's <i>Norma</i>	
	11 December		<i>Biana i Gvalterro</i>	
1845	?		Attended the Beethoven fête at Bonn	
	August		Performed for Prussian emperor and his guests (Queen Victoria & Prince Albert) at Coblenz	
1845 to 1846	Autumn to February		Russian season: <i>Don Pasquale</i> , <i>Il Barbiere</i> , <i>L'Elisir d'Amore</i>	
1846	21 Feb		Performed <i>La Sonnambula</i> for her bénéfice	
	24 Feb	Pauline develops whooping cough	Broke contract due to illness and returned to France	
	20 Sept		Debut at Berlin's Théâtre-Italien in <i>La Sonnambula</i> .	
1846-1847	German season		Berlin: Performed <i>La Gazza Ladra</i> , <i>Otello</i> (Rossini), <i>l'Elisir d'Amore</i> , <i>Don Pasquale</i> (Donizetti)	
			One month at Frankfurt-am-Main	
1847	January		Two more months in Berlin at the Opera Allemand: <i>Iphigénie</i> (Gluck); <i>Il Barbiere</i> and	

			<i>Otello</i> (Rossini); <i>Les Huguenots</i> , <i>Le Camp de Silésie</i> , and <i>Robert le Diable</i> (Meyerbeer); <i>Fidelio</i> (Beethoven).	
	March		Performed a German version of <i>La Juive</i> (Halévy) (Clayton 409, took the critics by storm).	
	April		Berlin, Dresden (<i>Les Huguenots</i>), Frankfurt, London, Paris	
1847 to 1848	Autumn to Winter		Tour of Germany (Dresden, Hamburg, Berlin): <i>La Sonnambula</i>	February Revolution in France; Louis-Philippe overthrown
1848	6 April		Pauline composition “La Jeune République” performed at the opening of the Théâtre de la République	Second Republic established
	London season		London at Covent Garden: <i>La Sonnambula</i> , <i>I Capuletti</i> , <i>Don Giovanni</i> , <i>Les Huguenots</i> ; first performance of Berlioz’s <i>La Captive</i>	
	12 May		Performed her arrangements of Chopin’s Mazurkas at Covent Garden	

			concert	
	7, 12 July		Performed Mazurkas again at Chopin concert/matinee recital	
1848 to 1849	Autumn to Winter		Pauline contracted to sing at the Paris Opéra for the first time	December: Louis Napoleon elected president of the Second Republic
1849	16 April		Premiere of Meyerbeer's <i>Le Prophète</i> ; Pauline created the role of Fides to great acclaim; Performed at Royal Italian Opera/Covent Garden in London.	
	23 April		Premiere of <i>Le Prophète</i> at the Théâtre de la Nation	
	3 May		Charity concert with Rachel	
	Summer		Performed <i>Le Prophète</i> in London	
	October		Invited to be soloist in performance of Mozart's <i>Requiem</i> for Chopin's funeral	
1850	Spring	Gounod and his mother invited to live at Courtavenal	Pauline in Berlin	
	June		Pauline in London (performed in <i>La Juive</i>)	
	Autumn		On tour with	

			Roger organized by Mapleson	
	November	Turgenev's illegitimate daughter comes to live with the Viardots		
1851	16 April		Premiere of Gounod's <i>Sapho</i> for which Pauline had secured the Paris Opéra as performance venue	
	Summer		London: <i>Sapho</i> (Sapho), <i>Die Zauberflöte</i> (Papagena)	May to October 1851: The Great Exhibition in London
	December	Family returns to Paris; house searched by the authorities		Louis Napoleon proclaims the Second French Empire
1852	21 May	Daughter Claudie [Chamerot] born		
1852 to 1853			St. Petersburg and Moscow: <i>Il Barbiere</i> , <i>La Cenerentola</i> , <i>Otello</i> , <i>La Sonnambula</i>	
1853	February		<i>Le Prophète</i>	
	Winter		Moscow concerts: performed some of her Chopin Mazurka arrangements; Lent concerts: contemporary Russian music	
	Spring/Summer		London performances	
1854		Daughter Marianne	London	

		[Duvernoy] born		
1855			London: <i>Il Trovatore</i> , <i>Le Prophète</i> , <i>Don Giovanni</i> (Donna Anna); Paris: public concerts, private recitals	
1856	10 January	Pauline throws dinner party for Charles Dickens so he could meet George Sand		
1857	March/April		Paris: concerts	
	20 July	Son Paul Viardot born		
1857 to 1858			Tour of Northern Europe, Warsaw, Berlin	
1858	April		Leipzig	
	May/London season		Engaged at Drury Lane Theatre (fourth Italian opera house in London)	
	17 July		<i>Don Giovanni</i> (Donna Anna)	
	Summer		PVG tour of England and Ireland organized by Beale	
	Autumn		German/Polish tour: Weimar, Leipzig	
	December		Main attraction at concert held by Prince Gortschakoff in Warsaw: <i>L'Italiana</i> , <i>Le Prophète</i> , Russian airs.	
1858/1859			Warsaw: <i>Norma</i> , <i>Il Barbiere</i>	Pauline acquires autograph manuscript of Don Giovanni

				for 5000 francs.
1859	January		London	
	January/February		Berlin	
	March		Three-week opera season in Dublin.	
	30 March		Verdi's <i>Macbeth</i> (Lady Macbeth)	
	August		Performs at Baden-Baden festival concerts under Berlioz's direction	
	18/19 Nov		<i>Orphée</i> opens at the Théâtre Lyrique in Paris	
1860	February		Performs part of Wagner's <i>Tristan</i> with him at her home for Mme Kalergis and Berlioz	
	May		Pauline engaged to sing Leonora in <i>Fidelo</i> at Carvalho's request; premiere May 5, 1860	
	July		<i>Orphée</i> performed in London	
1861	March		Performed selection from <i>Alceste</i> at Paris Conservatoire	
	21 October		Performs <i>Alceste</i> at Paris Opéra	
1862		Louise marries Ernest Heritte	Performed in Paris (Clayton 412)	
1863	24 April		Pauline retirement: farewell performance at Théâtre Lyrique of <i>Orphée</i>	

		Viardots move to Baden-Baden		
1864		Pauline's mother dies		
1867			Pauline's operetta <i>Trop des Femmes</i> performed for the Queen of Prussia	
1869	8, 11 April		Pauline's operetta <i>Le Dernier Sorcier</i> performed in Weimar with professional singers	
1870	Spring		Gives two performances of <i>Orphée</i>	
	Autumn	Viardots and Turgenev move to London (exile)	Pauline goes back to work to support the family (gives music lessons)	Outbreak of Franco-Prussian War. September 1870 to January 1871: Siege of Paris.
1871		Viardots return to Paris (old home on Rue de Douai)		Third Republic established. April to May 1871: Paris Commune.
1873	11 April		Performed title role in Massenet's <i>Marie Magdeleine</i> at the Odéon to help Massenet get recognized	
1874		Claudie marries Georges Chamerot	Performed Dalila in first two acts of Saint-Saën's <i>Samson et Dalila</i> at friend's home	
18??			Pasdeloup concerts	
1881		Marianne		

		marries Alphonse Duvernoy		
1882	March	Louis Viardot suffers stroke; Marianne has difficult pregnancy and delivery; Turgenev's daughter, Paulinette, runs away from her husband.	Pauline stops teaching; resumes giving lessons at her husband's insistence	
	April	Turgenev ill		
1883	5 May	Louis Viardot dies		
	3 September	Turgenev dies		
1884		Pauline visits Frankfurt and reconnects with Clara Schumann		
1886		Pauline meets Tchaikovsky		
1887			Pauline organizes a concert of Russian music	
1889			Paris performance of <i>Le Dernier Sorcier</i>	
1901		Pauline presented with the <i>Légion d'honneur</i>		
1910	18 May	PVG Death; buried in Montmartre cemetery		

APPENDIX TWO: COSTUME DESIGN



Figure 1. Pauline's costume design for the role of Orpheus. Pauline Viardot-García, *Costumi* sketchbook, 1858 and n.d., b MS Mus 264 (360), PVG add. papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.



Figure 2. Pauline's costume design for the role of Norma. Pauline Viardot-García, *Costumi* sketchbook, 1858 and n.d., b MS Mus 264 (360), PVG add. papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

APPENDIX THREE: PRIMA DONNA LITERATURE

Title	Author	Publication Date	Language	Prima donna/singer
<i>Corinne ou l'Italie</i>	Madame de Staël	1807	French	Corinne
<i>Rat Krespel</i>	E.T.A. Hoffmann	1816 (manuscript); 1819–21	German	Angela; Antonia
<i>Lélia</i>	George Sand	1833/39	French	Lélia
<i>The Two Friends</i>	Marguerite Blessington	1835	English	Urquhart sisters; Cecile
<i>Mademoiselle de Maupin</i>	Théophile Gautier	1835	French	Madelaine de Maupin
<i>Consuelo (La Comtesse de Rudolstadt)</i>	George Sand	1842/43	French	Consuelo; Clorinda; Corilla
<i>The Life, Death and Transmigration of the Prima Donna Assoluta</i>	Benedetto Bermani	1844	Italian	Clelia
<i>Lucrezia Floriani</i>	Sand	1846	French	Lucrezia Floriani
<i>Adriani</i>	George Sand	1853	French	Laure de Larnac
<i>Domenica</i>	Marceline Desbordes-Valmore	1855	French	La Domenica
<i>Emilia in England</i>	George Meredith	1864	English	
<i>Vittoria</i>	George Meredith	1866	English	
<i>Armgart</i>	George Eliot	1871	English	Armgart
<i>Daniel Deronda</i>	George Eliot	1876	English	Alcharisi; Gwendolyn Harleth; Mirah Lapidoth
<i>Trilby</i>	George du Maurier	1894	French	Trilby
<i>Evelyn Innes</i>	George Moore	1898	English	
<i>Sister Theresa</i>	George Moore	1901	English	
<i>Le fantôme de l'Opéra</i>	Gaston Leroux	1909-10	French	Christine; La Carlotta
<i>The Song of the Lark</i>	Willa Cather	1915	English	Thea Kronborg
<i>Painted Veils</i>	James Huneker	1920	English	Esther Brandes (Dame Lucifer)
<i>Of Lena Geyer</i>	Marcia Davenport	1936	English	Lena Geyer

APPENDIX FOUR: PAULINE VIARDOT-GARCIA DIARY

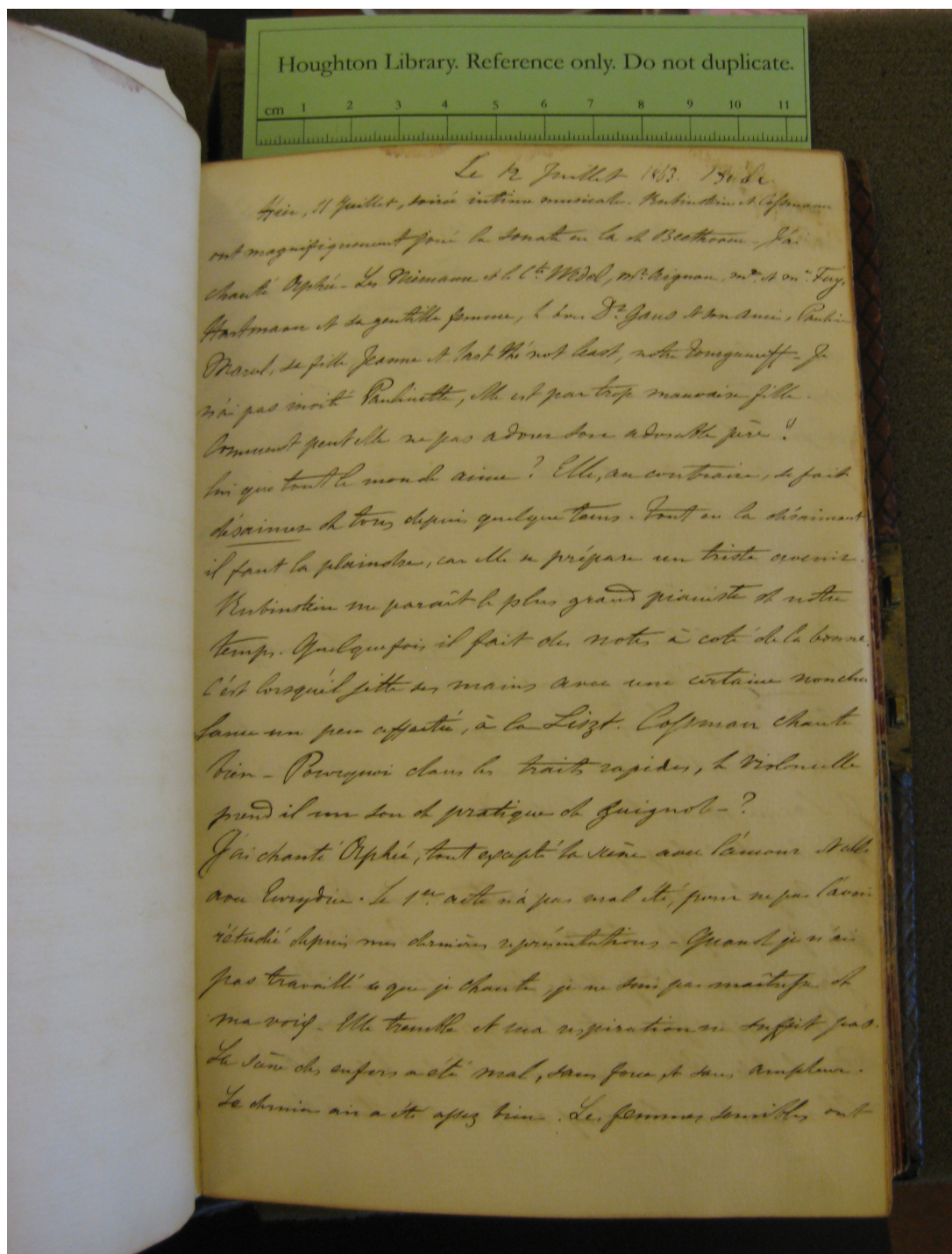


Figure 3. The first page of Pauline's diary which includes an unfinished memoir. Pauline Viardot-García, journal, 1863–1892, b MS Mus 264 (365), MS Mus 264: Pauline Viardot-García additional papers, 1838–1912, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

APPENDIX FIVE: WORKS INSPIRED BY AND/OR DEDICATED
TO PAULINE VIARDOT-GARCIA

Work	Author/Composer	Dates	Language	Notes
<i>Liederkreis</i>	Robert Schumann	1840	German	
<i>Consuelo</i>	George Sand	1842/43	French	See Chapter Three
<i>Le Prophète</i>	Meyerbeer	16 April 1849 (premiere)	French	Friend of Pauline. Meyerbeer intended his opera <i>Le Prophète</i> for Pauline and subsequently made Fidès the central character when Pauline was contractually secured to play the role.
<i>A Month in the Country</i>	Turgenev	1850	Russian	Turgenev based the character of Natalia Petrovna Islayef on Pauline.
<i>Sapho</i>	Gounod	16 April 1851 (premiere)	French	Dedicated <i>Sapho</i> to Pauline who also created the title role.
<i>Queens of Song</i>	Ellen Clayton	1865	English	Biographies of major women singers. The whole collection is dedicated to Pauline: "To Madame Pauline García, this work is dedicated by permission, as a testimony of the esteem and admiration of her obliged and

				faithful servant, the Authoress.”
<i>Samson et Dalila</i>	Saint-Saëns	1867?	French	Saint-Saëns wrote the title role of Dalila for Pauline who was also the first to sing the role when she staged the first two acts to help Saint-Saëns’ career. See Studd, <i>Saint-Saëns</i> , 68, 100–1.
“La brise”	Saint-Saëns	1870	French	Studd, <i>Saint-Saëns</i> , 77.
<i>Alto Rhapsody</i>	Brahms	3 March 1870	German	Goethe poem put to music. Brahms wrote the music for Viardot who first sang the work. See FitzLyon, <i>Price of Genius</i> , 406.
<i>Armgart</i>	George Eliot	1871	English	See Pope, “The Diva Doesn’t Die.”
<i>Marie Magdaleine</i>	Massenet	11 April 1873	French	Pauline organized the first public performance of this oratorio and sang the title role. See FitzLyon, <i>Price of Genius</i> , 435–36.
<i>Ascanio</i>	Saint-Saëns	1888	French	Studd, <i>Saint-Saëns</i> , 171–72.
Op. 4 and 7	Fauré	?	French	Fauré was a friend of Pauline’s, protégé of Saint-Saëns, one-time fiancé of Marianne

				Viardot; regularly attended Pauline's salon.
"La cloche"	Saint-Saëns	?	French	See Studd, <i>Saint-Saëns</i> , 33.