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"The Voice Which Was My Music": Narrative and Nonnarrative Musical Discourse in Schumann’s *Manfred*

ELIZABETH PALEY

Oh that I were / The viewless spirit of a lovely sound, / A living voice, a breathing harmony, / A bodiless enjoyment—born and dying / With the blest tone which made me!

—Lord Byron, *Manfred*, act I, sc. 2, lines 52–56

Of all late-eighteenth-century musical genres, melodrama—with its coupling of declaimed speech and musical accompaniment—is surely the strangest.¹ Whereas song conveys poetry through music (and music through poetry), melodrama permits the spoken word a rhythm and inflection not exclusively musical, while allowing music an autonomous nonverbal presence that sometimes supports and sometimes competes with the words it accompanies. The experimental genre generated its fair share of controversy in nineteenth-century Germany, primarily because the relation between music

¹The invention of melodrama is typically attributed to Rousseau, whose 1770 *Pygmalion* featured alternations between declamation and ritornelli. Early German melodrama incorporated greater overlap between, and eventually the combination of, declamation and music. Developments of the genre in Germany, especially through the innovations of Bohemian-born composer Georg Benda, led Sturm und Drang critics to claim melodrama as a particularly German art. With melodramas by Benda, Mozart, Reichardt, Weber, and especially Beethoven in the repertoire, it was clear that “the Germans have always taken this genre more seriously [than the French]” (“Über das Melodrama, bei Gelegenheit vom Doktor Johannes Faust, Volksmelodrama von Karl v. Holtey, Musik von Karl Blum,” *Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 6/4 and 6/5 [1829], 28). See also Andrew D. McCredie, “Operatic Reform Before Glück, and the German Heroic Music Theatre of the Sturm und Drang,” *Musicology* 6 (1980), 56.

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and declamation was indeterminate. Critics praised the emotional depth music could add to speech, but complained that the apparent source of the music was too far removed from the actor’s own voice. Music displaced words, as if to speak for the poet in an “unnatural language.” Consequently, melodrama was well suited for producing “otherworldly” effects. As one critic observed, “in spoken drama, music could actually resound as the language of the Spirit World [Geisterwelt], entering into the lives of men.” Composers of opera and incidental music invoked melodrama to represent the supernatural, from the casting of magic bullets in the Wolf’s Glen scene of Weber’s Der Freischütz to the casting of spells and other fairy antics in Mendelssohn’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream. Similarly, Beethoven reserved melodrama for Egmont’s prescient dream of the Goddess of Liberty, an ethereal vision melding the human and spirit realms, and for Leonora’s eerie descent into the unknown depths of Pizarro’s dungeon underworld in Fidelio.

Portraying a far more menacing Geisterwelt, Robert Schumann’s 1848 music to Lord Byron’s dramatic poem Manfred is remarkable for its reliance on melodrama, featured in nine of the fifteen incidental pieces. Accompanying incantations, transformations, and spectral apparitions, melodramatic music bridges the gaps between the invisible and the visible, the silent and the spoken, and the living and the dead. Schumann took full advantage of its enforced division between speech and tone to depict Manfred’s sinister interactions with the spirit realm. With song as its foil, melodrama signifies spiritual autonomy: for those in power, declamatory inflection evades the control of melos. In the musical settings, the demons over whom Manfred holds sway sing; only Manfred himself, along with the mightiest spirit rulers, speaks, for he is “of no common order” and no spirit “hath a soul like his—or power upon his soul” (II.iv.52 and 71–72).

Manfred’s melodramas are at their most fantastic in the fourth scene of act II, when a particularly unsettling conjuration initiates a sequence of melodramatic events that brings the work to its climax. At the close of a spine-tingling incantation that raises a ghost from the dead, a disembodied musical “voice” seems to emerge from beyond the diegetic realm of the play to speak to the listening audience. This communication is disturbing, not simply because the woman to whom the voice belongs is dead, but also because this apparitional voice manifests itself not through sound but through an unexpected acoustical silence. Over the course of the scene, the onstage characters respond variously to this voice from the dead as it progresses from noumenal silence to an eventual phenomenal manifestation in words and music.

This article addresses the peculiar relations between verbal and musical aspects of melodrama as they play out in act II, sc. 4, of Manfred. In particular, it draws on typologies of text types developed in recent narratological literature to explore how the music contributes to—and detracts from—the dramatic narrative. Carolyn Abbate has argued that moments of musical narration, marked by sonic disjunctions, are rare in instrumental music. In contrast, Lawrence Kramer has proposed that music manifests itself as a continuously enunciating voice that “disruptively becomes or reveals itself as narrative, not when voice is heard

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3 “Über das Melodrama,” p. 38. Indeed, the author argued that this is the only circumstance for which melodrama is appropriate.

4 All English quotations from Manfred are taken from The Poetical Works of Lord Byron (New York, 1946). Schumann’s German libretto, based on the 1839 translation by “Posgaru” [Karl Adolf Suckow], can be found in Robert Schumanns Sämtliche Werke: Manfred, Dramatische Gedicht von Lord Byron, op. 115, Klavierauszug (Leipzig, n.d.). For the libretto, Schumann altered Suckow’s translation only slightly. His most notable change to the dramatic intent of Byron’s poem was the addition of a Requiem “heard from the distant cloister” to accompany Manfred’s death at the end of the play.
in it, but when its voice is interrupted—a view posited here as well. But as with the voices of spoken narratives, these musical enunciations engage in a range of discursive behaviors that extends beyond the binary diegetic/mimetic opposition often cited in narratological writing on music. As we shall discover, the disruptive and semantically undefined silence that intrudes into the dramatic world of Manfred has much to say about musical modes of discourse.

ASTARTE

Byron's psychodrama centers on the efforts of its melancholic hero, Count Manfred, to find relief from an unspeakable sin. Manfred describes the locus of his guilt to the inquiring Alpenfee:

She was like me in lineaments; her eyes,
Her hair, her features, all, to the very tone
Even of her voice, they said were like to mine;
But soften'd all, and tempe'rd into beauty:
She had the same lone thoughts and wanderings,
The quest of hidden knowledge, and a mind
To comprehend the universe: nor these
Alone, but with them gentler powers than mine,
Pity, and smiles, and tears—which I had not;
And tenderness—but that I had for her;
Humility—and that I never had.
Her faults were mine—her virtues were her own—
I loved her, and destroy'd her!

[II.i.105-17; emphasis mine].

The unnamed "she" is Astarte, who remains anonymous until well into act II. Astarte mirrors Manfred both physically and mentally, properly tempered by gentler feminine virtues—beauty, pity, tenderness, humility. Selfless and silent, she fits comfortably into Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's category of the angel-woman who frequented many nineteenth-century literary works. The saintly angel is revered for her many merits: modesty, grace, purity, delicacy, compliancy, reticence, chastity. When her alienation from ordinary flesh takes on a mortal pall, the eternal-feminine angel becomes a messenger of death. Like the angel-woman, Astarte is [literally] dead and therefore devoid of any self-defining character of her own, frozen forever unchanged in Manfred's mind. She typifies Byron's ideal heroine: having no independent existence of her own, she exists solely to complement her hero.7

Never explicitly addressed in the poem, Manfred's affair with Astarte gradually emerges as having been one of sibling-incest; critics inevitably support this conclusion by pointing to Byron's own scandalous affair with his half-sister Augusta Leigh. Alike in "lineaments" and "lone thoughts," Manfred and Astarte shared familial blood, which incest transforms into the blood of Astarte's sacrifice. Manfred represses his incest-guilt, dealing with the topic by conspicuously avoiding it. But included in the evidence against him are his claims that he destroyed Astarte not with his hand but with his heart, that his embrace was fatal, and that it was "the deadliest sin to love as we have loved" (II.iv.124). With a bilingually disguised double entendre, the poem further hints at the sexual nature of their relation when Manfred attempts to spill his blood on the Jungfrau. A hospitable chamois hunter prevents the suicidal plunge and tries to calm Manfred with a cup of wine. The nobleman refuses, crying "Away, away! there's blood upon the brim!" (II.i.21):

I say 'tis blood—my blood! the pure warm stream
Which ran in the veins of my fathers, and in ours
When we were in our youth, and had one heart,
And loved each other as we should not love,
And this [blood] was shed.

[II.i.24-28]8

8 Byron's poem hints that Astarte's death may have been a suicide. Manfred says he saw Astarte's blood flow, but "could not stanch it" (II.i.121). Later he speaks to an Abbot about a Roman emperor dying of a self-inflicted wound: "A certain soldier, with show of loyal pity, would have stanched the gushing throat" (III.i.90-93). Schumann eliminated the latter text from his libretto.

In his study of incest as a Romantic symbol, Peter Thorslev concludes that “the only love possible for the Romantic hero . . . is an incestuous love,” for it symbolizes both the hero’s alienation from society and what Thorslev calls his narcissistic sensibility, or predilection for solipsism. As a literary theme, incestuous love guarantees conflict. Pitting the passions of the individual against a universal social taboo—a conflict that usually leads to tragedy—incest especially appealed to the “Romantic psyche’s love affair with self” and made outcasts of heroes and vice versa. Manfred undoubtedly chose to be an outcast long before his incestuous affair, for he was never “gay and free” like his father Sigismund but rather chose nights of “gloomy vigil” with “books and solitude” over the company of “men and their delights” (III.iii.17–24). Moreover, unlike many of his literary counterparts, he probably knew from the start that his love was socially forbidden. But if he took his detachment from the world as justification for his bond with Astarte, their love also consummates his isolation.

Freud, recognizing that incest was at the heart of Byron’s poem, would have diagnosed the intensity of Manfred’s devotion to Astarte, and his withdrawal from the external world, as manifestations of narcissism in which the love-object substitutes for an unattained ideal desired by the ego. For Freud, narcissism in men involves a combination of homosexuality (if one takes oneself as the model when seeking out a love-object) and Oedipal desire (if one takes one’s mother—the original love-object, identified by the infant with the self—as the model). Incest offers a convenient trope for both: by loving his sister, Manfred loves that which is most alike in body and mind to himself. Based on such psychoanalysis, literary critics typically read the phantom of Astarte not as a remaining trace of her human incarnation but as a narcissistic reflection of Manfred’s own mind, without any voice or identity of her own. As Atara Stein puts it, “dead, [Astarte] can be what [Manfred] wants her to be, and he can freely imagine her to be the perfect reflection of himself that he desires without her own identity getting in the way.”

Performance practice plays an important role in the realization or contradiction of this psychoanalytic reading. As Ardelle Striker has documented, two opposing practices emerged in Germany and America during the nineteenth century for performances of Schumann’s Manfred music. The first involved having several actors portray the different characters, as was the case at the 1852 Weimar premiere of the complete incidental music under the direction of Franz Liszt. The second involved the use of newly written Zwischenreden, or binding texts, so that a single declaimer could represent all of the characters, a possibility facilitated by Breitkopf and Härtel’s publication of Richard Pohl’s Zwischenreden in 1859. The latter practice would better support interpretations of the poem in which the supernatural characters are merely projections of a single deranged man’s mind, whereas the former would give the ethereal beings a tangible physicality and vocality of their own.

Liszt consulted with Schumann for the staging in Weimar, a performance Schumann was unable to attend due to his deteriorating mental state. Their letters suggest that from the beginning Schumann had envisioned different actors playing the various roles; Byron, on the other hand, never intended the poem to be

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9Peter L. Thorslev, Jr., “Incest as Romantic Symbol,” Comparative Literature Studies 2 (1965), 50 (emphasis added), 56.


11Atara Stein, “‘I Loved Her and Destroyed Her’: Love and Narcissism in Byron’s Manfred,” Philological Quarterly 69 (1990), 200. Stein suggests that Astarte exists solely as a vehicle for Manfred’s search for transcendence.

staged at all. Thus it is not surprising that the music fosters interpretations of Astarte that are not suggested by the verbal text alone. In Schumann’s *Manfred*, Astarte is not confined to the role of idealized angel-woman, frozen and forever unchanging in the hero’s mind. Rather, a conflict arises between Manfred and his feminine counterpart. Music becomes a symbol for Astarte’s voice and for Manfred’s attempted manipulation of it. The musicodramatic autonomy of Astarte’s phantom—and of Astarte herself—depends significantly on how a performer chooses to speak the phantom’s voice against the melodramatic incidental music. The melodramas of *Manfred* potentially contain multiple performative voices vying to be heard, what we might call—borrowing a phrase from Abbate—a polyphony of authorial Astartes.13

**Hearing Silence**

With this dramatic context in mind, let us return to the melodramatic incantations of act II, sc. 4. In order to find relief from his incessant guilt, Manfred has conjured a succession of unearthly spirits and sinister demons, none of whom can aid him in his quest for self-oblivion through forgetfulness or death. Finally, the superhuman “magian” determines to seek forgiveness from the ghost of Astarte herself, and thus he enters the fiery realm of Arimanes, sovereign of chaos and destruction. There he asks to look on “one without a tomb” and for the first time reveals the name of his deceased beloved. Arimanes’s powerful spirit-agent Nemesis agrees to “uncharnel” the phantom.14

Example 1 reproduces Nemesis’s eerie melodrama, in which Nemesis declaims rather than sings the text of the incantation against the sinuous melody and rhythmically displaced bass of the musical accompaniment. Contradictions between metric, rhythmic, and harmonic accents in the opening musical phrase yield an oddly disorienting melody. The irregularly placed sixteenth-note patterns in the violins suggest rhythmic groupings in compound meter rather than common time, in conflict with both the metric accents implied by the bar lines and the harmonic rhythm that slowly emerges from the swirling melody. The entrance of bassoons and additional strings in m. 3 finally establishes a precarious meter that stabilizes in the second phrase, only to be knocked off kilter again by the delayed motion to the tone E in the bass in m. 7. Muted and unpredictable, the music for the conjuration of Astarte transforms Nemesis’s incantation from mere rhymed text into something far more sinister. The plenitude of the unvoiced stridentis [s] and [z] in the words Nemesis utters contribute an ominous whispery quality of their own to the magic, from the first words “Schatten!—Geist!” to the close of the melodrama with the thrice-repeated command “Erschein’!—Erschein’!—Erschein!” Nemesis’s conjuration succeeds, and we aurally “see” the phantom of Astarte rise before Manfred with mimetic changes in the final measure of music: *pianissimo* woodwinds, sounding syncopated rhythms in their upper registers, displace the gloomy cadences in the strings with a shimmering E-major sonority.

For Count Manfred, merely gazing on Astarte is not enough: he desires aural communion with the vision before him, craving sound over sight, hearing over seeing. Yet he dreads addressing the phantom directly himself and bids Nemesis resume her incantation with a spell to exact speech from Astarte. The music accompanying Nemesis’s renewed invocation (ex. 2) clearly derives from the second phrase of her

13See Abbate, “Opera; or, the Envoicing of Women,” in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. Ruth A. Solie (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1993), pp. 225–58: “When confronted with human sources of sonority in live performance we create for ourselves a polyphony, in which the noise-making of the human individuals before us—as a little drama of usurpation that powerfully disperses the ‘composer’s voice’—encourages us to assume the other singers, inside the music” (p. 236).

14*Manfred* features a mix of mythological names borrowed from several Eastern cultures. According to Zoroastrian mythology, in the cosmic battle between good and evil, Ahriman seeks to destroy the good work of Omazd; Nemesis was the Greek goddess of retributive justice; and Astarte was the name of the Phoenician goddess of fertility and sexual love. For information on the influence of Eastern religions on *Manfred*, → James Twitchell, “The Supernatural Structure of Byron’s *Manfred*,” *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 15 (1975), 601–14.
Example 1: Nemesis’s incantation to conjure Astarte.

preceding melodrama, but there are subtle and important differences between the two. In the third and final measure of ex. 2, a ritardando cues listeners that the excerpt is coming to a close, while changes in instrumentation and voice leading add greater emphasis to the dominant seventh. These differences intensify our anticipation of a cadence on B♭ minor—a cadence we expect, given both the previous presentation of the musical phrase in ex. 1 and the long dramatic buildup to the presumably cathartic moment when Astarte will speak. But the cadence never materializes, and neither does the utterance: the dominant seventh above B♭ is left hanging, unresolved, abandoned at precisely the moment that Astarte’s speech fails to arise.

Nonetheless, I hear something in this unexpected silence. Prompted by the admittedly tentative resolution of the corresponding phrase in ex. 1, my own mind’s ear often fills in the missing tonic to hear music from a source other than the physically audible—as though Astarte were musically “speaking” from the beyond. This voice derives from more than simply a historically conditioned reflex to expect tonics after dominants, for Nemesis’s first incantation trains us to hear the cadence, even when it is not there. In one respect, the silence is simply silence, a clear-cut example of musical mimesis: Astarte does not speak in the poem, so the melodrama imitates her reticence by denying us the cadence. This silence marks a startling redirection of the music’s dramatic purpose. What began as background accompaniment for Nemesis’s magic abruptly becomes a signifier for Astarte’s voice. And yet, there is more than just silence, for an apparitional tone seems to resound within the unsounded cadence, the dominant B♭ resolving to a tonic musically present despite its unexpected acous-
tical absence. It is clear that Manfred does not hear it, perhaps because he is not yet ready to understand Astarte’s phantom as more than a projection of his own narcissistic psyche. In other words, Manfred doesn’t hear a resolution to E♭ minor because he is not listening for it. But to borrow from the motto by Friedrich Schlegel with which Schumann inscribed the Fantasie, op. 17, “a faint sustained note sounds through all other notes for those who secretly listen.” Astarte’s unsounded music seems to tell us that the dead can speak, if only we know how to listen—that Astarte, despite her silence, has an otherworldly voice that exists as surely as that absent E♭.

Given Astarte’s noumenal voice, this moment shares many of the characteristics that Abbate associates with musical narration in Unsung Voices. It is uncanny, disruptive, dislocated. It does not exist within the realm of the drama itself but originates elsewhere, disembodied from the performers onstage, and thus possesses a spatial if not temporal distance we might identify as a marker of narrative. Like the numinous ghost of Astarte, the literally unsung voice of the unsounded cadence disturbs the fictional and musical worlds of Manfred, commanding our attention.

Thus we have an analytical choice, depending on a phenomenological hearing. The absent cadence is either an example of musical enactment [musical silence mimics Astarte’s silence], or an Abbate-esque manifestation of musical narration [an unsung voice speaks to us from the dead]. But could this uncanny intrusion alert us to discursive realms yet undreamt? Abbate, responding to the tautological hermeneutic strategy that would read all music as narrative, poses an important question when she asks, “is there no nonnarrative music, as there are nonnarrative text genres?”

The task of qualifying distinctions between narrative and nonnarrative modes of discourse has long intrigued narratologists, and Abbate grounds her own theory of musical narrative on the fruitful assumption that such distinct-

15“Durch alle Töne tönet / Im bunten Erdentraum / Ein leiser Ton gezogen / Für den der heimlich lauscht.” My thanks to Christopher Thompson for drawing my attention to Schlegel’s motto.

16In her analysis of the epilogue of Dukas’s Sorcerer’s Apprentice, Abbate obliquely equates spatial distance with temporal distance. In the epilogue, the tempo slows, the instrumentation changes, the oft-repeated “broom” motive seems to stagger, and the music sounds as though it is grinding to a halt. The music is so greatly altered, argues Abbate, that “while there is no actual spatial distance involved [the instruments are not literally farther away], there is an effect of filtration similar to Adorno’s descrip-

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Example 2: Resumption of Nemesis’s conjuration melodrama.

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17Abbate, Unsung Voices, p. 46.
Typologies of Discourse

In his famous “Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives,” Roland Barthes proposed that “one of the tasks of [a linguistics of discourse] would be precisely that of establishing a typology of forms of discourse.” Barthes postulated a provisional typology that distinguishes three broad forms: the metonymic, metaphoric, and entymematic. According to Barthes, metonymic discourse corresponds to a functionality of doing; it involves action. Metaphoric discourse, in contrast, corresponds to a functionality of being; it involves description. Entymematic discourse refers to the art of persuasion, “enthymeme” being the term Aristotle used to designate one type of unit of logical argument.

Although Barthes unfortunately did not pursue it in detail, this provisional typology survives in current narratological literature as a triad of text genres that includes narrative, description, and argument. Some theorists have developed precise structuralist definitions for these categories, while others, such as Seymour Chatman, work with less formal but more intuitively satisfying constructions. Chatman defines two nonnarrative text-types: Descriptions (texts that attribute properties to things) and Arguments (texts that attempt to persuade audiences of a proposition’s validity). For Chatman, Narrative is distinguished from Argument and Description by means of its inherent, internal time dependence, be it the underlying chronological order of “story” or the surface “discourse” order into which those events are arranged when narrated. “Nonnarrative text-types do not have an internal time sequence,” Chatman explains, “even though, obviously, they take time to read, view, or hear. Their underlying structures are static or atemporal—synchronic not diachronic.”

19In asking about musical analogues to nonnarrative forms, my object is discourse type rather than aesthetic mode; models of the latter are already available. For an in-depth discussion of narrative (epic and drama) and lyric forms in music, see Karol Berger, “Narrative and Lyric: Fundamental Poetic Forms of Composition,” in Musical Humanism and Its Legacy: Essays in Honor of Claude V. Palisca, ed. Nancy Kovaleff Baker and Barbara Russano Hanning [Stuyvesant, N.Y., 1992], pp. 451–70. As Berger explains, the differences between narrative and lyric forms are both modal [related to enunciation] and thematic [related to content]; that is, they pertain to both the “what” and the “how” of expression. In “Narrative and Lyric,” Berger’s emphasis is primarily thematic. He turns to differences in the “how” of digetic and dramatic modes of music and painting → “Diegesis and Mimesis: The Poetic Modes and the Matter of Artistic Presentation,” Journal of Musicology 12 [1994], 407–33. Lawrence Kramer also contrasts narrative and lyric modes of musical organization in the final chapter of Music as Cultural Practice, 1800-1900 [Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1990], pp. 183–89. Both Berger and Kramer acknowledge the prevalence of hybrid or indeterminate forms.


21Metonymy involves the substitution of a cause for its effect, a container for its contained, or a part for its whole—for example, speaking of “a fleet of one hundred sails,” when meaning “a fleet of one hundred ships.” It deals in contiguous relations; to make logical sense of this shift from one element to the next—“sails” to “ships”—we require context. Barthes and other narratologists, following the work of Roman Jakobson, have classified narrative as primarily metonymic discourse, because narrative depends both on context and on contiguous, or sequential, relations between its elements. On the descriptive rather than narratistic aspects of metonymic discourse, see, e.g., Seymour Chatman, Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film [Ithaca, N.Y., 1990], “Description is No Textual Handmaiden,” chap. 2, pp. 22–37; Meir Sternberg, “Ordering the Unordered: Time, Space and Descriptive Coherence,” Yale French Studies 61 [1981], 60–88. Metaphoric discourse involves a different type of substitution, one that is [unlike narrative] nonsequential. Synonyms, antonyms, and other relations of similarity stand in place of the original element: instead of “ships” we might speak of “boats,” “watercraft,” or “cruisers.” As a result, description can be classified primarily as metaphoric discourse. For a more detailed explanation of the difference between metaphor and metonymy, see Raman Selden, A Reader’s Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory (2nd edn. Lexington, 1989), pp. 61–63. For Aristotle’s discussion of enthymeme, see Rhetoric, in Aristotle: Rhetoric and Poetics, trans. W. Rhys Roberts and Ingram Bywater [New York, 1954].
The creation of such discursive typologies reflects the tacit assumption that text-types can reliably be distinguished from one another. Barbara Herrnstein Smith attributes the practice to "a lingering strain of naive Platonism," arguing:

Narrative discourse is, at one extreme, hardly distinguishable from description or simply assertion. That is, "telling someone that something happened" can, under certain circumstances, be so close to "saying that something is [or was] the case" that it is questionable if we can draw any logically rigorous distinction between them or, more generally, if any absolute distinction can be drawn between narrative discourse and any other form of verbal behavior.22

Gérard Genette similarly challenged this pursuit in his groundbreaking essay "Frontiers of Narrative." Genette explored, among other issues, the traditional polarities between diegesis and mimesis [that is, between narration and direct imitation] and between narrative and description, only to conclude that these oppositions are dubious at best. For Genette, distinctions between mimesis and diegesis fade away with the observation that both involve the same linguistic behavior. In verbal texts, the act of mimesis represents verbal events in words, whereas the act of diegesis represents nonverbal events in words. The distinction boils down to a difference in what is represented, not how it is represented. This leads Genette to a startling conclusion, that mimesis is diegesis.23

He takes a similar approach to obliterating the border between narrative and description:

Lastly, it should be noted that all the differences which separate description and narration are differences of content, which, strictly speaking, have no semiological existence: narration is concerned with actions or events considered as pure processes, and by that very fact it stresses the temporal, dramatic aspect of the narrative; description, on the other hand, because it lingers on objects and beings considered in their simultaneity, and because it considers the processes themselves as spectacles, seems to suspend the course of time and to contribute to spreading the narrative in space. . . . But from the point of view of modes of representation, to recount an event and to describe an object are two similar operations, which bring into play the same resources of language.24

Even if we replace Genette's strictly verbal texts with musical ones, his conclusions still hold, for his concern centers on the means of representation rather than the content of that representation. A Mozart piano sonata remains music whether or not it seems to describe, narrate, argue, or enact. Chatman has countered that it is no surprise that narrative and description use the same linguistic resources, if actualized in language as Genette requires, because ultimately the resource of language is words. "But surely," Chatman insists, relying on the persuasiveness of intuition, "to describe' is different from 'to narrate'".25 This narratological controversy indicates that if different modes of discourse do exist—at least intuitively—then the definitions of these modes are as much idealized theoretical constructs as they are inherent aspects of texts. Distinctions between discursive modes are clouded by actual practice, for rarely do text-types occur in pure, unmediated states.

Standing outside this exchange, we can simply and productively note that theorists who do draw distinctions between narrative and nonnarrative modes of discourse typically privilege narrative over the other modes, as derivations of description and argument in opposition to narrative demonstrate. Even Genette, while challenging the premise of discursive
cate concepts, and noncapitalized to indicate particular examples. He notes that some narratologists also distinguish a fourth text-type, Exposition, but he considers Exposition more a hybrid between Description and Argument than an independent text-type, a category of "arguments that are somewhat less than forensic and descriptions, especially of abstract issues, that entail logical organization" [p. 6].

23Gérard Genette, "Frontiers of Narrative" [1966], in Figures of Literary Discourse, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, 1982), p. 133 [127–44]. Genette's essay challenging discursive distinctions was published the same year as Barthes's essay calling for such typologies.

24Ibid., p. 136.
25Chatman, Coming to Terms, p. 16.
typtologies, nevertheless promises to “restore to the narrative all its value and all its importance.” Chatman is perhaps least culpable in this regard, in that he aims to find a terminology for explaining relations between modes of discourse without privileging any mode or medium. For Chatman, these relations depend on the manner in which a text-type functions within a larger context: “The text-types routinely operate at each other’s service... Narrators of novels routinely digress to describe or argue, descriptors to narrate or argue, and arguers to narrate or describe.” Following this, we might say that the typology of different text-types is most efficacious when we conceive it as embodying an interaction, one in which no discursive mode is a priori privileged, in which each is at times dominant, at other times subordinate. Hence a description of a sunset—golden yellows giving way to fiery reds and deep purples—remains Description despite its underlying chronology, a trace of the narrative that serves it.

MODES OF MUSICAL DISCOURSE IN MANFRED

Whether one hears the missing cadence in ex. 2 as mimetic reticence or as a narrativistic dispatch from the dead, music becomes a symbol for Astarte’s voice—a voice that is, for the moment, purely musical, a preverbal feminine essence, desirable for the sensuous sonority it denies rather than for any promise of semantic intelligibility. If Manfred is, as John Daverio writes, “a cipher for logos,” then Manfred’s feminine counterpart, Astarte, encodes music itself. With her silence, Schumann encourages us to listen with Manfred’s ears, to yearn for musical, not verbal, completion from the object of our “aural gaze”; it hardly matters what words Astarte might have said had she actually spoken. Indeed, later when Astarte’s ghost finally does respond to Manfred’s pleas, it is not her words that give him pleasure, but her brute acoustic presence: “Say on, say on,” he cries, “I live but in the sound—it is thy voice!” (II.iv.150–51).

My interest in Astarte’s unsung voice lies, therefore, not only in what it potentially says, but also in how her onstage audience chooses to hear it. That her utterance is acoustically undefined encourages the other characters to mould it to their liking and to their own advantage. Her powerful silence threatens: Manfred hears it first as condemnation. “She is silent,” he says, “and in that silence I am more than answer’d” (II.iv.110–11). In German, the statement “sie schweigt” (she is silent) is active; Manfred’s observation implies an active resistance by the phantom, an active decision not to speak. This transformation from a description of the phantom [in English] into a recounting of an event [in German] highlights the haziness of drawing rigorous distinctions between nonnarrative and narrative text-types.

The dialogue that follows never suggests that Astarte’s phantom cannot speak, merely that it is beyond Nemesis’s capability to draw sound from her. It thus falls to the powerful spirit sovereign Arimanès to threaten the ghost with a menacingly terse melodramatic command: “Gehorche diesem Scepter, Geist” [Spirit—obey this scepter! [ex. 3]]. Surprisingly brief—almost to the point of being laughable—Arimanes’s two chords and four words display with stunning efficiency music’s capacity for both description and argument.

Example 3: Arimanès’s command to Astarte.

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26Genette, “Frontiers of Narrative,” p. 130.
27Chatman, Coming to Terms, p. 10.
28Chatman’s terminology thus neatly resolves an issue raised by Barthes, who wrote that “functions cannot be reduced to actions [verbs], nor indices to qualities [adjectives], for there are actions that are indical...” (“Structural Analysis of Narratives,” p. 93, n. 2).
29John Daverio, Robert Schumann: Herald of a “New Poetic Age” [New York, 1997], p. 361. In Manfred, words are rational while music is emotional; Manfred, whose masculinity is masked by his narcissism, is linked to the former, but it is clear that he is unable to function in the world without the latter.
How does this music describe? Chatman distinguishes between two types of description, explicit and tacit. Texts that explicitly describe focus attention on the properties of the things they portray. For example, the statement “the sovereign Arimanes was laconic” explicitly describes the sovereign as a spirit of few words. In contrast, texts that tacitly describe do so by focusing attention on a nondescriptive aspect of the text (such as narrative). The statement “the laconic sovereign threatened the reticent ghost” focuses attention on the sovereign’s act of threatening the ghost, rather than on the sparseness of his words or the ghost’s reticence. Even the verb “to threaten” is tacitly descriptive, connoting a set of paradigmatic relata distinct from those indexed by verbs such as “to frighten” or “to warn.” In verbal narratives, explicit description delays or interrupts plot; actions pause while the text assigns descriptive features to characters, places, or objects. Tacit description, on the other hand, transpires within the narrative flow.

Different media describe in different ways. Verbal description is selective. It necessarily dwells on certain features while ignoring others altogether, a process that achieves specificity at the cost of detail. In contrast, a filmic image tends to present the abundance of visual information that appears within its frame with equal emphasis, generally achieving detail at the cost of specificity. “In a sense,” writes Chatman, “the very cinematic projection of images entails Description. It is not that cinema cannot describe; on the contrary, it cannot help describing, though usually it does so only tacitly.”

Whereas description in literature is characterized by the citation of discrete details, description in narrative film suffers no such limitation (although it is limited in other ways). Chatman observes that the visual medium of film privileges tacit over explicit description. Normally, our attention is focused on the plot of a narrative film rather than on the wealth of descriptive detail the images offer; we observe these details tacitly as we engage in the narrative.

In general, music lacks the potential specificity of both verbal and visual descriptions, and as Abbate has demonstrated with musical narrative and enactment, it is of questionable worth to draw one-to-one correlations between musical sounds and semantically specific verbal descriptions. *La Mer* by Debussy and *Die Hebriden* by Mendelssohn, compositions whose titles suggest music of descriptive content, are perhaps as close as music comes to explicit description. In *Manfred*, music describes tacitly, providing information far beyond that which is included in the verbal text without interrupting the unfolding dramatic plot. As in Chatman’s evaluation of filmic images, this music cannot help but describe. One way in which it does so is through contrast with the music and musical silences surrounding it. That Schumann bothers to accompany Arimanes’s four words with music at all adds nonverbal force to the spirit’s command. Whereas Nemesis relies on the chromatic, twisting magic of sinuous strings, Arimanes relies on the direct force of low brass. Nemesis’s music, moreover, is harmonically and rhythmically disorienting, while Arimanes’s moves squarely from a B-major dominant to a conclusive E-major tonic. If nothing else, based on Romantic constructions of gender, this music marks Arimanes as masculine, Nemesis as feminine. This conclusion is not as obvious as it might seem: the name “Nemesis” belonged to the Greek goddess of retributive justice, but Schumann does not explicitly indicate the gender of the spirit, and the role of Nemesis has in some performances been undertaken by a man.

Arimanes’s melodramatic command to Astarte to “obey this scepter” marks him as

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32 See, e.g., the recording by Sir Thomas Beecham and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (Columbia Masterworks M2L245), cited in Striker, “Manfred in Concert,” p. 485.
masculine for another reason. In addition to the physical “scepter” he wields, the music itself serves as an emblem of his patriarchal might by providing sonic completion to Astarte’s cadential lack. Whereas Astarte failed to sound her Eb, Arimanès now demonstrates its enharmonic equivalent in the highest pitch of his first chord as a D♯ emanates authoritatively from the trombones. In the context of Nemesis’s conjuration melodrama and Astarte’s apparitional Eb, this chord sounds phenomenologically not as a B-major triad but as a C♯-major triad, a deceptive resolution to Nemesis’s failed incantation, with a belated substitute for Astarte’s missing cadence on the tonic. When it resolves to E, we are forced to reinterpret the chord: C♯ metamorphizes into B, Eb becomes D♯. Arimanès’s music declares the behavior demanded of and resisted by Astarte, teaching Astarte a musical lesson on the proper execution of a full cadence and pronouncing a musical imperative: tonics must be sounded, cadences must be realized. Arimanès’s melodrama thus has argumentative force. Perform this music, it suggests to Astarte, or suffer the consequences.

The brusque efficiency of Arimanès’s progression also presents an argument to the play’s extradiegetic audience, for the E-major cadence exposes a deception: what we originally might have taken for the phantom’s missing Eb was duplicitously a D♯, not the phantom’s voice at all but only Arimanès’s deformed imitation of it. This brief melodrama therefore generates a distinction between the musical manifestation of Astarte’s voice when she speaks for herself and when others speak for her, putting words [or music] into her mouth.33

When Astarte refuses even Arimanès’s edict, the oddly anticlimactic consequence is not a fiery eruption of an angry ruler’s rage but only Nemesis’s conclusion that Astarte “is not of our order, but belongs / To the other powers. Mortal! thy quest is vain, / And we are baffled also” [II.iv.115–17]. Yet if Manfred is capable of refusing Arimanès’s laws, it is hardly surprising that his idealized if deceased female counterpart refuses them too. Furthermore, if we believe, as many literary critics have argued, that Byron’s poem is not really about Manfred’s conjuration of sinister spirits but about the way he internally works through the mental turmoil caused by his repressed guilt, then both Nemesis and Arimanès are symptoms of his psychological state, imaginative projections within Manfred’s own mind. Through Nemesis, Manfred conjures up the phantom of Astarte. Through Arimanès, Manfred attempts to shape the music of Astarte’s voice. Ultimately, however, it is left to the inner voice of Manfred himself to coax a response from Astarte: he must face the music directly [ex. 4]. It is worth noting that in the autograph manuscript, Schumann included every word of this dramatically pivotal melodrama and went so far as to underline selected words that were to coincide with musical downbeats. In contrast, he included only the first few words for Nemesis’s conjuration of Astarte, leaving the balance of the incantation for his publishers to fill in.

Manfred’s plea begins not with words, but with music. When he implores Astarte, “hear me, hear me” [II.iv.117], it is not clear whether he is referring solely to the words he will soon utter or also to the plaintive music interspersed and interwoven with his dialogue. The melodrama’s eleven-measure introduction recalls the music of Nemesis’s sinister incantations, as well as the motive commencing Manfred’s earlier magical conjuration of the Witch of the Alps in act II, sc. 2. His music echoes that which previously signified the magic necessary to summon spirits and may represent more than just Manfred’s heartfelt request: like Nemesis and Arimanès, he relies on music’s power as a tool to manipulate his supernatural audience.

The music of the melodrama’s introduction dissipates as Manfred’s focus shifts from what he wants Astarte to hear to what he wants her to say: “O sag’, daß dir nicht graut vor mir, daß ich / Die Strafe für uns Beide trage” [Say that thou loath’st me not—that I do bear / This punishment for both [II.iv.125–26]]. With Manfred’s focus on the semantic specificity of

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33By assuming that Eb represents Astarte’s voice—a conclusion supported by an ethereal silence rather than actual sound—we too put music into her mouth. Is an imagined Eb as “false” as Arimanès’s enharmonic reinterpretation of it?
Gerufen hab' ich dich in stiller Nacht, aus Busch und Schlummer auf die Vögel scheuchend,
die Wölfe des Gebirgs erweckt' ich, liess die Höhlen vergeblich deinen Namen widerhallen,
sie gaben Antwort gaben mir so mancher Geist und Mensch

Underlined words in the text correspond to underlined words in Schumann's autograph score.

words, the musical accompaniment is for a short time withheld. Crucially, it resumes in m. 12 when Manfred explicitly links Astarte's voice to music, saying “[ich] hörte gern noch einmal, eh' ich sterbe, / Die Stimme, die Musik mir war,—o sprich!” [I would hear yet once more before I perish / The voice which was my music,—Speak to me! [II.iv.134–35]]. If Manfred's rhapsodic metaphor can be taken literally—that is, if, for Manfred, Astarte's voice truly is music, as her initial silence implies—then it is with a musical voice that he will urge her to be heard.

34While Suckow accurately retains the denotative and connotative meanings of Byron's English throughout most of the translation, here he weakens Manfred's simile by converting the more literal “the voice which was my music” into the figurative “the voice, which was music to me.” Nonetheless, as noted earlier, other references in the poem connect Astarte's voice with music, and its tone with that of Manfred's voice.
A continuous melodramatic episode ensues (ex. 4). Reentering in m. 12 in G major, the strings and flutes initiate poignant cycles of tension and relaxation that propel the music forward with recurring two-measure, neighbor-note sighs. A succession of deferred cadences builds tension on a larger scale. The D-major cadential six-four in m. 17 fails to resolve to A major as expected. Instead, neighbor motion in mm. 18–19 prolongs the cadential six-four, with a B♭ in the bass substituting a fully diminished seventh for the anticipated A-major dominant. The music prepares for a second stab at A major by moving to E minor in m. 20 and arrives successfully on the applied dominant in m. 21. Measures 22–23 thwart the resolution of this dominant seventh, however, extending the phrase with a repetition of the E-minor sonority that rises unexpectedly into a luminous C major. Only in mm. 26–27 do we finally hear the complete resolution of the cadential six-four as it passes through A major to a D-major dominant, which in turn resolves back to the G-major tonic.

Both words and music seek to persuade, yet in this regard the music is more than simply “mimetic,” for it supplements the content of Manfred’s pleading words in surprising ways. Manfred concludes his first spoken verse by recalling echoing chains that once answered his calls to the deceased Astarte. In mm. 19–21, the music suggests not only how those chains answered Manfred but also how Astarte should answer him now. The successful harmonic solution to A major emphasizes the melodic motion from the chromatically dissonant D♯ up to a resolving E—the melody of Arimanès’s edict. This melodically tense motion wells out of an inner voice in mm. 19–20 and into the melody in m. 21, where it sounds during Manfred’s brief verbal silence. We could interpret this motion as a mimetic intrusion within Manfred’s narrative, a musical enactment of the reverberating sound the caves threw back at him. But this music also teaches. Manfred’s melodramatic argument provides the phantom with a musical prompt: if caves could answer him, it implies, so ought she. And it reinforces the initial argument of Astarte’s silence, that if the phantom were to speak, then her voice would sound an E—turned by Arimanès and Manfred into a D♯ as they attempt to speak for her.

In m. 21, Manfred’s monologue resumes as he tells Astarte: “Antwort gaben mir so mancher— / Geist und Mensch” [Many things answer’d me— / Spirits and men—[II.iv.140–41]]. The D♯ to E motion retreats momentarily back to an inner voice in m. 23, but emerges again in mm. 24–25. Just as Manfred attempts a new tack in his argument by speaking not of echoes but of originary voices, the music has recontextualized its plea. As it retreats from its climax on C major, it translates Manfred’s desire for an answer into yet another melodic prompt as an unusually Baroque trill emphasizes D♯, virtually conflating it with E. This ornamental melodic excess feminizes the D♯, yet the trill occurs above a harmonic reminder of Arimanès’s phallic scepter—a progression from a dominant B to a locally tonic E. In m. 24, as in m. 21, the leap down to D♯ from G further accents the strong-beat dissonance.

In mm. 28–32, as Manfred redoubles his efforts, the music imitates him by literally doubling its pace, abbreviating material from mm. 12–19 by means of elision and diminution. Melodic rhythms become increasingly rapid and complex and the harmonic rhythm accelerates. Whereas the music previously delayed resolution from A to D major, the cadential six-four chord in m. 31 moves quickly to a dominant seventh above A, resolving to D major on the downbeat of m. 32. In mm. 32–36, the flutes double the violins an octave above, taking the melody to new registral heights. And in terms of Manfred’s spoken text, not only does the density of words per measure increase, but in order for Manfred to complete his monologue by m. 39 (as notated) the pace of his vocal delivery must quicken long before he reaches the impossibly dense text of mm. 36–37 (ex. 5).

Manfred’s entreaty ends in mm. 37–39, where he tells the phantom of Astarte, “wenn ich dich höre, noch einmal, nur noch einmal” [let me hear thee once—this once—once more! [II.iv.149–50]]. The accelerated music prepares for this by relaxing somewhat in m. 36 as the harmonic rhythm slows back into half notes and the cellos settle into neighbor-note motion between C and B. Whereas B is dissonant in m. 36, C becomes the dissonant neighbor tone in mm. 37–38, so that B major becomes harmonically stable. Repetition in Manfred’s verbal text
is mimetically paralleled by repetition of the end of the coinciding musical phrase, which provides a final cue for Astarte on the downbeat of m. 38 by sounding a melodic D♯ above the half cadence on B major. The cadential formula recurs in mm. 38–39, so that musical as well as verbal repetition rhetorically marks this moment as the conclusion of Manfred’s melodramatic plea. In contrast to the D♯s that were emphasized through dissonance as lower neighbors to E in mm. 12–25, the D♯s in mm. 38 and 39 are prominent for their consonance and agogic accent. Manfred’s musical cue is reduced to its bare essentials: all that seems to matter now is the desired pitch, D♯, and the sonority Arimanthes originally sounded in place of Astarte’s silence, B major. It is now time for the ghost of Astarte to speak—not with extradiēgetic silence, but with sound.

What does she say? Or, more specifically, if her voice is music, as her initial reticence and Manfred’s simile imply, then what music does Astarte’s phantom motivate when she finally speaks? The musical argument of the preceding melodramas suggests at least two suitable responses: Astarte might sound the pitch, E∥/D♯, anticipated by her initial silence; or she might resolve the half cadences of mm. 38–39 to E, as implicitly instructed by Arimanthes and Manfred. Only her answer can reveal the success or failure of Manfred’s argument, but there is an ambiguity in her response, one that arises from the flexible nature of the melodramatic genre itself. In melodrama, rarely is the declaimed text laid out rigorously against the music; performers take charge of the inflection and, especially, the placement of their speech against the musical background, which in Manfred can radically alter the meaning of the work. We therefore must proceed with caution when making analytical claims based on text layout. To Byron’s words and Schumann’s music we now must also add the interpretive authorial power of the performer. Indeed, my analysis of Manfred’s argument hinges on particular imagined performances, as will my interpretations of Astarte’s response.

Suppose Astarte enters according to the text placement of ex. 6, as in Clara Schumann’s Breitkopf and Härtel orchestral edition. Musically, this is the story of Astarte as the narcissistic reflection of Manfred’s ego. On the downbeat of m. 39, Astarte utters Manfred’s name, coinciding with her word is the music with
which she has often been prompted—a D♯ above a B dominant. D♯ arrives as a mere echo of the preceding cadence, a reflection of Manfred’s own music, sounding without any indication that the music belongs to Astarte. Manfred’s musical argument succeeds: he has persuaded Astarte to say exactly what he wants to hear—his name, his music, and perhaps his voice as well. The tone we hear is clearly a D♯; there is not even a hint of the E♭ that initially symbolized, by its absence, Astarte’s own voice. Given Manfred’s description of Astarte to the Alpenfee—"the very tone even of her voice . . . [was] like to mine"—we might suspect that Astarte’s voice is truly Manfred’s music, the phantom and her voice but a manifestation of his desires.

On the other hand, Astarte might follow the more ambiguous text settings in an undated nineteenth-century piano-vocal edition (as reproduced in ex. 5), or in Robert Schumann’s own autograph score (plate 1). This phantom speaks not on the downbeat of m. 39 but on the third beat of that measure. Her vocal entrance motivates a dramatic change of harmony: the half cadence on B major moves deceptively to the dominant of C instead of resolving to E as Arimanès’s earlier two-chord melodrama would have it. This obvious harmonic contrast, coupled with a soaring new melody in the solo clarinet, mimics the change of speaking voices from Manfred to Astarte, and provides the phantom with her own distinct music. Her entrance displaces Manfred’s B-major cadence and foils motion to E minor. Manfred’s musical argument thus fails: when the phantom speaks, she does so without the D♯ with which she has been repeatedly prompted, without the resolution to E suggested by Arimanès and Manfred, and finally (now a moot point) without the E♭ that originally seemed to define the entirety of her musical voice.35 We might suspect that for

35 According to Aristotle, the clever rhetor employs enthymeme in order to lead his audience toward conclusions that the rhetor himself does not explicitly state. The harmonic deception revealed by Astarte’s unexpected move to the six-five above B♭ in m. 39 seems to confirm the phantom’s (or Schumann’s) success as an enthymematic rhetor, since Astarte’s original silence led us toward the false conclusion that her voice necessarily sounds as E♭.

the human Astarte whom Manfred “loved and destroyed,” death was punishment not for an incestuous love but for the threat her autonomy posed to Manfred’s quest for transcendence. In such a performance, Manfred, alas, remains slow to listen, for in m. 40 his euphoric response to the phantom’s vocal entrance motivates an immediate melodic resolution to E (although supported by C). It is as if, to the oblivious Count, Astarte had actually sounded the D♯ he so desperately wanted to hear.

Example 6: Astarte’s vocal entrance (Breitkopf and Härtel, Clara Schumann edn.).
Plate 1: Astarte's vocal entrance, Schumann's autograph score. Reproduced by kind permission of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Preußischer Kulturbesitz [MS 21].

**The Consequences**

Astarte's acoustic manifestation resists easy definition. Verbally, after ominously alluding to Manfred's fate, she responds to his further questions with provocatively ambiguous answers before disappearing forever. Nemesis fatalistically pronounces, "she's gone, and will not be recall'd" [II.iv.156].

Regarding the verbal text alone, Stein argues
that the phantom’s vague words are the manifestation of Manfred’s own limitations. As her brother’s narcissistic reflection, Astarte is incapable of providing him with any information he does not already have. When she forecasts his impending death—a blessing as much as a warning—she merely echoes what he has already told her to say. Yet the music invites another explanation. Perhaps Astarte’s ghost frustrates Manfred’s quest for information not because she is a reflection of his narcissistic mind and therefore cannot answer him, but because she speaks for an autonomous Astarte who will not obey his command. Musically, Astarte’s voice defies association with any particular key area; indeed, it sends the music spiraling off into harmonic realms entirely unanticipated, initiating a succession of sequences that passes beyond the G-major tonic with which the movement began, to end the melodrama on F# major when the phantom vanishes. The encounter between Manfred and the phantom of Astarte bestows retrospective meaning on an event early in the poem, when Manfred wishes he were music, the “viewless spirit of a lovely sound, / A living voice, a breathing harmony, / A bodiless enjoyment—born and dying / With the blest tone which made me!” (I.ii.53–56). Manfred aligns his own voice with declamation; unexpected silence following Nemesis’s melodramas aligns Astarte’s voice with music. Manfred cannot be music. Melodrama is his blessing as well as his curse, symbolizing his power over music at the same time that it denies him an intrinsically musical voice. In losing Astarte, Manfred loses music. His narcissistic love for her is bound up with a desire to hear the musical voice his ego can neither become nor control.

The act II melodramas of Manfred demonstrate melodrama’s capacity for otherworldly communication as the outcast hero enters into an inner Geisterwelt of his own. In so doing, their music displays a discursive breadth that extends beyond the binary categorization diegetic/mimetic to operate along a continuum of interacting text-types, its messages necessarily mediated by the listening audiences both on and offstage. Astarte’s disruptive silence initiates this complex interplay of musical modes of discourse in the service of Byron’s dramatic poem, as Nemesis, Arimanes, and Manfred try to shape the phantom’s voice. Her unsung voice is at once mimetic (the missing cadence imitates the phantom’s silence); descriptive (explicitly, Astarte’s voice sounds like Es, or perhaps tacitly, Astarte is angry and will not speak); and argumentative (silence replaces Ei and silence replaces Astarte’s voice, therefore if Astarte were to speak, then her voice would sound like Eb). It is narrativistic as well, marked by the distance of a disembodied voice that speaks across the diegetic realm of the play—though we do not know what it says. Like Manfred and the spirits of the netherworld, we too shape Astarte’s voice, for its discursive content depends on how we choose to hear one faint sustained note sounding through all other notes for those who secretly listen.

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36 Stein, “I Loved Her and Destroyed Her,” p. 204.
37 F# major serves as the dominant to a B-major instrumental excerpt from the Hymnus der Geister Arimans that accompanies Manfred’s exit from the netherworld.

38 Musical distance and disjunction alone are therefore insufficient indicators of narration in its most rigorous sense, although they do occasion compelling narrativizations.