Performing Feminine Aging: The Marschallin's Body in *Der Rosenkavalier*

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Abstract

This paper applies theories from gerontology to analyze the music and text from Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal's *Der Rosenkavalier* (1911) in order to examine the Marschallin's attitude towards her aging female body. After illustrating the signifiers that code the Marschallin's body as feminine, this paper incorporates Chris Gilleard's idea from gerontology, that embracing feminine sexuality prevents the desexualizing process of aging, to examine the Marschallin's sexual escapism. Then, with the incorporation of biographical accounts discussing reflection on past experiences and Marja Saarenheimo's gerontological theory that memories are embodied processes, the paper analyzes how aspects of nostalgia relate to the Marschallin's process of remembering her younger body through musical and textual repetition. The paper concludes with a brief examination of the extra-musical connotations of the waltz and an investigation of the Marschallin and waltz tempi through the lens of gerontology, which revisits the topics of sexual escapism and nostalgia. At the end of the opera, this analysis of the Marschallin shows that she accepts her aging body and exerts control over her own life.

Keywords

Richard Strauss, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Der Rosenkavalier*, gerontology, opera

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As the curtain rises on Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*, the Marschallin lounges in her bed. Her face is concealed and the audience stares, much like the doting Octavian, at her appendages.¹ The audience's first impression of the Marschallin is not based on her personality or intellect (such as her singing, word choice, or facial expressions), but on an appraisal of her figure. The omission of these traits reduces the Marschallin to a physical object; she is a vehicle for male

1. The stage directions state: "Octavian kniet auf einem Schemel vor dem Sofa links und halt die Feldmarschallin, die in der Sofaecke liegt, halb umschlungen. Man sieht ihr Gesicht nicht, sondern nur ihre sehr schöne Hand und den Arm, von dem das Spitzenhemd abfällt..." (Octavian kneels on a stool in front of the sofa to the left and holds the Marschallin, who lies in the corner of the sofa half entangled. One does not see her face, but only her very beautiful hand and arm which drops from the top of [her] shirt). Richard Strauss, *Richard Strauss Edition: Sämtliche Bühnenwerke*, Vol. 5 of *Der Rosenkavalier: Komödie für Musik in Drei Aufzügen von Hugo von Hofmannsthal* (New York: Boosey and Hawkes, 1996), 11.

carnal desire—a woman whose physical body is integral to her societal identity. This initial accentuation of the Marschallin’s physicality, consistent with Foucauldian objectification, introduces the important role of physical appearance in the Marschallin’s character development, a theme that continues throughout the opera.²

In order to fully analyze the relationship between the Marschallin and her body, I will integrate theories from gerontology—specifically theoretical models and biographical accounts of the aging female body—into my musical and textual analysis.³ In *Der Rosenkavalier*, the text and music are

2. Michel Foucault outlines three modes of objectification. These modes are: modes of inquiry that adopt scientific status; the division of the subject from others or within the subject’s self (dividing practices); and turning oneself into a subject (subjectivity). Each of these modes relate to aspects of the Marschallin’s body relationship and its transformation throughout the opera. While it is not my intent, in this paper, to unpack these associations, it is important to keep them in mind, given their similarity to the gerontological concepts I employ in my analysis. Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 4 (Summer 1982): 777–778. See also Margaret A. McLaren, *Feminism, Foucault, and Embodied Subjectivity* (Albany: State University of New York, 2002), 64.

3. As gerontology is the study of aging and the elderly, it is applied in this paper as a way to analyze the Marschallin’s exaggerated feelings towards her aging body. Her actual age remains uncertain. As Norman Del Mar states, Strauss possibly exaggerated when he stated that the Marschallin should be depicted as 32, as she is generally thought of as in her 40s or 50s. See Norman Del Mar, “Synopsis and Analysis,” in *Richard Strauss: Der Rosenkavalier*, ed. Alan Jefferson, Cambridge Opera Handbook (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 24. Lotte Lehmann recollected that Strauss intended the Marschallin to be “approximately thirty-five, the age at which, in that period, a woman begins

extensions of the Marschallin's body, and, through significations of femininity, they reinforce her role in society as a female. Feminine signifiers also describe different facets of the Marschallin's relationship with her aging body, particularly her sexual escapism and her memories of past experiences. Incorporating theoretical models from gerontology into this analysis of feminine signifiers creates a multidimensional portrait of the Marschallin, arguably one of Strauss's most memorable operatic characters.

Asserting the Feminine Body

Through the frequent use of typical female plot positioning and feminine-coded musical gestures, Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal demarcate the Marschallin's aging body as a feminine social object. This encourages a gendered reading of the Marschallin's aging body and labels her body as a decidedly feminine social construction. In the middle of act 1, the Marschallin's acknowledgement of her body's aging textually reinforces the relationship between a woman's appearance and her societal position as someone "to be gazed at," when, after disapproving of her reflection in the mirror, the Marschallin reprimands her hairdresser for making her "ein altes Weib" (an old woman).⁴ The Marschallin's fear of, and

to stop being young." Lotte Lehmann, *Five Operas and Richard Strauss*, trans. Ernst Pawel (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), 124.

4. E. Ann Kaplan, "Trauma and Aging: Marlene Dietrich, Melanie Klein, and Marguerite Duras," in *Figuring Age: Women, Bodies, Generations*, Vol. 23 of *Theories of Contemporary Culture*, ed. Kathleen

frustration with, physical markers of aging demonstrate the gerontological association between the aging woman and body shaming. In early-twentieth-century Western society, women were pressured to conform to the dogma that youthful beauty equates worth.⁵ For example, in the crisis of identity gerontological model, women associate beauty with being good, whole, and lovable, and the absence of this beauty as being “bad, . . . fragmented, and unlovable.”⁶ The Marschallin conforms to this model because she believes that as her body ages, it becomes more worthless.

In an early monologue from act 1, musical signifiers intensify her body’s expression of the stigma against female aging. One prominent example is the violin, a symbol of femininity as the “queen of the instruments,” which dictates much of the scene’s musical material.⁷ The entire monologue, as described by William Mann, is based on two violin phrases (see Ex. 1), and Strauss derives the majority of the monologue’s music from these phrases.⁸ Strauss’s transformation of the feminine violin phrases is an extension of, and analogous to, the Marschallin’s changing thought process. At first, the Marschallin reflects on her lover, “Da geht

Woodward, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 174. Richard Strauss, *Der Rosenkavalier* (New York: Boosey and Hawkes, 1943), 122.

5. Linda Hutcheon and Michael Hutcheon, *Bodily Charm: Living Opera* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 43.

6. Kaplan, “Trauma and Aging,” 174.

7. Sanna Iitti, *The Feminine in German Song* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 34.

8. William Mann, *Richard Strauss: A Critical Study of the Operas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 118.

er hin, der aufgeblasene, schlechte Kerl” (there he goes, the vain, bad fellow), but soon afterwards, she laments her aging, “und dass ich auch einmal die alte Frau sein werd” (and that suddenly I too will be an old woman).⁹ She is unable to avoid aging and is stigmatized by this feminine social role.

Furthermore, this role dictates her emotional reaction to aging, as this negativity towards physical aging infects the Marschallin’s self-esteem, much like the violin phrase pervades the music of the monologue.

EXAMPLE 1A. The first of two recurring violin phrases during the Marschallin’s act 1 monologue, reh. 269. Strauss, *Der Rosenkavalier*, 132.

EXAMPLE 1B. The second recurring violin phrase during the Marschallin’s act 1 monologue, 1 measure after reh. 271. Strauss, *Der Rosenkavalier*, 134.

Specific instances of the violin phrase’s transformation, and its corresponding text, exemplify the common gerontological model of treating “aging as a crisis” or a “pathology.”¹⁰ The centrality of the feminine violin part in the

9. Strauss, *Der Rosenkavalier*, 132–133, 134–136.

10. Kathleen Woodward, “Inventing Generational Models: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, Literature,” in *Figuring Age: Women, Bodies*,

EXAMPLE 2. The transformation of Example 1b's theme (boxed), 4 measures after reh. 277. Strauss, *Der Rosenkavalier*, 136.

The image shows a page from a musical score for Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*, specifically measures 136-140. The score is for a full orchestra and the Marschallin. The tempo is marked "a tempo, etwas mäßig". The key signature has one flat. The instruments listed on the left are: # gr. Fl., I. Hob., 2 B. Clar., # Fag., I. Horn (F), Marschallin., Viol. I (alle), Viol. II (alle), Br. (alle), Celli (alle), and C. B. (alle). The Marschallin's lyrics are: "sein werd'... Die al-te Frau, die al-te Marschal-lin!". The tempo changes to "un poco moderato". There are two boxed passages in the score, one in the woodwinds and one in the strings, both containing a melodic theme. The score includes various dynamic markings such as *p*, *pp*, *mf*, and *f*.

next musical passage emphasizes the Marschallin's body as a female social construct. Its strong presence also accentuates the Marschallin's disdain for her body. Musically, the winds and strings present an altered version of the violin phrase (see Ex. 2), accompanying the Marschallin's lament that she will soon be referred to as "die alte Frau, die alte Marschallin!" (the old

Generations, Vol. 23 of *Theories of Contemporary Culture*, ed. Kathleen Woodward (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 158.

EXAMPLE 3. The slow string transformation of Example 1a starts at the *tempo primo*, 3 measures after reh. 278. The contour of Example 1a's agogic accents is boxed in the first violin part. Strauss, *Der Rosenkavalier*, 136.

woman, the old Marschallin!).¹¹ Because of the return of this motif, the Marschallin remains musically connected to recollections of her feminine body. Nevertheless, as conveyed by the transformation of the violin phrase, her obsession with aging has distorted these memories. For example, as one sees in Example 3, the strings alter the violin phrase by accentuating the original phrase's agogic accents.¹² This time, the music accompanies the rhetorical question, "wie kann denn das geschehn? Wie macht denn das der liebe Gott?" (How can this

11. Strauss, *Der Rosenkavalier*, 136.

12. An additional change from the first iteration of the theme is that the violin substitutes a D for the original passage's F.

[aging process] happen? How does dear God then make it so?).¹³ The Marschallin's questioning of this aging process and the transformation of feminine musical signifiers are examples of the gerontological model of aging as a disease. It dramatizes the process of aging, casting time as the Marschallin's chief antagonist.

Evading the Aging Body

In the orchestral prelude, symbols of femininity accentuate the Marschallin's escape from aging. Sexuality is the Marschallin's weapon against time. She embodies the social role of a female lover by embracing her feminine sexuality, and thus staves off the desexualizing process of aging.¹⁴ By asserting her sexuality, the Marschallin prohibits time from producing the physical and social symptoms of aging. For example, as Sam Abel describes in *Opera in the Flesh: Sexuality in Operatic Performance*, the prelude depicts the Marschallin's sexual relationship with the young Octavian; specifically, the Marschallin's motive musically exemplifies her libido (see Ex. 4).¹⁵ The placement of her motive, directly after Octavian's, exemplifies the spatial connection between the Marschallin and Octavian on stage (see Ex. 5). Engaging with her younger lover allows the Marschallin to portray

13. Strauss, *Der Rosenkavalier*, 136.

14. Chris Gilleard, "Woman Aging and Body Talk," in *Cultural Gerontology*, ed. Lars Andersson (Westport: Greenwood Publishing, 2002), 155.

15. Sam Abel, *Opera in the Flesh: Sexuality in Operatic Performance* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 92.

EXAMPLE 4. The violins, violas, A-clarinets, and oboes introduce the Marschallin's motive (boxed), opening. Strauss, *Der Rosenkavalier*, 5.

another gerontological mannerism—namely, recapturing a sense of youth by sharing a physical experience with another.¹⁶ Musically, the Marschallin's motive signifies femininity. This motive is perceived in relationship to, and subordinated by, Octavian's first motive because it is the second motive. The Marschallin's motive also features feminine musical tropes,

16. Marja Saarenheimo, "Body Memories and Aging Women," in *Cultural Gerontology*, ed. Lars Andersson (Westport: Greenwood Publishing, 2002), 162.

EXAMPLE 5. Octavian's motive (circled) immediately precedes the Marschallin's motive (boxed), opening. Strauss, *Der Rosenkavalier*, 5.

The image shows a page from a musical score for Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*. The title at the top is "Der Rosenkavalier, 5." and the tempo/mood is "Con moto agitato. Met. J = 60. Stürmisch bewegt." The score is for a full orchestra and includes parts for 2 large flutes, 2 oboes, 1 D-clarinet, 2 A-clarinets, Bassoon, 3 Fagottes, 4 Horns (I, II, III, IV), Violins I and II, Violas, Cellos, and Double Basses. The Octavian motive is circled in the Violin I part, and the Marschallin motive is boxed in the Violin II part. The score is in 3/4 time and the key signature has two sharps (D major or F# minor).

such as chromaticism and a weaving contour.¹⁷ As Example 6 shows, the feminine-signifying violin plays the motive. This femininity, within a sexual context, presents the Marschallin as a young and fertile woman. In other words, the Marschallin no longer performs her older sociocultural age, but she performs a younger one.

17. Susan McClary, foreword to *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, by Catherine Clement, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), xii.

EXAMPLE 6. The Marschallin's motive (in the violin) features a weaving contour and feminine chromaticism. Strauss, *Der Rosenkavalier*, 5.

The Marschallin's escapism and embodiment of this younger sociocultural age is further depicted through the prelude's key scheme. The work opens "in the spirit of Octavian" with "libidinal E major" followed by a tranquil E-flat major passage "in the spirit of the Marschallin."¹⁸ The association of the Marschallin with E-flat, Strauss's heroic key, illustrates her triumphant sexual escapism. It connects her not only to the heroes of Strauss's tone poems, such as that of *Ein Heldenleben*, but also, in conjunction with *Elektra*'s Chrysothemis, to the musical trope for purity.¹⁹ The utilization of this key in the musical language of the pure, fertile Chrysothemis reinforces the Marschallin's portrayal of an earlier sociocultural age. The Marschallin is a desirable and

18. Bryan Gilliam, *Rounding Wagner's Mountain: Richard Strauss and Modern German Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 123. See also Reinhard Gerlach, *Don Juan and Der Rosenkavalier: Studien zu Idee und Gestalt einer tonalen Evolution im Werk Richard Strauss* (Bern: Verlag Paul Haupt, 1966), 122–166.

19. *Elektra* was created by Strauss and Hofmannsthal directly before *Der Rosenkavalier*. As Bryan Gilliam acknowledges, in *Elektra* "Strauss chose E-flat major as the key not only for Chrysothemis's first monologue, but also for the character throughout the opera." Bryan Gilliam, "Strauss's Preliminary Opera Sketches: Thematic Fragments and Symphonic Continuity," *19th-Century Music* 9, no. 3 (Spring 1986): 178.

youthful object. The key's heroic connotations empower her and create an alluring and confident persona. Nevertheless, even as she perpetuates the idea of the youthful female denoting desirability, she conforms to her society's gender roles.

Remembering the Body

The Marschallin's memory of her younger body in act 3 is an example of gerontological models. This is most clearly seen when the Marschallin contemplates past occurrences by repeating text and music from the first act, which is akin to the Marschallin's relationship with her body, not only because it demonstrates her obsession with passing time, but also because memories themselves are "embodied processes."²⁰ Memories manifest themselves in physical forms. The Marschallin's physical aging is therefore part of her sense of self—or, rather, a part that overshadows the entire self. For instance, as seen in Examples 7 and 8, the Marschallin repeats her lament that Octavian will one day leave her ("Heute oder morgen").²¹ While the repetition preserves, for the most part, the intervallic content and feminine chromaticism of the original, its context differs. In the first two measures of the repetition, the music features slight rhythmic variations and alludes to a different key than the original (C minor instead of B minor). This variation also accentuates the line's femininity by its thinner orchestration, chromatic English horn line, and violin tremolo

20. Saarenheimo, "Body Memories and Aging Women," 165.

21. Strauss, *Der Rosenkavalier*, 491.

accompaniment. Even within the short time span of the operatic narrative, the Marschallin's femininity consumes her musical character. These differentiations from the original also demonstrate the gerontological theory that "the body always carries its own past to new situations."²² It introduces a cyclical paradox: although situations and ideas recur in one's life, their reappearance is always presented within a new context. Here, the new context is that time has not only aged the Marschallin's body, but also her relationship with Octavian. While the original phrase is directed towards Octavian, this repetition is distanced from him; the repetition before the trio of act 3—the opera's musical climax—shows that it is finally the day that the Marschallin must relinquish Octavian.

EXAMPLE 7. The first instance of “Heut’ oder morgän” in the Marchallin’s vocal line of act 1, reh 321, alludes to B minor. Strauss, *Der Rosenkavalier*, 157.

EXAMPLE 8. The first half of the repetition of “Heut’ oder morgen...” in act 3, reh. 267. The Marschallin’s vocal line alludes to C minor. Strauss, *Der Rosenkavalier*, 491.

22. Ibid.

Other characters, particularly Sophie, Octavian's new love object, also portray this cyclical paradox. Sophie usually repeats the Marschallin's lines; for example, she echoes the Marschallin's statement "ist eine Wienerische Maskerad' und weiter nichts" (it is a Viennese masquerade and nothing more) in act 3.²³ Like Octavian, Sophie is an extension of the Marschallin's sense of self, because she echoes the Marschallin's ideas and epitomizes the Marschallin's lost feminine youth. Previously, the Marschallin's body was the object that Octavian desired, but it is now replaced with Sophie's body. Similarly, Sophie fulfills the Marschallin's former role as the puerile woman taken from the convent and pressured into an arranged marriage. The Marschallin even establishes a connection between Sophie's body and her own. In act 3 she scrutinizes Sophie's body, commenting on "ihr blass Gesicht" (her pale face) and perpetuating subordinated female gender roles: "red' Sie nur nicht zu viel, Sie ist ja hübsch genug!" (Do not speak too much, you are pretty enough!).²⁴ Both Octavian and the Marschallin long for Sophie's alluring and fertile body. While Octavian lusts after Sophie's body, the Marshallin yearns for Sophie's youthful image (even though Sophie is only "hübsch genug").

23. Strauss, *Der Rosenkavalier*, 465.

24. Ibid., 497–498.

Embodying the Waltz: The Feminine, the Sexual, and the Nostalgic

In *Der Rosenkavalier*, the waltz combines and extends the Marschallin's bodily themes: the feminine, the sexual, and the nostalgic. Waltz music and tempi pervade the opera's score, and the prominence of the waltz establishes the presence of these social connotations of female subordination, nostalgia, and seduction.²⁵ For example, the first time waltz music occurs in act 1, it highlights the theme of female subordination. The music is connected to the Marschallin, but she does not originally control the music; rather, it is the mode of communication that Baron Ochs uses to speak to her.²⁶ Unlike female characters in other Strauss operas, particularly the titular character of *Elektra*, the Marschallin is not the primary creator of the music; it is only later in this act—after her breakfast with Octavian when she awaits the official arrival of Baron Ochs—that she is given enough power to introduce waltzes on her own.²⁷ When she attains this power, the Marschallin gains the authority to change the emotional atmosphere of the opera. For example, she provokes a “new-found joviality of mood...[and] sets in motion a string of waltz

25. As Bryan Gilliam notes, the opera contains “an entire typology of waltz types.” Gilliam, *Rounding Wagner's Mountain*, 120.

26. Del Mar, *Richard Strauss*, 33.

27. See Carolyn Abbate, “Elektra's Voice: Music and Language in Strauss's Opera,” in *Richard Strauss: Elektra*, ed. Derrick Puffet, Cambridge Opera Handbook (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 107–128.

measures....”²⁸ The Marschallin can enact change, but her power to do so is monitored by men because she adapts her musical language from her male acquaintances.

The choreography of the waltz also reinforces aspects of the Marschallin’s relationship with her body, specifically those relating to nostalgia and feminine social roles. During a waltz, a male leads his female partner around a ballroom in circular motions.²⁹ It is a gendered cyclical process: cyclical in that it features the circular repetition of individual dance steps, and gendered because its performance is a physical manifestation of male dominance.³⁰ The circularity inherent in waltz choreography creates a condensed version of time’s cyclical paradox. When couples waltz, they repeatedly return to earlier places and relive embodied memories, just like the Marschallin. Time profoundly effects the Marschallin and waltzing couples because change is inevitable in the reenactment of these memories (the repetition of spatial relationships).³¹

In addition to the waltz’s illustration of gender roles and nostalgia, its sexual nature alludes to the Marschallin’s own sexuality. When the waltz was popularized in the nineteenth century, the dance became a socially condoned way

28. Del Mar, *Richard Strauss*, 29.

29. Sevin H. Yaraman, “The Waltz: A Musical Interpretation through the Steps” (PhD diss., The City University of New York, 1998), 11.

30. The Marschallin’s motive follows Octavian’s motive in the orchestral prelude, and the Marschallin introduces waltzes after Baron Ochs.

31. In the waltz change may occur either artificially, by switching dance partners, or organically through the passage of time.

by which to induce and express desire.³² Female and male bodies touched, with the “lower parts of their bodies...in a startlingly close proximity” to one another.³³ This conjoined nature physically exemplifies the gerontological idea that the bodies of others can function as extensions of one’s self and that they can enable one to live through external relationships.³⁴ The waltz’s symbolic connotations signify a liberation of sexuality and create a freeing, socially condoned means of expressing sexual desire. Because of these associations, many viewed waltzing as a serious demonstration of commitment and encouraged young women to choose their partners wisely.³⁵ These historical connotations, signified in the waltz, allude to the Marschallin’s duality of subordinated conformity and liberated sexuality.

A specific instance of these extra-musical implications in connection with the Marschallin occurs in the act 3 trio. This trio features the waltz time signature (3/4) throughout, and it is musically linked to the waltz “Nein, Nein, ich trink kein Wein” (No, no, I don’t drink wine).³⁶ The waltz reflects the Marschallin’s changing relationship with her body in that the social implications of the waltz accentuate the female body while conveying nostalgia and sexuality. The connotations of the waltz solidify her changing relationship with her body from an avoidance of physical aging to a reluctant acceptance of it.

32. Iitti, *The Feminine in German Song*, 33.

33. *Ibid.*, 44.

34. Saarenheimo, “Body Memories and Aging Women,” 162.

35. Yaraman, “The Waltz,” 13.

36. For further information on this connection see Del Mar, *Richard Strauss*, 75.

The Marschallin is no longer subordinated by her male counterparts because, unlike in act 1, she now controls the shifts to and from waltz meter. By controlling these shifts, the Marschallin embraces a different form of female power, and with it, her aging body. As seen in Example 9, the waltz-meter begins with the Marschallin's reflection, "Hab' mir's gelobt, ihn lieb zu haben in der richtigen Weis'" (I had promised myself, that I was fond of him in the right way...). She ushers in the waltz meter and its extra-musical connotations of sexuality and nostalgia. However, she soon abandons these connections by accentuating her body's spatial distance from the young lovers: "Da steht der Bub' und da steh' ich, und mit dem fremden" (there stands the boy and here I stand, and with the newcomer).³⁷ Then, she fully relinquishes these extra-musical connections and, with them, her relationship with Octavian. She controls the trio's brief conclusion in 4/4 because, as Example 10 shows, she is the only character that sustains the meter change. This musical distance reinforces her relinquishment not only of Octavian, but also of her connections to the youthful body (the feminine, the sexual, and the nostalgic). In the last measure of the trio she fully distances herself from the young lovers. As she sings "in Gottes Namen" (in God's name), she musically separates herself from Octavian's and Sophie's final notes by four measures. She aurally and spatially relinquishes her connection to them; she finally permits the passing of time and her subsequent physical aging.

37. Strauss, *Der Rosenkavalier*, 505.

EXAMPLE 9. The act 3 trio in waltz time (3/4) begins during the singing of the Marschallin (boxed) at reh. 285. Strauss, *Der Rosenkavalier*, 500.

(sie winkt ihm zurück und blickt in der Tür stehen) (vor sich)
 Marschallin. mir's ge-lobt, ich lieb- zu ha-ben
 (Octavian steht ihr zu, Sophie wendet rechts) Hab
 (umschließend, als wollte er ihr nach)
 Octavian. Ma-rie The-ri-...
 (Moderato e molto sostenuto) ♩ 72

EXAMPLE 10. The Marschallin is the only character to sustain the time signature change to 4/4 (boxed), beginning at reh. 293. Strauss separates her last line in the trio from Octavian and Sophie by four bars. Strauss, *Der Rosenkavalier*, 507–508.

Sophie. dich hab' ich lieb, dich hab' ich
 Marschallin. sein, als wie halt Man-ner das Glück-lich-sein ver-
 Octavian. nur dich, dich hab' ich
 Sophie. lieb.
 Marschallin. steh'n. In Got-tes Namen.
 Octavian. lieb.

Conclusion: The Marschallin's Power

By the end of the opera, the Marschallin no longer performs the role of a younger woman, nor does she embody a younger sociocultural age. Instead, Sophie's father, Faninal, inducts the Marschallin into her new social group by distancing her from the younger one when he states, "Sind halt also, die

jungen Leut'!" (so are the young people! [Octavian and Sophie]), before welcoming her into the older group, "[er] reicht der Marschallin die Hand" (he gives the Marschallin [his] hand).³⁸ He joins vocal expression with physical action, switching the Marschallin's social orientation from her previous alignment with the younger generation to a new alignment with the older generation.

Although the Marschallin is initiated into this sociocultural age group by a man, she ultimately determines the trajectory of the opera. She gives Octavian to Sophie in the act 3 trio when she abnegates her connection to Octavian, sacrificing her love for him for the greater good of the new generation. The Marschallin abandons her former notions of bodily escapism and recognizes the need to relinquish her nostalgia. Through her actions, she restores the opera's social order, from two ill-suited couples (herself and the youthful Octavian as well as the virginal Sophie and the promiscuous Baron Ochs) to a pair of young lovers (Octavian and Sophie). Because of these actions, she is a strong woman; she is what Foucault deemed a "vehicle of power."³⁹ Through her interpersonal relationships with and actions towards Sophie and Octavian, she enacts a type of positive control; Sophie and Octavian become the subjects of her power, and she uses this authority to solidify their relationship.⁴⁰ The Marschallin is a stronger and more complex character than the victim described in certain readings of *Der Rosenkavalier*, including Catharine

38. Ibid., 515.

39. McLaren, *Feminism, Foucault, and Embodied Subjectivity*, 66.

40. Ibid.

Clément's interpretation of the opera as the "death of a woman's body" or "an old woman giving up on love."⁴¹ The Marschallin's body and sexual escapades do not die at the end of the opera. Instead, as Strauss acknowledged, "Octavian is neither the first nor last lover of the beautiful Marschallin."⁴² The Marschallin upends the aging as disease model, and as she moves on from Octavian, time—her former adversary—becomes her advocate.

41. Catherine Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 107, 109.

42. Richard Strauss quoted in Norman Del Mar, "Synopsis and Analysis," in *Richard Strauss: Der Rosenkavalier*, 24.

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