

THE *JARDIN DES FEMMES* AS SCENIC CONVENTION  
IN FRENCH OPERA AND BALLET

by

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## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Much scholarship on French grand opera has understandably focused on the monumentality of the genre—its sweeping historical panoramas, public spectacles, and large onstage chorus. This focus is reinforced, for example, by Anselm Gerhard, who associates the chorus with the Parisian crowd in its diversity, autonomy, and even violence, and by Marian Smith, who contrasts grand opera’s magnificent urban and indoor settings with the bucolic countryside locales of ballet-pantomime. Yet this emphasis on the “grandness” of grand opera has obscured the dramaturgical significance of private gardens within French opera of the July Monarchy era.

While Queen Marguerite’s garden in Act II of Meyerbeer’s *Les Huguenots* (1836) has long been acknowledged as a forbidden, feminine realm, the prevalence of the *jardin des femmes* as a scenic convention in nineteenth-century French opera remains unexplored. Using the canonic example of *Les Huguenots* as a starting point, this study examines additional garden scenes from Donizetti’s *La Favorite* (1840) and Halévy’s *La Reine de Chypre* (1841) to demonstrate the typical use of the garden as a scenic frame for clandestine encounters, sexual transgression, and homosocial intimacy. Two further case studies, Auber’s *Le Cheval de Bronze* (1835) and Adam’s *Giselle* (1841), illustrate the presence of the *jardin des femmes* convention in opera-comique and ballet-pantomime,

respectively, thus testifying to a shared scenic vocabulary among multiple Parisian music theater genres of the 1830s and '40s.

My principal argument is that these garden settings are represented as feminine spaces – and the women of these scenes as ecomorphic beings – through a complex of textual, visual, and musical cues. Drawing on feminist critiques of the metaphoric transcoding of woman, space, and landscape, I posit that certain repeated musico-visual images encourage a mode of looking and listening that conflates admiration of idyllic garden scenery with admiration of the female body. The collusion of gender, sexuality, and nature has been analyzed by Allanbrook, Hunter, and DeNora in Mozart's buffa operas and by Senici in nineteenth-century Italian opera, but this study is the first to argue a similar case for nineteenth-century French opera and ballet.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION:

#### GARDENS AND FEMININE SPACE IN FRENCH OPERA AND BALLET

This study stems from a basic question: Where are the places of female community in the onstage world of nineteenth-century French grand opera? And more importantly, what are the dramatic purposes of representing female communities within this repertoire? For, despite the wealth of opera studies on cultural meanings invested in the solo female voice and leading female characters, as well as social histories of the *divas* and *débutantes* who brought these roles to life, female ensemble scenes have been largely overlooked. Catherine Clément's taxonomy of voice and character types in opera, for example, completely omits the women's chorus. Clément identifies the mixed chorus as representing the "community" and the male chorus as representing the "tribe," claiming that the tribe is not a space for women:

When the chorus expresses itself as a tribe, their melodies tend toward the masculine, obeying the anthropological reality of tribes themselves. Nevertheless, the concept of 'tribe' applies symbolically to a coherent group of human beings with their own rules and culture; one could also use the word 'band,' or even 'gang.' Unlike the mythical communities I described a moment ago, opera rarely allows women to share the tribal space: the heritage of these imaginary tribes seems to bring out the worst aspects of opera, cruelty and violence.<sup>1</sup>

Is opera truly lacking in female tribes? In short, no.<sup>2</sup> The most well-known exception to Clément's general principle comes from the repertoire of French grand

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<sup>1</sup> Catherine Clément, "Through Voices, History," in *Siren Songs*, ed. Mary Ann Smart (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 20.

<sup>2</sup> The study of female "tribes" or communities has, however, been better addressed by dance scholars' analysis of Romantic-era ballet-pantomime, and opera scholarship could benefit from these approaches. See, for example, Sally Banes's discussion of the three female tribes of the ballet *La Sylphide* – Scottish

opera: namely, Act II of *Les Huguenots*, in which Marguerite de Valois and her ladies-in-waiting luxuriate in the gardens of Chenonceau. Certainly, the canonic status of Scribe and Meyerbeer's grand opera *Les Huguenots* has ensured that its second act, set in the gardens of Marguerite de Valois at Chenonceaux, is the best known example of female community in French opera. Yet this tableau of women celebrating love and nature in a luxurious garden was not by any means unique to *Les Huguenots*. Rather, Queen Marguerite's gardens exemplify a broader scenic convention that extended to multiple Parisian musico-dramatic genres of the 1830s and '40s, including grand opera, opéra-comique, and ballet-pantomime.

### **The *Jardin des Femmes*: Theatrical Setting and Scenic Convention**

Within the onstage world of nineteenth-century French opera and ballet, groups of women gather in gardens or *sites délicieux* (*loci amoeni* or “places of delight”) with astounding frequency.<sup>3</sup> I have classified these garden settings into five types, although there is some overlap among categories: (1) private gardens of a queen or other noblewoman; (2) aristocratic pleasure gardens, which feature women as the focal point of

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farm girls (Effie and her friends), sylphs, and witches – in Sally Banes, *Dancing Women: Female Bodies on Stage* (London: Routledge, 1998), 17–22.

<sup>3</sup> The *locus amoenus* or pleasance, first defined as a rhetorical *topos* in Classical pastoral poetry by Curtius, is typified by the presence of water, trees, and grass; flowers, birds, and zephyrs are optional embellishments. See Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press [orig. Bollingen], 2013 [orig. 1953]), 192–93, 95–200. Building on Curtius's identification of the *locus amoenus* as the “ideal landscape of poetry,” Fabienne Moore points out that the appearance of this *topos* in eighteenth-century French literature – as, for example, in Montesquieu's *Temple de Gnide* (1725) – “signaled to [...] readers that they had entered the realm of poetry.” Fabienne Moore, *Prose Poems of the French Enlightenment: Delimiting Genre* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 108. I would argue a similar case for the appearance of the idealized *locus amoenus* in nineteenth-century French opera: namely, that it marks entry into a world of poetic illusion and enchantment. I further discuss the *locus amoenus* in terms of its relationship to the *jardin des femmes* convention in Chapter II.

the festivities but may have a mixed company of women and men; (3) seraglio gardens;<sup>4</sup> (4) magic or fairy gardens; and (5) demonic or haunted gardens (See Appendix: Selected *Jardins des Femmes* in French Opera and Ballet, 1830–1865). These various garden settings are typically constructed as loci of eroticized feminine space through a complex of text, music, movement, costume, and décor—a specific scenic convention that I am calling the *jardin des femmes*. The term *jardin des femmes* is generally thought of as a Proustian invention; however, it first appeared not as the Narrator’s euphemism for the Bois de Boulogne in *Du côté de chez Swann* (1913), but rather as the name of an actual setting for Act III of the ballet-pantomime *L’île des pirates* (1835).<sup>5</sup>

The very appearance of the term *jardin des femmes* as a theatrical setting poses a fundamental concern: Is the *jardin des femmes* a garden governed by women, or are women the very things “growing” within the garden? That is to say, are these gardens truly places of female autonomy, liberation, and intimacy, or rather places where women

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<sup>4</sup> Ralph Locke has already noted the symbolic connection between sexually inviting women and lush vegetation in nineteenth-century Orientalist operas, yet I propose that the conflated image of alluring Eastern Woman and fertile tropical Landscape was but one possible application of what I am identifying here as a broader theatrical schema.

<sup>5</sup> Riffaterre, for one, asserts that the phrase *le Jardin des Femmes* found in *Du côté de chez Swann* from Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu* is “the only one of its kind in French,” except for the 1961 novel *Le Jardin des Femmes*, itself derivative of Proust’s use of the term. Michael Riffaterre, *Fictional Truth* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 80. However, though Proust’s conflation of flowers and women is certainly among the most richly imagined, the libretto authors of *L’île des pirates* used the term *jardin des femmes* almost eighty years prior to Proust’s novel. Here I am indebted to Smith’s comparison of selected settings for July Monarchy-era ballet-pantomimes and operas: see Table 3.2 in Marian Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 62–65. *L’île des pirates* is among the works included in this table, and the entry “III. The garden of women, on the Isle of the Pirates” piqued the initial curiosity that led to this project. The purpose of Smith’s table is to show a marked difference in settings between the two genres: “ballet-pantomime tended more toward outdoors and the countryside while opera tended more toward indoors and the city.” *Ibid.*, 62. The present study, however, argues for greater significance of outdoor and countryside settings (specifically, gardens) in French grand opera than has previously been acknowledged.

are enclosed, tended, and surveyed by male “gardeners” and voyeuristic visitors?<sup>6</sup> In the case of *L’île des pirates*, the libretto quickly explains that this “garden of women, on the Isle of the Pirates” is “a sort of harem” from which new initiates to the pirate brotherhood are allowed to pick two companions.<sup>7</sup> In other words, this *jardin des femmes* is not merely a site of female community amid verdant garden scenery. Rather, the odalisques and slaves who inhabit the garden are also the prized specimens that constitute the landscape, much like flowers, fruits, or foliage. With this provocatively titled Act III setting, therefore, the authors of *L’île des pirates* explicitly and unabashedly conceptualize women as pleasing natural attractions contained within a garden. One year later, the critic Castil-Blaze used a similar linguistic construction in describing Act II of *Les Huguenots* as taking place in “*un jardin rempli de jolies femmes*” (a garden full of pretty women).<sup>8</sup> Therefore, although the phrase *jardin des femmes* was not used in the nineteenth century to directly reference a recurring scenic convention, I have chosen this term based on its

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<sup>6</sup> For example, Peter Stoneley argues that the nuns’ bacchanale in *Robert le diable*, one of the most famous female scenes in French grand opera, implies the possibility of not only homosocial but also homosexual community—yet such a construction still plays to male heterosexual fantasies: “It might seem that, in the bacchanal before Robert’s arrival, the ballet offers the audience a sort of lesbian phantasmagoria. Possibly this is an instance of [...] ‘heteroscopic sapphism’ [...]. It is a spectacle of women ‘disporting’ with each other in a ‘rousing gallop,’ but it seems calculated to appeal to the heterosexual male viewer. The sapphic suggestion does not preclude the possibility of heterosexual intercourse. If anything, it reassures the male view. It suggests that, beneath the veil of discipline and sanctity, women have a sexual appetite, and indeed, they are omnivorous.” Peter Stoneley, *A Queer History of the Ballet* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 25.

<sup>7</sup> “La Moresque gardienne de cette sorte de harem y introduit le héros des épreuves ; elle indique au nouvel élu, Ottavio, l’article de la loi établie parmi les pirates, qui lui donne le droit de choisir deux compagnes parmi les esclaves disponibles.” (The Moorish guardian of this sort of harem introduces the hero of the trials; she indicates to the new elect, Ottavio, the article of the law established among the pirates that gives him the right to choose two companions among the available slaves.) *L’île des Pirates, ballet-pantomime en quatre actes, par MM. Henry et \*\*\*\*\*, musique de MM. Gide, Carlini, Rossini et Beethoven. Représenté pour la première fois, sur le Théâtre de l’Académie Royale de Musique, le 12 août 1835* (Paris: Jonas; Barba, 1835), 19.

<sup>8</sup> “Au premier acte nous n’avions que des hommes, le second acte s’ouvre par un jardin rempli de jolies femmes élégamment parées de riches et brillants atours.” Castil-Blaze, “*Les Huguenots*, de M. Meyerbeer. Premier Article,” *Revue de Paris* 27(1836): 55.

appearance in the mid-1830s to denote theatrical settings in which beautiful women are inextricably linked to the visual spectacle of the garden landscape.

As a scenic convention, the musical structure of the *jardin des femmes* tableau is fairly consistent, typically comprising an entrance solo for a secondary female lead; a *chœur dansé* performed by the company of women; and a love or seduction duet shared by a male interloper and one of the women of the garden. Musical depictions of the *jardin des femmes* are, however, as varied as the types of gardens themselves.

Nevertheless, there is a finite set of predictable musical attributes that may be rotated in and out, based on the particulars of a given scene. (The most common of these attributes are listed in the Appendix, organized according to the five garden types.) Aside from directly mimetic nature sounds, these various musical attributes rarely have an intrinsic connection to either landscape or women, let alone a conflation of the two. Yet since opera and ballet are multimedia art forms, their music contains what Nicholas Cook has described as the “*potential* for the construction or negotiation of meaning in specific contexts.”<sup>9</sup> In other words, a constellation of media – libretto, décor, costume, and choreography – encourages the audience to selectively hear musical attributes that reinforce imagery seen onstage.<sup>10</sup> For this reason, critic Guénot-Lecoite could claim that the women’s *chœur dansé* in Tableau 2 of Donizetti’s *La Favorite* had “vague reminiscences of Meyerbeer’s bathers’ chorus” from *Les Huguenots*—even though the

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<sup>9</sup> Nicholas Cook, *Analyzing Musical Multimedia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 23. See also Cook’s “Theorizing Musical Meaning,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 23, no. 2 (2001): 170–95.

<sup>10</sup> This is essentially the same argument made by Locke in proposing his “full context” paradigm for interpreting musical exoticism, and the same “full context” approach is equally crucial in recognizing the *jardin des femmes* convention, which is defined by the collusion of visual, poetic, and musical images. See Ralph Locke, “A Broader View of Musical Exoticism,” *The Journal of Musicology* 24, no. 4 (2007): 477–521.

two pieces have few, if any, specific musical parallels. Instead, a combination of décor (“the beautiful shores of the Isla de León”), loosely similar stage action (“young girls sing and weave garlands”), and an evocative text confirm this theatrical likeness.<sup>11</sup> So strong was this perceived likeness that, although the women of *La Favorite* make no semblance of bathing, another critic wrote: “Do you remember the pretty scene of the bathers in the second act of *Les Huguenots*? Well, here is the same action that will recur: again gardens on the bank of the river, again mysterious pleasures and semi-nude dancers.”<sup>12</sup>

To be clear, the *jardin des femmes* convention is more than a mere voyeuristic tableau in which beautiful, thinly clad women sing and dance, framed by a picturesque garden background. Rather, I argue that this convention positions women as ecomorphic beings who emerge from nature like nymphs, sirens, and flower-maidens—thus, they are presented as the metaphoric embodiment of the garden itself. Furthermore, I posit the women’s *chœur dansé* as the central feature of this theatrical imaginary in which landscape is invested with abundant feminine sexual energy. For not only does the typical costuming of gauzy white dresses associate these women with Classical nymphs (minor deities local to a particular landform), but the very presence of dance also invokes ballet’s

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<sup>11</sup> “Voilà donc Fernand amoureux et pauvre, qui débarque sur les beaux rivages de l’île de Léon. Des jeunes filles chantent et tressent des guirlandes. Il y a dans tout cela de vagues réminiscences du chœur des Baigneuses de Meyerbeer, et il faut dire que le livret y contribue pour beaucoup.” G. Guénot-Lecoite, “Théâtres. Académie-Royale de Musique. *La Favorite*, opéra en quatre actes, paroles de MM. Alphonse Royer et Gustave Vaez, musique de M. Donizetti,” *La Sylphide*, 6 December 1840, 8.

<sup>12</sup> “[...] voici la même action qui va se reproduire ; encore des jardins au bord du fleuve, encore de mystérieuses voluptés et des danseuses à demi nues [...]” “Revue Musicale,” *Revue des Deux Mondes* 24(15 December 1840): 876.

emphasis on the body and objectified female sexuality.<sup>13</sup> Within the *jardin des femmes* convention, the women's *chœur dansé* brings the garden landscape to life through both song and dance, and thus reinforces a longstanding cultural conflation of landscape and the female body.

### **Landscape and Gender: Archetypal Gardens and Feminine Space**

The conflation of gender, sexuality and landscape is a broad, boundless theme, reinforced in some of Europe's earliest literary texts. The garden is an ideal site for this mode of image-making, since – as art historian Sue Best points out in her 1995 article “Sexualizing Space” – “bounded spatial entities” of human habitation such as countries, regions, cities, and homes have long been conceptualized in terms of the female body.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the garden as a metaphor for the eroticized female body is a familiar mythic trope: the enclosed garden (*hortus conclusus*) is a well-established *topos* of female virginity and sexual promise, and the enchanted gardens of Calypso, Alcine, and Armide

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<sup>13</sup> Marian Smith writes that the “acute sense of the body’s presence in ballet also allowed it to be objectified” and explains the institutional mechanisms (particularly the Opéra’s *foyer de la danse* and voyeuristic Jockey Club) that fueled “the perceived connection of ballet with sex in the public mind” of nineteenth-century Parisians. Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 68–71. Other studies of the overlap between opera, ballet, and the body are found in: Maribeth Clark, “Understanding French Grand Opera Through Dance” (dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1998); “Bodies at the Opéra: Art and the Hermaphrodite in the Dance Criticism of Théophile Gautier,” in *Reading Critics Reading: Opera and Ballet Criticism in France from the Revolution to 1848*, ed. Roger Parker and Mary Ann Smart (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 237–53. Mark Everist has argued that there was no dance at the Opéra-Comique during the July Monarchy and Second Empire, since *opéra comique* did not have the same generic requirements for dance as did the Opéra. Mark Everist, “*Choriste, danseur, comparse*: Dance and Movement in Opéra Comique during the July Monarchy and Second Empire” (paper presented at the Opera as Spectacle workshop, University of Nottingham, 2012). However, references to dance – or at least stylized movement – in the libretto, staging manual, and press review of Scribe and Auber’s *Le Cheval de Bronze* (premiered at the Opéra-Comique in 1835) suggest differently. *Le Cheval de Bronze* is examined in Chapter III of the present study as an example of Scribe’s use of the *jardin des femmes* convention at the Opéra-Comique.

<sup>14</sup> Sue Best, “Sexualizing Space,” in *Sexy Bodies: The Strange Carnalities of Feminism*, ed. Elizabeth Grosz and Elspeth Probyn (New York: Routledge, 1995), 181–82.



are dangerously alluring places of feminine seduction, entrapment, and artifice.<sup>15</sup> For indeed, the “entire landscape tradition” of Western culture is “built from a rich deposit of myths, memories, and obsessions,” as Simon Schama has argued.<sup>16</sup>

Poetic evocations of the sexualized *locus amoenus* can be traced to Virgil’s *Eclogues*, set in a “reinvented arcadia” where “Pan’s indiscriminate insemination has now become the spontaneous fecundity of nature itself.”<sup>17</sup> Virgil’s fourth eclogue details a particularly fertile landscape that, without the help of human cultivation, bursts forth with vines, flowers, fruits, grains, and spices; here the earth is gendered in terms of female reproduction, as a body who “pour[s] freely forth her childish gifts.”<sup>18</sup> This feminization of Arcadian nature and the metaphor of the female-body-as-landscape continued in Jacopo Sannazaro’s *Arcadia* (published 1504), particularly Sannazaro’s description of the nymph Amaranta (Amaranth) in Eclogue 3 and Prosa 4. Schama summarizes Sannazaro’s imagery and its impact on pastoral painting of the Renaissance:

There was the erotic landscape that appeared on the body of the nymph Amaranth, between whose budding breasts a path described a trail that descended toward deep and shady groves. So when recumbent nudes appear in the pastorals of Titian, Giogione, and Domenico Campagnola, the swellings and hollows of their body become a further *locus amoenus*, a “place of delight.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Helphand’s discussion of the gendered landscape in the Song of Songs in Kenneth I. Helphand, “My Garden, My Sister, My Bride’: the Garden of ‘The Song of Songs’,” in *Gender and Landscape: Renegotiating Morality and Space*, ed. Lorraine Dowler, Josephine Carubia, and Bonj Szczygiel (New York: Routledge, 2005), 254–68.

<sup>16</sup> Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 14.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 528.

<sup>18</sup> Virgil, *Eclogues* 4.18–19. English translation in: *The Poems of Virgil*, trans. James Rhoades (New York: Oxford University Press, 1921).

<sup>19</sup> Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 531.

Among the works influenced by Sannazaro's *Arcadia* was Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667), another landmark text in the history of Nature/Woman confluences. In his description of Eden, Milton characterizes the garden's flowers as ambiguous creations, symbolic of sexuality and temptation: Satan finds Eve among thickly entwined flowers, and Milton describes the vulnerable Eve herself as a flower. Centuries later, Honoré de Balzac's "Une fille d'Ève" (first published as a two-part essay in *Le Siècle*, 1838–39; later published as the first volume of Balzac's *Comédie humaine*) would popularize the stereotypical image of the nineteenth-century Parisian woman as a "daughter of Eve."<sup>20</sup> The term *fille d'Ève* not only denoted contemporary Parisian women as inheritors of Eve's original sin – and promulgators of feminine corruption – but also encouraged numerous garden and floral metaphors, as Elizabeth Menon has shown in her study of the *femme fatale* in late nineteenth-century Parisian visual and material culture.<sup>21</sup> The *fille d'Ève* was particularly linked to sensual appetites, materialism, vanity, and women's fashions, and Balzac's "Une fille d'Ève" features an extravagant ecomorphic ball scene to which we shall return in Chapter VI.

The transcoding of an individual woman and her garden realm, as in Milton's vivid conflation of Eve/Eden, is also characteristic of Calypso, Alcine, and Armide figures. The Calypso episode in Fénelon's didactic prose poem *Les Aventures de*

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<sup>20</sup> Elizabeth K. Menon, "Les Filles d'Ève in Word and Image," in *Writing and Seeing: Essays on Word and Image*, ed. Rui Carvalho Homem and Maria de Fátima Lambert (New York: Rodopi B.V., 2006), 157. Later examples analyzed by Menon include Grévin's twenty-one-plate album *Les filles d'Ève* (1868). The first four of Grévin's plates link women's fashions to plants, animals, birds, and reptiles; Menon notes that this conflation is of course satirical, but emphasizes nevertheless that "woman's relationship to nature was revived in his [Grévin's] lifetime, not only through the Creation myth, but also through contemporary fashion." *Evil By Design: The Creation and Marketing of the Femme Fatale* (Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 48–49.

<sup>21</sup> *Evil By Design: The Creation and Marketing of the Femme Fatale*, 128.

*Télémaque* (1699) features lavish poetic descriptions of Calypso’s grotto, suggestive of the sensual delights of the enchantress herself: luxuriant vines, balmy zephyrs, murmuring fountains, sweet perfumes, ripe fruits, and flowers continually bursting forth from the verdant earth.<sup>22</sup> Two sixteenth-century Italian epic poems, Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* (1516–1532) and Tasso’s epic poem *Gerusalemme liberata* (1581), likewise feature supernatural episodes in which a young man is held captive by a beautiful sorceress (Alcine in Ariosto; Armide in Tasso) in an enchanted garden of idealized pastoral illusions and erotic pleasures. Both *Orlando Furioso* and *Gerusalemme liberata* inspired a host of artistic re-imaginings; Tasso’s Armide episode was particularly influential on opera librettists and composers, resulting in the creation of over forty “Armide” operas during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>23</sup>

By the nineteenth century, however, interest in musical settings of the Armide episode had plummeted, and newly composed stage works on this subject were relatively scarce.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, in his *Essai sur l’Opéra français* of 1826, the librettist Victor-Joseph Étienne de Jouy defined opera as a “spectacle wherein the citizen may forget his troubles in a sweet enchantment”—and Jouy invested this escapist fantasy in the figure of Armide.<sup>25</sup> As described in Jouy’s essay, Armide in her enchanted garden is emblematic

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<sup>22</sup> On Fénelon’s Calypso episode and its significance to eighteenth-century descriptive poetry, as well as its early twentieth-century gloss by Aragon, see Moore, *Prose Poems of the French Enlightenment*, 42–48.

<sup>23</sup> David J. Buch, *Magic Flutes and Enchanted Forests: The Supernatural in Eighteenth-Century Musical Theater* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 377–378.

<sup>24</sup> Here I borrow Eric Hobsbawm’s label of “the long nineteenth-century,” as laid out by Hobsbawm’s trilogy, *The Age of Revolution: 1789–1848* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1962), *The Age of Capital: 1848–1875* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1975), and *The Age of Empire: 1875–1914* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1987).

<sup>25</sup> Quoted and translated in Anselm Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera: Music Theater in Paris in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Mary Whittall (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 44. In more recent times, Jean Starobinski has echoed this same idea of Armide as a personification of opera’s musical

of opera's ability to conjure forth a pleasurable, sensuous oasis: "her eyes heavy with languor and voluptuousness, she sits down in a cool grove perfumed with flowers, where the light is gentle and tinted by all the colors of the rainbow; the zephyr rocks the waters and the foliage with harmonies."<sup>26</sup> And, as we shall see, Armide was continually invoked by critics in their descriptions of operatic and balletic *jardins des femmes*. To give but one example in addition to those discussed in subsequent chapters: when Théophile Gautier lavished praise upon Despléchin's décor and the electric lighting effects for Act II of *La Filleule des Fées* (in which garden sculptures transform into living fairies), he described the setting as "a park, or rather a type of Garden of Armide, with a truly magical appearance" (Figure 1.1).<sup>27</sup>

Yet despite the idyllic landscapes painted by set designers, the ideology of the *jardin des femmes* convention is often problematic. For landscape is not mere nature-painting: rather, landscape is "a way of seeing—a way in which some Europeans have represented to themselves and to others the world about them and their relationships to it, and through which they have commented on social relations," to quote Denis Cosgrove's now-classic definition.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the persistent structuring and perception of landscape

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seductions. See Jean Starobinski, *Enchantment: The Seductress in Opera*, trans. C. Jon Delogu (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), xx–xxii. Starobinski has also considered Armide as a prototype of Kundry from Wagner's *Parsifal*: *ibid.*, 29–31.

<sup>26</sup> Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera*, 45.

<sup>27</sup> "Elle représente un parc, ou plutôt une espèce de jardin d'Armide d'un aspect vraiment magique [...]. La lumière électrique donne à ce décor une puissance d'effet incroyable: l'illusion est complète. C'est un vrai parc, une vraie lune; on dirait que les combles du théâtre effondrés laissent passer les rayons nocturnes. Ce décor fait le plus grand honneur à M. Despléchin, auteur de tant de belles toiles. Il est impossible de voir des arbres mieux dessinés, d'un plus grand style et d'un aspect plus poétique. M. Despléchin est un des meilleurs paysagistes de la décoration; il a de la noblesse, de l'élévation et compose admirablement." Théophile Gautier, *La Presse*, 15 October 1849.

<sup>28</sup> Denis E. Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 1.

“in terms of the female body and the beauty of Nature” has been critiqued as a product of masculinist visual ideology.<sup>29</sup> An important early work addressing this phenomenon is Annette Kolodny’s *The Lay of the Land* (1975), which examines land-as-woman metaphors used by European male settlers of North America. Another foundational text is Gillian Rose’s *Feminism and Geography* (1993), which critiques the traditional privileging of the white male heterosexual perspective within the discipline of geography.<sup>30</sup> Other feminist literary critics, art historians, and cultural geographers have likewise argued for an understanding of landscape as a cultural construction that reinforces gender ideologies and social hierarchies by equating the natural world with the female body.<sup>31</sup> These scholars’ work is particularly germane to nineteenth-century French opera and ballet, where women and landscape – specifically, gardens – are often conflated within a scopophilic male gaze.

In cultural geography, the terms “space” and “place” are typically used, respectively, to distinguish between generic and specific concepts of existence, location, and mobility. If space is “a continuous area or expanse that is free, available, or unoccupied,” it is immediately transformed into a place once it is invested with tangible meaning—a given name, an associated memory, human habitation, and so forth. Thus,

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<sup>29</sup> Gillian Rose, *Feminism and Geography: the Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 87. An important and foundational critique of this phenomenon is found in Chapter V, “Looking at Landscape: the Uneasy Pleasures of Power,” in *ibid.*, 86–112.

<sup>30</sup> Annette Kolodny, *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975); Rose, *Feminism and Geography*.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Catherine Nash, “Remapping and Renaming: New Cartographies of Identity, Gender and Landscape in Ireland,” *Feminist Review* 44(Summer 1993): 41–60.

place is “enclosed and humanized space,” as Yi-Fu Tuan has asserted.<sup>32</sup> In this sense, the various *jardins des femmes* analyzed in this study could be designated as feminine or feminized places since they have specific, differentiated geographic locations and are sites of human activity. So, too, are these gardens imprinted with deep cultural meaning, including associations with archetypal mythic and literary gardens.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 1.1.** Janet Lange, illustration of Désplechin’s décor for Act II, Tableau 1 of *La Filleule des Fées*. Published in *L’Illustration* (1849). F-Po Estampes Scènes Filleule des Fées (5).

Yet throughout this study, my preferred term in discussing the *jardin des femmes* convention is feminine space, not place, based on the secondary definition of space as

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<sup>32</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 54.

“the dimensions of height, depth, and width within which all things exist and move” (*OED*).<sup>33</sup> In theatrical genres, staging and choreography convey “feminine space” through the visual and kinetic organization of female bodies; and where available, I make use of *mise-en-scène* or choreographic manuals to examine how feminine space is structured on stage. Though the feminization of space has been criticized for presenting the female body as a passive, receptive, malleable “container” awaiting male authorship, Linda McDowell counters that “space is not inert, not merely a container for social action, but is a significant element in the constitution of identity.”<sup>34</sup> It is in this spirit that I use the term feminine space: for if space refers to an interval or span that separates characters or objects, then feminine space need not be blank or lacking, but rather a sort of synergistic energy shared among women. This type of feminine space is powerful and can, at times, enable women of the *jardin des femmes* to assert their own authorial voice.

### **Musico-Dramatic Topographies and *Topoi***

Feminist readings of opera and ballet are prevalent in existing scholarship, a trend initiated over two decades ago with then-controversial works by Catherine Clément and

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<sup>33</sup> The concept of socially constructed feminine space is explored in such studies as: Daphne Spain, *Gendered Spaces* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Griselda Pollock, “Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity,” in *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 50–90; Linda McDowell, “City and Home: Urban Housing and the Sexual Division of Space,” in *Sexual Divisions: Patterns and Processes*, ed. Mary Evans and Clare Ungerson (London: Tavistock, 1983), 142–63; Anna Despotopoulou, “Fanny’s Gaze and the Construction of Feminine Space in *Mansfield Park*,” *The Modern Language Review* 99, no. 3 (2004): 569–83.

<sup>34</sup> Linda McDowell, *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 68. Likewise, Massey has challenged Sue Best’s study of the feminization of space (cited above), asserting that space and place can be understood as active rather than passive. See Doreen Massey, “Politics and Space/Time,” *New Left Review* 196(1992): 65–84.

Susan McClary.<sup>35</sup> In the past ten years, the discipline of musicology has also experienced a surge of interest in ecocriticism, evidenced by recent scholarly works by Denise Von Glahn, Brooks Toliver, Holly Watkins, and Daniel Grimley, to name only a few.<sup>36</sup> However, the application of both feminist criticism and landscape studies to the analysis of opera and ballet is still nascent. The collusion of gender, sexuality, and the garden has previously been examined by Wye Allanbrook, Mary Hunter, and Tia DeNora in their respective studies of Mozart's buffa operas; Allanbrook's analysis of Susannah's aria "Deh, vieni" from *Le nozze di Figaro* is particularly germane to my own investigation of feminized, embodied landscape.<sup>37</sup> The conflation of women and flowers in theatrical culture of the late nineteenth-century *fin-de-siècle* is also well documented.<sup>38</sup> However,

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<sup>35</sup> Catherine Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988); Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991); *Georges Bizet: Carmen*, Cambridge Opera Handbooks (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>36</sup> Denise Von Glahn, *The Sounds of Place: Music and the American Cultural Landscape* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2003); *Music and the Skillful Listener: American Women Compose the Natural World* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013); Brooks Toliver, "Eco-ing in the Canyon: Ferde Grofé's Grand Canyon Suite and the Transformation of Wilderness," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 57, no. 2 (2004): 325–67; Holly Watkins, "The Pastoral After Environmentalism: Nature and Culture in Stephen Albert's Symphony: RiverRun," *Current Musicology* 84(2007): 7–24; "The Horticultural Aesthetics of Schumann's *Blumenstück*, op. 19" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society, Pittsburgh, PA, 2009); Daniel Grimley, *Grieg: Music, Landscape, and Norwegian Identity* (Rochester, NY: Boydell, 2006).

<sup>37</sup> Regarding the pastoral literary technique of the pathetic fallacy in the "Deh, vieni" text, Allanbrook notes, "Because all natural elements in the magic garden take on human habits, humans merge naturally with the landscape. Susanna seems to be a nymph or dryad, some minor local deity murmuring incantatory promises [...]." Wye Jamison Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart: Le Nozze di Figaro and Don Giovanni* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 174. See also Mary Hunter, "Landscapes, Gardens, and Gothic Settings in the *Opera Buffa* of Mozart and His Italian Contemporaries," *Current Musicology* 51(Fall 1991): 94–104; Tia DeNora, "The Biology Lessons of Opera Buffa: Gender, Nature, and Bourgeois Society on Mozart's Buffa Stage," in *Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna*, ed. Mary Hunter and James Webster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 146–64.

<sup>38</sup> In her recent dissertation, Sarah Gutsche-Miller has identified numerous divertissements and tableaux for "floral" women in music-hall ballets, including dances for flowers and water-dwelling creatures in *Fleurs et Plumes* (Folies-Bergères, 1887); a tableau in which hundreds of flowers open simultaneously in *Orsowa* (Folies-Bergères, 1892); a ballet for perfumes and a waltz for flowers in *Visions!* (Olympia, 1898); and a ballet of daisies (i.e., "marguerites") when Faust searches the world for Marguerite in *Faust* (Olympia, 1900). Sarah Gutsche-Miller, "Pantomime-Ballet on the Music-Hall Stage: The Popularisation of Classical



despite the prevalence of the garden as a gendered site of intimacy and desire in French music theater from the first half of the nineteenth century, the significance of this theatrical setting and its female inhabitants has not yet been acknowledged.

To date, the most important scholarly work on the intersection of landscape and gender in opera is Emanuele Senici's monograph *Landscape and Gender in Italian Opera: the Alpine Virgin from Bellini to Puccini* (2005). Senici describes the landscape of Italian opera as a "site of human geography," noting that the voice of nature was heard primarily through the women who inhabited it. Therefore, impressions and experiences of the natural world were most often mediated by the emotional state of female characters.<sup>39</sup> This metaphoric relationship between women and landscape generated specific archetypes of place and character, and Senici discusses the symbolic association of virginal heroines with pristine mountain settings.<sup>40</sup> The present study addresses similar matters of landscape, gender, and archetype, but within another theatrical setting and a different national repertoire: specifically, private garden scenes in French opera and ballet of the 1830s and 40s.

Whereas Senici's work uses the post-Lacanian psychoanalytic models of Julia Kristeva and Kaja Silverman to theorize the power of the female (maternal) voice as

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Ballet in Fin-de-Siècle Paris" (dissertation, McGill University, 2010), 28–29 and 387–402 (Appendix B). See also Clair Rowden's discussion of performer Loïe Fuller as a "fille fleur" in Clair Rowden, "Introduction," in *Jules Massenet, Thaïs: Dossier de Presse Parisienne (1894)*, ed. Clair Rowden (Heilbronn: Lucie Galland, 2000), xxx–xxxii. On the image of the "fille fleur" or femme-fleur" in visual culture, see: Menon, *Evil By Design: The Creation and Marketing of the Femme Fatale*, particularly 17–39 ("Les filles d'Eve") and 127–63 ("Les fleurs du mal"); Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>39</sup> Emanuele Senici, *Landscape and Gender in Italian Opera: the Alpine Virgin from Bellini to Puccini* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 19.

<sup>40</sup> Senici writes: "In nineteenth-century opera the portrayal of an emphatically virginal heroine is often associated with a mountain setting, most frequently the Alps, where the clarity of the sky, the whiteness of the snow, the purity of the air function as symbols for the innocence of the female protagonist." *Ibid.*, 2.

love-object, my critical lens is that of feminist cultural geography, which reminds us that the pleasures of looking at women and landscape are inextricably bound to visual ideologies of gender, power, and privilege. In applying feminist cultural geography to opera and ballet analysis, I begin with visual modes of topographical and spatial representation: décor and costume maquettes, descriptive libretto texts, staging manual indications, and eyewitness accounts culled from press reviews and illustrations. Yet my approach is not limited to visual media: for the gendered landscape is not merely seen, but can be heard as well. How, though, might music represent the garden landscape and, furthermore, sonically define feminine space within that landscape?

In defining the *jardin des femmes* as a scenic *topos* (that is, a recurring topic or commonplace), I turn to theories of musical *topoi*. Musical topic theory, pioneered by Leonard Ratner and further examined by Kofi Agawu, Robert Hatten, and Raymond Monelle, among others, does much to elucidate the scene-painting techniques used by composers of dramatic music.<sup>41</sup> In a foundational article on musical gesture and meaning in late eighteenth-century dramatic music, David Charlton introduces the concept of an image-generating orchestral texture or “medium,” noting that the word medium “is intended to embody the notions of an ‘environment’ and ‘the liquid vehicle with which

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<sup>41</sup> See Leonard Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York: Schirmer, 1980); *Romantic Music: Sound and Syntax* (New York: Schirmer, 1992); Raymond Monelle, *The Sense of Music: Semiotic Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); *The Musical Topic* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006). For example, the music written for garden settings often invokes features of the pastoral topic; and in the case of supernatural garden types, the ombra topic, moonlight topic, and *style féérique* are important tools of signification. On the pastoral topic, see “Part Four: Shepherds” in *ibid.*, 185–71. On the *style féérique*, see Francesca Brittan, “On Microscopic Hearing: Fairy Magic, Natural Science, and the *Scherzo fantastique*,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64, no. 3 (2011): 527–600; Janice Dickensheets, “The Topical Vocabulary of the Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of Musicological Research* 31(2012); Sarah Clemmens Waltz, “In Defense of Moonlight,” *Beethoven Forum* 14, no. 1 (2007).

pigments are mixed for use.”<sup>42</sup> Charlton’s notion of orchestral medium is particularly influential on my own analysis, since instrumental timbre and orchestral texture were of crucial significance in nineteenth-century Parisian dramatic music: this period witnessed great fascination with orchestral color, as evinced by commentary in the press, the publication of numerous orchestration treatises, and the inclusion of new instruments or instrumental techniques in the scores themselves.<sup>43</sup> In addition to existing scholarship on musical topics and gestures, I integrate reviews and other articles from the Parisian press that elucidate how nineteenth-century listeners interpreted the scenographic capabilities of the orchestra.

Moreover, as my study demonstrates, evocations of garden settings and gendered space in nineteenth-century opera frequently returned to certain distinctive palettes of instruments in specific textural combinations. This should not be surprising to feminist critics, who have long argued that gender is a learned performance: Simone de Beauvoir observed that one “becomes” a woman, and Judith Butler has described gender as a “culmination of performative acts” that perpetuate normative behaviors through

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<sup>42</sup> David Charlton, "Orchestra and Image in the Late Eighteenth Century," *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 102(1975–76): 1. Mary Ann Smart, *Mimomania: Music and Gesture in Nineteenth-Century Opera*, California Studies in Nineteenth-Century Music (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Charlton, "Orchestra and Image in the Late Eighteenth Century; 'Envoicing' the Orchestra: Enlightenment Metaphors in Theory and Practice," in *French Opera 1730–1830: Meaning and Media* (Brookfield, VT: Aldershot, 2000).

<sup>43</sup> In addition to Berlioz’s orchestration treatise, other important treatises from this period include those by Fétis (1837) and Kastner (*Traité général d’instrumentation*, 1837; *Cours d’instrumentation considéré sous les rapports poétiques et philosophiques de l’art*, 1839; supplements for both treatises, 1844). Hervé Lacombe has noted the importance of “correspondences” between instrumental timbre and metaphors of light and color in nineteenth-century French opera. See Hervé Lacombe, *The Keys to French Opera in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Edward Schneider (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 151–54.

repetition.<sup>44</sup> Building on Butler's theory of gender performativity, Julie Noonan notes in her study of female vocal tessitura in American musical theater that the performance of gender includes sonic actions of the body.<sup>45</sup> Yet it is not merely vocal tessitura that marks a musico-dramatic space as stereotypically feminine; as part of this study, I interrogate the recurring orchestral textures and timbres that surround, support, and even signify groups of female bodies.<sup>46</sup> Finally, as mentioned above, Nicholas Cook's analytical approach to musical multimedia explains the presence of music that does not immediately and explicitly seem to signify either gardens or women. Based on Cook's theory of signifying potential in musical multimedia, certain musical attributes can be selectively heard as reinforcing onstage events, characters, and/or décor in the *jardin des femmes* convention.<sup>47</sup>

### **The *Jardin des Femmes* Convention: Five Case Studies**

The metaphoric link between Woman and Nature (particularly the controlled, culturally mediated Nature found in a garden) is one made across cultural discourses—

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<sup>44</sup> Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 519–31. See also Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 171–90.

<sup>45</sup> Julie A. Noonan, "The Sound of Musicals' Women: Tessitura and the Construction of Gender in the American Musical" (dissertation, University of Kansas, 2006), 2.

<sup>46</sup> For example, composer Casimir Gide reused music for the opening of *La Volière* (performed less than ten times) in the opening of Act II of *Ozaï*. Both are scenes of female companionship and *communitas*: in *La Volière*, young Creole girls eat rice, gather water, and so forth while Zoé sits contemplatively in the garden; in *Ozaï*, Madame and Mademoiselle Bougainville assist the Tahitian island girl Ozaï with her *toilette*.

<sup>47</sup> Cook emphasizes that "music never is 'alone'" and suggests that "it is wrong to speak of music *having* particular meanings; rather, it has the potential for specific meanings to emerge under specific circumstances." Cook, "Theorizing Musical Meaning," 180.

literary, scientific, philosophical, material, and so forth.<sup>48</sup> Within the scope of this study, however, my focus is on a system of musico-visual images within Parisian theatrical discourse, and the effect of these images on dramaturgy. This is not to say that theatrical image-making was not influenced by other contemporary discourses—quite the contrary. However, my main purpose is to establish recognition of the *jardin des femmes* as a prevalent scenic convention in Parisian opera and ballet of the 1830s and '40s, define its characteristic features, and analyze its dramatic significance (beyond mere decorative amusement) within selected works. To echo the sentiment of Jean Starobinski: “it is not so much sources that I am seeking as proof of the persistence of a system of images in European culture.”<sup>49</sup> Indeed, Gautier noted the merging of various archetypal gardens in the second tableau of Donizetti’s opera *La Favorite* (1840): “What is this ambiguous and mysterious retreat? An island of Calypso, a palace of Armide, a garden of Alcine: — a bit of all of these.”<sup>50</sup> Yet the scene type of the *jardin des femmes* is not simply reproduced and frivolously inserted in grand operas for coloristic or titillating effects: rather, it is multivalent, and might be variously employed and manipulated to serve the drama.

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<sup>48</sup> See for example Maurice Bloch and Jean H. Bloch, "Women and the Dialectics of Nature in Eighteenth-Century French Thought," in *Nature, Culture and Gender*, ed. Carol MacCormack and Marilyn Strathern (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 25–41. Numerous scholars have interrogated this metaphoric construction of sexualized, feminized Nature as a product of Enlightenment science, particularly Linnaean botany. To list only a few: DeNora, "The Biology Lessons of Opera Buffa: Gender, Nature, and Bourgeois Society on Mozart's Buffa Stage," 146–64; Amy M. King, *Bloom: The Botanical Vernacular in the English Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Alison Syme, *A Touch of Blossom: John Singer Sargent and the Queer Flora of Fin-de-Siècle Art* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010); Theresa M. Kelley, *Clandestine Marriage: Botany and Romantic Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012).

<sup>49</sup> Starobinski, *Enchantment*, 30. Starobinski writes here of the parallels between Wagner’s *Parsifal* and Gluck’s *Armide*.

<sup>50</sup> “Quelle est cette retraite équivoque et mystérieuse ? Une île de Calypso, un palais d’Armide, un jardin d’Alcine : — un peu de tout cela. ” Théophile Gautier, "Académie royale de Musique. — *La Favorite*, opéra en quatre actes, paroles de M. Alphonse Royer et Gustave Vaëz, musique de Donizetti," *La Presse*, 7 December 1840, 1.

I begin in Chapter II with Scribe and Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots* (1836), a canonic piece in both present-day scholarship and in nineteenth-century critical discourse. Act II of *Les Huguenots*, set in the gardens of Chenonceau, was certainly the most frequently performed example of the *jardin des femmes* convention during the July Monarchy era and throughout the nineteenth century. Moreover, *Les Huguenots* was the emblematic piece for Parisian critics' discussions of female ensemble scenes and stereotypically feminine music, imbued with such attributes as "freshness" and "grace." Therefore, I use this well-known opera to introduce the typical features of the *jardin des femmes* convention. Toward the end of the chapter, I turn to the comedic genre of vaudeville, in which the music of the famous *chœur des baigneuses* ("Jeunes beautés sous ce feuillage") from Act II of *Les Huguenots* was multiple times borrowed and retexted. These humorous appropriations not only demonstrate the familiarity of the *jardin des femmes* convention within Parisian theatrical culture, but also speak to the status of "Jeunes beautés" as a musical emblem of female community and sensuality.

*Les Huguenots* was not, however, the first example of the *jardin des femmes* convention. Dating back to the 1820s, Eugène Scribe had cultivated this scenic convention in his opéra-comique libretti, including *Le Paradis de Mahomet* (1822), *Actéon* (1835) and *Le Cheval de Bronze* (1835). Scribe's transfer of this scenic type to works such as *Les Huguenots* (and *La Favorite*, the subject of Chapter IV) thus suggests genre crossover from opéra-comique to grand opera, a subject that has been illuminated by Mark Everist's work on Meyerbeer and Halévy.<sup>51</sup> Scribe's use of the *jardin des*

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<sup>51</sup> See "The Name of the Rose: Meyerbeer's *opéra comique*, *Robert le diable*" and "Fromental Halévy: From *opéra comique* to *grand opéra*" in: Mark Everist, *Giacomo Meyerbeer and Music Drama in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, Variorum Collected Studies Series (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 177–240.

*femmes* convention in both genres is also a testament to his codification of effective dramatic formulas, as Karin Pendle has previously demonstrated in the case of other scene types.<sup>52</sup> Chapter III focuses on Scribe and Auber's *Le Cheval de Bronze*, one of Scribe's *jardins des femmes* in the genre of *opéra comique*. Act III of *Le Cheval de Bronze* is perhaps the most fanciful of all *jardins des femmes* settings—the celestial gardens of Princess Stella on the (all-female) planet Venus.

With its Mughal princess and company of women in gauzy flowing fabrics, Act III of *Le Cheval de Bronze* exemplifies the Orientalist “garden of women” as both harem and Qu’ranic paradise. In Orientalist discourse, the enclosed space of the seraglio was understood as a metaphorical garden of women: for example, Thomas Moore’s widely read *Lalla Rookh* (1817) described the harem of Mughal emperor Jehangir as “a parterre of the flowers of this planet”; and in a footnote, Moore added the claim that the same word was used in the Malay language for “woman” as for “flower.”<sup>53</sup> In turn, the Qu’ranic paradise was stereotyped as a celestial harem of alluring *houris*, a connection made explicit in Scribe’s earlier *opéra-comique* *Le Paradis de Mahomet*.<sup>54</sup> Thus, the women of the planet Venus represent the unusual intersection of Eastern exoticism, eroticized mysticism, and science fiction.

I return to the genre of grand opera in Chapter IV with Donizetti’s French-language opera *La Favorite*, premiered at the Paris Opéra in 1841. The genesis *La*

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<sup>52</sup> See Karin Pendle, *Eugène Scribe and French Opera of the Nineteenth Century* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1979).

<sup>53</sup> Kelley, *Clandestine Marriage: Botany and Romantic Culture*, 92.

<sup>54</sup> Of course, Edward Said would point out that this construction of Islam is part of a Western enterprise to position the East as inferior and subservient to the West. Said writes: “Islam is judged to be a fraudulent new version of some previous experience, in this case Christianity.” Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 59. By presenting the Qu’ranic paradise as a celestial harem, Orientalist authors presented Islam as morally depraved and extravagantly sensual, versus Christianity.

*Favorite* was fraught with numerous musical and dramatic reworkings—a complicated history that has been unknotted by Rebecca Harris-Warrick (1993; 1999). Among the layers of the *La Favorite* palimpsest is Eugène Scribe’s revised scenic plan, in which the Neapolitan setting of Royer and Vaëz’s *L’Ange de Nisida* libretto is discarded in favor of a fourteenth-century Spanish setting. This translocation, according to Harris-Warrick, “provided opportunities for Moorish and Spanish local color, but had minor impact on the plot whose outlines owe little to history.”<sup>55</sup> Yet the role of setting and place in opera and ballet is not simply as a backdrop that provides local color: rather, it is integral to the dramatic narrative and characterization.

In fact, I argue that Scribe’s geographic re-envisioning of *La Favorite* was not simply a superficial attempt at historical verisimilitude, nor a mere excuse for decorative exoticism. Rather, the specific locations detailed in Scribe’s scenic plan – the monastery of Santiago de Compostela, the Isla de León, and the Alcázar of Seville – are rich in cultural and dramatic meaning. Indeed, topographical and spatial contrasts among these three Spanish landmarks – reinforced by the timbral contrasts of Donizetti’s musical scene-painting – reveal major thematic polarities crucial to the dramaturgy of *La Favorite*: sacred/secular pilgrimage, sexual freedom/captivity, and pastoral retreat/return. Moreover, protagonists’ travel to and from these places maps the trajectory of their respective psychological and spiritual journeys over the course of the opera. Here I borrow from literary critic J. Hillis Miller, who proposes that the stories told in novels “are not so much placed against the background of the scene as generated by it” and that

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<sup>55</sup> Rebecca Harris-Warrick, *La Favorite, opéra en quatre actes: Introduction, Sources, Critical Commentary* (Milan: Ricordi, 1999), 36.



the mapping of these stories gives rise to “the metonymy whereby environment may be a figure for what it environs.”<sup>56</sup>

The case of *La Favorite* also demonstrates how the *jardin des femmes* convention could be perpetuated or altered by influential individual players. Brought in by Opéra director Léon Pillet to revise Royer and Vaëz’s first opera libretto, the veteran dramatist Scribe not only developed a new scenic plan but also made sure to include a new tableau with a *jardin des femmes* (Tableau 2, a *locus amoenus* on the Isla de León). For, as we have seen in *Le Cheval de Bronze* and *Les Huguenots*, Scribe’s established vocabulary for the *jardin des femmes* convention had already proven effective in creating strong scenic and dramatic contrast. I would argue further that the success of operas set to Scribe’s formula-driven libretti was in large part responsible for the codification of the *jardin des femmes* convention. Like Scribe, mezzo-soprano Rosine Stoltz also shaped the history of the *jardin des femmes* convention. As Pillet’s mistress, she exerted particular control over operas written for her—such as *La Favorite*. By insisting on being the sole principal female singer, Stoltz effectively eliminated the coloratura soprano role typically the province of queens and princesses who rule the *jardin des femmes* (as in Marguerite of *Les Huguenots* or Stella of *Le Cheval de Bronze*).<sup>57</sup> The soprano role of Inès in *La Favorite* is not particularly florid or virtuosic, and given contemporary critics’ complaints that the soprano who premiered the role (M<sup>me</sup> Elian) had not been allowed to display her full vocal gifts, it seems possible that Rosine Stoltz’s demands effectively modified the

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<sup>56</sup> J. Hillis Miller, *Topographies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 18–20.

<sup>57</sup> Mary Ann Smart writes of Stoltz: “She refused to share the stage with any other principal soprano, thus almost single-handedly making obsolete the convention of paired lyrical and virtuosic female leads.” Mary Ann Smart, “Roles, Reputations, Shadows: Singers at the Opéra, 1828–1849,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Grand Opera*, ed. David Charlton (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 122–23.

*jardin des femmes* convention – at least temporarily – to prevent her lyrical mezzo-soprano voice from being upstaged.

If the secondary female role in *La Favorite* was greatly reduced, it was eliminated altogether in Saint-Georges and Halévy's *La Reine de Chypre* (1841), another star vehicle for Stoltz and the focus of Chapter V. Yet even without a dazzling entrance aria for a princess or enchantress in a supporting, “decorative” coloratura soprano role – and, for that matter, without a love or seduction duet – I argue that Act III of this opera nevertheless employs the *jardin des femmes* convention. *La Reine de Chypre* exemplifies a particular type of *jardin des femmes*, namely the aristocratic pleasure garden. Unlike the other types of *jardins des femmes*, the aristocratic pleasure garden need not be exclusively female but rather can have a mixed company of both men and women. In this garden, women are often displayed as consorts and courtesans—as precious sexual possessions and decorative emblems of male socioeconomic power, much like the opulent garden itself.

After all, the most important component of the *jardin des femmes* convention is its lush garden setting and its staging of female-community-as-landscape through a *chœur dansé* of ecomorphic women. This feature is central to Act III of *La Reine de Chypre*, and was in fact recognized by critics as the climax of the act: amid the festivities of Cypriot and Venetian noblemen in the illuminated gardens of a Nicosian casino, a troupe of courtesans emerges from the gardens and surrounds the men with singing and dancing. The courtesans' entwining, overwhelming movements are a corporeal analogue to the casino garden itself, a tangle of coiled vines and twisted branches—this reading is not one of my own imagining, but rather one reflected in contemporary press reviews of *La*

*Reine de Chypre*. And if the courtesans seem, at first blush, to be mere lascivious entertainment for the Venetian noblemen's bacchanal, they soon exert their own agency, thus destabilizing the straightforward discipline of the men's objectifying gaze. The courtesans hypnotize the noblemen with promises of a reborn Cythera and overwhelm them with dizzying dances, and the noblemen are subsumed within this labyrinth of enlacing foliage and women.

The masochistic desire to be overwhelmed by dangerous, feminized Nature is a trademark of the Romantic Sublime landscape, and while *La Reine de Chypre* hints at this darker power of Nature/Woman, a work premiered at the Opéra six months prior to *La Reine de Chypre* illustrates this principle with even greater intensity. Chapter VI examines the ballet-pantomime *Giselle* (1841) as a type of Sublime *jardin des femmes*, a wild and disorienting garden in which intrepid men risk (and even lose) their lives. My purpose here is twofold: first, to show that the *jardin des femmes* convention appears as an organizational device in ballet-pantomime as well as opera; and second, to contextualize Act II of *Giselle* within the demonic strand of the *jardin des femmes* convention. In so doing, I situate *Giselle* alongside other works in which supernatural women perform demonic rituals in a nocturnal garden. Most notable of these is *Robert le Diable* (1831), with its famous scene of ghostly nuns who enact their debauched rites (a procession, bacchanale, and three seductive *airs de ballet*) in a moonlit cloister—a setting centered on a contemplative monastic garden. Another work less well known as an antecedent to *Giselle* is the 1834 Paris production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (as *Don Juan*), which featured an added final tableau in which Don Juan is haunted by a chorus of the damned and a procession of young girls in white dresses (his “seraglio of ghosts,” to

quote one critic) who emerge from the recesses of his chateau gardens. Unlike the garden types of previous chapters, in which male envelopment is a pleasurable erotic experience, the feminine space of the demonic ritual garden is an alluring yet terrifying Sublime that threatens to subsume and destroy.

I also contextualize the *jardin des femmes* in Act II of *Giselle* within Fantastic literature, in which women's fashions are often linked to environmental phenomena. For example, colorfully dressed society women are likened to the flowers of a richly designed garden in "Die Geschichte vom verlorren Spiegelbilde" (The Story of the Lost Reflection) from E.T.A. Hoffmann's "Die Abenteuer der Sylvester-Nacht" (New Year's Eve Adventures, 1815), first published in the fourth volume of his *Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier* and translated into French by 1830. Admittedly, this a German tale, set in Italy; nevertheless, it was widely read in Paris (as "L'Histoire du Reflet Perdu") and therefore contributed to the image of the Fantastic *jardin des femmes* in French literary discourse. At the beginning of Hoffmann's tale-within-a-tale, the protagonist Erasmus Spikher attends a soirée in a "marvelously illuminated garden, where flowers give off the sweetest perfumes."<sup>58</sup> In Erasmus's mind, these flowers seem to merge with the women of the garden: "the women, dressed in rich clothing of different colors and forms, resembled delightful flowers in their capricious and fantastic *toilette*."<sup>59</sup> It is here, overwhelmed by the sensuous delights of the brilliant and fragrant nocturnal garden, that

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<sup>58</sup> "Ainsi advint-il que ces jeunes gens, (Érasme, à peine âgé de vingt-sept ans, pouvait bien faire nombre avec eux), donnèrent un soir une fête dans un jardin merveilleusement illuminé, et dont les fleurs répandaient les plus doux parfums." E.T.A. Hoffmann, "Les Aventures de la Nuit de Saint-Sylvestre," in *Contes*, ed. Théodore Toussenet (Paris: Pougin, 1838), 274.

<sup>59</sup> "Les dames, couverte de riches vêtements, de couleurs, de formes différentes, semblaient, dans leur toilette capricieuse et fantastique, autant de fleurs délicieuses." *Ibid.*, 274–75. In the original German text, Hoffmann describes the women as *liebliche wandelnde Blumen* (lovely walking flowers), thus making even more explicit the concept of an animated garden of women.

Erasmus will first encounter the beautiful yet demonic courtesan Giulietta, who appears in the grove like a magical apparition, first emerging “from the bosom of the dark night” and then disappearing in the distance through “an alley of verdure.”<sup>60</sup> In Chapter VI, I focus on passages from Hugo, Gautier, and Balzac in which the ball is imagined as a conservatory of women who resemble not flowers, but insects; this poetic imagery of ecomorphic women with gauzy “wings” (that is, scarves and wraps) is mirrored in Adam’s *Giselle* score, which likewise characterizes the Wilis as placid butterflies—and swarming wasps.

A major theme of *Giselle* is the dangerous attraction of dancing itself, a theme emphasized by the two texts that inspired Gautier’s conception of the ballet. Victor Hugo’s poem “Fantômes” from *Les Orientales* (1829) tells of a beautiful young Spanish girl who “loved the ball too much, and that is what killed her.”<sup>61</sup> Likewise, Heinrich Heine’s description of ghostly Wilis in his *De l’Allemagne* notes, “In their stilled hearts and lifeless feet, there remains a love for dancing which they were unable to satisfy during their lifetimes.”<sup>62</sup> This insatiable love for dancing is a metaphoric euphemism for sexual desire, as many critics and scholars have pointed out.<sup>63</sup> And of course, dancing

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<sup>60</sup> “En ce moment, un léger bruit se fit entendre à l’entrée du bosquet, et, du sein de la nuit sombre, on vit s’avancer, à la lueur des bougies, une femme, merveilleusement belle.” Ibid., 277. “Pendant le chœur allemand que les jeunes gens entonnèrent pour clore la fête, Giulietta avait disparu du bosquet ; on la vit, précédée de deux domestiques qui portaient des flambeaux, passer au loin dans une allée de verdure.” Ibid., 280.

<sup>61</sup> “Elle aimait trop le bal, c’est ce qui l’a tuée.” Quoted in Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 171. My literal translation here differs from Henry Carrington’s poetic translation, which appears in Smith.

<sup>62</sup> Quoted and translated in *ibid.*, 172.

<sup>63</sup> Susan Foster, for one, writes that *Giselle*’s passion for dancing “both reinforces and contributes to her desire by cultivating her preference for play over work and body over mind.” Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreography and Narrative: Ballet’s Staging of Story and Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 243. Sarah Davis Cordova is more explicit: “For some, loving to dance too much connoted sexual promiscuity, while dying from dancing signified orgasm as in ‘la petite mort.’” Sarah Davis Cordova, “Romanic ballet in France: 1830–1850,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Ballet*, ed. Marion

was fatal not only to imprudent young women who gave themselves over to its physical stimulation, but also to the unfortunate young men seduced into the nocturnal bacchanals of the dansomaniacal Wilis. In Gautier's original scenario, the two acts of *Giselle* were essentially two ball scenes: one earthly, in an aristocratic hall (though prior to the guests' arrival, the Wilis briefly appear, drawn by opportunity to dance in a glittering ballroom); and one supernatural—the Wilis' Fantastic ball in a forest glade.<sup>64</sup> Even after Saint-Georges's revisions to Gautier's scenario, *Giselle* remained a ballet that is fundamentally *about* dance. What's more, the representation of the Act II forest glade as a dance floor for the Wilis' Fantastic ball reflects a larger discursive trend in which the visual spectacle of balls was imagined as a kaleidoscopic, even phantasmagoric conservatory of insectean women.<sup>65</sup>

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Kant (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 115. A reading of the dancing-sex-madness-death complex in *Giselle* as a metaphor for contemporary anxieties about prostitution and syphilis (as a type of sexual revenge) is found in Felicia McCarren, *Dance Pathologies: Performance, Poetics, Medicine* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 69–71. Peter Stoneley addresses the two conflicting rationales for the Wilis' sexual appetite found in Gautier's libretto: "He [Gautier] explains that they love to dance because they died before their marriages could take place. In this account, dancing stands in as an obvious euphemism for the pleasures of the marriage bed. The women seek out in death what they missed out on in life. But Gautier also suggests that [...] the Wilis are girls who have died as a result of an excessive love of dancing. The Wilis are also, then, the shades of young women who were destroyed by their own nymphomaniacal devotion to pleasure." Stoneley, *A Queer History of the Ballet*, 30–31. Stoneley reads the character of Myrtha as "a masculine fantasy of the older woman's desire for predominance over the incoherent or undecided young woman" as in Diderot's *La Religieuse*, and suggests the possibility that – although "the ballet insists on the dominant woman as an ultimate evil" – female viewers attracted to other women may have self-identified with Myrtha and the Wilis. *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>64</sup> Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 174.

<sup>65</sup> Press accounts of contemporary balls and fêtes use this same vocabulary, as well, suggesting that these social occasions – many of which were held in actual gardens or greenhouses – created a carnivalesque atmosphere in which the distinctions might easily be blurred between women's fashions and marvels of the natural world (insect wings and flower petals, for example). This is an area that I plan to address in future work, with a particular focus on the ballet *Le Violon du Diable* and its concluding tableau, "Les Fleurs Animées," inspired by Grandville's collection of illustrations by the same name.

## The De-Urbanization of Opera

The works surveyed in this study were all created within a period of only six years (1835 through 1841), yet I do not mean to imply that the *jardin des femmes* convention is limited to opera and ballet the July Monarchy era. After all, it was itself rooted in archetypal garden scenes staged at the Paris Opéra in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: the enchanted garden of Armide, the garden of Venus, and so forth. Moreover, it persisted well beyond the 1840s (see again the Appendix), and its late nineteenth-century resonances are apparent in such famous scenes as Dalila's retreat in the Valley of Sorek from Saint-Saëns's *Samson et Dalila* (1877) and Klingsor's magic garden of Flower Maidens in Wagner's *Parsifal* (1882). I have chosen to focus on the 1830s and '40s, however, in order to challenge the dominant historiographical narrative and oft-repeated assumptions about French grand opera in these decades.

Existing scholarship on nineteenth-century French grand opera has focused on the genre's large-scale historical panoramas, public urban settings, and powerful societal forces, represented onstage by a large chorus. Moreover, the sprawling crowd *tableaux* of grand opera have been interpreted as analogous to the powerful, autonomous, diverse, violent, and destructive mob of the nineteenth-century Parisian streets. This view, first articulated by Anselm Gerhard in his influential 1992 book *The Urbanization of Opera*, has been affirmed by numerous other scholars, and the usual formulation of grand opera is that the private drama of individual relationships is set against an historical backdrop of bustling cities and traumatic social upheaval.<sup>66</sup> Building on Gerhard's thesis, Marian

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<sup>66</sup> James Parakilas, "The Chorus," in *The Cambridge Companion to Grand Opera*, ed. David Charlton (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 76–92; Matthias Brzoska, "Meyerbeer: *Robert le Diable* and *Les Huguenots*," *ibid.*, ed. David Charlton, 189–207. See also Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera*.

Smith has suggested that French opera and ballet of the 1830s and 40s differed fundamentally in their respective uses of place, with urban and indoor settings preferred for opera and countryside or other outdoor locales relegated to the world of ballet-pantomime: “ballet tended to depict the more pastoral, sexual, private, and pleasing side of this world, and French grand opera, the more urban, intellectual, public, and violent.”<sup>67</sup> Smith suggests that the ballet-pantomimes thus offered audiences a “more soothing and pastoral realm” that complemented the chaotic, tumultuous world of French grand opera.<sup>68</sup> Yet the nineteenth-century scenic convention of the *jardin des femmes* functions as a site of intimacy and feminine space in both ballet-pantomime and grand opera. Therefore, this study offers a more nuanced understanding of the shared spaces and places of nineteenth-century French opera and ballet.

Scholars have also readily accepted claims made by nineteenth-century writers regarding the elimination of Classical or Anacreontic subject matter at the Opéra. Certainly, by the late 1820s French critics were urging the abnegation of mythological subjects at the Opéra. As Jean-Toussaint Merle wrote in 1827, “I think it is time that all this Roman and mythological frippery was relegated to the warehouse.”<sup>69</sup> Ten years later, Edouard Monnier pointed to Scribe and Auber’s *La Muette de Portici* (1828) as successfully ushering in a new theatrical age: “drama [...] ventured into territory populated by gods and heroes; with Masaniello, the people invaded the domain reserved

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<sup>67</sup> Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 71–72.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>69</sup> Quoted in Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera*, 48.



for pontiffs and kings, nymphs and princesses.”<sup>70</sup> By 1844, Gautier reported that Classical subject matter had been decisively eliminated from ballet-pantomime: “The twelve mansions of marble and gold of the Olympians were relegated to the dust of the scenery shop.”<sup>71</sup>

Yet the *jardin des femmes*, I would argue, is something of a Classical holdover, with its dreamy atmosphere, pastoral themes (or the manipulation of these themes, as in the wild and dystopic pastoral of *Giselle*), and gauze-draped nymph-like women. Indeed, the pastoral nymph figure was perhaps the strongest vestige of Anacreontic ballet and opera still felt in the July Monarchy era, even if only obliquely: critics recognized the bathers of *Les Huguenots* as slippered nymphs, Fernand addresses the women of *La Favorite* as nymphs, the libretto and staging manual of *Le Cheval de Bronze* identifies Stella’s attendants as nymphs, the courtesans of *La Reine de Chypre* seem to be reincarnated cultic priestesses in the Mediterranean setting of Cyprus (with its rich mythological associations), and the Wilis of *Giselle* were identified as Artemisian votaries by Gautier himself.

Furthermore, three of my case studies – one *opéra-comique* and two grand operas – use Cytherean imagery to carve out feminine space within an already exotic setting. The Auber *opéra-comique* *Le Cheval de Bronze* (1835) is a fairy-tale *chinoiserie* based on a tale from *Les Mille et Une Nuits*; Act III takes place in the celestial gardens of the all-female planet of Venus. In the medieval Spanish setting of Donizetti’s *La Favorite*

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<sup>70</sup> Quoted and translated in Sarah Hibberd, *French Grand Opera and the Historical Imagination* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1. Hibberd summarizes: “For Monnier, the rather rarefied classical and mythological subject matter favored by Gluck and Spontini had been decisively rejected.”

<sup>71</sup> Théophile Gautier, *La Presse*, 1 July 1844. Quoted and translated in Ivor Guest, ed. *Gautier on Dance* (London: Dance Books, 1986), 142.

(1840), the former monk Fernand travels by boat to a bucolic island populated by young Spanish girls for a secret tryst with his beloved Léonor. Though *La Favorite* does not directly name Venus, its scenic design bears strong resemblance to paintings such as Watteau's *L'Embarquement pour Cythère* (1717) and Fragonard's blindfolded lovers, images that returned to prominence in the Rococo revival of the 1830s. The *fête galante* also figures prominently in Act III of *La Reine de Chypre* (1841): while noblemen drink and gamble in the gardens of a casino, a troupe of courtesans urges them to indulge in love, with the reminder that the island of Cyprus was once consecrated to "the Cytherean goddess."<sup>72</sup> *Le Cheval de Bronze*, *La Favorite*, and *La Reine de Chypre* offer three new topographies for the sensual gardens of Venus: an Orientalized planet, the Isle of Léon, and Cyprus. Moreover, Cytherean images are subtly embedded in Act II of *Giselle*: Queen Myrtha's name refers to the tree (myrtle) traditionally deemed sacred to Venus; and the Wilis wear verbena crowns, associated with the figure of Venus Victrix. And as we shall see, the Classical myth of Diana's sacred grove also informs the folkloric world of *Giselle*.

Finally, the 1830s and '40s are an important period to study in the history of the *jardin des femmes* convention because of their potential to illuminate Wagner studies. Both Thomas Grey and Simon Williams have cited the Blumenmädchen of *Parsifal* as a reflection of Wagner's fetishization of Parisian material culture; Grey notes that the Flower Maiden's music, "with its little aromatic arabesques and sensuously mild chromatic inflections of a smooth harmonic exterior, is the musical equivalent of the

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<sup>72</sup> Over a decade later, Félicien David's grand opera *Herculanum* (1859) includes a hymn to Venus, sung by the pagan queen Olympia; however, since *Herculanum* is set in 79 A.D., the worship of Venus in accordance with Roman polytheism was historically appropriate (by nineteenth-century standards). A similar example is in Donizetti's *Les Martyrs* (1840), in which a hymn to Proserpine situates the drama in Mytilene, ca. 259 A.D., and characterizes the opposition between Christian converts and Roman pagans.

exotic Parisian scents and fabrics by which Wagner was seduced, particularly in later years — the commercial products of a culture he never tired of condemning from a higher moral ground.”<sup>73</sup> However, I would go further to suggest that the magic garden of *Parsifal* is actually a specific scenic type culled from Paris—one that Wagner had, of course, already used in *Tannhäuser*. Previously, Armide’s enchanted garden has been cited as a direct influence on Kundry and the Flower Maidens in *Parsifal*, since Wagner conducted Gluck’s *Armide* in 1840s.<sup>74</sup> However, this study shows a richer lineage: Wagner knew Auber’s *Le Cheval de Bronze*, Meyerbeer’s *Les Huguenots*, and Halévy’s *La Reine de Chypre*, and the *jardins des femmes* of these works surely left their trace on Klingsor’s magic garden. Although this last point is beyond the scope of the present study, it represents the future trajectory of this project and its larger significance to nineteenth-century opera studies.

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<sup>73</sup> Thomas S. Grey, *Wagner's Musical Prose: Texts and Contexts*, New Perspectives in Music History and Criticism (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 174.

<sup>74</sup> This point is made in multiple sources: Starobinski, *Enchantment*; Grey, *Wagner's Musical Prose: Texts and Contexts*; Carl Van Vechten, *Interpreters and Interpretations* (New York: Knopf, 1917); "Notes on Gluck's *Armide*," *The Musical Quarterly* 3, no. 4 (1917): 539–47.

## CHAPTER II

“UN JARDIN REMPLI DE JOLIES FEMMES”:

### *LES HUGUENOTS* AND THE *JARDIN DES FEMMES* CONVENTION

A trademark of Eugène Scribe’s dramaturgy is an emphasis on strong scenic contrasts, a principle well illustrated by one of Scribe’s most enduring libretti, the grand opera *Les Huguenots* (1836). While Act I of *Les Huguenots* centers on the revelries of an entirely male company – a veritable “stag party,” as Richard Taruskin has memorably described it<sup>75</sup> – Act II of *Les Huguenots* features Marguerite de Valois and her ladies-in-waiting, who luxuriate in the gardens of Chenonceau. The stark contrast between these two gendered spaces was noted in nineteenth-century press reviews of *Les Huguenots*; the critic Castil-Blaze, for one, observed: “in the first act we had only men, [while] the second act opens with a garden full of pretty women elegantly adorned with rich and brilliant attire.”<sup>76</sup>

Castil-Blaze’s expression “*un jardin rempli de jolies femmes*” is a curious construction. One usually expects a garden to be *rempli* – that is, full, abundant, even bursting – with plant life: *un jardin rempli de fleurs, de plantes, de fruits, d’arbres, d’herbes*. Here, though, Castil-Blaze suggests that the garden is in full bloom with pretty women. If we follow this thread, then the Act II setting in the gardens of the Château de Chenonceau is not merely a place for exclusively female society: rather, these attractive

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<sup>75</sup> Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Nineteenth Century*, The Oxford History of Western Music (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 220.

<sup>76</sup> “Au premier acte nous n’avions que des hommes, le second acte s’ouvre par un jardin rempli de jolies femmes élégamment parées de riches et brillants atours.” Castil-Blaze, “*Les Huguenots*, de M. Meyerbeer. Premier Article,” 55.

women in dazzling costumes actually constitute or embody the garden. Thus, the women of Marguerite's court are situated as eye-catching attractions of the garden, much like colorful flowers, crystalline fountains, lush foliage, and ornate *fabriques*. In this way, landscape is feminized and women are "naturalized": the garden is designated as a place for female community, and the women who inhabit it are positioned as either decorative architectural follies or ecomorphic beings who emerge from nature like nymphs, naiads, and flower-maidens. Likewise, the music associated with these women is frequently heard as part of the garden soundscape. For example, another one of Castil-Blaze's reviews of *Les Huguenots* conjures the fanciful image of fragrant verdure that both exudes beautiful melodies and conceals semi-nude women:

Le premier acte est chaudement coloré, pétulant et rapide ; le second, plein de calme, de fraîcheur et de sérénité : on y respire je ne sais quoi de voluptueux et de lascif qui vous berce en des rêves charmants ; les mélodies ne s'exhalent plus de l'orchestre ; on dirait qu'elles se dégagent par bouffées odorantes de ces buissons en fleurs où se dérobent les baigneuses.<sup>77</sup>

The first act is warmly colored, lively, and rapid; the second, full of calm, freshness, and serenity: one breathes a certain voluptuousness and lasciviousness that lulls you into charming dreams; the melodies no longer rise from the orchestra; they seem to emerge in fragrant wafts from these flowering bushes where the bathers hide themselves.

The concept of *un jardin rempli de jolies femmes* – a collection of beautiful singing and dancing female bodies within an eroticized garden landscape – is found not only in *Les Huguenots*, but also in numerous other French operas and ballets of the July Monarchy era (1830–1848). In fact, Act II of *Les Huguenots* epitomizes an oft-repeated scenic convention that includes several specific visual, musical, and choreographic features: a verdant and seemingly atemporal garden landscape, often evocative of the

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<sup>77</sup> Henri Blaze, "Poètes et Musiciens de l'Allemagne. II. M. Meyerbeer," *Revue des Deux Mondes* 15 March 1836, 697–98.

Classical *locus amoenus*; a dazzling coloratura soprano aria (or virtuosic solo dance) for the queen or other noblewoman who reigns over the garden; an eroticized *chœur dansé* for the queen's female entourage; and the introduction of an awestruck male protagonist.

I have labeled this convention the *jardin des femmes*, following both Castil-Blaze's description of the Act II setting in *Les Huguenots* as “*un jardin rempli de jolies femmes*” and the appearance of the term “*jardin des femmes*” as an actual setting in Act III of the 1835 ballet-pantomime *L'île des pirates*. More importantly, though, this term best reflects the double meaning of a place that is reserved for women's habitation and simultaneously “roots” women to the landscape through their metaphoric representation as trees, flowers, and so forth.<sup>78</sup> In this chapter, I illustrate the key features of the operatic *jardin des femmes*, using Act II of *Les Huguenots* as the best known example of this theatrical imaginary, in which female bodies are conflated with their garden environment through a combination of text, music, movement, costume, and décor.

### **Setting and Décor: The Gardens of Chenonceau**

The first expectation of the *jardin des femmes* convention is its setting in a private garden that is a place of shelter and repose, marked as geographically and often socioeconomically removed. Access to the garden usually requires significant travel for characters within the drama, and the garden's inhabitants frequently boast of their separation from the discontents of the outside world—its excessive heat and filth, and especially its sociopolitical turmoil, warfare and other metaphoric “storms.” Thus, the

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<sup>78</sup> The *Jardin des Femmes* of Marcel Proust's *Du côté de chez Swann* (1913) from *À la recherche du temps perdu* has been analyzed in this manner. See Riffaterre, *Fictional Truth*, 79–81. Riffaterre notes the linguistic parallel between Proust's “*Jardin des Femmes*” and the *Jardin des Plantes* of Paris, another garden that is “both zoological and botanical.”

garden functions as an idealized pastoral realm constructed as an antidote to the urban; yet as with other literary pastorals, this retreat is a temporary and often fragile illusion threatened by the same urban anxieties it intends to escape.<sup>79</sup> The environmental delights of the *jardin des femmes* typically include lush shade trees, soft beds of grass, crystalline water, warm zephyrs, sweet fruits and flowers, and a soothing soundscape of birdsong and fountains. This garden type thus encompasses the essential features of the *locus amoenus* or pleasance, a “lovely” secluded place devoted to sensual pleasure.<sup>80</sup> The *locus amoenus* of Classical poetry was first defined sixty years ago by Ernst Robert Curtius as “a beautiful, shaded natural site. Its minimum ingredients comprise a tree (or several trees), a meadow, and a spring or brook. Birdsong and flowers may be added. The most elaborate examples also add a breeze.”<sup>81</sup> As a rhetorical *topos*, the *locus amoenus* was an established type of landscape description that “formed part of the scenery of pastoral poetry and thus of erotic poetry.”<sup>82</sup>

The appearance of the *locus amoenus* in nineteenth-century French opera and ballet is most often to invoke an eroticized pastoral. (It can also be a nostalgic archaizing gesture, a point I address below in my discussion of the *chœur dansé*.) Hence, this type of idealized garden is repeatedly associated with, and even represented by, female bodies that seem to emerge from the landscape. This implicit link between the sensual delights of a bucolic setting and the visual pleasures of female beauty illustrates what geographer

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<sup>79</sup> Indeed, Terry Gifford describes the process of retreat and return as the “fundamental pastoral movement.” Terry Gifford, *Pastoral*, ed. John Drakakis, *The New Critical Idiom* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 1–2. Furthermore, the escape to a pastoral locale “only serves to focus on the problems that have apparently been left behind, as Peter V. Marinelli has argued. Quoted in *ibid.*, 10.

<sup>80</sup> Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 192.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 199–200.

Gillian Rose and others have described as the feminization of nature. In her foundational work *Feminism and Geography* (1993), Rose has argued for an understanding of landscape as a cultural construction that reinforces gender ideologies and social hierarchies by equating the natural world with the female body.<sup>83</sup> Rose critiques the traditionally masculinist approach within the discipline of geography and draws parallels to modes of representation in visual art; however, her remarks are equally germane to opera and ballet. Within the nineteenth-century French operatic canon, Act II of *Les Huguenots* offers one of the most pronounced examples of the feminization of nature, in which the pleasures of looking at landscape are conflated with the pleasures of looking at the women who populate a garden space.

Act II of *Les Huguenots* opens in the gardens of the Château de Chenonceau, located in the remote countryside of the Loire Valley, nearly 150 miles from Paris.<sup>84</sup> As described in Scribe's libretto and depicted in iconographic sources, the château – built on a bridge – is visible in the background: a large stone staircase at stage left leads down to the gardens, and the River Cher “winds through the middle of the scene, disappearing from time to time in clusters of green trees.”<sup>85</sup> Topographically, Chenonceau offers a pastoral oasis that contrasts with the settings of the surrounding acts (Figure 2.1): Act I takes place in a banquet hall of the Comte de Nevers's chateau, albeit with views of his

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<sup>83</sup> See Chapter V, “Looking at Landscape” in Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, 86–112.

<sup>84</sup> In terms of spelling, I follow present-day usage: Chenonceau refers to the historical Château de Chenonceau, whereas Chenonceaux refers to the village. However, as we shall see, many nineteenth-century critics use the “Chenonceaux” spelling when referring to the château and its grounds. Within this study, I have chosen to allow these orthographic contradictions to coexist.

<sup>85</sup> Le fleuve serpente jusque sur le milieu du théâtre, disparaissant de temps en temps derrière des touffes d'arbres verts. *Les Huguenots, / opéra en cinq actes, / paroles de M. Eugène Scribe; / musique de M. Giacomo Meyerbeer; ballet de M. Taglioni; / décors de MM. Séchan, Feuchères, Dieterle et Desplechin. / Représenté pour la première fois, à Paris, sur le théâtre de l'Académie Royale de / Musique, le 29 février 1836* (Paris: Dubuisson, 1836), 73.



decorative garden, and Act III features a sprawling urban panorama of citizens, Huguenot soldiers, young Catholic women, and Romani along the *Pré aux clercs* on the banks of the River Seine. Interior and urban settings are also used for the remaining acts: Act IV is in a room in Nevers's Parisian home; Act V begins in a ballroom of the Hôtel de Nesle where revelers celebrate the marriage of Marguerite de Valois and Henri of Navarre, then moves to a cemetery and the streets of Paris.<sup>86</sup> Most importantly, Chenonceau is the one setting of *Les Huguenots* specifically designated as a place *for* women—a private aristocratic realm and exclusively homosocial female community with antecedents both mythological (Diana's sacred grove) and historical (Marie Antoinette's notorious *Hameau de la Reine*). Thus, the pastoral and the feminine become a unified space for the imprinting of male heterosexual fantasy.

Before the curtain even rises to reveal these various décors, however, Meyerbeer's introductory music illustrates each act's distinctive sense of place and atmosphere. The Act I overture establishes the opera's historical and religious milieu with the chorale "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott" (an immediately recognizable if geographically and denominationally inappropriate tune); the Act III entr'acte opens with ponderous bell tones and cheerful flute interjections, but soon erupts into a hectic frenzy of scurrying violins and flutes, fueled by the propulsive tension of a rising chromatic bass line. The brief Act IV entr'acte foreshadows the psychological agitation of Valentine's opening recitative; and the Act V entr'acte is similarly tumultuous, with the ominous

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<sup>86</sup> Marian Smith points out that interior and urban settings were favored in opera of the 1830s and 40s, whereas outdoor and countryside settings were more common in ballet-pantomime. Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 61–65. The *jardin des femmes* convention, however, is an important exception to this general rule. Notably, this convention includes a danced element, most often a *chœur dansé*. Perhaps then this convention offers another intersection between the worlds of ballet-pantomime and opera: after all, these genres shared the same stage, costumes, sets, and musical conventions, as Smith has shown.

tolling of bells that continue through the celebratory ball scene. The Act II entr'acte, on the other hand, is the most expansive and untroubled of the introductory orchestral numbers in *Les Huguenots*.

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**Figure 2.1.** Pastoral versus urban settings: Décors for Acts II and V of *Les Huguenots*. F-Pn 4-ICO THE-2771 (6).

In the Act II entr'acte, Meyerbeer prefigures the bucolic tableau that follows by employing several markers of the pastoral as musical *topos*: the key of G Major, 12/8 meter, the tempo *Andante cantabile*, and a prominent flute solo.<sup>87</sup> Violas begin the piece with a languorous, upward-sweeping gesture, answered by sweetly intoned chords in the upper woodwinds. The violas' gesture evokes the movement of balmy, perfumed zephyrs, and the distribution of this motive among lower instrumental voices – initially violas, but later cellos, bassoons, and clarinets – lends a particularly rich, sensuous color to this musical landscape.<sup>88</sup> The opening woodwind progression is also evocative of environmental sounds: with large upward leaps to the final chord, this gesture seems to imitate the cadence of bird signals.

Even more suggestive of the fauna of the Chenonceau gardens is a virtuosic solo flute cadenza, which begins with the same “zephyr” gesture heard previously, but soon bursts into stylized birdsong, with pointed staccato articulations, numerous trills, and rapidly tumbling roulades. This cadenza is not only pictorial as “nature music,” but also – and more complexly – as a conflated image of Nature/Woman. After all, in French and Italian opera of this period, solo woodwind cadenzas were a common technique for prefiguring the entrance of a leading female character: other such cadenzas may be found

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<sup>87</sup> On the pastoral as musical topic, see “Part Four: Shepherds” in Monelle, *The Musical Topic*, 185–271. Incidentally, these pastoral markers of G Major (originally, though later transposed to F Major), 12/8 meter, *Andante* tempo, and solo flute are shared by the aria “Casta diva” from Bellini’s *Norma* (1831), another famous example of female communion with nature in nineteenth-century opera.

<sup>88</sup> Helen Greenwald has identified the upward-sweeping gesture that opens Puccini’s *La Fanciulla del West* as a musical depiction of the California landscape, specifically the gusts of wind blowing in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. As befitting the harsh mountain landscape of *Fanciulla*, Puccini’s “wind” gesture is far more grandiose and bombastic than Meyerbeer’s “zephyr” gesture; nevertheless, it demonstrates a similar approach to how musical motion can be understood as metaphor for environmental phenomena. See Helen M. Greenwald, “Realism on the Opera Stage: Belasco, Puccini, and the California Sunset,” in *Opera in Context: Essays on Historical Staging from the Late Renaissance to the Time of Puccini*, ed. Mark A. Radice (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1998), 290.

in the introductions to the cavatinas of Norma (Bellini, *Norma*, 1831) and Pauline (Donizetti, *Les Martyrs*, 1840). Thus, the solo woodwind voice choreographs the character's movement before she has appeared onstage, encouraging the audience to anticipate her arrive and imagine – even fetishize – her body.<sup>89</sup> Here, then, the solo flute cadenza has a double meaning: it evokes the environmental sounds of elaborate birdsong, a typical pleasure found in the *locus amoenus*; and simultaneously, it prefigures the delicate movements, decorative beauty, and highly embellished vocality of the coloratura soprano character Marguerite de Valois. As I argue below (The Queen's Entrance), this musical code also has implications for Marguerite's body as hybrid bird-woman or siren figure.

The conflation of Nature and Woman in Act II of *Les Huguenots* can even be read in the press reception of the décor itself. For, in the discourse of visual art and geography, landscapes have historically been structured and perceived “in terms of the female body and the beauty of Nature,” as Gillian Rose has argued.<sup>90</sup> Nineteenth-century landscape paintings and portraits of women had much in common, Rose and other scholars remind us: both shared “the same topography of passivity and stillness” as well as associations of

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<sup>89</sup> On gestural music in nineteenth-century opera, see Smart, *Mimomania*. Smart writes, “On the most mundane level [...], music can provide sheer pace, [a] kind of virtual directions for choreography [...]. In less literal contexts, music can operate on a more delicate level of gestural meaning, pinning itself to a particular character or sequence of movements in order to guide the spectator's attention, sending us signals about where to look or what to feel while looking at a body on stage.” *Ibid.*, 5–6.

<sup>90</sup> Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, 87. Rose draws on Armstrong's critique of the female body-as-landscape in visual art: “The female nude, when free of narrative situations, is most often constituted frontally and horizontally—as a kind of landscape, its significant part the torso, its limbs merely elongations of the line created by the supine, stretched-out torso.” C.M. Armstrong, “Edgar Degas and the Representation of the Female Body,” in *The Female Body in Western Culture: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. S.R. Suleiman (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 237. Quoted in Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, 96. See also J.D. Porteous, “Bodyscape: The Body-Landscape Metaphor,” *Canadian Geographer* 30(1986): 2–12.

“reproduction, fertility, and sexuality.”<sup>91</sup> Indeed, the Parisian critics lavished praise on the Opéra’s set painters for their Act II design, describing their garden landscape painting in terms commonly associated with female beauty: fresh, graceful, ravishing, charming, smiling (*riant*), elegant, and so forth. It was impossible “to see anything more fresh and brilliant than the view of the chateau and the gardens of Chenonceau,” as Jean-Toussaint Merle opined in his review of *Les Huguenots*, appearing in *La Quotidienne*. Merle enumerated the set painters’ particular achievements, including naturalistic visual effects and the pleasing use of balance and perspective: “graceful composition, piquant effects of light, transparency of the water; nothing is lacking in this ravishing landscape, in which the architecture and the picturesque positioning of the chateau add much charm.”<sup>92</sup>

Likewise, the critic of *La Mode* admired the ability of the set painters to visually transport the audience to this beautiful place, specifically associating it with the phantom presence of its sixteenth-century mistress, Diane de Poitiers:

Des peintres d’un rare talent, MM. Séchant [Séchan], Feuchères [Feuchère] et Depleinchin [Despléchin], couvraient de leurs brillantes couleurs d’immenses toiles qui devaient, par les prestiges de la peinture, de la perspective et de la lumière, faire paraître sur le théâtre, aux yeux étonnés du spectateur, la Loire et les riants châteaux de ses rives ; Chenonceaux, aux galants souvenirs de Diane de Poitiers, avec ses élégantes tourelles et ses longues galeries, et son pont suspendu sur les eaux limpides du Cher, et son parc touffu et ses somptueux jardins.<sup>93</sup>

Painters of rare talent, MM. Séchan, Feuchères, and Despléchin, covered with their brilliant colors immense canvases that – through the illusions of painting, perspective, and light – had to make the Loire and the cheerful castles on its banks

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<sup>91</sup> Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, 96. See also John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 45–64; L. Nochlin, *Women, Art, Power and Other Essays* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1989): 138.

<sup>92</sup> Il est impossible de rien voir de plus frais et de plus brillant que la vue du château et des jardins de Chenonceaux ; composition gracieuse, effets piquants de lumière, transparence des eaux, rien ne manque à ce ravissant paysage, auquel l’architecture et la position si pittoresque du château ajoutent tant de charme. Jean-Toussaint Merle, "Académie Royale de Musique. 2e et 3e représentations des Huguenots," *La Quotidienne*, 7 March 1836, 1.

<sup>93</sup> Unsigned, "Académie Royale de Musique," *La Mode* (1836): 231–32.

appear onstage before the astonished eyes of the spectator: Chenonceau, with *galant* memories of Diane de Poitiers, with its elegant towers and its long galleries, and its bridge suspended over the limpid waters of the Cher, and its lush park and its sumptuous gardens.

With references to Chenonceau's elegant towers, long galleries, and suspended bridge, the critic of *La Mode* even seems to invite a certain mode of visualization: the gaze is invited to follow the long contours of these architectural features, stretching and panning across the canvas of this landscape painting before settling in the cushioned greenery of the gardens. Perhaps this mode of visualization even prepares the spectators for the way in which they will view the women of Act II: to wit, as dazzling illusions of light and color; water- and wood-nymphs; and tall, graceful *fabriques*. In fact, the imagining of Marguerite and her courtiers as shapely ornamental garden statues is apparent in Jules Janin's review of *Les Huguenots*, in which he likens the women of Chenonceau to "delicate ivory needles whose straight ascent has been stopped in the middle of the body and neck by globes sculpted *à jour* from the same piece."<sup>94</sup>

Janin's comment reflects a fantasy of the *jardin des femmes* as a living sculpture garden, a conceit later staged in Act II of the ballet-féerie *La Filleule des Fées* (Saint-Georges/Perrot/Adam and Saint-Julien, 1849), in which the statues of an enchanted park come to life as members of a fairy sisterhood (see again Figure 1.1., in the previous chapter).<sup>95</sup> The *jardin des femmes* could be readily conceptualized as a garden of

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<sup>94</sup> On compte dans ce second acte trois morceaux qui sont autant de scènes complètes : 1° un air de Marguerite de Valois, commencé et coupé par un fin quatuor de femmes et soutenu de chœurs dans l'allégo. On dirait de ces délicates aiguilles d'ivoire dont le jet est arrêté au milieu du corps et au col, par des globes sculptés à jour dans le même morceau [...]. Jules Janin, "Théâtres de l'Opéra. *Les Huguenots*, opéra en cinq actes, paroles de M. Scribe, musique de M. Meyerbeer," *Journal des Débats*, 7 March 1836, 2. *À jour* refers here to translucent, pierced, or openwork designs used in carving.

<sup>95</sup> The woman-as-living-statue was a familiar trope, from the myth of Galathée to Mérimée's Fantastic tale "La Vénus d'Ille" (1835; published 1837) to the Adolphe Adam ballets *La Fille de marbre* (1847). See also Joellen Meglin's discussion of "alabaster" as a valorized word in Fantastic literature: Joellen A. Meglin,

animated female statues because, to be sure, an important component of the *jardin anglais* prized in late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century France was its architecture—sculptures, fountains, bridges, pavilions, temples, grottoes, imitation ruins, and follies. The primary focus of this study, however, is in the musico-visual representation of women as “natural” landscape or environmental elements, and vice versa. To that end, let us consider a review of *Les Huguenots* appearing in the periodical *L’Echo Français*, in which the critic directly links the Act II setting to the Catholic noblewomen’s music-making and dancing. The critic asserts that the picturesque décor “prepared” Marguerite’s pastorale “Ô beau pays de la Touraine” and even “necessitated” the bathers’ chorus “Jeunes beautés”:

Jetez les yeux sur les décors du second acte. Là bas, au fond, est Chenonceaux, la noble résidence, dont les tours, dont la chapelle, dont les ponts-levis s’élèvent avec grâce vers le ciel bleu de la Touraine. De fraîches eaux le séparent du parc où Marguerite de Valois est venue, avec les dames de sa cour, prendre quelque délassement sous les ombrages touffus d’un immense bosquet. L’effet de ce paysage est ravissant, et prépare tout d’abord au grand air, empreint d’un charme voluptueux que la reine, Mme Dorus, chante avec une si suave expression, avec une méthode si exquise. Survient une chaîne presque diaphane de baigneuses, aux simples voiles de mousseline et de gaze, qui se rapprochent, se séparent, se mêlent, en dansant au gré d’un chœur, dont l’intervention rappelle peut-être trop naturellement la tyrolienne de *Guillaume-Tell*. Ce ballet a paru un hors-d’œuvre qu’ont nécessité sans nul doute les exigences chorégraphiques du lieu.<sup>96</sup>

Cast your eyes on the set of the second act. Over there, in the background is Chenonceaux, the noble residence, whose towers, chapel, and drawbridges rise gracefully into the blue sky of Touraine. Fresh waters separate it from the park where Marguerite de Valois has come with the ladies of her court to take some refreshment in the leafy shade of an immense grove. The effect of this landscape is ravishing, and prepares one first of all for the *grand air*, full of a voluptuous

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"Behind the Veil of Translucence: An Intertextual Reading of the *Ballet Fantastique* in France, 1831–1841. Part Three: Resurrection, Sensuality, and the Palpable Presence of the Past in Théophile Gautier's *Fantastic*," *Dance Chronicle* 28, no. 1 (2005).

<sup>96</sup> G.L., "Théâtres. 1re représentation de: *les Huguenots*, paroles de M. Eugène Scribe, musique de M. Giacomo Meyerbeer, divertissemens de M. Taglioni, décors de MM. Séchan, Feuchères [Feuchère], Diéterte [Diéterle], et Desplechen [Despléchin]," *L’Echo Français*, 7 March 1836, 2.

charm, which the queen, Mme Dorus, sings with such sweet expression and such exquisite technique. Unexpectedly an almost diaphanous chain of bathers appears, in simple veils of muslin and gauze. The bathers come together, move apart, and mingle with one another, dancing to a chorus, whose intervention recalls perhaps too naturally the Tyrolienne of *Guillaume-Tell*. This ballet appeared to be an appetizer that was undoubtedly necessitated by the choreographic requirements of the place.

To the critic of *L'Echo Français*, the “ravishing” landscape of Chenonceau seems to generate the women’s music and dance, even dictating its style. An aria of “voluptuous charm” is performed with qualities of smoothness, delicacy, and prettiness; and a troupe of dancers clad in thin, translucent fabrics—seemingly a single entity that unfolds and intertwines its gauzy limbs in pleasing patterns. If the women’s musical numbers are thus linked to the visual directives and aesthetic qualities of a particular landscape, then their performing bodies become a natural “outgrowth” of their lush and refreshing garden retreat. In other words, the women of Marguerite’s garden are so closely associated with their environment that they seem to represent the voice and body of nature itself. I shall explore this point in greater detail below, in my discussion of both Marguerite’s air “Ô beau pays” and the bathers’ *chœur dansé* “Jeunes beautés.”

Also considered in my discussion of these two pieces is the importance of musico-visual mimesis: just as the Opéra set painters’ décor visually recreated Chenonceau and thus allowed spectators to imagine themselves in that place, Meyerbeer’s musical language likewise transported the audience through direct mimetic gestures and “painterly” effects of color and light. Above, I have briefly addressed how Meyerbeer’s Act II entr’acte evokes the breezes and birds of a pastoral *locus amoenus*; we shall see further examples of musical mimesis in “Ô beau pays” and “Jeunes beautés.” If, as I am suggesting, *Les Huguenots* participates in the persistent cultural trope of



conflated Nature/Woman, then these techniques of musico-visual mimesis encourage a twofold fantasy: being magically transported to a beautiful landscape is equated with achieving close proximity to the women who populate and even embody that place.<sup>97</sup>

### **The Queen's Entrance**

The *jardin des femmes* is not merely a scene type in which women sing and dance, framed by nature. Rather, through this convention women are presented as the metaphoric body of nature itself. The garden is an ideal site for this mode of image-making, since “bounded spatial entities” are frequently conceptualized in terms of the body—specifically, the female body.<sup>98</sup> It is not merely that the female body is a Marxian “equivalent term” that gives value and meaning to the bounded space of the garden; rather, the Garden/Woman metaphor is bidirectional.<sup>99</sup> If metaphor operates by “presenting one idea under the sign of another that is more striking or better known” – as Pierre Fontanier summarized in his *Les figures du discours* (1830) – then the bidirectional metaphor of Garden/Woman uses both of its composite terms to illuminate the mysteries and imagined delights of each other.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Indeed, the fantasy of having access to the Opéra's performing women – particularly the dancers – was encouraged by director Louis Véron, who granted wealthy male patrons admission to the *foyer de la danse* where the ballerinas stretched before performances. Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 68–70.

<sup>98</sup> Best, “Sexualizing Space,” 181–82. Best draws on the work of Mary Douglas (1991), who writes, “The body is a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious.” Best also points out that the metaphor of bounded spatial entities as female bodies persists today in the personification of cities, regions, and countries, as well as in notions of “Mother Earth.”

<sup>99</sup> On Marx's formulation of the “equivalent term”, see “The Value-Form, or Exchange-Value” in *Capital* (1976: 138–163). Cited in *ibid.*, 185.

<sup>100</sup> Fontanier quoted and translated in Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor* (1987), 59; see also *ibid.*, 186.

This conflation of the female body and garden landscape is implied by the décor and musical prelude that introduce the *jardin des femmes*; however, it is fully realized in the musical numbers performed by the women of the garden. The first of these numbers is a solo showpiece for the queen or noblewoman who reigns over the garden and its population of women. In opera, this showpiece is an aria, usually for coloratura soprano; in ballet, this piece is a featured solo dance. Within the scenic convention of the *jardin des femmes*, this piece has the following functions:

1. The queen is introduced as the leader of the garden and its female community, thus establishing social hierarchy. This is particularly important because the florid coloratura singing style usually performed by this character was typically reserved for princesses and queens, rather than the demure domestic heroines of 1830s grand opéra.<sup>101</sup>
2. As a decorative secondary female role, the queen may indulge in vocal pyrotechnics that reflect her character, often invoking longstanding cultural associations between virtuosic excess and unbridled sexuality.<sup>102</sup> This vocal style can also indicate that the queen is showy and superficial, without the intellectual or emotional depth of the lyrical principal female role.
3. Her musical virtuosity is a sonic embodiment of Otherness, just as her garden seems to be an enchanted, fairy-tale, or mythic place. The experience of geographic travel to this new world is matched by a type of musical travel, signaled by new instrumental and vocal timbres and techniques. Perhaps, too,

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<sup>101</sup> See the sections “The Retreat of the Princess” (Chapter III) and “The Obedient Daughter” (Chapter V) in Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera*, 105–11, 77–81. See also the section “Women of Few Words” in Smart, “Roles, Reputations, Shadows: Singers at the Opéra, 1828–1849,” 110–16.

<sup>102</sup> See “Roles, Reputations, Shadows: Singers at the Opéra, 1828–1849,” 110–16.

vocal *fioratura* and “sparkling” high notes translate the visual stimuli of light, water, and intricate knots of flora into musical imagery. Indeed, the same expressions of astonishment and admiration found in critics’ descriptions of the décor might easily be transferred to – and enhanced by – a virtuosic aria or solo dance.

4. The queen is the leading representative of her garden realm, and her opening piece links her to that landscape through music, text, and staging. Birdsong and other mimetic nature sounds are common, since these techniques position the queen as part of the soundscape and ecology of the garden. Birdsong in particular confers on the queen a bird-woman hybridity characteristic of the siren, the quintessential image of feminized nature. Moreover, pastoral texts that personify nature through the pathetic fallacy have the reflexive effect of “naturalizing” the woman who sings of smiling fountains, whispering trees, and so forth.<sup>103</sup>
5. Finally, this opening piece often has religious connotations, since the queen is often invested with the ability to bring nature to life in a quasi-pagan ritual (this is most directly shown in the various *jardins des femmes* of ballet-pantomime, in which the queen’s followers emerge from the landscape itself). Furthermore, she may be presented as a mystic or high priestess who summons mythological deities while communing with nature—the ability to understand and speak (or rather, sing) the language of birds is, after all, traditionally associated with supernatural ability and magical transformation. Thus, the same *coloratura* style usually

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<sup>103</sup> This phenomenon is addressed most eloquently by Wye Allanbrook’s analysis of Susanna’s aria “Deh, vieni” from Mozart’s *Le Nozze di Figaro*: “Because all natural elements in the magic garden take on human habits, humans merge naturally with the landscape. Susanna seems to be a nymph or dryad, some minor local deity murmuring incantatory promises [...]” Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart: Le Nozze di Figaro and Don Giovanni*, 174.

associated with sexuality or superficiality can also (paradoxically) signify the queen's religious ecstasy and prophetic utterances, as well as marking the garden as a numinous place.<sup>104</sup>

With these points in mind, let us now examine Marguerite's Act II pastorale "Ô beau pays de la Touraine," considering how it illustrates typical functions of the queen's entrée in the *jardin des femmes*. As the curtain rises on the gardens of Chenonceau, Marguerite de Valois is completing her toilette, surrounded by her ladies-in-waiting and assisted by her page Urbain, who holds her mirror. This staging situates Marguerite as a pampered queen who commands her ladies' attention, but she does not enter in full regalia with polished coiffure; rather, she is first seen in the private act of preparing her personal appearance, attended only by a trusted circle of favorites. It is as though the curtain has risen too early, thus making the audience privy to the rituals of hygiene and beautification usually only witnessed by members of the queen's inner sanctum. The prominent use of a mirror in this scene further encourages voyeurism by reinforcing the audience's gaze on Marguerite: as Marguerite examines her own reflection, the audience is similarly encouraged to assess her appearance and treat her as a visual object. Indeed, mirrors are often used in landscape paintings to direct the viewer's gaze onto a female body, as Gillian Rose has noted:

Rarely do the women in landscape images look out from the canvas at the viewer as an equal. Their gaze is often elsewhere: oblivious to their exposure, they offer no resistance to the regard of the spectator. Perhaps they will be looking in a

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<sup>104</sup> On the use of coloratura for religious – rather than hypersexual or irrational – characterization, see Gurminder Kaur Bhogal, "Lakmé's Echoing Jewels," in *The Arts of the Prima Donna in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. Rachel Cowgill and Hilary Poriss (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 186–205. On the specific association between pagan divinity and the operatic diva, with particular attention to the eponymous high priestess of Bellini's *Norma* (which received its Parisian premiere at the Théâtre Italien on 8 December 1835), see J.Q. Davies, "Gautier's 'Diva': The First French Uses of the Word," *ibid.*, ed. Rachel Cowgill and Hilary Poriss, 123–26.

mirror, allowing the viewer to enjoy them as they apparently enjoy themselves. If they acknowledge the spectator/artist, they do so with a look of invitation. The viewer's eye can move over the canvas at will, just as it can wander across a landscape painting, with the same kind of sensual pleasure.<sup>105</sup>

The mirror is also a prop associated with the siren. For, as the Classical siren became increasingly equated with the folkloric mermaid in medieval and Renaissance bestiaries, she appropriated the mermaid's traditional accessories of vanity: comb and mirror.<sup>106</sup> That Marguerite is first seen fixing her hair while gazing at her own reflection in a mirror thus aligns her with the siren, an association that she will more fully embody over the course of her aria. Furthermore, Marguerite's mirror emphasizes the very act of mimesis and image-making, with implications of artifice, superficiality, and narcissism. After all, Marguerite's Chenonceau is a fanciful mirage or, in the words of Mathias Brzoska, an "artificial paradise" constructed so that the queen's court might retreat from religious and political strife and instead "take refuge in love and luxury."<sup>107</sup> The friction between natural and artificial is a familiar paradox in the history of landscape gardens: even naturalistic English-style gardens were explicitly constructed and manipulated to give the impression of wild, uncultivated nature. By the same token, although the Act II décor of *Les Huguenots* emphasizes a vast leafy canopy, thick shrubs, and trailing vines rather than the manicured parterres and carved labyrinths of the real-life Chenonceau gardens, themes of artifice and fantasy are nevertheless crucial to the scenes that unfold within this Anglicized Chenonceau garden (see again Figure 2.1; see also Figures 2.3 and 2.4 below).

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<sup>105</sup> Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, 96–97.

<sup>106</sup> Leofranc Holford-Strevens, "Sirens in Antiquity and the Middle Ages," in *Music of the Sirens*, ed. Linda Phyllis Austern and Inna Naroditskaya (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 36.

<sup>107</sup> Brzoska, "Meyerbeer: *Robert le Diable* and *Les Huguenots*," 202.

In fact, the opening tableau of Act II exemplifies what feminist critics would describe as the feminine masquerade: it shows a woman in the process of creating the mask of femininity through hair, cosmetics, and jewelry; and it delights in excessive femininity, to the point that the audience watches “a woman demonstrating the representation of a woman’s body.”<sup>108</sup> On the one hand, this masquerade of femininity may offer a parody of male heterosexual desires among Parisian audiences.<sup>109</sup> More germane to the dramaturgy of *Les Huguenots*, an interpretation of Marguerite’s courtly activities as feminine masquerade emphasizes the *topos* of Chenonceau as artificial paradise. Just as Marguerite carefully constructs an ideal femininity through her physical appearance, she constructs her gardens as a naïve celebration of idyllic country life at odds with the reality of mounting urban turmoil in her kingdom. So, too, can Marguerite’s flashy coloratura singing style in “Ô beau pays” be understood as a dazzling illusion of her enchanted garden.

Marguerite’s multi-sectioned virtuosic air “Ô beau pays” accomplishes a comparable effect to the mirror held up by Urbain: it directs spectators’ gaze to the queen and positions her as an object of admiration (Table 2.1). Ostensibly an aria about the beauties of the Chenonceau gardens, this coloratura showpiece ultimately refocuses attention on the beauties of Marguerite’s voice and body. In its first moments, “Ô beau pays” seems little more than a sentimental paean to nature: Marguerite’s opening melody

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<sup>108</sup> This is how Silvia Bovenschen has described the film performances of Marlene Dietrich in her influential 1977 essay “Is There a Female Aesthetic?” Quoted in Mary Ann Doane, “Film and the Masquerade—Theorizing the Female Spectator,” *Screen* 23, no. 3–4 (1982): 82. Doane, Jacques Lacan, Judith Butler, and numerous other theorists build on the concept of feminine masquerade as first introduced in Joan Rivière, “Womanliness as a Masquerade,” *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 10(1929): 306.

<sup>109</sup> Not surprisingly, *toilette* scenes are at their most excessive in Orientalist settings, especially seraglios. A topic for future inquiry would be a closer examination of *toilette* scenes in vaudeville and opéra-comique, where satirical commentary on this type of scene is more readily discerned.

is simple and largely triadic as she sings of pleasant gardens, mossy fountains, and murmuring streams; meanwhile, alternating solos in the cello and flute suggest the environmental sounds of a flowing brook and a lighthearted bird.<sup>110</sup> Arpeggiated chords in the harp also contribute to a sense of place by lending a folk-like or pastoral quality, much like the strumming of a lyre might accompany a minstrel's song. This is the first time that the harp has been heard in *Les Huguenots*, and its distinctive color helps set Act II apart as a feminine realm, in sharp sonic contrast to the masculine space of Act I, scored for a battalion of winds, brass, and percussion.<sup>111</sup> More importantly, though, the harp's timbre and arpeggiated gestures paint this scene as a gilded dream-world, illuminated with the aura of magic.<sup>112</sup>

**Table 2.1.** Text and Structure of Marguerite's entrance aria "Ô beau pays de la Touraine"

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<b>Solo Air</b>	<i>Marguerite :</i>
G Major, 12/8	Ô beau pays de la Touraine Riants jardins verte fontaine Doux ruisseau qui murmure à peine, Que sur tes bords j'aime à rêver, Oui, que sur tes bords j'aime à rêver Ô doux ruisseau qui murmure, Que sur tes bords j'aime à rêver

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<sup>110</sup> The convention of highly pictorial music was certainly not new to the operatic stage: the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century simile aria had long used instrumental effects to illustrate the singer's emotional state with the sounds of natural phenomena such as birdsong or wind. In addition, Smart has identified Philis's aria "Toi qui nous plait" from Louis-Sébastien Lebrun's *Le Rossignol* (1816) as a pertinent precedent to "O beau pays" for its coupling of soprano with solo flute in a virtuosic aria and its use of a highly ornate "'oiseau' idiom" for the voice. Smart, "Roles, Reputations, Shadows: Singers at the Opéra, 1828–1849," 111.

<sup>111</sup> Smith has noted that harps were often used in scenes featuring women or for "tender declarations of love." Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 35.

<sup>112</sup> Similar examples of how the harp is reserved for musical portrayals of otherworldly realms include *Giselle*, in which harp is used only in Act II to illustrate the Wilis' forest dwelling (see Chapter VI in the present study), or Chaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty*, in which harp is used only in the first two "magical" acts, but is replaced by piano in the third act after the spell has been broken. See Thérèse Hurley, "Opening the Door to a Fairy-Tale World: Tchaikovsky's Ballet Music," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ballet*, ed. Marion Kant (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 168.

G minor, 12/8 Belles forêts, sombre rivage  
Cachez-moi bien sous votre ombrage  
Et que la foudre ou l'orage  
Jusqu'à moi ne puisse arriver !

G Major, 12/8 Ô beau pays de la Touraine, etc...

**Solo Recitative** Que Luther ou Calvin ensanglantent la terre  
G Major, 4/4 De leurs débats religieux  
Des ministres du ciel que la morale austère  
Nous épouvante au nom des cieux

**Trio** *Marguerite, Urbain, and a Lady of Honor*  
D Major, 3/4 Sombre chimère  
Humeur sevrère  
N'approchez guère  
De notre cour !  
Sous mon/son servage,  
On ne s'engage  
Qu'à rendre hommage  
Au dieu d'amour !

**Solo** *Marguerite :*  
**with Chorus** Oui je veux chaque jour  
C Major, 3/4 Aux échos d'alentour  
Redire nos refrains d'amour !

Écoutez, écoutez ! Les échos d'alentour	<i>Urbain and Lady of Honor, with the Chorus</i>
Ont appris nos refrains d'amour	Oui, les échos d'alentour
Amour, amour, amour, amour	Ont tous appris ces doux refrains d'amour
Oui, déjà la fauvette	Amour, amour
Dans les airs le répète	Viens
Et des tendres ramiers les soupirs langoureux	Viens
Se perdent en mourant sur les flots amoureux	

<b>Quartet</b>	<i>Marguerite:</i>	<i>Urbain and Two Ladies of Honor:</i>	<i>Chorus of Women:</i>
<b>with Chorus</b>	Ah....amoureux	Sombre chimère	Soyez bannie toujours
D Major, 3/4		Humeur sevrère	
		N'approchez guère	
		De notre cour !	De ce charmant séjour
	Les sons mélodieux	Sous son servage,	Toujours
		On ne s'engage	Toujours
		Qu'à rendre hommage	
		Au dieu d'amour !	
	Sous mon empire	(Au dieu d'amour)	Sous son servage
	On ne respire		On ne s'engage
	Que pour sourire		Qu'à rendre hommage
	Au dieu d'amour		Au dieu d'amour
	Sombre chimère	Sombre chimère	Sombre folie
	Humeur sevrère	Humeur sevrère	Ou pruderie
	N'approchez guère	N'approchez guère	Soyez bannie
	Sous mon empire	Sous son empire	Sous son empire
	On ne respire	On ne respire	On ne respire
	Que pour sourire	Que pour sourire	Que pour sourire



	Au Dieu d'amour	Au Dieu d'amour	Au Dieu d'amour
<b>Solo</b>	<i>Marguerite :</i>		
<b>with Chorus</b>	A ce mot tout s'anime		
D Major, 4/4	Et renait la nature		
	Les oiseaux l'ont redit		
	Sous l'épaisse verdure		
	Le ruisseau le répète		
	Avec un doux murmure		
	La terre, les ondes, la terre, les cieux		
	Redisent nos chants...		
	A ce mot tout s'anime		
	Et renait la nature		
	Les oiseaux l'ont redit		
	Terre et cieux		
	Redisent nos chants amoureux		
		<i>Chorus :</i>	
		Terre et cieux	
		Rediront tous nos chants amoureux	

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Yet “Ô beau pays” does not merely offer pleasing musico-visual images of nature: it is also a display of Marguerite’s own performing body, situated within and even melded to her idyllic surroundings at Chenonceau. In fact, the mirror held by Urbain as Marguerite completes her *toilette* – aside from directing the audience’s gaze toward the queen – serves further as a symbolic emblem of “Ô beau pays,” for it is through this *air pastorale* that Marguerite becomes an image or “reflection” of nature itself. The conflation of Marguerite’s body with nature is illustrated in “Ô beau pays” through the queen’s vocal interactions with solo flute and clarinet, woodwind instruments associated with the pastoral topic and tone-painting.<sup>113</sup> In the line “ô doux ruisseau qui murmure,” Marguerite imitates the flute’s melodic gestures; however, by the line “oui, je veux chaque jour/aux échos d’alentour/redire nos refrains d’amour” (yes, every day I want to repeat our refrains of love to the surrounding echos), the roles have reversed and the flute imitates Marguerite. Similarly, the clarinet imitates Marguerite’s voice later in the piece,

<sup>113</sup> The pairing of solo flute and clarinet as different species of birds was used, for example, in the second movement of Beethoven’s Sixth (“Pastoral”) Symphony. Monelle recognizes the clarinet as “one of the *aulos*’s successors” in nineteenth-century pastoral music: Monelle, *The Musical Topic*, 248, 50.

with the line “la terre, les ondes, la terre, les cieux redisent nos chants” (the earth, the waters, the earth, the skies repeat our songs). On the one hand, the woodwinds’ imitation of Marguerite’s voice emphasizes the imagery of echos, refrains, and repeating songs in the text. At the same time, though, these echo effects position Marguerite as a nymph or nature girl who converses with the birds of her garden. By the final section of her air, Marguerite joins her voice to the garden’s soundscape: with her second statement of “à ce mot tout s’anime et renait la nature” [at this word everything comes to life and nature is reborn], she sings in unison with solo flute and clarinet. Thus, the “voice” of nature is not only heard through the music that envelops and interacts with Marguerite onstage, but is also channeled through her, as her voice fuses with her sonic environment.

Indeed, Marguerite’s communion with nature is particularly pronounced as she shares elaborate, decorative birdsong figures with the flute, performing in what Mary Ann Smart has described as an elaborate vocal “*oiseau* idiom.” Meyerbeer’s use of an “*oiseau*” idiom in “Ô beau pays” aligns Marguerite with the landscape in two ways: first, admiration for the Touraine countryside is conflated with admiration for Marguerite’s vocal abilities; secondly, Marguerite is musically portrayed as having the ability to sing in the manner of a bird. In other words, Marguerite is equated with the siren, the creature of Greek mythology renowned for her seductive singing but whose monstrous identity is betrayed by her half-bird, half-female body.<sup>114</sup> Of course, the siren is best known for the supernatural beauty of her singing voice, which had such powers of seduction that men might be lured to their deaths upon hearing it. Moreover, the siren is the paradigmatic

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<sup>114</sup> For a summary of the siren’s history as a bird-woman, see Chapter V, “Feminine Birds and Immoral Song,” in Elizabeth Eva Leach, *Sung Birds: Music, Nature, and Poetry in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 238–73; Holford-Strevens, “Sirens in Antiquity and the Middle Ages,” 16–51.

example of how constructions of women and nature have traditionally been linked: this “alluring but dangerous” figure best represents the “uneasy mix of pleasure, mystery, and fear” that characterizes man’s relationship with a feminized landscape, as Rose has argued.<sup>115</sup>

Marguerite also encourages the audience to visualize her body’s connection with the landscape when she sings, “Que sur tes bords j’aime à rêver/Oui, que sur tes bords j’aime à rêver” (How I love to dream on your banks/Yes, how I love to dream on your banks).<sup>116</sup> Images of sleeping women appeared frequently in nineteenth-century landscape paintings, not only linking female bodies to their surrounding landforms, but also inviting the erotic pleasure of looking at these passive, unsuspecting bodies: as Rose points out, “sleep was a popular allegory allowing scenes of women in unself-conscious abandon, oblivious to the spectator’s gaze.”<sup>117</sup> Here Marguerite indulges – and invites the audience to join her – in one such voyeuristic fantasy of herself, asleep and dreaming on the riverbank. (Of course, she will later enact this image when she stretches out along the bank to enjoy her ladies’ diversion in the river.) Marguerite even offers the sound of her own pleasure to the audience: her interjection “oui” is an expansive, languid high G that lasts nearly six beats. Time is seemingly suspended in this moment of gratification, and the violas’ chromatic ascent underpins Marguerite’s “oui” with a sense of mounting excitement.

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<sup>115</sup> Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, 73.

<sup>116</sup> This and all subsequent English translations of lines from Scribe’s *Les Huguenots* libretto are taken from Richard Arsenty and Robert Ignatius Letellier, *The Meyerbeer Libretti: Les Huguenots*, 2nd ed. (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009).

<sup>117</sup> Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, 96.

The Chenonceau gardens are a place of dreams and fantasy, a topical trait emphasized as Marguerite pauses on the very word “rêver”: fading away, she repeats it several times over *pianissimo* staccato woodwind echos and a glimmering sweep of harp arpeggios, then erupts into a free cadenza. The queen’s blissful enjoyment of her daydream seems to sanction, and even impel, the audience’s own fantasizing. Yet her dreams are troubled: both of her “dream” cadenzas are subverted by unpleasant visions that intrude upon her psyche and threaten her pastoral retreat. The first of these nightmares is in G minor, with an agitated, churning sixteenth-note ostinato introduced by the violas and then picked up by the basses and bassoons. Though Marguerite pleads with the “beautiful forests” and “dark riverbanks” to protect her from thunder and storms, her request is somewhat ironic—sinister, turbulent musical imagery has already infiltrated her realm, foreshadowing the metaphoric storm brewing in Paris.

Marguerite’s second nightmare is more specific, as she imagines the bloodshed of the Reformation (“Que Luther et Calvin ensanglantent la terre”), but urges these “dark chimeras” to stay away from her Chenonceau court. Her trio with Urbain and a lady-of-honor (“Sombre chimère”) carries several markers of the military topic: the martial key of D Major, trumpet-like fanfare figures in the clarinet, and dotted rhythms in the voices. Here, though, Meyerbeer’s use of the military topic for Marguerite illustrates the queen’s naïveté and myopia: her manner of “battling” her country’s religious strife is to take refuge in her private gardens. That Marguerite describes these religious disputes as *sombre chimère* is also revealing: she views the Wars of Religion as a chimera, or a figment of the imagination, because the “reality” she has created for herself at Chenonceau is a utopian fantasy world. Marguerite’s garden is therefore a conflicted

terrain that attempts to celebrate the natural but is ultimately proven to be a site of artifice and self-deception.

In contrast to the Protestant reformers, whom she describes as “ministers of heaven” with “austere morality,” Marguerite positions herself as a pagan high priestess, whose melismatic invocations banish unhappy spirits, summon the God of Love, and vivify the garden landscape. Beginning with the line “oui, je veux chaque jour/aux échos d’alentour/redire nos refrains d’amour” (yes, every day I want to repeat our refrains of love to the neighboring echos), Marguerite’s melodies are repeated by the flute. In this way, Marguerite seems to awaken the garden’s avian life through her own voice. Furthermore, in this section of the piece she is accompanied by a chorus of her ladies and page, who sing in block chords that punctuate her florid melodic gestures. This type of choral writing implies both sociopolitical hierarchy (female subjects and followers obediently support and serve their queen) and religious ritual (priestesses softly chant a prayer or incantation).

Marguerite’s status as mystic or high priestess is further emphasized in the next section of the piece, in which Marguerite’s voice soars above the texture of the female chorus, much like an ecstatic musical divination (“sons mélodieux”) meant to ward off evil spirits (that is, “somber chiméras” and “severe moods”) and invite instead the god of love. The female chorus continues their chanting, now with the purpose of banishing unwelcome spirits from the enchanted garden (“Soyez bannie toujours de ce charmant séjour”), while Urbain and two of Marguerite’s ladies form a trio of votaries who lead the rest of the women in driving away the *sombre chimère* and *humeur sévère* that threaten their *locus amoenus*. Most telling of Marguerite’s mystical powers, though, is her ability

to generate new life from the landscape: “à ce mot tout s’anime et renait la nature” (at this word everything comes to life and nature is reborn). Her vocal trills on “anime” and “nature” (shared by flute and clarinet) emphasize this ability to breathe invigorating life into nature.

As we shall see in other *jardins des femmes* surveyed in this study, pagan religious ritual is important in characterizing these gardens as places of feminized nature-worship and heightened supernatural activity: in *Le Cheval de Bronze*, Princess Stella’s renewed hope of rescue is paralleled by the rebirth of nature in her celestial gardens; in *La Favorite*, Inès seems to lead the young women in “awakening” their island gardens; the courtesans of *La Reine de Chypre* do not have a leader, but they identify themselves as priestesses of Venus; and Queen Myrtha of *Giselle* represents a type of moon goddess or votary. In all of these examples, the conflation of women and the garden takes on a spiritual component, thus illustrating the Romantic fascination with the transcendent qualities of both nature and erotic love.

The earliest reviews of *Les Huguenots* were mixed in their reception of “Ô beau pays,” particularly in regard to its expansive scope, mimetic nature-sounds, and suspension of dramatic action. Joseph Mainzer of *Le Monde Dramatique* complained that the audience grew restless with Marguerite’s self-indulgent musical reveling in the landscape: “We expect action, and Marguerite sings us streams and feasts, nightingales and warblers, whose strains of love are echoed by the mountains.”<sup>118</sup> A similar charge was brought by the critic of *La Gazette de France*, who shared Mainzer’s disappointment

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<sup>118</sup> “Nous attendons de l’action, et Marguerite nous chante les ruisseaux et les fêtes, les rossignols et la fauvette, dont les refrains d’amour sont répétés par les échos des montagnes.” Joseph Mainzer, “Académie Royale de Musique: Les Huguenots. Opéra en cinq actes, de MM. Scribe et Meyerbeer,” *Le Monde Dramatique* 2(1835 [1836]): 250. Quoted and translated in Thomas Forrest Kelly, *First Nights at the Opera* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 213.

with the suspended musico-dramatic action of Act II, but blamed Scribe's libretto for Meyerbeer's shortcomings:

Dans un œuvre aussi sérieuse et aussi étendue on s'attend à une progression d'intérêt dramatique et musical ; or ici cet intérêt est comme suspendu. Le chant n'est plus guère que de la vocalisation et l'accompagnement se ressent de la mollesse et du vague de la situation et des paroles. Que vouliez-vous aussi qu'un compositeur tel que M. Meyerbeer trouvât dans son génie musical pour exprimer *raison austère, humeur sévère, ne règnent guère dans notre cour ; et le riant feuillage, et le discret ombrage, et l'onde pure, et le ruisseau qui murmure, et l'ardeur nouvelle, et le cœur fidèle, etc.* M. Scribe n'est pas un Quinault, il s'en faut de beaucoup. Mais le compositeur allemand, quoique incomparablement supérieur à Lulli, ne pouvait réchauffer tant de niaiseries des sons de sa musique.<sup>119</sup>

In a work so serious and so extensive, one expects a progression of dramatic and musical interest; but here this interest is suspended. The song is little more than vocalization and the accompaniment shows the effects of the softness and the vagueness of the scenario and the lyrics. Moreover, what did you want a composer such as M. Meyerbeer to find in his musical genius to express *austere reason, stern mood, hardly reign in our court; and the smiling foliage, and the discreet shade, and the pure wave, and the murmuring stream, and the new ardor, and the faithful heart, etc.* M. Scribe is no Quinault, far from it. But the German composer, though incomparably superior to Lully, could not warm up such nonsense with the sounds of his music.

The description of "Ô beau pays" as nothing but excessive "vocalization" – in other words, superficial exercises in vocal technique – for a star soprano was repeated in even harsher terms by the critic of *La France Musicale*, two years after the premiere of *Les Huguenots*:

L'air de Marguerite, *O beau pays de la Touraine* est le plus pénible et le plus contourné de tous les recueils de vocalises qu'on ait jamais destinées à la *Bravoure* des premières chanteuses. Dans le quatuor de femmes qui se mêle au duo de Marguerite avec les *échos d'alentours*, il y a un abus successif de contretemps et du rythme brisé. Passe encore si cette bizarrerie produisait un

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<sup>119</sup> A., "Académie Royale de Musique. Les Huguenots, opéra en 5 actes, paroles de M. Scribe, musique de M. Meyerbeer (Troisième article)," *La Gazette de France*, 18 March 1836, 1.

effet quelconque, mais il n'y a pas de situation, pas d'effet dramatique ; et l'effet musical est nul.<sup>120</sup>

Marguerite's air, "O beau pays de la Touraine," is the most painful and most convoluted of all collections of vocalises that have ever been destined for the *bravura* of premiere singers. In the quartet of women that joins in duet with Marguerite with the *échos d'alentours* (surrounding echos), there is an abuse of successive disruptions and broken rhythm. It would be acceptable if this oddity produced any effect, but there is no scenario, no dramatic effect; and the musical effect is zero.

Yet other critics were more forgiving of Meyerbeer's musical choices. Composer and critic Hector Berlioz insisted that Meyerbeer's music for Act II of *Les Huguenots* had been unfairly lambasted:

Le second acte a été jugé très sévèrement, et fort mal à mon avis. L'intérêt n'en est pas à beaucoup près aussi grand que celui du reste de la pièce, mais la faute en est-elle au musicien ? Et celui-ci pouvait-il faire autre chose que de gracieuses cantilènes, des cavatines à roulades, et des chœurs calmes et doux, sur des vers qui ne parlent que de *riants jardins, de vertes fontaines, de sons mélodieux, de flots amoureux, de folie, de coquetterie, et de refrains d'amour que répètent les échos d'alentour* ? Nous ne le croyons pas; et certes, il ne fallait rien de moins qu'un homme supérieur pour s'en tirer aussi bien.<sup>121</sup>

The second act has been judged very severely and quite badly in my opinion. The interest is nowhere near as great as that of the rest of the piece, but what fault is that of the composer? And could he do anything but create graceful cantilenas, cavatinas of roulades, and calm and gentle choruses on verses that speak of nothing but *smiling gardens, mossy fountains, melodious sounds, amorous waves, madness, coquetry, and refrains of love repeated by the surrounding echos*? We do not believe so; and certainly it required nothing less than a superior man to make something out of it so well.

Marguerite's ornate, flashy vocal idiom is interpreted by Castil-Blaze as indicative of her characterization: the soon-to-be-queen is a "cheerful gossip" who "sings of love, pleasure, madness, smiling gardens, the mossy fountain, shade, the warbler,

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<sup>120</sup> Unsigned, "Giacomo Meyerbeer. Les Huguenots. (Troisième article)," *La France Musicale*, 27 May 1838, 3.

<sup>121</sup> Hector Berlioz, "Les Huguenots: Premier, Deuxième et Troisième Acts," *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris*, 13 March 1836, 82. Berlioz makes the same point (nearly verbatim) in "Les Huguenots: La Partition," *Journal des débats*, 10 November 1836, 1–2.



foliage, and makes her trills, her roulades, her chromatic scales resound with the echoes of Touraine.”<sup>122</sup> Recall, too, that the critic of *L’Echo Français* asserted that the Act II décor of blue skies, fresh waters, and shaded grove had a “ravishing” effect that “prepared” Marguerite’s *grand air* and its “voluptuous charm.”<sup>123</sup> In other words, her extravagant vocalization was recognized by some critics as necessitated by both her naïve, self-indulgent character and her visually stunning garden retreat. Moreover, Scribe and Meyerbeer’s conscious use of suspended action as a dramatic device seems to have been lost on most critics, as musicologist Anselm Gerhard has pointed out.<sup>124</sup> Gerhard further explains Scribe and Meyerbeer’s techniques regarding time-consciousness in *Les Huguenots*: “The continual ‘growing more dense’ of the events and the concomitant acceleration of the action serve rather to point out how central the time motive is to the dramaturgical conception of the opera. The first two acts show the society of the French court doing its best to enjoy the present time, at the cost of ignoring the signs of the time.”<sup>125</sup>

One of the only critics to discern this darker meaning behind the seemingly interminable pastoral indolence of Act II was Louis Desnoyers, writing for *Le National* in March 1836:

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<sup>122</sup> En attendant que ces nymphes se plongent dans l’eau, Marguerite de Valois, la joyeuse commère, la fiancée de Henri IV, chante l’amour, le plaisir, la folie, les rians jardins, la verte fontaine, l’ombrage, la fauvette, le feuillage, et fait redire aux échos de la Touraine ses trilles, ses roulades, ses gammes chromatiques. Castil-Blaze, “*Les Huguenots*, de M. Meyerbeer. Premier Article,” 55.

<sup>123</sup> L’effet de ce paysage est ravissant, et prépare tout d’abord au grand air, empreint d’un charme voluptueux que la reine, Mme Dorus, chante avec une si suave expression, avec une méthode si exquise. G.L., “Théâtres. Ire représentation de: *les Huguenots*, paroles de M. Eugène Scribe, musique de M. Giacomo Meyerbeer, divertissemens de M. Taglioni, décors de MM. Séchan, Feuchères [Feuchère], Diéterte [Diéterle], et Desplechen [Despléchin],” 2. See my discussion of setting and décor, above.

<sup>124</sup> Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera*, 186–87.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

Un escalier réel, comparable au fameux escalier de Versailles, occupe la droite du théâtre, au-dessus de laquelle de grands arbres séculaires étendent leur magique ombrage. Ce décor est admirable sous le rapport du grandiose et de la grâce. La maîtresse de céans est entourée de femmes ; elle vient d'achever sa toilette et son beau page Urbain, à genoux devant elle, tient encore le miroir. Les Armides de ce délicieux séjour ne pensent non plus qu'à s'amuser. Elles chantent, elles rient, elles dansent, folâtrent, courent les unes après les autres, forment mille groupes, s'occupent de leur toilette de bain. [...] L'ensemble de ces gracieux divertissemens est, du reste, bien capable d'augmenter les sinistres appréhensions du public, relativement à la grande catastrophe qui se couve à Paris.<sup>126</sup>

A real staircase, similar to the famous staircase of Versailles, occupies the right of the theater, above which large, age-old trees spread their magic shade. This décor is admirable with respect to grandeur and grace. The mistress of this place is surrounded by women, she has just completed her toilet and her handsome page Urbain, kneeling before her, is still holding the mirror. The Armides of this delightful abode think of nothing but amusing themselves. They sing, they laugh, they dance, play about, run one after the other, form a thousand groups, busy themselves with their bathing *toilette*. [...] Incidentally, the whole of these gracious amusements is quite capable of increasing the sinister apprehensions of the audience in regard to the great catastrophe that is brewing in Paris.

Desnoyers's comments include two striking references, one historical and one mythic: first, the "famous staircase of Versailles" and second, to the Saracen sorceress Armide of Torquato Tasso's epic poem *Gerusalemme liberata* (1581)—and, later, operas by Lully (1686) and Gluck (1777). Desnoyers's comparison of the marble staircase in the Act II décor of *Les Huguenots* and the "famous staircase of Versailles" implies a perceived parallel between the Chenonceau of *Les Huguenots* and Versailles, a more recent historical garden associated with royal decadence and willful retreat from Parisian unrest. Given contemporary interest in palingenesis – a philosophy that explained historical progress in terms of cycles of "decline, expiation, and regeneration" – an intriguing possibility is that Desnoyers saw sixteenth-century Chenonceau in the days leading up to the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre as an antecedent of Versailles at the

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<sup>126</sup> Louis Desnoyers, "Théâtres de l'Opéra," *Le National*, 3 March 1836, 2.

dawn of the French Revolution.<sup>127</sup> Desnoyers's description of Marguerite and her ladies as "Armides" further emphasizes the artifice and fragility of Chenonceau, since the sorceress Armide's enchanted garden is an illusion, constructed by dark magic as an idyllic prison for the Crusader knight Rinaldo.

Above all, though, Desnoyers's review demonstrates his understanding of Scribe and Meyerbeer's aesthetic: the carefree games and pleasures of Marguerite's court do indeed slow and even suspend dramatic time, but this serves to elevate the audience's tension and anxiety regarding the impending turmoil and ultimate tragedy in the opera's final acts. Indeed, within the pastoral discourse of retreat, "the Golden Age in the country provides a medium for a critique of the present in the court," as literary theorist Terry Gifford has noted.<sup>128</sup> In the case of *Les Huguenots*, the would-be Golden Age that Marguerite tries to recapture and maintain in the Chenonceau gardens is in fact a grim critique of the nobility's attempt to escape the mounting discontent of the city. The dramatic motive of time and the aesthetic of temporal suspension in Act II of *Les Huguenots* become even more important in the *chœur dansé* "Jeunes beautés," a piece to which we now turn.

### **The *Chœur Dansé* and the "Choreographic Requirements" of Place**

Certainly, the most notorious piece in Act II of *Les Huguenots* is its *choeur dansé* (danced chorus or choric dance) "Jeunes beautés, sous ce feuillage," in which the women of Marguerite's court sing of pastoral delights while members of the *corps de ballet*

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<sup>127</sup> On the importance of palingenesis and the period of the Reformation to the cultural milieu of *Les Huguenots*, see Brzoska, "Meyerbeer: *Robert le Diable* and *Les Huguenots*," 200–01.

<sup>128</sup> Gifford, *Pastoral*, 24.

dance in light bathing costumes. This bathing scene is frequently cited in existing scholarship as an example of the blatant eroticism in the second act of *Les Huguenots* and the scopophilic culture of the Opéra stage in general.<sup>129</sup> What these scholars have not pointed out, however, is that the visuality of this scene participates in the cultural construction of feminized landscape: in other words, the way in which spectators are encouraged to admire the scenery of the Chenonceau is conflated with the pleasure of seeing beautiful women bathing in the gardens—or at least performing a stylized choreographic evocation of bathing.<sup>130</sup> To illustrate this point, let us recall the words of the nineteenth-century critic of *L’Echo Français*, who – after describing the pastoral beauty of Chenonceau and the “voluptuous charm” of Marguerite’s air “Ô beau pays” – noted that the ballet of “Jeunes beautés” seemed to be demanded by this bucolic place:

Survient une chaîne presque diaphane de baigneuses, aux simples voiles de mousseline et de gaze, qui se rapprochent, se séparent, se mêlent, en dansant au gré d’un chœur, dont l’intervention rappelle peut-être trop naturellement la tyrolienne de *Guillaume-Tell*. Ce ballet a paru un hors-d’œuvre qu’ont nécessité sans nul doute les exigences chorégraphiques du lieu.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Among others, see Smart, *Mimomania*, 104; Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Nineteenth Century*, The Oxford History of Western Music (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 220; Stephen Huebner, “Huguenots, Les,” *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*. *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/O008109>.

<sup>130</sup> In his review of *Les Huguenots*, Desnoyers felt obligated to “report a fraud”: the women of the *chœur des baigneuses* did not actually bathe onstage, contrary to Scribe’s libretto. “M. Scribe tells us very clearly,” Desnoyers insists, “that some of these women appear in bathing costumes, while we see others swimming in the Cher. However, nothing like this takes place at the theater, and these girls do not really bathe as in the libretto.” (Et ici, qu’il nous soit permis de signaler un dol qui a paru affecter douloureusement les véritables amis de la perspective. M. Scribe nous dit très positivement dans son livret que plusieurs d’entre ces dames, qui sont déjà prêtes, paraissent en toilette de bain, tandis qu’on en voit d’autres se baigner dans le Cher. Or, rien de tel ne se passe au théâtre, et ces demoiselles ne se baignent réellement que dans le livret.) Desnoyers, “Théâtres de l’Opéra.” Rather, it seems that the women of the *corps de ballet* performed stylized movements, creating various ensemble shapes.

<sup>131</sup> G.L., “Théâtres. 1re représentation de: *les Huguenots*, paroles de M. Eugène Scribe, musique de M. Giacomo Meyerbeer, divertissemens de M. Taglioni, décors de MM. Séchan, Feuchères [Feuchère], Diéterle [Diéterle], et Desplechen [Despléchin],” 2. See earlier citations of this review in previous sections (Setting and Décor; The Queen’s Entrance).

Unexpectedly an almost diaphanous chain of bathers appears, in simple veils of muslin and gauze. The bathers come together, move apart, and mingle with one another, dancing to a chorus, whose intervention recalls perhaps too naturally the Tyrolienne of *Guillaume-Tell*. This ballet appeared to be an appetizer that was undoubtedly necessitated by the choreographic requirements of the place.

In other words, the *Echo Français* critic deemed the *chœur dansé* “Jeunes beautés” a perfect fit for the scenic demands of the Chenonceau gardens, a sentiment shared by critic Albert Cler of the periodical *Le Charivari*, who described the bathing chorus as “a piece full of suavity and freshness, and perfectly situated [within the scenario].”<sup>132</sup> Based on this notion that the ballet of “Jeunes beautés” satisfied the “choreographic exigencies” of Chenonceau, I posit that in *Les Huguenots* and other *jardins des femmes*, the female *chœur dansé* functions not only as a “natural” stage activity befitting a feminized pastoral setting, but also as a choreomusical embodiment of place.

Before proceeding with this point, however, the *Echo Français* critic’s perceived connection between “Jeunes beautés” and the *pas de trois et chœur tyrolien* (“À nos

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<sup>132</sup> Cler was among the many critics who complained that the action dragged too much in Act II, and recommended that judicious cuts be made. “Jeunes beautés” was among the pieces that Cler would retain in his hypothetical abridgement of *Les Huguenots* (Cler recommended that the first two acts be combined into one): “Les seuls morceaux, qui nous paraissent mériter d’être conservés sont : dans le premier acte, le chœur des buveurs, lequel ne manque pas de *brio* et de gaîté ; mais cette gaîté est un peu triste, on dirait que les convives s’enivrent de vieux Bordeaux et non de pétillant Champagne ; la romance de Raoul à cause du charmant accompagnement de viole d’amour, les couplets du page, et surtout le chœur du bain dans le second acte, morceau plein de suavité et de fraîcheur, et parfaitement en situation.” (It seems to us the only pieces that merit being saved are: in the first act, the drinking chorus, which does not lack *brio* and gaiety; but this gaiety is a little sad—it seems the guests get drunk on old Bordeaux and not sparkling Champagne; Raoul’s romance, because of the charming viola d’amour accompaniment; the page’s couplets; and especially the bathing chorus in the second act, a piece full of suavity and freshness, and perfectly situated.) Albert Cler, “Grand Opéra. Nouveau coup-d’œil sur les *Huguenots*,” *Le Charivari*, 15 March 1836, 4. Like Cler, Prévost also advocated cuts to Act II, but noted that the bathing chorus should be retained: “La musique qui se trouve entre cet air et le duo de Raoul et de Marguerite nous semble un peu froide. Des coupures adroites en pourraient facilement faire disparaître quelques longueurs ; toutefois, elles devraient épargner le chœur des dames d’honneur qui marque la cadence du pas exécuté par les baigneuses.” (The music between this air and the duo of Raoul and Marguerite seems a bit cold to us. Skillful cuts could easily make a few lengths disappear; but they should save the chorus of ladies-of-honor which marks the cadence of the steps executed by the bathers.) Hippolyte Prévost, “Les Huguenots: Musique – 2me Article,” *Revue du Théâtre* 7(1835–36): 366.

chants viens mêler tes pas”) in Act III of Rossini’s *Guillaume Tell* (premiered at the Opéra on 3 August 1829) warrants brief consideration. Indeed, this critic was not the only one to draw such a parallel: Hippolyte Prévost’s review of *Les Huguenots* noted that the Act II *chœur dansé* “has some relation in workmanship to the chorus of women in the third act of *Guillaume Tell*, which also serves as a ballet.”<sup>133</sup> That “Jeunes beautés” reminded nineteenth-century theater critics of “À nos chants viens mêler tes pas” from *Guillaume Tell* seems to be a matter of genre rather than dramatic function or specific musical content—both pieces are *chœurs dansés* featuring female voices (though the *Guillaume Tell* number includes an accompanimental chorus of male voices).

Even so, Act III, scene 3 of *Guillaume Tell* demonstrates the potential of the *chœur dansé* to stand for place and community. As part of the festivities celebrating the centenary of Austrian rule of Switzerland, the cruel Austrian governor Gesler forces the people of Altdorf to pay him homage. One of Gesler’s officers orders three Tyroleans (one man and two women) to dance a *tyrolienne* to music performed *a capella* by a chorus of women, accompanied by a chorus of male voices (Figure 2.2).<sup>134</sup> Gesler’s soldiers then force the Swiss women to dance with them, while the villagers make gestures of protestation against this offense.

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<sup>133</sup>Ce morceau a quelque rapport de facture avec le chœur de femmes du troisième acte de Guillaume Tell qui sert aussi à un ballet. "Les Huguenots: Musique – 2me Article," 366.

<sup>134</sup>Berlioz cited this chorus as an example of vocal “orchestration,” in which certain voices (here, the men) are given a more “instrumental” accompanimental style of block chords that articulate harmonic changes. Hugh MacDonald, ed. *Berlioz's Orchestration Treatise: A Translation and Commentary* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 262.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 2.2.** Louis Maleuvre, costume for Marie Taglioni in the *pas tyrolien* from *Guillaume Tell* (Paris: Martinet, 1829). F-Po BMO C-261 (7-663).

The Austrian oppressors' control of the Swiss land is thus equated with control of its female inhabitants, manifested through the soldiers' forcing the women to sing and dance (a metaphor for rape). Through their performance of the ethnic *tyrolienne*, singing and dancing women allegorically represent the Alpine landscape; thus, the women's *chœur dansé* feminizes the Swiss land as an object to be subjugated, owned, and partitioned by Austrian conquerors.<sup>135</sup> Therefore, although Act III, scene 3 of *Guillaume Tell* is not an example of the *jardin des femmes* convention, it nonetheless offers another illustration of how a predominantly female *chœur dansé* could represent landscape and place in nineteenth-century French opera.

Within the *jardin des femmes* convention, the *chœur dansé* is likewise an embodiment of place and community, though this local identity is not denoted through national dance or folk music elements, as in the *Guillaume Tell chœur dansé*. Rather, the female *chœur dansé* of the *jardin des femmes* often has a Classical or ancient Greek overlay (a point to which I will return), thus referencing not an exotic geographic place but rather a temporally distant *locus amoenus*. In this setting, the *chœur dansé* channels the imagined sexual energy of the garden through a community of women who sing of nature's delights and perform stylized movements. I use the term "stylized movements" because, unlike the ballet *divertissement*, the *chœur dansé* is not a set of formal dances. Rather, it is more integrated within the dramatic action, and its vocabulary of movements may include visually pleasing poses and groups; the graceful use of choreographic tools like veils and garlands, and even diegetic activities such as gathering flowers, fanning,

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<sup>135</sup> On the use of national, folk, or so-called character dance as an emblem of nationhood within a Herderian ideology, see Lisa C. Arkin and Marian Smith, "National Dance in the Romantic Ballet," in *Rethinking the Sylph: New Perspectives on the Romantic Ballet*, ed. Lynn Garafola, *Studies in Dance History* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), 30–44.



and *toilette* preparation. These dance elements often appear as an organic outgrowth of the landscape, as women create sinuous figures and undulating shapes akin to wind, waves, and foliage.

Whereas the *divertissement* could function as a diegetic set-piece of danced entertainment or celebration, the *chœur dansé* was a more problematic subgenre in nineteenth-century French opera, as composer and theorist Reicha noted in his treatise on dramatic music:

Les maîtres de ballets n'aiment pas les morceaux de danse où l'on chante en même temps, surtout ceux que le chœur accompagne, parce que il est difficile pour l'exécution de bien marier les danseurs avec les chanteurs, et parce que le plus souvent une partie contrarie l'exécution de l'autre : ce dont nous nous sommes aperçus maintes fois. Mais on chante et on danse quelquefois alternativement, ce qui n'a point d'inconvénient.

The ballet-masters did not like these dance pieces with singing at the same time, especially those accompanied by the chorus, because in performance it is difficult to make a good marriage between singers and dancers, and because very often one part interferes with the performance of the other; this we have noticed many a time. But sometimes there is singing and dancing in turn, and that presents no problem.<sup>136</sup>

The difficulty in “making a good marriage between singers and dancers” in the *chœur dansé* was particularly pronounced at the Paris Opéra because female performers did not both sing and dance (as could be done in other types of musical theater): rather, there was a clear division of theatrical labor between the singing women of the chorus and the dancing women of the *corps de ballet*. This distinction between singing and dancing women in the Act II *chœur dansé* of *Les Huguenots* is given a humorous

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<sup>136</sup> Antoine Reicha, *Art du Compositeur dramatique* (Paris: A. Farrenc; A. Reicha, 1833), 91. Quoted and translated in Thomas Betzwieser, "Musical Setting and Scenic Movement: Chorus and *Chœur Dansé* in Eighteenth-Century Parisian Opéra," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 12, no. 1 (2000): 7, fn 30.

“justification” by Castil-Blaze, who supposes that the scantily clad women of the ballet would catch a cold if they opened their mouths to sing:

Le chœur des baigneuses est charmant : les baigneuses ne chantent pas pourtant ; elles pourraient s'enrhumer, leur vêtement est si léger ; mais les dames qui ont déjà fait leur toilette peuvent, sans crainte, exercer leur gosier : elles invitent donc les naïades à chercher le calme et la fraîcheur dans les flots du Cher. Ces demoiselles sont toutes prêtes, il leur suffit de quitter leurs pantoufles, ce qu'elles exécutent avec une grâce toute particulière, et forment des groupes très séduisants.<sup>137</sup>

The chorus of bathers is charming; the bathers do not sing, though; they could catch a cold, their clothing is so light; but the women who have already made their *toilette* may fearlessly exercise their voices; therefore, they invite the naiads to seek calm and refreshment in the waters of the Cher. These ladies are ready. They just need to leave their slippers, which they execute with a special grace, and form very seductive groups.

Even given the inherent challenges of choreomusical coordination, the *chœur dansé* is crucial to communicating the sexual energy of the *jardin des femmes* because of an emphasis on both voices and bodies. In fact, within this scenic convention, the *chœur dansé* seems to be the preferred subgenre for the transcoding of the garden landscape and female sexuality. As we shall see in later chapters, the *chœur dansé* confirms the *jardin des femmes* convention even in the absence of a virtuosic showpiece for the queen of the garden.<sup>138</sup> This may be due to the generic ambivalence of the *chœur dansé*: with its blend of singing and dancing, it bridges grand opéra with ballet-pantomime. Perhaps, too, the *chœur dansé* could be a means to infuse the more urban, public, and political world of grand opéra with the pastoral, private world of ballet-pantomime. For, in general, countryside settings and themes of sexuality and intimacy were the province of ballet-

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<sup>137</sup> Castil-Blaze, "Les Huguenots, de M. Meyerbeer. Premier Article," 55.

<sup>138</sup> In particular, see my discussion of the *jardin des femmes* convention in *La Reine de Chypre* (Chapter V of this study). The *jardin des femmes* in Act III of *La Reine de Chypre* lacks a coloratura secondary female role, but nevertheless has the crucial element of a women's *chœur dansé*.

pantomime rather than grand opéra, a trend that Marian Smith attributes to ballet's performance medium of silent bodies:

Because it was body-centered and its actors were silent, ballet-pantomime could more readily be construed as overtly sexual (and therefore less proper a medium for recounting tales of public struggle) than French grand opera. Thus, though ballet-pantomimes and operas depicted the same world – early modern Europe and its colonies – ballet tended to depict the more pastoral, sexual, private, and pleasing side of this world, and French grand opera, the more urban, intellectual, public, and violent. The two genres complemented each other well at the Paris Opéra, remaining grounded in the same basic fictional reality but splitting this reality into two segments, allocating each to what was deemed the appropriate medium.<sup>139</sup>

The *jardin des femmes* convention constitutes an exception to Smith's rule of the split between the thematic spheres of grand opéra and ballet-pantomime, but I would suggest that it is precisely because of the inclusion of a danced element in the women's *chœur dansé* that these two worlds collide. Furthermore, since ballet-pantomime tended to allow for more imaginative, magical plots and settings, the *jardin des femmes* borrows from that aesthetic to bring an episode of Otherworldly fantasy into the normally realistic, historically-driven scenarios of grand opéra. This is particularly true of the *chœur dansé* "Jeunes beautés," with its stylized bathing ballet. Although bathing scenes were not unusual at the Opéra or other Parisian theaters (Tables 2.2 and 2.3), Act II of *Les Huguenots* was an exception: simply put, bathing scenes in French opera and ballet were typically reserved for Eastern or supernatural women, not French aristocratic women. Bathing and toilette scenes were most commonly staged in the harem, as in *La Tentation* (1832), *La Révolte au sérail* (1833), and *Le Corsaire* (1856); however, bathing might also be seen among other isolated communities of exotic women, such as the Tahitian islanders of *Ozai* (1847).

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<sup>139</sup> Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 71–72.

**Table 2.2.** Bathing Scenes at the Opéra, 1830–1860

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**Cave & Duponchel/Halévy & Gide/Coralli, *La Tentation* (1832), ballet-opéra.** Act IV: In a magnificent harem, bathing odalisques sing the chorus “Amour, amour” while slaves perfume them and braid their hair.

**Labarre/Taglioni, *La Révolte au Sérail* (1833), ballet-féerie.** Act II: In a luxurious bathing hall, the bayadère Zulma and her companions romp in the water and make their toilette, then dance and admire themselves in mirrors.

**Scribe & Deschamps/Meyerbeer/Taglioni, *Les Huguenots* (1836), opéra.** Act II: Queen Marguerite’s ladies-in-waiting bathe in the River Cher at the Château de Chenonceau. Marguerite’s page, Urbain, attempts to watch them and is chastised.

**Scribe & Méliès/Auber/Coralli, *Le Lac des Fées* (1839), opéra.** Act I: Zéïla and her fairy companions descend from the skies and bathe in the lake. Albert spies on them and steals Zéïla’s veil.

**Gide/Coralli, *Ozaï* (1847), ballet-pantomime.** Act I: Native girls bathe, rest on the grass, lie in hammocks, dress and perfume their hair. Some girls dance and apply artificial wings to imitate the movement of birds.

**Scribe & Duveyrier/Verdi/Petipa, *Les Vêpres Siciliennes* (1855), opéra.** Act III “Four Seasons” ballet: Summer comes out of a basket surrounded by golden sheaves. Heat overwhelms her and she asks the Naiads for the refreshment of their rivers. The bathers are put to flight by a faun that appears, preceding Autumn.

**Saint-Georges/Adam/Mazilier, *Le Corsaire* (1856), ballet-pantomime.** Act II: At the Pasha’s palace on the Island of Cos, the Pasha’s women come out of the bathing-pool (surrounded by magnificent gardens and screened by immense draperies) and make their toilette.

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Though bathing carried exotic associations, bathing scenes were not the sole province of sexually available harem women onto whom questionable morality could be projected. Rather, bathing can also be considered a marker of a lost age of innocence, a pastoral activity that invokes both geographic and temporal distance.<sup>140</sup> Onstage bathing could also be justified by the perceived purity and naïveté of characters such as Classical

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<sup>140</sup> Anthropologist Johannes Fabian describes this construction of temporal Otherness as having two subcategories: “Mundane Time” (the creation of distinct “ages and stages”) and “Typological Time,” or the marking of intervals between socioculturally meaningful events. Typological Time gives rise to binarisms such as peasant versus industrial, preliterate versus literate, and so forth. Within the *jardin des femmes* convention, temporal Otherness is constructed through this latter category. See Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 22–33.

nymphs, Romantic undines, or native women living in a seemingly prelapsarian paradise. The women of Marguerite's court in *Les Huguenots* are neither odalisques nor undines; however, their onstage bathing positions them as inhabitants of an idealized world, sheltered from the religious and political upheaval of sixteenth-century Paris and the destructive effects of time and history.

**Table 2.3.** Selected Examples of Bathing Scenes at Other Parisian Theaters, 1830–1845

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***Les Ondines* (1834), ballet prologue (Théâtre Nautique):** In the opening tableau, sylphides and ondines dance and form pleasing groups along the verdant banks of a lake. (The main attraction of this theater was its large basin of real water on stage.)

**Carmouche & de Courcy/Monpou, *La Chaste Suzanne* (1839), opéra (Théâtre de la Renaissance).** Act II: In a shady garden, Suzanne's attendants prepare her bath; unbeknownst to the women, elders Achab and Sédécias arrive to watch Suzanne. Some women bathe, others relax in hammocks, others play theorbo, and a few lie down.

**Dumerson, Duvert & Lauzanne, *Les Belles Femmes de Paris* (1839), comédie-vaudeville (Théâtre des Variétés).** Act II: In a greenhouse decorated with exotic plants, women bathe in the basin of a large fountain and sing of the water's delights (to the music of the *Huguenots* bathers' chorus). M. Boissière and Count Ostroloff promise not to look at each other's wives, but disobey.

**Dupeuty & Delaporte/Adolphe, *Les Amours de Psyché* (1841), pièce fantastique, mêlée de chant (Théâtre des Folies-Dramatiques).** Act II: Cupid sits on a grassy throne in his gardens, while *petits amours* (little cupids/cherubs) present him baskets of fruit and crown him with flowers. Psyche bathes in clear water shaded by trees; some nymphs balance on garlands of flowers, others bathe and sing.

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Moreover, Marguerite's ladies-in-waiting don thin bathing costumes that give them the appearance of frolicking nymphs, as Castil-Blaze humorously noted in his *Les Huguenots* review, quoted above. This costuming is an archaizing gesture typical of the *jardin des femmes* convention: dancing women of the *chœur dansé* are often clothed in gauzy white dresses that visually align them with nymphs or votaries. These Classical white tunics, coupled with the associations of choric dance as a religious activity in

ancient Greece, thematize the *jardin des femmes* as a place of temporal suspension, pagan ritual, and eroticized antiquity (as would later be explored by Debussy and Ravel in the following century)—and thus further support the image of the garden’s queen as a mystic or high priestess, as discussed above. In addition, the appearance of singing and dancing women in Greek-inspired white chitons reinforces a theatrical imaginary in which landscape is given female embodiment, since nymphs are ancient mythological beings who personify nature.

The dramatic motive of time, identified by Gerhard as central to *Les Huguenots*, is invoked in “Jeunes beautés” not only through the visual imagery of bathing nymphs, but also through Meyerbeer’s opening melody, which quotes the popular tune “Le Temps et l’Amour” (Time and Love). This quotation has not previously been acknowledged in existing scholarship on *Les Huguenots*; however, it was recognized by nineteenth-century critic Louis Desnoyers, who claimed, “The bathers’ chorus of *Les Huguenots* is an old romance titled *Le Temps et l’Amour*, which is not [written] by the author of the opera.”<sup>141</sup> The song “Le Temps et l’Amour” is based on a poem by Joseph-Alexandre Ségur (1752–1809) and best known in its setting by Jean-Pierre Solié (1755–1812), an actor who had

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<sup>141</sup> Louis Desnoyers: *De l’Opéra en 1847, à propos de Robert Bruce, des directions passées, de la direction présente et de quelque unes des 500 directions futures* (Paris: Delanchy, 1847), 17. In this pamphlet, Desnoyers criticizes the Rossini pastiche *Robert Bruce*, but admits that no musical work is completely original and devoid of borrowing: « La prière de *la Muette* était d’abord un *Agnus Dei* ; le chœur des baigneuses des *Huguenots* est une vieille romance intitulée *le Temps et l’Amour*, qui n’est pas même de l’auteur de l’opéra ; le choral de cet ouvrage appartient pareillement à Luther ; le duo de *Robert-le-Diable*, entre Alice et Bertram, est un emprunt fait à Mozart. Mais je m’arrête : il faudrait des volumes pour signaler l’origine de tous les morceaux de rapport dans les partitions réputées chefs-d’œuvre comme unité de style, y compris *la Dame Blanche* et *le Pré aux Clercs*. » (The prayer of *La Muette de Portici* was first an *Agnus Dei*; the bathers’ chorus of *Les Huguenots* is an old romance titled *Le Temps et l’Amour*, which is not by the author of the opera; the chorale of this work belongs equally to Luther; the duo of *Robert le diable* between Alice and Bertram is a loan from Mozart. But I stop myself: it would take volumes to indicate the origin of all the pieces from scores reputed as masterworks for unity of style, including *La Dame Blanche* and *Le Pré aux Clercs*.) Desnoyers goes on to emphasize that these works are not purely pastiches, as *Robert Bruce* is.

debuted at the Opéra-Comique in 1782. Solié’s tune, labeled with the incipit “A voyager passant sa vie,” appears as No. 6 in *Le Clé du Caveau* (a collection used by creators of vaudevilles to find melodies that fit the rhythmic profile of a given text). Solié’s setting was also anthologized in the third volume of Dumersan’s collection *Chants et Chansons Populaires de la France* (1843).<sup>142</sup> The opening phrase of “Jeunes beautés” is clearly related to that of “Le Temps et l’Amour”; after that, however, the resemblance soon fades (Example 2.1). Nevertheless, that incipit melody of “Le Temps et l’Amour” can act as a synecdochal fragment that stands for the whole. Therefore, it is worth examining the entire text of “Le Temps et l’Amour” for how it might add a new layer of meaning to “Jeunes beautés”:

A voyager passant sa vie,  
 Certain vieillard, nommé le Temps,  
 Près d’un fleuve arrive, et s’écrie:  
 “Ayez pitié de mes vieux ans!  
 “Et quoi! sur ces bords on m’oublie,  
 “Moi qui compte tous les instants!  
 “Mes bons amis, je vous supplie,  
 “Venez, venez passer le Temps!”

Journeying through his life,  
 A certain old man, named Time,  
 Arrives near a river, and exclaims:  
 “Have pity on my old age!  
 “And what! On these banks I am forgotten,  
 “I, who count all moments!  
 “My good friends, I beg you,  
 “Come, come while away the time!”

De l’autre côté, sur la plage,  
 Plus d’une fille regardait,  
 Et voulait aider son passage  
 Sur un bateau qu’Amour guidait:  
 Mais une d’elles, bien plus sage,  
 Leur répétait ces mots prudents:  
 “Ah! souvent on a fait naufrage  
 En cherchant à passer le temps!”

On the other side, on the beach,  
 More than one girl looked  
 And wanted to help his passage  
 On a boat guided by Love:  
 But one of them, much wiser,  
 Repeated to them these prudent words:  
 “Ah! often one has been shipwrecked  
 Seeking to while away the time!”

L’Amour gaiment pousse au rivage;  
 Il aborde tout près du Temps;  
 Il lui propose le voyage,

Love pushes gaily to the shore;  
 He approaches close to Time;  
 He offers him the voyage,

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<sup>142</sup> Théophile Dumersan, *Chants et Chansons Populaires de France*, vol. 3 (Paris: Delloye, 1843), 69–76. Here “Le Temps et l’Amour” is titled “Le Voyage de l’Amour et du Temps,” and is paired with the song “La Naissance de l’Amour.” Dumersan’s notes on the two songs are followed by the song texts, with rich illustrations, and then the musical settings. Solié’s melody for “Le Temps et l’Amour” is harmonized with a piano accompaniment by Hippolyte Colet, a professor at the Paris Conservatory.

L'embarque et s'abandonne aux vents.  
 Agitant ses rames légères,  
 Il dit et redit dans ses chants:  
 « Vous voyez bien, jeune bergères,  
 « Que l'Amour fait passer le Temps. »

Boards him, and surrenders to the winds.  
 Waving his light oars,  
 He says again and again in his songs:  
 “You see, young shepherdesses,  
 “How love helps to while away the time.”

Mais tout à coup l'Amour se lasse :  
 Ce fut toujours là son défaut ;  
 Le Temps prend la rame à sa place,  
 Et lui dit : « Quoi ! céder sitôt !  
 « Pauvre enfant, quelle est ta faiblesse !  
 « Tu dors, et je chante à mon tour  
 « Ce vieux refrain de la Sagesse :  
 « Ah ! le Temps fait passer l'Amour ! »

But suddenly Love becomes weary:  
 This has always been his weakness;  
 Time takes the oar in his place,  
 And says to him: “What! Giving up so soon!  
 “Poor child, what is your weakness!  
 “You sleep, and I sing in my turn  
 “The old refrain of Wisdom:  
 “Ah! Time causes Love to fade away!”

**Example 2.1.** “Le Temps et l'Amour” melody, no. 6 in *Le Clé du Caveau*



Meyerbeer’s musical reference to “Le Temps et l’Amour” in “Jeunes beautés” creates a new intertextual meaning, a rather ominous allegory within the dramatic context of *Les Huguenots*. Like the young girls of “Le Temps et l’Amour,” the ladies of Marguerite’s court enjoy leisurely activities along a riverbank where the ravages of time and old age seem to have been forgotten. So, too, do they try to “pass time” with love—



they spend their days at Chenonceau singing love songs and worshipping the god of love. In “Le Temps et l’Amour,” a girl wiser than her companions warns that those who seek to pass the time with love are often ruined (literally, shipwrecked): in other words, the pursuit of sexual relationships might have disastrous results for a young woman.

Overconfident, Love is quick to boast to the “young shepherdesses” how he makes Time pass; yet in the end, Love grows tired and is overtaken by Time. For the Catholic noblewomen of *Les Huguenots*, then, the quotation of “Le Temps et l’Amour” is a subtle omen of the approaching catastrophe. These women’s frivolous pursuit of pleasure will lead only to their ruination, and Time – in other words, the inexorable march of history, fueled by powerful societal forces – will ultimately prove more powerful than their attempts to take shelter in the pastoral delights of love and nature.

While Meyerbeer’s melodic borrowing from “Le Temps et l’Amour” seems to have been a veiled subtext that largely escaped critical and scholarly attention, the overtly mimetic accompaniment of “Jeunes beautés” has been noted as an example of Meyerbeer’s scene-painting music ever since the first performances of *Les Huguenots*. Castil-Blaze’s review highlights the unusual accompaniment of “Jeunes beautés” (which he suggests may have gone unnoticed due to the scene’s titillating visual stimuli):

Tout le monde a remarqué la mélodie de ce chœur dansé, les molles ondulations de l’orchestre. Je crois devoir appeler l’attention des amateurs, si toutefois leurs yeux ne sont pas trop occupés des pantoufles des nymphes, je dois appeler leur attention sur un trait de bassons qui serpente à travers l’accompagnement des autres instrumens. Ce trait, d’une grande rapidité, contraste avec l’allure tranquille du chœur : il se plie à toutes les modulations, monte, descend, parcourt la riche étendue du basson, et a le mérite d’être parfaitement exécuté. L’ensemble est tel que l’on croirait qu’il est dit par un seul bassoniste ; le volume du son me fait penser pourtant que plusieurs l’exécutent à la fois.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Castil-Blaze, “*Les Huguenots*, de M. Meyerbeer. Premier Article,” 55–56.

Everyone has noticed the melody of this danced chorus [*chœur dansé*], the soft undulations of the orchestra. I believe I should call to the attention of the amateurs, if, however, their eyes are not too occupied with the slippers of the nymphs, I must draw their attention to a bassoon line that winds through the accompaniment of the other instruments. This line, of great speed, contrasts with the tranquil allure of the choir: it yields to all the modulations, goes up, down, over the rich range of the bassoon, and has the merit of being perfectly executed. The ensemble is such that one would believe it is performed by a single bassoonist; the volume of sound makes me think, however, that more than one executes it.

The “Jeunes beautés” accompaniment of rising and falling scalar patterns in the bassoons and cellos is an iconic musical gesture that represents the waves of the Cher. Paired with this accompaniment are harp flourishes that evoke the shimmer of sunlight on the water, as well as the metaphoric “bathing” of this voyeuristic scene in a golden aura of fantasy.<sup>144</sup> This type of clearly pictorial music seems overly obvious and even heavy-handed today. Yet, curiously enough, other bathing scenes of the 1830s did not use directly mimetic effects: for example, the bathing chorus from *La Tentation* alternates exotic Janissary music with gentler passages during which the women sigh, “Amour, amour”; and the bathing scene from *La Révolte au Sérail* has music that can be described as having flowing or rocking qualities, but it does not have explicit “water” music. Moreover, Berlioz criticized the cello accompaniment in the bathers’ chorus (“Tout est prêt pour le bain de Suzanne”) from Monpou’s opera *La Chaste Suzanne* (1839) for copying too closely the rapid scalar passages from *Les Huguenots*:

Le chœur des baigneuses serait mieux goûté s’il était chanté juste et si le trait de violoncelle qui le soutient à l’orchestre rappelait moins fidèlement le gracieux accompagnement des baigneuses des *Huguenots*.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> The B section of the chorus employs yet another instrument associated with sparkling light and color: the triangle. The triangle was also prominently featured in the bathing scene from *La Tentation*: its silvery timbre is a multifaceted metaphor for the exotic, the luster of royal wealth and opulence, the shimmer of light and reflection in the bath, and the tinkling of laughter among the bathers as they sport in the water.

<sup>145</sup> Hector Berlioz, “Théâtre de la Renaissance. Première représentation de *la Chaste Suzanne*, opéra en deux actes et en quatre tableaux, musique de M. Monpou, paroles de MM. Carmouche et de Courcy,”

The bathers' chorus would be better enjoyed if it were sung in tune and if the cello line that supports it in the orchestra recalled less faithfully the graceful accompaniment of the bathers in *Les Huguenots*.

Of course, the imitative effect of rolling waves was certainly not Meyerbeer's patent (numerous examples exist in eighteenth-century simile arias, for example). Yet in the context of nineteenth-century female bathing scenes, this technique was associated first and foremost with *Les Huguenots*. In addition, even if Monpou's use of this effect was in fact derivative of Meyerbeer, it nonetheless demonstrates the potency of the "Jeunes beautés" accompaniment for nineteenth-century audiences. To be sure, critics were not universally pleased by it: Albert Cler, who had found the *chœur des baigneuses* "full of suavity and freshness" as a whole, nevertheless detested the "overly bizarre effect" of the accompaniment. Cler described the accompaniment as a "rumbling barbarism" of the contrabasses (Cler's portmanteau *borborysme* is a combination of *borborygme* and *barbarisme*).<sup>146</sup> On the other hand, Stanislas Champein admired how Meyerbeer's music for "Jeunes beautés" had the ability to transport the audience to an idyllic place through the mimesis of environmental sounds. In a June 1839 article entitled "On Grace in the Music of Meyerbeer" and appearing in the periodical *Le Franc-Juge*, Champein wrote: "These are the waves and the wind that moan; during this chorus one divines the sun, one senses the shade, one sees the river flowing majestically."<sup>147</sup>

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*Journal des débats*, 31 December 1839. Reproduced in Anne Bongrain and Marie-Hélène Coudroy-Saghai, eds., *Hector Berlioz, Critique Musicale, 1823–1863*, vol. 4: 1839–1841 (Paris: Buchet/Chastel, 2003), 214.

<sup>146</sup> "Nous désirerions seulement que l'on fit disparaître de l'accompagnement, une partie d'un effet par trop bizarre et dont nous ne saurions donner une idée plus juste qu'en l'appelant une espèce de borborysme des contrebasses." Cler, *Le Charivari*, 15 March 1836, 4.

<sup>147</sup> « Ce sont les ondes et le vent qui gémissent; pendant ce chœur on devine le soleil, on se sent à l'ombre, on voit le fleuve couler majestueusement. » Champein, *Le Franc-Juge*, June 1839, 2.

Yet how, if at all, does Meyerbeer's scenographic music for "Jeunes beautés" participate in the cultural construction of feminized landscape? I submit that Meyerbeer's "water" music effects, in transporting the audience to the Chenonceau gardens and the River Cher, also had the effect of bringing the audience in closer proximity to the women of that place. If this highly pictorial music allowed the audience to imagine themselves there in Marguerite's garden, then by the same token the audience is granted access to the private, intimate feminine space of that garden. After all, *Les Huguenots* is part of a repertoire created by male authors, composers, and designers for a business that thrived on its stimulation of bourgeois heterosexual male fantasies—fantasies that were often played out in real-life encounters between male patrons and performing women of the Opéra.<sup>148</sup>

In fact, for all of the supposed realism of its mimetic water sounds, this bathing scene should also be understood as a fantasy sequence: with its serpentine motion, the cello/bassoon accompaniment of "Jeunes beautés" has a swirling, kaleidoscopic effect that lends a dream-like quality (and even artificiality) to the bathers' sport. Additionally, the melodic contour of this accompaniment pattern can be read as a manifestation of the material imagination, a metaphoric mapping of the women's curves as seen onstage through diaphanous clothing and "seductive groups." The women's gauzy white dresses, mentioned above as evocative of a temporally distant Classical world, also serve to conflate – and confuse – female bodies with landscape elements. Light dresses, scarves, and veils appeared in many bathing scenes at the Opéra, since these gossamer fabrics

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<sup>148</sup> See also Chapter V, "The Erotic Culture of the Stage" in Lenard R. Berlanstein, *Daughters of Eve: A Cultural History of French Theater Women from the Old Regime to the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 104–34.

share the ephemeral, flowing qualities projected onto both water and dancing women. Moreover, the movement of these fabrics emulates the undulating motion of water and foliage, thus allowing the women to be portrayed as ecomorphic specimens of the garden.

### **Entrance of the Male Protagonist**

Rarely is the queen of the *jardin des femmes* the romantic heroine or “proper” love interest for the male protagonist. Rather, the queen may be a temptress who ensnares the male protagonist with her lush, enchanted gardens and the eroticized pleasures of her voice. Or, since the heroine represents qualities of “purity,” chaste love, and devoted fidelity, the queen can function as her sexualized surrogate: in other words, the queen may use her vocal charms to stimulate the male protagonist’s desire and procure his affections for a woman who is not given her own erotic agency. Such is the case in *Les Huguenots*, in which Marguerite acts not only as matchmaker between Raoul and Valentine, but also as a sort of hypersexual “fire-starter” who sparks Raoul’s passions (with the intention of redirecting them towards his intended bride). As we shall see in future chapters, Inès of *La Favorite* and Myrtha of *Giselle* similarly act as intermediaries between the lead male and female lovers; Stella of *Le Cheval de Bronze* has qualities of the temptress archetype, but is part of the opera’s secondary romantic couple.

On Marguerite’s orders, the Huguenot nobleman Raoul is led, blindfolded, into Chenonceau (Figure 2.3). The critic of *Le Constitutionnel* found Raoul’s blindfold a silly conceit: “Marguerite, it seems, could very well bring Nangis to her palace without covering his eyes like in *colin-maillard*. What do you want? These are the habits of

opera.”<sup>149</sup> Yet the blindfold was not merely a mannered theatrical flourish. First of all, it indicates that Chenonceau is a private, even ritualistic world—and the route to these gardens is kept hidden from new initiates and guests. Secondly, it is a symbolic play on Raoul’s double “love-blindness”: he mistakes the veiled Valentine for Nevers’s mistress, and he is initially captivated by Marguerite, unaware of her station and betrothal to the king. The game of *colin-maillard* (blindman’s buff or blindman’s bluff), referred to by the *Constitutionnel* critic, is also significant: this amorous outdoor activity was enjoyed by the nobility of the *ancien regime* and is a recurring motif in eighteenth-century French pastoral art (particularly Rococo). Thus, reference to *colin-maillard* in *Les Huguenots* imparts connotations of aristocratic leisure, highly stylized pastoral scenes of Watteau and Fragonard, and the erotic freedoms enjoyed outside of court. After all, the restriction of vision in this game heightened remaining sensory perceptions – particularly touch – and offered a ludic context for “physical intimacy that would otherwise be shocking.”<sup>150</sup>

This type of playful eroticism, characteristic of Marguerite’s Chenonceau in general, is particularly evident as the ladies-in-waiting dance around the blindfolded Raoul in the *scène du bandeau*, essentially a staging of the *colin-maillard* game. During this blindfold scene, the ladies of the ballet point their fingers at Raoul and approach gingerly on tiptoe to look at him; some quickly run away, while others surround him in

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<sup>149</sup> [...] mais Marguerite, ce semble, pouvait très bien faire venir Nangis dans son palais, sans lui couvrir les yeux comme à un Colin-Maillard. Que voulez-vous ? ce sont des mœurs d’opéra. Unsigned, "Académie Royale de Musique," *Le Constitutionnel*, 2 March 1836, 2.

<sup>150</sup> So notes art historian Jennifer Milam in her reading of Fragonard’s five blindman’s buff paintings. Jennifer Milam, "Fragonard and the Blindman's Game: Interpreting Representations of Blindman's Buff," *Art History* 21, no. 1 (March 1998): 3.

their curiosity.<sup>151</sup> This emphasizes the status of Chenonceau as an exclusively female space (save, of course, for the androgynous Urbain): Raoul is an outsider in this world, and as such arouses fascination and amusement. Meyerbeer's music is closely linked to this stage action: the sneaking bass line of *staccato* bassoons and *pizzicato* cellos and basses evokes the ladies' tiptoeing around the blindfolded Raoul; the violins' sixteenth-note triplets correspond to the ladies' whispers; wind punctuations of paired *staccato* eighth notes might be sudden giggles, or perhaps the moment when a lady turns to scurry away.

Once his blindfold is removed, Raoul is awestruck by the sight of Chenonceau: he exclaims, "Ô ciel! Où suis-je? De mes yeux éblouis n'est-ce pas un prestige?" (Oh heavens! Where am I? Is this but an illusion of my dazzled eyes?) So, too, is he immediately enamored of Queen Marguerite, hailing her as "beauté divine, enchanteresse" (divine beauty, enchantress) (Figure 2.4). Here the conflation of Woman and Nature as eroticized objects of the male gaze is particularly apparent, and this conflation is evident in press reviews, such as the following from *Le Constitutionnel*:

On lui rend la vue et Nangis est ébloui et étonné de se retrouver au milieu de toutes ces femmes en costume de bain, en présence d'une reine et dans de si magnifiques jardins. Les jardins sont beaux en effet, et à l'horizon on découvre les tourelles sveltes et légères du château et sa chapelle aux vitraux coloriés, cette décoration est d'un effet charmant.<sup>152</sup>

His vision returned, Nangis is dazzled and amazed to find himself in the middle of all these women in bathing costumes, in the presence of a queen and in such magnificent gardens. The gardens are beautiful indeed, and on the horizon we

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<sup>151</sup> "Raoul, que deux jeunes filles amènent avec un bandeau sur les yeux, descendent avec lui du grand escalier. Toute les autres jeunes filles (du ballet) le montrent du doigt, ou reviennent doucement sur la pointe des pieds le regarder, puis s'enfuient, d'autres s'approchent et l'entourent." Giacomo Meyerbeer, *Les Huguenots*, ed. Philip Gossett and Charles Rosen, *Early Romantic Opera* (New York: Garland, 1980), 284.

<sup>152</sup> Unsigned, "Académie Royale de Musique," 2.

discern the slender and light towers of the chateau and its chapel with colorful stained glass—this décor has a charming effect.



**Figure 2.3.** Célestin Deschayes: lithograph of the *scène du bandeau* (blindfold scene) in Act II of *Les Huguenots* (1836). F-Po Estampes Scènes Huguenots (1).

Marguerite does not intend to make Raoul one of her romantic conquests, but the Huguenot nobleman is ignorant of her matchmaking plans: rather, as one nineteenth-century critic put it, “Raoul, enchanted by the adventure, and not acquainted with Marguerite, believes himself to be another Renaud at the palace of Armide.”<sup>153</sup> Once again, the archetype of Armide’s enchanted garden is invoked in press reviews of *Les Huguenots*: for indeed, like Renaud in the garden of Armide, Raoul is dazzled by the

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<sup>153</sup> “Raoul, enchanté de l’aventure, et ne connaissant pas Marguerite, se croit un autre Renaud dans le palais d’Armide.” A., “Académie Royale de Musique,” *La Gazette de France*, 4 March 1836, 3.



artificial paradise of the Chenonceau estate and its population of beautiful nymph-like women. What's more, I would suggest that in an era when Gluck's *Armide* was no longer fashionable at the Opéra, Marguerite's Chenonceau carried on the legacy of Armide's garden: now, though, the enchanted garden *topos* is reimagined within an historical setting befitting grand opera of the 1830s and 40s.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 2.4.** Print illustrating Marguerite and Raoul in Act II, scene 5 of *Les Huguenots*. F-Po Estampes Scènes Huguenots (4).

The orchestral medium of Raoul's duet with Marguerite, "Beauté divine, enchanteresse" – a lyrical melody atop a hypnotic accompaniment pattern of undulating arpeggiated triplets in the pastoral key of F Major – reveals his ensorcelled state (*à la*

*Renaud*).<sup>154</sup> This textural configuration of a “floating” melody, repetitive arpeggiated accompaniment (usually in triplets, often in a compound meter), and a slow, sustained bass has been described by David Rowland as “romance/nocturne style” and by Sarah Clemmens Waltz as the “moonlight *topos*.”<sup>155</sup> Waltz notes that the “moonlight” convention was used not only to depict the moon and nighttime, but also for “portrayals of rivers, light, tears, even enchantment or consolation,”<sup>156</sup> as well as “images of contemplation, idyll, and serenade.”<sup>157</sup> Therefore, though this scene is not set in a nocturnal, moonlit garden, the moonlight *topos* nevertheless functions as a sonic aura that surrounds Raoul within an affective environment of wonder and otherworldly communion. Furthermore, this orchestral medium connotes Raoul’s ecstatic contemplation of the intermingling beauties of landscape and woman: “Beauté divine, enchanteresse” is at once a serenade to Marguerite and a paean to the glorious Chenonceau gardens.<sup>158</sup>

The structure of the opening section of “Beauté divine, enchanteresse” – parallel strophes sung first by Raoul, then Marguerite – is interpreted by Huebner as suggestive of

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<sup>154</sup> I favor the term “medium” as used by Charlton in his identification of the “expressive medium.” Charlton explains his use of the word “medium” thusly: “it is intended to embody the notions of an ‘environment’ and ‘the liquid vehicle with which pigments are mixed for use.’” Charlton, “Orchestra and Image in the Late Eighteenth Century,” 1. Charlton adds: “There is an incidental echo in the theatrical meaning of a ‘screen fixed in front of a gas-jet in order to throw a colored light upon the stage,’ in that the accompaniment parallels the screen and the melody the tinted image.” *Ibid.*, fn 4.

<sup>155</sup> David Rowland, “The Nocturne: Development of a New Style,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, ed. Jim Samson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 36–37; Waltz, “In Defense of Moonlight,” 4.

<sup>156</sup> “In Defense of Moonlight,” 16.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>158</sup> As Huebner notes, “When the blindfold is lifted Raoul expresses wonder at his surroundings and the beauty of the queen in the duet ‘Beauté divine, enchanteresse.’” Huebner, “Huguenots, Les”. I would emphasize that these two objects of Raoul’s admiration are inextricably linked.

“the stiffness of their encounter.”<sup>159</sup> And, to be sure, Raoul and Marguerite are not meant to be viable or compatible as a romantic couple. Yet, as I have mentioned above, Marguerite functions as the igniter of Raoul’s sexual desire, a passion that is meant to then be appropriately channeled towards Valentine. In that sense, she “teaches” him the techniques of erotic love, and the evolution of Raoul’s is apparent in their dialogue. As Huebner points out, Raoul’s opening gambit is relatively stiff: after all, he is in awe of Marguerite’s beauty. His musico-poetic idiom is therefore deferential and even obsequious, perhaps in the manner of an archaic courtly overture (this is supported by the formulaic, serenade-style arpeggiated accompaniment).

Raoul’s formality soon gives way to a sense of wonderment, however, evident in Meyerbeer’s treatment of the line “Am I on earth or in the heavens?” In particular, the word *cieux* (heavens) is colored by an A-flat Major chord—a distantly related, borrowed mediant harmony in F Major. Within the relatively simple harmonic vocabulary of “Beauté divine, enchanteresse,” the tertian progression from the C dominant-seventh chord (V<sup>7</sup>) of *les* to the chromatic mediant A-flat Major chord (<sup>b</sup>III) of *cieux* was an unusual effect that received comment in the press: Castil-Blaze noted that in this F-Major duet, “the pause on A-flat is a surprise that one does not expect, and that gives the phrase an original turn.”<sup>160</sup> What’s more, this “surprising” harmonic progression illustrates Raoul’s metaphoric sublimation into a magical realm.

Taking Raoul’s cue, Marguerite responds with an exact repetition of his musical material, thus reinforcing her pupil’s confidence and encouraging his advances. Her text

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> “[...] ce duo est en *fa*, le repos sur le *la bémol* aigu est une surprise à laquelle on ne s’attend pas, et qui donne à la phrase un tour original.” Castil-Blaze, “*Les Huguenots*, de M. Meyerbeer. Premier Article,” 56.

also reveals that she takes pleasure in this role-playing and even entertains the fantasy of a romantic dalliance with Raoul: “Ah, I can well imagine the amorous excitement of the object of his affection.” Her insistence of “No, no, never” seems to be less a reference to how “no queen or princess could ever have chosen better,” and more a reminder to herself that she cannot give in to the temptation of an affair. Her fluttering refrain of “Ah! Si j’étais coquette” evinces her indulgence in the frivolous excitement and giddy anxiety of an imagined tryst—she does not reveal these sentiments to Raoul, but rather confesses them to the audience.

Though they initially share musical material – reflecting a shared psychological or emotional state (or at least the feigning thereof, in Marguerite’s case) – Marguerite and Raoul are given distinct musical characterizations. As Castil-Blaze observed, their duet “abounds in piquant oppositions”: whereas “Raoul is all sentiment, the part of Marguerite is lively and light.”<sup>161</sup> This contrast is more than mere strategy to create musical interest: Marguerite and Raoul are performing socially constructed expectations of gender. This, too, is part of Raoul’s training at Marguerite’s court of love. The queen willingly plays the part of coy, coquettish young woman in gleeful agitation over Raoul’s proffered affection. Raoul, meanwhile, is positioned as the valiant knight who dedicates himself to his lady. His impassioned strain adopts the military topic, with repeated pledges of “à vous” that emulate a trumpet call:

À vous et ma vie et mon âme,	For you, my life and my soul,
À vous mon épée et mon bras!	For you, my sword and my arm!
À vous et ma vie et mon âme,	For you, my life and my soul,
Mon épée et tout mon sang!	My sword and all my blood!

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<sup>161</sup> “Le duo: *Ah! si j’étais coquette!* sans être précisément neuf, abonde en oppositions piquantes. Raoul est tout sentiment, la partie de Marguerite est vive et légère [...]” Ibid.

Yet Marguerite's sovereignty over her female courtiers and her ability to manipulate Raoul's earnest heart are ultimately insignificant powers. She is unable to sustain the illusion of her idyllic garden space, and by the end of Act II is proven incapable of maintaining order even in her sheltered realm: in the words of Brzoska, "the extreme fragility of [her] artificial paradise is shown by the dramatic device of the 'troubled idyll,' and the political powerlessness of the Queen becomes plain in her failure to control the spat at court."<sup>162</sup> This, of course, foreshadows her profound inability to prevent the horrors of the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in Act V. In fact, she is reduced to a silent witness by the end of the opera, after having dominated the opening of Act II with dazzling displays of her vocal prowess and royal splendor. Marguerite's musical silencing over the course of the opera, Sieghart Döhring argues, is symbolic of the fragility and instability of her deceptive dream-world created at Chenonceau.<sup>163</sup> Therefore, the musical disappearance of Marguerite parallels the gradual unraveling of the Chenonceau illusion.

### **The Legacy of Marguerite's *Jardin des Femmes* in Vaudeville**

Act II of *Les Huguenots* was perhaps the most frequently staged performance of female community on the Opéra stage: *Les Huguenots* was performed 200 times in the 1830s and 40s; by 31 December 1876, it had been performed 620 times; at the close of

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<sup>162</sup> Brzoska, "Meyerbeer: *Robert le Diable* and *Les Huguenots*," 202.

<sup>163</sup> Sieghart Döhring, "Der Schrei der Königin: Zur Destruktion der Idylle in Meyerbeers *Les Huguenots*," in *Festschrift für Winfried Kirsch zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Ulrike Kienzle, Peter Ackermann, and Adolf Nowak (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1996), 238–53.

the long nineteenth century (1914), it had reached over a thousand performances.<sup>164</sup> This performance run surpasses those of even the most successful operas created during the July Monarchy era, including *Robert le diable* (1831) and *La Juive* (1835). Therefore, by virtue of sheer repetition, *Les Huguenots* contributed more than any other work at the Opéra to the musico-visual reinforcement of the *jardin des femmes*, a scenic convention that links female bodies, nature, private spectacle, and desire.

Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that the *Les Huguenots* bathing scene (especially Meyerbeer's music) became the standard by which other feminine scenes in grand opera were judged, whether or not bathing was involved—this is especially clear in the press reception of Donizetti's opera *La Favorite* (1840), as will be discussed in Chapter IV. The preeminence of the *Les Huguenots* bathing scene as the quintessential female ensemble scene in the late 1830s and 40s becomes even more apparent upon considering the parallel life led by the bathers' chorus "Jeunes beautés, sous ce feuillage" in the world of vaudeville. Thus far, I have identified three vaudevilles that re-text "Jeunes beautés" and repurpose this chorus for new dramatic contexts: *Les Belles Femmes de Paris* (1839), *Les Guêpes* (1840), and *Une Nuit au Sérail* (1841). As we shall see, these humorous appropriations of Meyerbeer's music not only demonstrate the familiarity of the *jardin des femmes* convention within Parisian theatrical culture, but also speak to the status of "Jeunes beautés" as a musical emblem of female community and sensuality.

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<sup>164</sup> Théodore de LaJarte, *Bibliothèque Musicale du Théâtre de l'Opéra: Catalogue Historique, Chronologique, Anecdotique*, vol. 2 (Paris: Librairie des Bibliophiles, 1878), 153. See also the Chronopéra database, <chronopera.free.fr>.

*Les Belles Femmes de Paris* (1839)

Over the course of one week in July of 1839, Paris witnessed the premiere of three different vaudevilles bearing the title *Les Belles Femmes de Paris*: a vaudeville in three tableaux by Varin, Desvergers and Maurice Alhoy, premiered at the Théâtre du Vaudeville 14 July 1839; a comédie-vaudeville in two acts by Dumersan, Duvert, and Lauzanne, premiered at the Théâtre des Variétés on 17 July 1839; and a one-act vaudeville by Eustache Angel and Eugene Vanel, premiered at the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Antoine on 20 July 1839. These works took their cue from the 1839 publication of the first series of *Les Belles Femmes de Paris*, a collection of biographies and portraits of famous French women.<sup>165</sup> Many of these women had theatrical careers as actresses, singers, or dancers – among those included were Fanny Elssler, Cornélie Falcon, and Rosine Stoltz – and the volume’s title boasted that profiles of these “beautiful women of Paris” were penned by “men of letters and men of the world.”<sup>166</sup>

Of the three theatrical satires of *Les Belles Femmes de Paris* mentioned above, the comédie-vaudeville by Dumersan, Duvert, and Lauzanne is pertinent to the present study for its use of Meyerbeer’s “Jeunes beautés” in its second act, where – much like in *Les Huguenots* – Meyerbeer’s music accompanies a bathing scene replete with male voyeurs.<sup>167</sup> Act II of *Les Belles Femmes de Paris* is set in a greenhouse filled with exotic

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<sup>165</sup> Jules Brivois lists two other one-act vaudevilles inspired by this publication, although these works do not share the same title (*Les Belles Femmes de Paris*) and were premiered later: *Les femmes laides de Paris* by Labic and Joanny Augier, premiered 29 August 1839 at the Théâtre des Folies dramatiques; and *Les belles femmes de la rue Mouffetard* by Auguste Jouhaut, premiered 15 August 1840 at the Théâtre Saint-Marcel. Jules Brivois, "Les Belles Femmes de Paris – Les Belles Femmes de Paris et de la Province – Lettres aux Belles Femmes de Paris et de la Province," in *Revue Biblio-Iconographique*, ed. Pierre Dauze and d'Eylac (Paris: rue Poissonnière, 1902), 387–88.

<sup>166</sup> *Les Belles Femmes de Paris, par des hommes de lettres et des hommes du monde*, vol. 1 (Paris: Poussin, 1839).

<sup>167</sup> Henceforth, all mentions of the title *Les Belles Femmes de Paris* refer to this particular vaudeville.

flowering plants; a fountain occupies center stage and its pool spreads across the width of the stage; on either side of the stage are grottos and potted plants (Figure 2.5).<sup>168</sup> At the beginning of the act, the servant Joseph leads artist Théodore Dubourg to this place, then departs. Left alone, Dubourg first imagines himself to be in a fairy realm, but soon laments the banishment of mythology and magic from contemporary life and correctly identifies this “mysterious locale” as a bathing hall:

[...] mais où suis-je ? quel est ce local mystérieux dans lequel Joseph vient de m'introduire par cette petite porte qui donne sur les Champs-Élysées : mythologiquement, c'est le séjour des bienheureux... mais depuis ce temps-là c'est bien changé. Me voici dans une grotte charmante, un bassin y répand une douce fraîcheur, des arbres exotiques l'embaument de leurs parfums ; c'est le séjour de quelque fée ! — autre illusion ! les fées aujourd'hui vont en police correctionnelle ; la poésie s'en va ; c'est triste. Cependant j'ai un pressentiment : ceci est une salle de bains [...]

[...] but where am I? What is this mysterious place to which Joseph has brought me by this small door opening to the Champs-Élysées? In mythology, this would be the abode of the blessed...but since that time, things have changed a lot. Here I am in a charming grotto, a pool there spreads a sweet freshness, exotic trees embalming it with their fragrances; it is the abode of some fairy! — Another illusion! Fairies today end up in the court of summary jurisdiction; poetry is disappearing; it's sad. However, I have a hunch: this is a bathing-hall.

Later in the act (Act II, Scene 12), Countess Ostroloff suggests to her friends that they bathe in this fountain pool as a relaxing antidote for their frustration with their husbands. The men have refused to let their wives' portraits be done by Dubourg and published in the next issue of *Les Belles Femmes de Paris*, and the Countess exclaims,

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<sup>168</sup> “Le théâtre représente l'intérieur d'une serre garnie de plantes exotiques fleuries. Au centre d'un bassin qui occupe le milieu et toute la largeur du théâtre, un jet d'eau retombe en cascades. De chaque côté du théâtre, au premier plan, en face du public, une grotte; celle de gauche est censée donner sur les Champs-Élysées. Au second plan, et de chaque côté, une grotte. Au troisième plan, il y a de chaque côté de la scène un petit pont jeté sur le bassin, qui forme canal et se perd hors de vue à droite et à gauche. De l'autre côté du bassin, à gauche, hors de vue, est la porte l'entrée de la serre. Au premier plan, à l'angle de chaque grotte qui fait face au public, une caisse contenant un fort arbrisseau.” *Les / Belles Femmes de Paris, / comédie-vaudeville en deux actes, / par MM. Dumersan, Duvert et Lauzanne, / Représentée pour la première fois, sur le Théâtre des Variétés, le 17 juillet 1839*, Magasin Théâtral (Paris 1839), 15.



“Ah! The count hurts my nerves...it will do me good to frolic in the waves.”<sup>169</sup> To diffuse the women’s modest reluctance to join her, the Countess initially assures them that they will only be in the company of other women; when the women still resist, the Countess accuses them of having embarrassing physical deformities. This incites the women’s vanity: Madame de Rinvill, for one, recalls that her neck and shoulders have often been likened to those of a sylph (“Moi, on m’a toujours dit que j’avais un col et des épaules de sylphide”); before long, all of the women are disrobing onstage, though stage directions in the published libretto insist that this action is limited to the undoing of a few buttons and the removal of hairpins—by the end of the scene, the women have taken off only their belts.<sup>170</sup>

In Act II, scene 15, the women surface one by one in the pool, with coiffed hair and “very elegant, long bathing shirts” (*longues chemises de bain très-élégantes*). The women are no longer alone, however: M. Boissière and Count Ostroloff are hiding behind a potted plant on stage right (Figure 2.5). Upon recognizing their wives in the water, each nobleman entreats the other to look away—but both disobey:

BOISSIÈRE, *au Comte*: Ma femme!... cher comte... ne regardez pas.  
 LE COMTE: Parbleu ! (*Il regarde.*) Oh! Oh! Oh!  
 [...] LE COMTE: Ma femme! (*À Boissière.*) Fermez les yeux.  
 BOISSIÈRE, *regardant* : C’est ce que je fais... oh ! oh ! oh ! quel spectacle !<sup>171</sup>

BOISSIÈRE, *to the Count*: My wife!... Dear count... do not look.  
 THE COUNT: Certainly! (*He looks.*) Oh! Oh! Oh!  
 [...] THE COUNT: My wife! (*To Boissière.*) Close your eyes.  
 BOISSIÈRE, *looking* : That is exactly what I am doing... Oh! Oh! Oh! What a spectacle!

<sup>169</sup> “Ah! Le comte m’a fait mal aux nerfs...ça me fera du bien de batifoler dans les ondes.” *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>170</sup> “Le déshabillé des dames s’est borné à quelques boutons défaits, à des épingles ôtées; elles retirent leur ceinture vers la fin de la scène.” *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

Boissière and Ostroloff, then, are onstage voyeurs in the same vein as the page Urbain of *Les Huguenots* or, for that matter, the page Stéphano and Count Léoni in the Scribe/Auber opéra-comique *Actéon* (1836).<sup>172</sup> Oblivious to the presence of the two married men, the women sport in the water, splashing each other and singing of their delight in the sensuous pleasures of bathing. Appropriately, they sing to the tune of the bathers' chorus "Jeunes beautés" from *Les Huguenots*.<sup>173</sup> Of the three borrowings of "Jeunes beautés" examined here, this is the simplest type of repurposing: music from the *Huguenots* bathing scene is used for another bathing scene. Thus, even though the bathing scene of *Les Belles Femmes de Paris* can be understood as a parody of "serious" theatrical bathing scenes such as that of *Les Huguenots*, the original scenic context of "Jeunes beautés" remains largely intact.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> According to Meyerbeer, Scribe reused the *Actéon* plot for Act II of *Les Huguenots*. Quoted in Kelly, *First Nights at the Opera*, 174. *Actéon* was premiered in January 1836, two months before *Les Huguenots*, and in my next chapter I address Scribe's cultivation of the *jardin des femmes* convention in opéras-comiques such as *Actéon* and *Le Cheval de Bronze* (1835).

<sup>173</sup> This number is listed in the libretto as "Air: *Chœur des Baigneuses des Huguenots* (arrangé par M. Louis Reine)." *Les / Belles Femmes de Paris, / comédie-vaudeville en deux actes, / par MM. Dumersan, Duvert et Lauzanne, / Représentée pour la première fois, sur le Théâtre des Variétés, le 17 juillet 1839*, 26.

<sup>174</sup> Theater critic (and devotee of voyeuristic spectacle) Théophile Gautier was not, however, impressed with the bathing scene of *Les Belles Femmes de Paris*. Gautier noted that bathing scenes were not new to the Parisian stage, and furthermore, that this particular "exhibition" was too modest in comparison: apparently the lead actress of *La Chaste Suzanne* had displayed upper-body nudity. The bare shoulders and arms of *Les Belles Femmes de Paris* were even tame compared to women's *toilettes* at contemporary Parisian balls. Gautier is quick to point out, though, that one would not want to see any more, since in his assessment, the Théâtre des Variétés lacked beautiful, shapely women—he describes the actresses as spiders and pumpkins (that is, too thin and too fat): "La pièce des Variétés fait tout ce qu'elle peut pour être immorale et allécher le succès au moyen des épaules et des bras nus des actrices. Nous lui savons gré de l'intention, mais elle s'est trompée cruellement, et il n'y a rien de vertueux et de moral comme cette exhibition malheureuse. On voit tous les jours, d'ailleurs, des bras et des épaules, et, dans le premier bal venu, toutes les femmes, pour peu habillées qu'elles soient, sont un peu plus déshabillées que les baigneuses des Variétés. Ce n'est pas que nous eussions voulu en voir davantage ; ce que nous avons vu nous donne une assez pauvre idée du reste, et nous ne concevons guère quel plaisir on peut prendre à voir des araignées ou des potirons en toilette de bain. Cela rentre dans la pathologie et l'anatomie. Cette idée de montrer des femmes au bain sur la scène n'est pas neuve; et l'on se souvient d'avoir vu, dans le rôle de la chaste Suzanne, au théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin, que M. Merle dirigeait alors, une madame Quériot, d'ailleurs beaucoup plus belle que les actrices des Variétés, Suzanne fort peu chaste et découverte jusqu'aux hanches." (The piece at the Variétés [Gautier contrasts this *Les Belles Femmes de Paris* with the one staged at the Théâtre des Vaudevilles] does everything it can do be immoral and tries to achieve this through the

So, too, do the women of *Les Belles Femmes de Paris* retain the silliness and self-indulgence of the women in Act II of *Les Huguenots*; moreover, their ringleader, the Countess Ostroloff, is a spoiled aristocrat akin to Queen Marguerite. The women of *Les Belles Femmes de Paris*, however, are much more explicit in their acknowledgement of the eroticism and exoticism of bathing in nineteenth-century French culture. For, indeed, eighteenth-century moralists had cautioned against “the pleasure, the sensual glances, the autoerotic temptation of baths,” as Alain Corbin has noted in a fascinating social history of smell and fragrance.<sup>175</sup> And although bathing became more common in Paris by the end of the eighteenth century, it continued to be associated with enervation and languor—particularly when (imprudently) done in excess. Therefore, this practice was still largely limited to the leisure class, and even so usually required therapeutic justification.<sup>176</sup>

These social anxieties attached to bathing are apparent in *Les Belles Femmes de Paris*; in fact, *Les Belles Femmes de Paris* addresses these issues more directly than does *Les Huguenots*. (This is perhaps not surprising, given the particular ability of vernacular comedic genres to openly satirize contemporary social anxieties.) As we have already seen, the Countess Ostroloff justifies her desire to bathe by citing its calming effect on

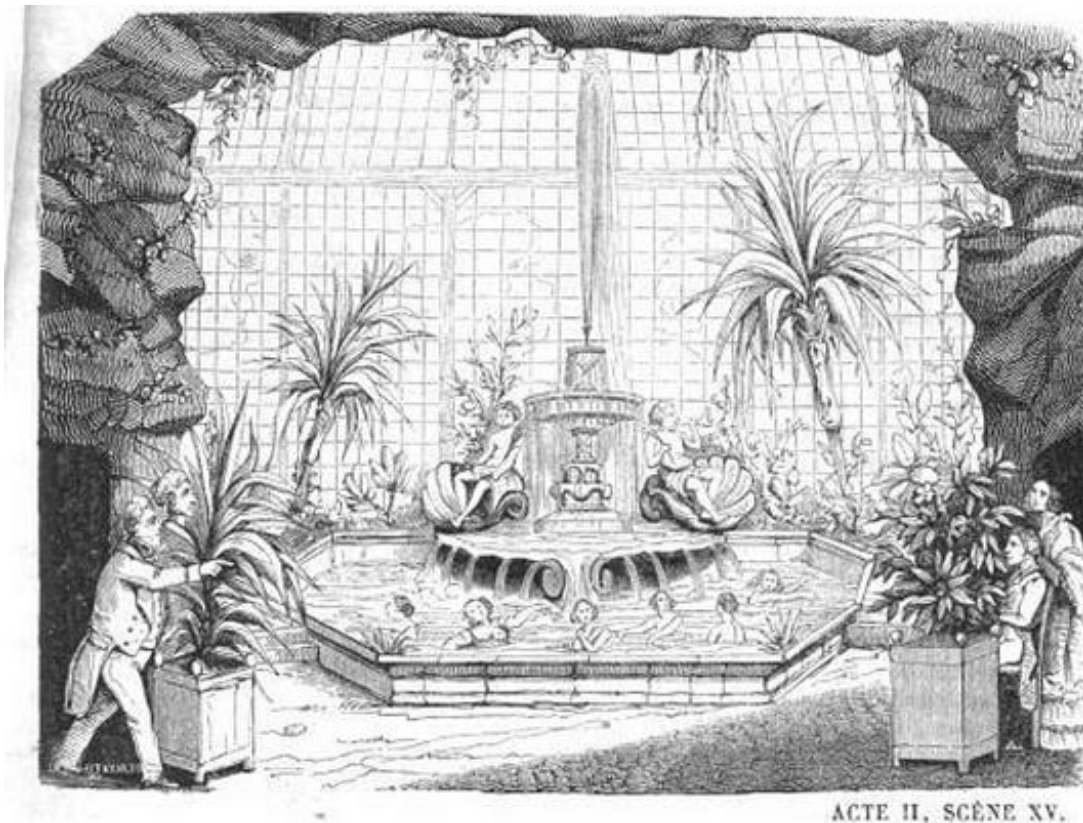
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shoulders and bare arms of its actresses. We understand the intention, but it is sorely mistaken, and there is nothing so virtuous and moral as this unfortunate exhibition. Moreover, every day one sees arms and shoulders, and all the women who came to the first ball were barely clothed, a little more undressed than the bathers of the Variétés. It is not that we would want to see more; what we have seen gives us a pretty poor idea of the rest, and we can hardly conceive what pleasure one can take in seeing spiders or pumpkins in bathing costumes. This enters into pathology and anatomy. This idea of showing women bathing on stage is not new, and one remembers having seen a certain Madame Quériot in the role of the chaste Susannah at the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin, then directed by M. Merle—besides being much more beautiful than the actresses at the Variétés, Susannah was hardly chaste, and was uncovered down to the hips.) Théophile Gautier, *Histoire de l'art dramatique en France depuis vingt-cinq ans* (Paris: Édition Hetzel, 1858), 281.

<sup>175</sup> Alain Corbin, *The foul and the fragrant : odor and the French social imagination* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), 72.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.* See also *ibid.*, 179.

her agitated nerves; the Countess's particular delight in bathing might also be explained by the libretto's indication that she is a former *belle limonadière*, or pretty café hostess whose profession carried suggestions of prostitution.<sup>177</sup> In other words, the Countess has an established appetite for sensuality and, by the start of the play, has achieved the social mobility that allows her indulgence in privileged activities of the upper-class lifestyle.



**Figure 2.5.** The bathing scene in Act II, scene 15 of *Les Belles Femmes de Paris*. Illustration from the printed libretto (Paris: Dondey-Dupré, 1839).

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<sup>177</sup> See, for example, the following account of early nineteenth-century Parisian life: “A few years after, Jérôme’s throne was purchased by keepers of the Café des Mille Colonnes, in the Palais Royal, and the celebrated *belle limonadière* was nightly seen seated on it, exhibiting her charms, as in the early part of her life she had done at the corners of the streets of Paris.” Thomas Richard Underwood, *A Narrative of Memorable Events in Paris, Preceding the Capitulation, and During the Occupancy of that City by the Allied Armies, in the Year 1814; Being Extracts from the Journal of a Détenu, who Continued a Prisoner, on Parole, in the French Capital, from the Year 1803 to 1814. Also, Anecdotes of Buonaparte’s Journey to Elba* (London: Longmans, 1828), 285.

The sexual overtones and elite associations of bathing are further emphasized by the new text fitted to Meyerbeer's "Jeunes beautés" music, the women sing about the arousing movement of the water's "enchanted wave" that gently causes their bodies to "shudder." Furthermore, in addition to its titillating physical sensation, bathing is identified as a marker of high socioeconomic status—and this "privilege of opulence" is immediately projected onto the East, which is imagined as a hotbed of luxury and lassitude.<sup>178</sup> According to the European women of *Les Belles Femmes de Paris*, the bath "brings Asia to France" and transforms Paris into a realm of *houris*, the celestial virgins of the Qu'ranic paradise; Countess Ostroloff adds that the exotic flowers and shadows of the greenhouse, coupled with the women's gauzy bathing-dresses, allow the women to think themselves in a "country of savages":

CHORUS OF WOMEN:

Ah! quel bonheur! ah! quelle ivresse!	Ah! What happiness! Ah! What ecstasy!
Oui, dans cette onde enchanteresse	Yes, in this enchanting wave
Doucement on se sent frémir	Gently one feels a shudder.
Le bain est un plaisir!	The bath is a pleasure!
Privilège de l'opulence,	Privilege of opulence,
Qui transport l'Asie en France,	That transports Asia to France
Et fait un séjour des houris	And makes a dwelling-place for houris
À Paris!	In Paris!

THE COUNTESS:

Vraiment, ces fleurs et ces ombrages	Truly, these flowers and these shadows
Rappellent le pays des sauvages,	Recall the country of savages
Et nous leur ressemblons, ma foi,	And we resemble them, indeed,
D'autant plus qu nous avons	Especially when we have
le costum' de l'emploi.	the costume for the job.

Bathing, luxury, tropical landscapes, and hypersexual women in revealing clothing are among the stock scenery, characters, and situations that comprise what Said

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<sup>178</sup> This familiar Orientalist trope has been most famously critiqued in Edward Said's classic *Orientalism*. See, in particular, Said's discussion of nineteenth-century French and English Orientalist writings ("Pilgrims and Pilgrimages, British and French"): Said, *Orientalism*, 166–97.

has critiqued as the theatrical “stage” of Orientalism.<sup>179</sup> Indeed, these are the oft-recycled stereotypes of Orientalist representations in nineteenth-century French music theater, as we shall see in greater detail in the following chapter. Therefore, Said’s assertion that “the Orient is less a place than a *topos*” is particularly relevant to works such as *Les Belles Femmes de Paris*.<sup>180</sup> “L’Asie” is invoked not as a particular place, but a vast and generic repository of feminine sexuality and is, of course, a mirror for Europe’s own fantasies and desires. And among the various figures of the Orientalist vocabulary, bathing is one of the most potent signifiers of the exotic woman and her alluring sexuality.<sup>181</sup> Therefore, by modeling themselves after Eastern women – that is, by bathing in a greenhouse full of lush vegetation – the Countess Ostroloff and her friends create a mask that permits their own enjoyment of sensual pleasure. As we shall see below, another vaudeville treatment of “Jeunes beautés” uses Meyerbeer’s music in an even more overt and elaborate Orientalist context. First, though, let us briefly examine our second example, *Les Guêpes* (1840).

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 63, 71. Said likens the vocabulary of Orientalism to that of the Italian *commedia dell’arte*, an improvisatory theatrical tradition based on formulaic character and plot types.

<sup>180</sup> Said writes: “In the system of knowledge about the Orient, the Orient is less a place than a *topos*, a set of references, a congeries of characteristics, that seems to have its origin in a quotation, or a fragment of a text, or a citation from someone’s work on the Orient, or some bit of previous imagining, or an amalgam of all these.” Ibid., 177.

<sup>181</sup> To take but one example from French literature of the 1840s, the narrator of Prosper Mérimée’s novella *Carmen* (1845) first encounters the titular Roma temptress as one of the women of Córdoba who bathe in the Guadalquivir at sunset, after the tolling of the *Angelus*. Carmen mounts the ladder leading from the water, dressed in black and wearing in her hair a large spray of jasmine, an exotic flower whose “large petals exhale an intoxicating fragrance at night.” Thus, Carmen is immediately positioned as a languid, sexually provocative woman in the minds of the narrator and reader alike: “Un soir, à l’heure où l’on ne voit plus rien, je fumais, appuyé sur le parapet du quai, lorsqu’une femme, remontant l’escalier qui conduit à la rivière, vint s’asseoir près de moi. Elle avait dans les cheveux un gros bouquet de jasmin, dont les larges pétales exhalaient le soir une odeur enivrante. Elle était simplement, peut-être pauvrement vêtue, tout en noir, comme la plupart des grisettes dans la soirée. Les femmes comme il faut ne portent le noir que le matin ; le soir, elles s’habillent à la *francesca*. En arrivant auprès de moi, ma baigneuse laissa glisser sur ses épaules la mantille qui lui couvrait la tête, et, à l’*obscur clarté qui tombe des étoiles*, je vis qu’elle était petite, jeune, bien faite, et qu’elle avait de très grands yeux.” Prosper Mérimée, “Carmen,” *Revue des Deux Mondes* 12(1 October 1845): 14–15.

Les Guêpes (1840)

Bayard and Dumanoir's *Les Guêpes*, a "revue mixed with *couplets*" premiered 30 November 1840 on the stage of the Palais-Royal, refers not to Aristophanes but to journalist Alphonse Karr and his satirical monthly journal *Les Guêpes*, first published in November 1839. Today, the vaudeville *Les Guêpes* is remembered primarily for having coined the term "chauvinism."<sup>182</sup> This work is also notable for satirizing the slew of devils that had recently appeared on the Opéra stage, from *Robert le diable* (1831) to the ballets *Le Diable boiteux* (1836) and *Le Diable amoureux* (1840).<sup>183</sup> Here, though, we shall focus on the first scene of this work, which features a retexted rendition of the *Huguenots* bathers' chorus.<sup>184</sup>

*Les Guêpes* opens in a garden, where four female wasps are assembled: Padocke, Mammone, Moloch, and Azazel. These characters are taken directly from Karr's periodical: the wasps Mammone, Moloch, and Azazel are introduced in the February 1840 issue of *Les Guêpes* as metaphoric messengers of Karr's "stinging" social commentary; Mammone explains that she and her companions have taken their *noms de*

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<sup>182</sup> Gérard de Puymège, "The Good Soldier Chauvin," in *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past*, ed. Pierre Nora and Lawrence D. Kritzman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 340.

<sup>183</sup> In scene 8 of *Les Guêpes*, Pierrot and the wasps debate the identity of the devil who appears, singing the popular air "C'est l'amour": "–Quel diable est-ce là? –Ce n'est pas *Robert-le-Diable*. –Ce n'est pas le *Diable Boiteux*. –Eh non ! c'est le *Diable amoureux*." *Les Guêpes, / revue mêlée de couplets, / par MM. Bayard et Dumanoir, / Représentée pour la première fois, à Paris, sur le théâtre du Palais-Royal, / le 30 novembre 1840* (Paris: Lacombe, 1840), 10. See Henri Rossi, *Le Diable dans le vaudeville au XIXe siècle: avec une chronologie des pièces, un index des auteurs et un répertoire des revues et journaux* (Paris: Lettres modernes Minard, 2003), 164. In a forthcoming dissertation, Mia Tootill (Cornell University) also analyzes the treatment of the Devil figure in *Les Guêpes*, among other works of the July Monarchy era.

<sup>184</sup> Indicated in the libretto as "Air: des Huguenots. (les baigneuses.)" *Les Guêpes, revue mêlée de couplets*, 1.

*guerre* from the fallen angels of Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667).<sup>185</sup> Padocke first appears later that year, in the August 1840 issue of *Les Guêpes*, and is named after one of the familiar spirits of the witches from Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* (I.1: “Padocke calls—anon!”).<sup>186</sup> Karr’s periodical includes “scripts” of his conversations with these wasps – his own familiar spirits, so to say – in which he is designated as “the Master of the Wasps” (*le Maître des Guêpes*). By the start of the vaudeville *Les Guêpes*, however, the Master of the Wasps has been taken away from his garden and his faithful wasps by the National Guard. In his absence, Padocke, Mammone, Moloch, and Azazel are ordered to stop all their stinging; to the tune of “Jeunes beautés,” they sing of their need to calm themselves and take newfound pleasure in their garden:

THE WASPS:

Aux volontés de notre maître,	To the will of our master,
Mes sœurs, il faut bien nous soumettre:	My sisters, we must submit:
Puisqu’il l’a dit, résignons-nous	As he has said, let us resign ourselves
A suspendre nos coups.	To suspend our blows.
Il faut, cessant d’être cruelles,	It is necessary, in ceasing to be cruel ones,
Couper nos aiguillons, nos ailes...	To clip our stingers, our wings...
Goûtons, sous cet ombrage épais,	Let us taste, under this thick shade,
Les douceurs de la paix.	The delights of peace.

In the dialogue that follows, however, the four sister-wasps bemoan their “unemployment”: Mammone and Moloch liken their plight to that of clerks who are dismissed following a change in governmental office; and Azazel notes the frustration of

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<sup>185</sup> “UNE GUEPE. Je suis *Mammone*, j’ai emprunté mon nom à un des anges déchus que *Milton* range sous la bannière de *Satan*, et quelques-unes de mes compagnes ont pris comme moi leurs noms de guerre du *Paradis perdu*.” Alphonse Karr, *Les Guêpes* 1(February 1840): 121.

<sup>186</sup> Karr does not expressly state that Padocke’s name is a *Macbeth* reference; however, the section immediately prior to his first “conversation” with Padocke is a faux-anecdote that mocks Louis Napoléon’s second failed coup attempt of August 1840; here Karr refers to Louis-Napoléon as “Madame \*\*\*, l’une des sorcières de *Macbeth*.” *Les Guêpes* 2(August 1840): 14.



having a stinger but being unable to use it.<sup>187</sup> Azazel and Moloch complain further about being deprived of both their sustenance and mobility: “We are on a diet! On forced rest!” Padocke, however, suggests a solution: “Unless someone comes to find us at home”—in other words, although the wasps need their master Alphonse Karr’s orders to leave the garden and deploy their stings, they may still attack anyone unwise enough to trespass into their garden.<sup>188</sup> (Their first prospective victim turns out to be another wasp: Coquette Dubu, formerly a corset-maker on rue Vivienne but newly transformed by the Master of the Wasps after she attempted to stab him for the embarrassing – if not actually libelous – revelations of his “wicked little volumes.”)

Given this scenic context, the use of “Jeunes beautés” in *Les Guêpes* is certainly the most ironic repurposing of Meyerbeer’s music. To be sure, Padocke, Mammone, Moloch, and Azazel sing of finding peace in the shade of the garden, much like the Catholic noblewomen of *Les Huguenots*; however, for the sisterhood of wasps in *Les Guêpes*, there are bitter undertones to their song. They see their garden not as a welcome refuge, but rather as an idyllic prison to which they are unhappily confined. Moreover, while “Jeunes beautés” in its original context offered only an oblique criticism of female community, its invocation in *Les Guêpes* suggests a much darker vision of women as vicious, vindictive wasps. Such a vision had previously been articulated in *Scènes de la Vie Privée et Publique des Animaux* (1836), a collection of vignettes by various authors about anthropomorphic animals and insects, with imaginative illustrations by J.-J.

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<sup>187</sup> “MAMMONE. Nous voilà sans emploi... comme des commis destitués... / MOLOCH. Par un changement de ministère. / AZAZEL. C’est un peu ennuyeux d’avoir un aiguillon, et de ne pouvoir s’en servir!” *Les Guêpes, revue mêlée de couplets*, 1.

<sup>188</sup> “AZAZEL. Nous voilà au régime! / MOLOCH. Au repos forcé! / PADOCKE. A moins qu’on ne vienne nous trouver à domicile.” *Ibid.*

Grandville. Among these *Scènes* is Paul de Musset’s “Les Souffrances d’un Scarabée,” which includes a warning against “thin-waisted wasps who are dangerous company.”<sup>189</sup> Grandville’s illustration portrays a fashionable woman-as-vespid, replete with fan, veil, handkerchief, and a dripping fang extending from her hungry mouth in the shape of a dagger (Figure 2.6). The implication, of course, is that the society woman is vain and vampiric, her fine clothing unable to mask the predatory nature that lies beneath. As we shall see in Chapter VI, the imagining of women as a horde of angry wasps will reappear in Adolphe Adam’s score for the ballet *Giselle* (1841).



Il y a des Guêpes à fine taille qui...

**Figure 2.6.** Grandville, *Scènes de la Vie Privée et Publique des Animaux* (Paris, 1836): “There are thin-waisted wasps who... [are dangerous company]”

<sup>189</sup> “[...] il y a des Guêpes à fines tailles qui sont d’un commerce dangereux.” *Scènes de la Vie Privée et Publique des Animaux. Vignettes par Grandville* (Paris: Marescq & Cie, 1836), 141.

Une Nuit au Sérail (1841)

For a third and final example of the bathers' chorus "Jeunes beautés" in vaudeville, I turn to *Une Nuit au Sérail*, premiered during Carnival season at the Théâtre National du Vaudeville on 29 January 1841. *Une Nuit au Sérail* starred the actress Suzanne Brohan as "Lady Montaigu," a fictionalized representation of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689–1762), wife of the British ambassador to Turkey and author of the widely read *Turkish Embassy Letters* describing her travels. In *Une Nuit au Sérail*, Lady Montaigu wishes to enter the harem of Sultan Achmet III and discover its secrets; to do so, she must become an undercover investigator, disguising herself "in rich Oriental costume" (Figure 2.7).

Lady Montaigu enters the harem in Act II, set at night in a pavilion within the enclosed seraglio gardens. This pavilion is furnished with typical Orientalist markers of sensuality, fertility, and exoticism – a fountain, flowers, couches, and Chinese lanterns – and the opening tableau is typical of seraglio scenes in the 1830s and '40s: groups of odalisques sit on cushions, complete their *toilette*, consume sorbets, and dance to the sound of Turkish instruments.<sup>190</sup> "Jeunes beautés" is first heard at the end of scene 7, played softly by the orchestra while the chief eunuch Mastouf prepares the odalisques for their inspection by the sultan. In scene 9, the odalisques sing Meyerbeer's chorus, fitted with the following text, to welcome Lady Montaigu to the harem:

ODALISQUES OF THE HAREM:

Jeune beauté, dans cet asile,  
Où l'on trouve un bonheur tranquille,  
Viens passer tes jours avec nous...

Young beauty, in this sanctuary,  
Where one finds a tranquil happiness,  
Come spend your days with us...

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<sup>190</sup> "Une Nuit au Sérail, / comédie en deux actes, mêlée de chant, / par / MM. A. de Forges et Paul Vermond, / Représentée pour la première fois, sur le théâtre national du Vaudeville, / le 29 janvier 1841," in *La France Dramatique au Dix-Neuvième Siècle, Choix de Pièces Modernes* (Paris: Tresse, 1841), 15.

Dans une heureuse insouciance,  
Exempt de chagrin, de souffrance,  
Ton sort y sera des plus doux.<sup>191</sup>

In a happy carelessness,  
Free of sadness, of suffering,  
Your fate will be the sweetest.

Although Act II of *Une Nuit au Sérail* does include a “gushing fountain” (*une fontaine jaillissante*) and the women are seen preparing their *toilette*, there is no direct implication of bathing in these seraglio gardens. Rather, “Jeunes beautés” functions as a marker of pastoral languor and sensuality within an exclusively female community—a purportedly homosocial community that is nonetheless eroticized and monitored by the male gaze (as in *Les Huguenots*, as well). Furthermore, the association of “Jeunes beautés” with the seraglio suggests a construction that I shall explore in the following chapter: namely, the harem as a metaphoric “garden of women.”

*Les Huguenots* was performed over forty times on the Opéra stage between 1839 and 1841; during those same years, its bathers’ chorus enjoyed a parallel life on the vaudeville stage. There, “Jeunes beautés” took on a new status as popular song, a recognizable musical signifier of women who luxuriate in nature and their own company. Gender performance, as Judith Butler points out, is an “act” susceptible to “splittings, self-parody, self-criticism, and those hyperbolic exhibitions of ‘the natural’ that, in their very exaggeration, reveal its fundamentally phantasmic status.”<sup>192</sup> The vaudevilles appropriations of “Jeunes beautés” offer these types of self-parody and self-criticism that confirm the status *Huguenots* bathing scene as a familiar performance of gender within a female homosocial community, while also revealing the instability and “inventedness” of that construction through humor and satire.

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>192</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 187.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 2.7.** Costume of Suzanne Brohan in the role of Lady Montaignu in Act II of *Une Nuit au Sérail*, vaudeville by Pittaud de Forges and Eugène Guinot. Lithograph by Hauteœur-Martinet (Paris, 1841). F-Pn ASP 4-ICO COS-1 (15, 1450).

## Conclusions

The canonic status of *Les Huguenots* has made its second act the best-known example of the feminine pastoral tableau in French grand opera.<sup>193</sup> However, the display of a luxuriant *jardin rempli de jolies femmes* was not by any means unique to *Les Huguenots*, as I hope to make apparent over the course of this study. Rather, Act II of *Les Huguenots* exemplifies a broader scenic convention that extended to multiple Parisian musico-dramatic genres, including grand opera, opéra-comique, ballet-pantomime, and vaudeville. Nor is *Les Huguenots* the first example of this scene type, even if it did become a foundational point of reference for other works. In fact, we must turn to the world of opéra-comique for earlier cases in which *Huguenots* librettist Eugène Scribe cultivated the image of a beautiful “garden of women.” In the following chapter, I examine the appearance of the *jardin des femmes* in Act III of the Scribe/Auber opéra-comique *Le Cheval de Bronze* (1835), largely forgotten today but wildly successful in the mid-1830s.

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<sup>193</sup> *Les Huguenots* is the subject of chapters in Anselm Gerhard’s *The Urbanization of Opera*, Thomas Forrest Kelly’s *First Nights at the Opera*, and Mary Ann Smart’s *Mimomania*. It is also featured as an exemplar of French grand opera in Western music history textbooks such as the Burkholder/Grout/Palisca *A History of Western Music* and Richard Taruskin’s *Oxford History of Western Music*.

### CHAPTER III

#### SCRIBE AND THE *JARDIN DES FEMMES* AT THE OPÉRA-COMIQUE: THE CELESTIAL GARDENS OF VENUS IN *LE CHEVAL DE BRONZE*

In the months leading up to the 29 February 1836 premiere of Eugène Scribe and Giacomo Meyerbeer's grand opera *Les Huguenots*, theatergoers had opportunity to see several other "gardens of women" on the Parisian stage. At the Opéra, Act III of the ballet-pantomime *L'île des pirates* (premiered 12 August 1835) was set in the "*jardin des femmes*, on the Isle of the Pirates"—that is, an island harem of the pirates' captured women. Meanwhile at the Opéra-Comique, two works by Eugène Scribe and Daniel Auber also featured *jardins des femmes*: *Le Cheval de Bronze* (premiered 23 March 1835), whose third act travels to the celestial gardens of Princess Stella on the all-female planet Venus; and the one-act *Actéon* (premiered 23 January 1836), in which the princess Lucrezia paints a tableau of Diana and her nymphs at their bath, using the palace gardens as a backdrop and her sister-in-law and ladies-in-waiting as models.

So striking were the parallels between *Actéon* and Act II of *Les Huguenots* that Meyerbeer claimed they had identical plots.<sup>194</sup> Indeed, Scribe used many similar motifs in these operas: a bored princess seeking entertainment, ladies-in-waiting who masquerade as bathing nymphs in gauzy dresses, an indiscreet page who attempts to spy on the

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<sup>194</sup> Kelly, *First Nights at the Opera*, 174. See Meyerbeer's letter to Minna Meyerbeer, dated 22 October 1835: "Die Damorau hat sich bei der komischen Oper engagirt. Ich verliehre sie also für die Rolle der Margharete die ich seit unsrer Trennung sehr niedlich ausgestattet hatte. Ferner debutirt sie in einer Oper von Scribe und Auber deren Sujet total dasselbe ist wie das des 2<sup>ten</sup> Aktes meiner Oper." Giacomo Meyerbeer, *Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, ed. Hans Becker and Gudrun Becker, vol. 3 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1975), 484.

“nymphs” at their bath, and so forth.<sup>195</sup> Musically, there are parallels as well: Princess Lucrezia and Queen Marguerite are both coloratura soprano roles (premiered by Laure Cinti-Damoreau and Julie Dorus-Gras, respectively), and the pages Stéphano and Urbain are both travesty soprano roles (premiered by Félicité Pradher and Maria Flecheux, respectively). *Actéon* cannot, however, be cited as the singular precedent for Scribe’s writing of a luxuriant, erotically charged “garden of women” in *Les Huguenots*. Rather, the *jardin des femmes* was a recurring convention employed by Scribe in several of his *opéras-comiques*, not simply for strong scenic contrasts, but more as a fantasy space in which interrelated themes of gendered landscape, voyeurism, and heterosexual male desire might be freely explored.

In this chapter, I focus on the musico-dramatic features of the *jardin des femmes* convention in one particular opéra comique, Scribe and Auber’s opéra-féerie *Le Cheval de Bronze*, chosen for its strong parallels to *Les Huguenots* and its great success at the Opéra-Comique: the periodical *Le Miroir* described it as a “gold mine” for the Comique,<sup>196</sup> and Émile Deschamps praised its score as “remarkable in spirit, order, and

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<sup>195</sup> In *Actéon*, the theme of voyeurism is given an even more comedic treatment than Urbain’s repeated attempts to watch Marguerite’s ladies in Act II of *Les Huguenots*: Count Léoni, in love with Princess Lucrezia’s sister-in-law Angela, disguises himself as a blind minstrel and is therefore allowed to join in Lucrezia’s tableau as a model for the hunter Actéon, the ill-fated hunter transformed into a stag and killed by his own dogs for watching the goddess Diana and her nymphs bathing. Angela recognizes Léoni and, knowing that he is not really blind, is embarrassed to appear in front of him in the revealing costume of a *nymph chasseresse*. Lucrezia insists that Angela participate: “You are the nymph Eucharis, so dear to Diana! But first, take off those velvet clothes, useless attire for a huntress!” Léoni rejoices in this sight (“O moment full of charms! O enchanting spectacle! Her trouble and alarm make my heart palpitate!”), but his charade is revealed when the page Stéphano attempts to spy on the women (“O sweet marvel! O heavenly pleasures like no other! Delightful tableau so sweet to my gaze! Without them to see me, observe!”). Léoni calls out to Angela with a warning that she is being watched by Stéphano, thus revealing his own ability to see the women. *Actéon, / opéra-comique en un acte, / par M. Scribe, / musique de M. Auber, / représenté pour la première fois, / à Paris, sur le Théâtre de l’Opéra-Comique, / le 23 janvier 1836* (Paris: Dondey-Dupré), 11.

<sup>196</sup> “OPÉRA-COMIQUE. — *Le Cheval de Bronze* de M. Auber, est une mine d’or pour ce théâtre, qui avec cet opéra s’est donné la perspective d’une longue série de belles soirées. Succès de gloire pour le compositeur et d’argent pour le directeur.” L. Vidal, “Théâtres,” *Le Miroir de Paris*, 8 April 1835, 3.



dramatic truth.”<sup>197</sup> Later adapted as an opéra-ballet for its premiere at the Opéra in 1857, *Le Cheval de Bronze* did not fare as well in its new incarnation, receiving only twenty performances between 21 September 1857 and 22 November 1858.<sup>198</sup>

As in the *jardin des femmes* of *Les Huguenots*, the celestial gardens in Act III of *Le Cheval de Bronze* are a sphere of exclusively female activity, with a decorative *cavatine* for the secondary female lead (a queen or princess); a chorus sung by female attendants who delight in the leisurely pleasures of nature; stylized movement performed by dancers; and décor that encourages visual perception of these women as emergent from the landscape. Yet Stella’s Venusian gardens in Act III of *Le Cheval de Bronze* have not previously been considered as one of Scribe’s imaginative antecedents to Marguerite’s Chenonceaux gardens in Act II of *Les Huguenots*. This is perhaps due to the present-day obscurity of the *Le Cheval de Bronze* (save for a recent performance by Komische Oper Berlin in March 2012) and the championing of the *Les Huguenots* within the Western canon. My purpose is not to trace direct lines of influence and origin regarding *Les Huguenots*; indeed, questions of genesis are beyond the scope of this study. Rather, it is fruitful to consider how *Les Huguenots* was part of a larger cultural Gestalt that included contemporaneous works like *Le Cheval de Bronze*. As part of this shared imaginary, theatrical presentations and representations contributed to the construction of

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<sup>197</sup> “En attendant, le *Cheval de Bronze* ira loin et longtemps. La musique de ce nouvel opéra est remarquable par l’esprit, la facture et la vérité dramatique.” Émile Deschamps, “Lettres sur la Musique: Paris, 15 mai 1835 [troisième lettre],” in *Œuvres Complètes de Émile Deschamps*, ed. Alphonse Lemerre (Paris: J. Claye, 1873), 37.

<sup>198</sup> Paris Opéra archivist Théodore de LaJarte commented on this unexpected failure: “On aurait pu croire que l’idée de transporter à l’Opéra la ravissante partition d’Auber serait bien accueillie du public. Il n’en fut: rien, et on a le droit d’en être étonné, d’autant plus qu’Auber avait ajouté des airs de danse et quelques morceaux de chant.” (One would have thought that transporting Auber’s ravishing score to the Opéra would be well received by the public. It wasn’t: nothing, and one has a right to be surprised, especially because Auber had added *airs de danse* and some vocal pieces.) LaJarte, *Bibliothèque Musicale du Théâtre de l’Opéra*, 2, 224.

feminized landscape and “naturalized” femininity.<sup>199</sup> The scenic convention of the *jardin des femmes* is one such complex which, through its repetitions and variations, reinforces the performativity of female gender, community, and space. Let us now turn to a brief overview of the various structural and thematic expectations of this convention as they appear in Act III of *Le Cheval de Bronze* (Table 3.1).

### ***Le Cheval de Bronze and the Jardin des Femmes Convention***

The *jardin des femmes* convention introduces the audience to a private pastoral world: a homosocial community of women who gather in a secret or exclusive garden setting. This community is led by a queen, princess, or other noblewoman, usually a coloratura soprano with an elaborate, virtuosic vocal part. Since excessive vocal display was often associated with superficiality, self-aggrandizement, and seduction, this particular role is usually the secondary female lead and not the principal romantic heroine. (For, indeed, such morally questionable characteristics were deemed improper for the bourgeois heroines of July Monarchy-era theatrical works.) In *Le Cheval de Bronze*, the Act III *jardin des femmes* is the domain of Princess Stella, a coloratura soprano who has been imprisoned on the planet Venus by a spell that can only be broken if a man can pass twenty-four hours in her gardens without kissing her. This task has proven impossible for all men who travel to Venus on the magical bronze horse of the opera’s title. Stella and one of her suitors, Prince Yang, are the secondary couple in the opera; the principal couple is Péki and Yanko, who must overcome Péki’s father’s ambitions to marry her to the wealthy Mandarin Tsing-Sing.

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<sup>199</sup> Moreover, works such as *Le Cheval de Bronze* demonstrate typical features and expectations of the *jardin des femmes*, and thus better contextualize the use of this scenic convention in *Les Huguenots*.

**Table 3.1.** The *Jardin des Femmes* Structure in Act III of *Le Cheval de Bronze*.

Typical elements in the <i>jardin des femmes</i> scene	Corresponding musical numbers in the opéra-féerie <i>Le Cheval de Bronze</i> (Opéra-Comique, 1835)
Women's <i>chœur dansé</i>	No. 13: Entr'acte et Air (Chorus of Women): "O séduisante ivresse"
Princess's entrance aria	No. 13: Entr'acte et Air (Stella, Chorus of Women): "En vain de mon jeune âge...De ma délivrance"
Love/seduction duet	No. 14: Duo (Stella, the Prince) "Eh quoi, monsieur, toujours vous plaindre" No. 16: Duo (Stella, Péki)* "Quel désir vous conduit vers nous, bel étranger?" *In the 1857 opéra-ballet, this duo is immediately preceded by Délia's <i>pas de séduction</i> .

The second feature of the *jardin des femmes* is its population of women who celebrate the leisurely pleasures of nature through song and dance, often in a *chœur dansé*. Some element of dance is essential to the *jardin des femmes*, since the physicality of women's bodies represents the latent sexual energy of the feminized garden space. Moreover, these women are usually costumed in gauzy white dresses, which visually align them with nymphs or other ancient mythological nature-beings. Through the *chœur dansé*, these women are positioned as both the voice and body of nature, and their performance seems to personify and vivify the landscape. In *Le Cheval de Bronze*, the women's chorus "Ô séduisante ivresse" is not explicitly labeled a *chœur dansé*; however, at least one press review described this chorus as "sung and danced" by the women of Stella's court. In addition, the published staging manual for the 1835 Opéra-Comique version indicates that these women carried silver garlands of flowers, while two followers carried fans. These accessories suggest stylized movement, such as waving gestures and the formation of shapes and groups, if not formally choreographed *pas*. Indeed, this type

of stylized movement – rather than *divertissements* or set pieces – seem to have been generally favored for the representation of an animated, feminized landscape in *jardin des femmes* scenes at the Opéra-Comique and Opéra alike.

When *Le Cheval de Bronze* was adapted as an opéra-ballet for the Opéra in 1857, however, its Act III dance element was formalized and given more emphasis. To complement the sung role of Stella's confidante Lo-Mangli, the danced role of Délia was added. In other words, Stella now had a maid-of-honor for singing (Lo-Mangli) and a maid-of-honor for dancing (Délia, performed by Italian ballerina Amalia Ferraris). Délia leads Stella's courtiers in a *pas de seduction* during which they unsuccessfully attempt to seduce the heroine Péki, who is disguised as a man. This Act III *pas de seduction* is depicted in a lithograph that exemplifies how dancers' bodies were imagined as merging with the immense ferns and tropical flowers of the *jardin asiatique* designed by Charles Cambon for the 1857 opéra-ballet version of *Le Cheval de Bronze* (Figure 3.8, below).

A final element typically found in the *jardin des femmes* convention is the introduction of a male visitor to this all-female realm. This man is dazzled by both the splendid environment and the beautiful women of his surroundings: thus, place and woman are transcoded. Over the course of *Le Cheval de Bronze*, several different men travel to the celestial gardens of Venus. The first to return are Tsing-Sing and Yanko, both of whom are turned to stone for speaking of their encounters with Stella: what happens on Venus stays on Venus. The audience does not see Tsing-Sing and Yanko in the garden, however. Within the Act III *jardin des femmes* tableau, the role of the awestruck male guest is fulfilled by Prince Yang, who shares a passionate love duet with Princess Stella before failing the test, kissing her, and falling back to Earth.

A second “man” is brought into the celestial gardens when Péki arrives in men’s clothes, determined to break the spell and bring her beloved Yanko back to life. In a similar manner to Urbain of *Les Huguenots*, Péki is an example of how cross-dressing might allow for humorous play on male fantasies of entering an all-female space. As a heterosexual woman, the heroine Péki easily resists the charms of Venus and its women. When Princess Stella is unable to understand Péki’s indifference to her, Péki “mischievously” (*avec malice*) observes in a clever aside, “Si j’étais homme!!!” (If I were a man!!!) In the opéra-ballet version of 1857, Péki once again declares, “Si j’étais homme cependant!” (If I were a man, however!) when surrounded by Stella’s dancing maid-of-honor, Délia, and the *corps* of dancing Venustian women. In other words, Péki acknowledges that a man would be unable to resist this temptation.

Péki’s exclamation breaches the fourth wall, acknowledging both the audience’s recognition of the stage convention of a man seduced by a beautiful woman in an exotic locale, as well as offering a teasing “inside joke” to male audience members who would wish themselves in her place. Péki goes on to absolve her beloved Yanko of responsibility for his dalliance with Stella earlier in the opera: “Yanko, je te pardonne; Comment lui résister?” (Yanko, I forgive you; how could he resist?) Thus, she offers justification for her husband-to-be’s affair with an exotic woman. This allowance of extramarital romance with an “other” woman was a common feature of ballet plots, as well; dance historians have drawn parallels with these plots and the backstage affairs between dancers and wealthy (often married) male patrons.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 70–71.

*Le Cheval de Bronze* illustrates how the scenic convention of the *jardin des femmes* was particularly favored in Orientalist works, wherein the sensual pleasures of Eastern women were equated with those of lush tropical landscapes.<sup>201</sup> Set in China and based on the tale “Les Sept Fils du Calender” from *Les Mille et Une Nuits*, *Le Cheval de Bronze* combined both Orientalist and fairy-tale exoticism, as would be seen in later *opéras comiques* such as *La Fée aux Roses* (1849) and *Esclarmonde* (1889). This double-dose of exoticism “provided a pretext for showing off every possible visual marvel” at the Opéra-Comique, as Lacombe has noted.<sup>202</sup> Indeed, the visual splendor of *Le Cheval de Bronze* was highlighted by nineteenth-century English travel writer Frances Trollope, who noted in her *Paris and the Parisians in 1835*, “The ‘Cheval de Bronze’ being *spectacle par excellence* at the Opéra Comique this season, we have considered it a matter of sight-seeing necessity to pay it a visit [...]”<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Cultural geographer Gillian Rose points to one of the most compelling examples of the Orientalist feminization of nature and naturalization of Woman in visual art of the late nineteenth century—Paul Gauguin’s paintings of Tahitian women, images that conflated male exploration of distant island nations with conquest of its “beautiful, sexual, fertile, silent, and mysterious” inhabitants. Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, 94.

<sup>202</sup> Lacombe, *The Keys to French Opera in the Nineteenth Century*, 187–88. See also Steven Huebner, *French Opera at the Fin de Siècle: Wagnerism, Nationalism, and Style* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 88. Although Lacombe and Huebner imply that mixing Eastern and supernatural Otherness was a particular feature of *opéra-comique*, this pairing was also commonly found in ballet-pantomimes at the Opéra, including *La Chatte Métamorphosée en Femme* (1837), *La Péri* (1843), *Le Papillon* (1860), and *La Source* (1866).

<sup>203</sup> Frances Trollope, *Paris and the Parisians in 1835*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Paris: Baudry's European Library, 1836), 260. Trollope’s review of *Le Cheval de Bronze* was generally unfavorable, though she confessed to being transfixed by its visual splendor. There is, amid her cynicism, a shame in allowing herself this pleasure: “[...] we have all agreed that it is as perfectly beautiful in its scenery and decorations as the size of the theatre would permit. We gazed upon it, indeed, with a perfection of contentment, which, in secret committee afterwards, we confessed did not say much in favor of our intellectual faculties. I really know not how it is that one can sit, not only without murmuring, but with positive satisfaction, for three hours together, with no other occupation than looking at a collection of gewgaw objects, with a most unmeaning crowd, made for the most part by Nature’s journeymen, incessantly undulating among them. Yet so it is, that a skillful arrangement of blue and white gauze, aided by the magic of many-colored lights, decidedly the prettiest of all modern toys, made us exclaim at every fresh maneuver of the carpenter, ‘Beautiful! beautiful!’ with as much delight as ever a child of five years old displayed at a first-rate exhibition of Punch.” Ibid.

More than mere excuse for spectacle, however, the magical *jardin des femmes* in *Le Cheval de Bronze* is encoded as a celestial harem of seductive odalisque-houris, thus illustrating how fantasies of enclosed seraglio gardens and the Qu’ranic paradise were conflated in the Western imagination. Furthermore, Scribe adds another dimension of Otherness to this feminine space by infusing elements of science fiction: the mythological gardens of the Roman goddess Venus are modernized as the cosmic gardens of the planet Venus, where the “heavenly bodies” of Stella’s court are not simply angelic beings, but also galactic star-maidens. I shall now examine how each of these imagined places – seraglio, Qu’ranic paradise, and alien planet – are mapped onto the *jardin des femmes* of *Le Cheval* through a constellation of visual, musical, and dramatic cues.

### **The Seraglio Garden**

Act III of *Le Cheval de Bronze* is set in the celestial gardens of the beautiful Princess Stella, who exemplifies the frequent melding of Eastern and supernatural Otherness: within the Chinese fairy-tale setting, she is even further exoticized as a Mogul princess who rules an all-female court on the planet Venus.<sup>204</sup> The label *princesse du Mogol* in Scribe’s libretto not only ascribes royal status to Stella, but also situates her within the ethno-religious group of the Moguls (also Moghuls or Mughals), Muslim

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<sup>204</sup> Following the 2012 Komische Oper Berlin production, critic A.J. Goldman noted, “truth be told, the plot sounds more like something dreamed up by a team of drug-addled Disney animators trying to make a sci-fi B-movie set in the ancient Orient.” A.J. Goldman, “*Le Cheval de Bronze*. Berlin, Komische Oper Berlin, 3/26/12,” *Opera News* 77, no. 1 (July 2012). And, in fact, Stella’s court has its twentieth-century parallel in twentieth-century American comic book culture: in spring 1945, the comic book *Wonder Woman* (no. 12) introduced the place “Captive Haven,” an idyllic prison on the planet Venus. Lest the concept of an all-female planet seem laughable today, we should remember that the feminization of Venus still exists in the scientific nomenclature of its topography: all surface features are named after goddesses or other women, both mythological and historical; the exceptions are the regions Alpha Regio, Beta Regio, and the planet’s largest mountain massif, “Maxwell Montes,” which has led to the quip that its namesake, physicist James Clerk Maxwell, is “the only man on Venus.”

conquerors descended from Genghis Khan who reigned over the Indian subcontinent from 1526 to 1857.<sup>205</sup> Stella's Muslim identity is an important detail, since it aligns her realm with two types of Islamic gardens: the seraglio garden and the Qu'ranic paradise garden.

The Orientalist connotations of Stella's gardens become even more apparent in the opening tableau of Act III. Scribe's libretto describes an idle ruler reclining on cushions, thinly clad women, and carefree musical entertainment in a hazy, verdant setting:

Le théâtre représente un palais et des jardins célestes au milieu des nuages. Au lever du rideau, Stella est assise sur de riches coussins. Lo-Mangli, et plusieurs femmes vêtues de robes de gaze, l'entourent et la servent ; d'autres jouent du théorbe, de la lyre, etc.<sup>206</sup>

The theater represents a palace and celestial gardens amid clouds. At the rise of the curtain, Stella is seated on rich cushions. Lo-Mangli and several women clothed in diaphanous dresses surround her and serve her; others play the theorbo, the lyre, etc.

This opening tableau is identified as a type of seraglio scene by Lacombe, who notes that Scribe's description "evokes the elegance of the harem and its society of women, like a dream where the senses are veiled."<sup>207</sup> Indeed, Scribe directly borrows imagery from a common theatrical vocabulary of visual cues used in seraglio scenes to eroticize, even fetishize Eastern femininity: swaying palm trees and thick clusters of

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<sup>205</sup> Stella is described as a Mongolian princess in Peter Glidden's translation of Lacombe: see Hervé Lacombe, "The Writing of Exoticism in the Libretti of the Opéra-Comique," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 11, no. 2 (1999): 148. However, I believe that Mogul or Mughal is more accurate, particularly given Lacombe's observations about the harem imagery in Act III of *Le Cheval de Bronze*. (Mongolia is predominantly Buddhist.)

<sup>206</sup> *Le / Cheval de Bronze, / opéra-féerie en trois actes / Paroles de M. Scribe, / Musique de M. Auber, / représenté pour la première fois, sur le Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique, / le 23 mars 1835* (Paris: Dondey-Dupré, 1835), 21. The similarities between this tableau and harem scenes has already been noted by Lacombe. See Lacombe, "The Writing of Exoticism in the Libretti of the Opéra-Comique."

<sup>207</sup> "The Writing of Exoticism in the Libretti of the Opéra-Comique," 148–49.



blooming plants, cushions and divans, veils and gauzy dresses, ornate jewelry, private music-making on plucked string instruments, and an atmosphere heavy with clouds, perfume, incense, and smoke (Table 3.2 and Figures 3.1–4). These visual cues stimulate multiple modes of sensory perception, thus contributing to the prevalent Western construction of the East as a realm of excessive, overwhelming sensual indulgence.

**Table 3.2.** Selected Seraglio Scenes in French Music Theater, 1820–1860. Libretti, staging manuals, and iconography emphasize stimulation of the five senses.

	Sight	Sound	Touch	Smell	Taste
<i>Le Paradis de Mahomet, ou la Pluralité des Femmes</i> (1822), opéra comique (Opéra Comique) II. palace gardens of Nathan	magnificent temple decorated with precious stones/metals	harps & theorbos; female chorus (“Gloire à toi, céleste séjour”)	gauzy dresses	flowers, blooming plants, burning aloes & perfumes	fruits
<i>Le Petite Lampe Merveilleuse</i> (1822), opéra comique-féerie (Gymnase) III. interior of princess Faruck-Naz’s apartments	rich interior design, vases of presents & precious stones, veil	female chorus (“O Dieu de mystère”)	draperies, sofa, veil, cushions	flowers, perfumes	
<i>La Tentation</i> (1832), ballet-opéra (Opéra) IV. interior of a magnificent harem	rich interior design (gold & precious stones)	fountain, “smooth & vaporous music” (female chorus “Amour, amour”)	large couch, hair-braiding, bathing	perfumes, smoke	sorbet, tobacco, coffee
<i>La Révolte au Sérail</i> (1833), ballet-pantomime (Opéra) II. splendid bathing pool [Figure 3.1]	mirrors, veils	water	veils, dresses, bathing	perfumes, palm trees	
<i>Le Cheval de Bronze</i> (1835/1857), opéra-féerie (Opéra Comique, 1835), and later opéra-ballet (Opéra, 1857) III. celestial gardens of Princess Stella on the planet Venus	clouds, jewelry, golden fountain, silver garlands	fountain, lutes & theorbos [not in staging manual], female chorus (“O séduisante ivresse”)	cushions or couch, gauzy dresses, fans	flowers, foliage	

<b><i>Une Nuit au Sérail</i> (1841)</b> , vaudeville (Théâtre National du Vaudeville) II. seraglio gardens	alabaster lamps & candelabras with Chinese lanterns	fountain, Turkish instruments, female choruses	couches, cushions	flowers	sorbet
<b><i>La Péri</i> (1843)</b> , ballet-pantomime (Opéra) I. room of a harem in Cairo	jewelry, henna make-up, mirror	fountain	tapestries, lionskin couch, scarves, hair	flowers, perfumes	
<b><i>Jérusalem</i> (1847)</b> , opéra (Opéra) III. gardens of the Emir's harem [Figure 3.2]		female <i>chœur dansé</i> ("O belle captive")	cushions, gauzy skirts & sleeves	palm trees, foliage	
<b><i>Griseldis</i> (1848)</b> , ballet-pantomime (Opéra) II: gardens of Hassan, governor of Belgrade [Figure 3.3]	lanterns, veils	fountain	hammock, veils, fans	foliage	sorbet, coffee
<b><i>Le Corsaire</i> (1856)</b> , ballet-pantomime (Opéra) II. the pasha's palace on the Isle of Cos – baths of the women, amid magnificent gardens [Figure 3.4]	mirrors, pearls	water	dresses, draperies, hair	flowers, trees, foliage	

As evinced by Duverger's published staging manual and lithographs of Thierry's Act III set design, not all of the elements from Scribe's libretto were realized on stage. For example, the theorbos and lyres of Scribe's libretto are discarded in the staging manual; instead, Stella's followers carry garlands of silver flowers.<sup>208</sup> These props reinforce the imagery of Stella's celestial gardens as a place of artifice and magic: the women carry precious ornaments in the form of flowers, rather than natural blossoms. In

<sup>208</sup> From the *Détails Accessoires* in the published staging manual: « Acte 3me. Guirlandes de fleurs d'argent, bandeaux à paillons d'argent pour le chœur, riches bracelets à paillons d'or, deux éventails pour les suivantes de Stella. » L. V. Duverger, *Mise en Scène / avec indications générales, costumes et dessins coloriés des décorations du / Cheval de Bronze / opéra féerie en 3 Actes, Paroles de M. Scribe, Musique de M. Auber, / représenté pour la première fois sur le Théâtre de l'Opera-Comique, le 23 mars 1835.* (Paris: Bureau de Commission Théâtrale), 3–4.

addition, two servants carry fans, presumably to refresh their princess in the thick, cloudy atmosphere of Venus. Garlands and fans might also be used as choreographic tools, allowing for a subtle gestural vocabulary of gentle undulations and graceful shapes.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 3.1.** Pierre-Luc Charles Cicéri, sketch of décor for Act II of *La Révolte au Sérail* ou *La Révolte des Femmes* (1833). F-Po BMO Esq. Cicéri-4.

Another change from the tableau described by Scribe was the replacement of “rich cushions” with a sofa upholstered in golden fabric (Figure 3.5). Like cushions, sofas or divans were associated with the imagined languor of Near Eastern women and (effeminized) rulers: this connection is apparent in early nineteenth-century French Orientalist paintings such as Ingrès’s *Grand Odalisque* (1814), Delacroix’s *The Death of Sardanapalus* (1828), and numerous others. According to the staging manual, Stella is seated on a sofa at the beginning of Act III; thus, she is aligned with other

conventionalized Orientalist representations of indolent sovereigns and lounging odalisques.<sup>209</sup> Thierry's design also includes other elements commonly found in seraglio scenes: a gushing fountain and lush tropical vegetation. Here, hedges of foliage are capped with tall red flowering stalks, similar in appearance to gladioli or red ginger.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 3.2.** Edouard Despléchin, sketch of décor for Act II of *Dom Sébastien* (1843): a desert oasis in Africa, labeled “Jardin Asiatique” in crayon. This décor was later reworked to depict the Act III seraglio gardens of *Jérusalem* (1847).<sup>210</sup> F-Po BMO Esq. Despléchin-38.

<sup>209</sup> “[...] jardins frais, émaillés de fleurs ; Femmes aériennes vêtues en tunique de gaze, avec des fleurs ; ceintures, bretelles et bandeaux à paillons d’argent. Groupes de nymphes ayant des guirlandes de fleurs d’argent à la main. Stella est assise sur le sofa.” (Fresh gardens, dotted with flowers; celestial women clothed in gauze tunics with flowers; belts, shoulder straps, and bands of silver spangles. Groups of nymphs carrying garlands of silver flowers. Stella is seated on the sofa.) Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Knud Arne Jürgensen, *The Verdi Ballets* (Parma: Istituto Nazionale de Studi Verdiani, 1995), 16.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 3.3.** Charles Cambon, sketch of décor for Act II of *Griselidis, ou les cinq sens* (1848): gardens of Hassan, governor of Belgrade. F-Po BMO Esq. Cambon-52.

A marked departure from the typical iconography of an Eastern setting is, however, found in Thierry's design for Stella's palace. The ornamental carvings on the lintel and columns of the palace are not Orientalist, but rather French Rococo, with intricate details and curling shapes (Figure 3.6). Much like the silver garlands carried by the Venusian women, the appearance of elaborate Rococo architectural design may well be a signifier of the artifice, frivolity, and quaint prettiness of Stella's enchanted realm. Furthermore, this decorative façade is an explicit illustration of how Stella's gardens offer a profusion of female bodies to tempt male visitors. Closer inspection of Thierry's design shows that the palace architecture is inlaid with sculptures of naked women: they



encircle the fountain, sitting side-by-side; at the base of the columns, they pose with arms behind their heads, accentuating and inviting contemplation of their breasts; higher up, they hang from the columns like exotic dancers from poles, with their legs entwining about each other (Figure 3.7; see again Figures 3.5 and 3.6). Since female bodies provide the curves, scrollwork, and arabesques of the ornate architecture, women are visually coded as the decorative embellishments of this fairy-tale empire. While we cannot be sure that these precise details of Thierry's design were realized, his design nevertheless evinces a conception of Stella's Act III abode as a place of overt female sexuality, in which female bodies meld with and emerge from the architecture and environment.



Source [gallica.bnf.fr](http://gallica.bnf.fr) / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 3.4.** Edouard Despléchin, maquette of décor for Act II, *Le Corsaire* (1856): bath of the women amid magnificent gardens. F-Po Maq. A.42.



**Figure 3.5.** Thierry, hand-colored lithograph of décor for Act III, Tableau 1 of *Le Cheval de Bronze*: palace and celestial gardens (1835). At center stage are Prince Yang and Princess Stella. F-Po Rés. Estampes Scènes Cheval de Bronze (1). Photograph by permission.

A comparison of Thierry’s design for the 1835 version at the Opéra-Comique with Cambon and Thierry’s design for the 1857 version at the Opéra demonstrates a shared visual impulse by which female bodies are represented as emergent from the celestial gardens of Venus. While the 1835 opéra comique positions female bodies within the palace architecture and hints at a Woman-Nature alignment through a chorus of gossamer-clad “nymphs” holding silver flowers, the feminization of nature is made even more explicit in a lithograph of the Act III *pas de séduction* from the 1857 opéra-ballet (Figure 3.8). In this illustration, landscape and the female body are transcoded through an imagined common morphology: for example, the women’s arms are equated with enlacing lianas, and their skirts with the leafy treetops and cascading fountains. An

important feature is the physical movement of these women: “choreographic enchantment is combined with the visual enchantment of the scene’s lush vegetation,” to quote Lacombe.<sup>211</sup>



**Figure 3.6.** Thierry, décor for Act III, Tableau 1 of *Le Cheval de Bronze* (detail).  
F-Po Rés. Estampes Scènes Cheval de Bronze (1). Photograph by permission.

Also apparent is a more extreme Orientalist vision in the 1857 Opéra version, with its immense tropical fantasy jungle. The 1857 décor departs from the iconography of the seraglio garden, which usually contained architectural structures, and moves more into the iconography of the Qu’ranic paradise garden, a point we shall examine in greater detail below. Finally, this illustration shows the phenomenon that I term “environmental seduction,” or the process by which a protagonist is overwhelmed by an eroticized fusion of place and woman. Through this imagined collusion, desire for being in a place is

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<sup>211</sup> Lacombe, *The Keys to French Opera in the Nineteenth Century*, 183, caption to Figure 21.



synonymous with desire for being implanted among its female inhabitants. (In the case of *Le Cheval de Bronze*, however, the Venusian women's attempts are in vain, since protagonist Péki is a woman only disguised as a man.)



**Figure 3.7.** Thierry, décor for Act III, Tableau 1 of *Le Cheval de Bronze* (detail).  
F-Po Rés. Estampes Scènes Cheval de Bronze (1). Photograph by permission.

It is not surprising to find Stella's realm coded as a type of seraglio, considering that in the first act of *Le Cheval de Bronze*, we learn that Prince Yang has had dreams of this mysterious beautiful woman, whom the magi of China and Tibet tell him is the daughter of the Great Mogul (a Muslim emperor of India). In early nineteenth-century French opera, ballet, and vaudeville, scenes depicting fantasies of Eastern sensuality were usually staged in the richly decorated interiors or magnificent gardens of the seraglio. Even if not framed by verdant gardens and palm trees, these seraglios were often decorated with large tropical flowers to give the appearance of a garden or greenhouse

(see again Table 3.2 and Figures 3.1–4).<sup>212</sup> The association of the seraglio with the garden reinforces a Western construction of the East as a mysterious female body to be penetrated and explored. Indeed, most Western portrayals of the East emphasize not only its “fecundity,” but also its “sexual promise (and threat), untiring sensuality, unlimited desire, [and] deep generative energies,” as Edward Said has argued.<sup>213</sup> These qualities are particularly emphasized through the garden seraglio scenes of music theater works, in which the positioning of veiled women among lush, colorful plants projects attributes of fragrance, humidity, and fertility onto a stereotypically feminized Orient.

In addition to the imagery of languid odalisques reclining within perfumed gardens, another pervasive eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Orientalist myth that associated the seraglio with the discourse of intimacy, love, and gardens was that of the supposed *sélam* tradition, described in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s *Turkish Letters*, first published in 1763. According to European travelers such as Lady Montagu and Seigneur Aubry de la Mottraye (*Voyages du Sr. A. de la Mottraye en Europe, en Asie et en Afrique*, 1727), *sélam* was a system of communication whereby hidden messages could be encoded by the symbolism of flowers and other objects bound in a handkerchief, then passed between clandestine lovers through the walls of the harem; Orientalist Joseph

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<sup>212</sup> Seraglio gardens are, of course, prevalent in eighteenth-century opera and ballet, as well. A particularly notable example is the third *entrée* of Rameau’s opéra-ballet *Les Indes galantes* (premiered 23 August 1735), “Les Fleurs: Fête Persane.” Set in the gardens of the palace of Ali, favorite of the Persian prince Tacmas, “Les Fleurs” culminates in “La Fête des Fleurs,” a pageant that opens with the entry of odalisques from different Asian countries. Each odalisque adorns her hair and costume with a different flower of the seraglio garden—rose, jonquil, and so forth. *Les Indes / Galantes, / ballet-héroïque, / représente, / pour la première fois, / par l’Académie-Royale / de Musique, / en 1735. Repris en 1743. / Pour la seconde fois, le Mardi 8 Juin, 1751. / Et remis au Théâtre le Mardi 14 Juillet 1761.* (Paris: Lormel, 1761), 53. The subsequent “Ballet des Fleurs” depicts “in a picturesque manner the fate of flowers in a garden.” *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>213</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 188.

Hammer-Purgstall also claimed *sélam* was used within the harem to express homosexual intimacy among women.<sup>214</sup>



**Figure 3.8.** The *pas de séduction* in Act III of the 1857 opéra-ballet version of *Le Cheval de Bronze*. Godefroy Durand, lithograph: “Théâtre de l’Opéra. *Le Cheval de Bronze*, 3<sup>e</sup> acte, ballet, décoration de MM. Cambon et Thierry.” F-Pn 4-ICO THE-2816.

Claiming lineage from the Eastern *sélam*, hundreds of flower dictionaries were published in France in the early nineteenth century, most famously *Le langage des fleurs* (1819) by the pseudonymous “Charlotte de la Tour.” This language of flowers, then, “has

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<sup>214</sup> Hammer-Purgstall claimed harem women had “invented [*sélam*] in the leisure of their lonely life” (inventé dans le loisir de leur vie solitaire) and used it “as a code for lesbian attachments” (comme d’un chiffre pour des déclarations lesbiennes). Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, *Mines de l’Orient, exploitées par une Société d’Amateurs* (Vienna: Antoine Schmid, 1809), 34. Translated in Syme, *A Touch of Blossom*, 48. Hammer-Purgstall also pointed out the fundamental flaw of this imagined system: the meanings of these objects were at once “secret” and universally known; thus, messages could hardly remain encrypted.

its origins in Western notions of Oriental courtship,” as Beverly Seaton has noted.<sup>215</sup> *Sélam* bouquets are featured in several Orientalist ballet-pantomimes set in seraglios, including *La Révolte au Sérail*, *La Péri*, and *Le Corsaire*. In *La Révolte au Sérail*, the Genie of Women gives Zulma a magical *sélam* bouquet; Zulma uses this bouquet to equip the harem women with military trappings — and to transform their lances into lyres when suspicious men enter the room. In *La Péri*, the queen of the péris (Léila) makes a *sélam* bouquet for Achmet and adorns it with a star from her crown; if Achmet wants to see her again, he need only kiss the star. And in *Le Corsaire*, the Greek slave Médora presents a *sélam* bouquet to the pirate chief Conrad to communicate her love for him.

Fantasies of clandestine love, endless leisure time, and Oriental splendor fueled a complex of connections among harems, opulent garden settings, and *sélam* bouquets. Therefore, it was not a very large metaphoric leap to imagine the seraglio itself – usually framed by verdure and flowers – as a *jardin des femmes*. The concept of the seraglio as a metaphoric garden is even made explicit in Act III of the ballet-pantomime *L’île des pirates* (1835), set in “the garden of women, on the Isle of the Pirates.”<sup>216</sup> This *jardin des femmes* is described in the libretto as “a sort of harem” from which new initiates to the pirate brotherhood are allowed to pick two women as companions, much as they might pick beautiful flowers from the garden paths:

La Moresque gardienne de cette sorte de harem y introduit le héros des épreuves ; elle indique au nouvel élu, Ottavio, l’article de la loi établie parmi les pirates, qui lui donne le droit de choisir deux compagnes parmi les esclaves disponibles.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Beverly Seaton, *The Language of Flowers: A History* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1995), 65.

<sup>216</sup> “La scène est au jardin des femmes, dans l’Île des Pirates.” *L’île des Pirates, ballet-pantomime en quatre actes, par MM. Henry et \*\*\*\*\*, musique de MM. Gide, Carlini, Rossini et Beethoven. Représenté pour la première fois, sur le Théâtre de l’Académie Royale de Musique, le 12 août 1835*, 19.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*

The Moorish guardian of this sort of harem introduces the champion of the trials; she indicates to the new elect, Ottavio, the article of the law established among the pirates that gives him the right to choose two companions among the available slaves.

This metaphor of the harem as a “garden of women” was also used in the opposite direction: flowers were compared to odalisques, and Parisian flower markets to Middle Eastern slave markets. An example of this mapping appears in the illustrated vignette “Traite des Fleurs” (Flower Market, literally Trafficking in Flowers) from *Les Fleurs Animées* (1847), a satirical book of short essays about anthropomorphic flowers, morphologically equated with female bodies in imaginative caricatures by J.J. Grandville. Taxile Delord’s short essay “Traite des Fleurs” describes the flower market as a type of slave market in which flowers are inspected, haggled over, purchased, and ultimately held captive within the “seraglios” of their buyers:

Je ne puis traverser un marché aux fleurs sans me sentir saisi d’une amère tristesse. Il me semble que je suis dans un bazar d’esclaves, à Constantinople ou au Caire. Les esclaves sont les fleurs. Voilà les riches qui viennent les marchander ; ils les regardent, ils les touchent, ils examinent si elles sont dans des conditions suffisantes de jeunesse, de santé et de beauté. Le marché est conclu. Suis ton maître, pauvre fleur, sers à ses plaisirs, orne son sérail, tu auras une belle robe de porcelaine, un joli manteau de mousse, tu habiteras un appartement somptueux ; mais adieu le soleil, la brise et la liberté : tu es esclave !<sup>218</sup>

I cannot walk across a flower market without feeling struck with bitter sadness. I feel as if I were in a slave-bazaar Cairo or Constantinople. The slaves are the flowers. Here come the rich men who are here to haggle over them; they look at them, they touch them, they examine to see if they are sufficiently young, healthy, and beautiful. The bargain is clinched. Follow your master, poor flower, tend to his pleasures and adorn his seraglio. You will be given a beautiful porcelain dress and a pretty mantle of moss, you will inhabit a sumptuous apartment; but farewell to the sun, the fresh air, and freedom: you are a slave!

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<sup>218</sup> Taxile DeLord, “La Traite des Fleurs,” in *Les Fleurs Animées*, par J.J. Grandville (Paris: Gonet, 1847), 299.

By the same token, Grandville's accompanying illustration visually equates anthropomorphic *femme-fleurs* of the flower market with the melancholy bound women of slave markets. Like the slave market that offered women from various countries and ethnicities, Grandville's flower market offers a variety of classified specimens for sale: anemone, geranium, gillyflower, and ranunculus (Figure 3.9).

As representatives of geography, topography, and distant lands, the women of the harem might be likened not only to the diverse flowers sold at markets and displayed in botanical gardens, but also the colorful and richly plumed birds of an aviary. Like flowers, birds are living adornments within the seraglio garden and had long been emblems of human sexuality.<sup>219</sup> Moreover, this metaphoric mapping of harem women as birds invokes the archetype of the idyllic prison: these women are birds within a golden cage, held captive by a powerful male ruler or tyrant. This analogy is made particularly apparent in the set design for the Théâtre Lyrique's 1865 production of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* (*La Flute Enchantée*, Figure 3.10): Act II is set in Monostatos's harem, described in the French libretto as "a vast greenhouse enclosed by golden bars" with "suspended hammocks, palm trees, lotus, etc."<sup>220</sup> As in the original German libretto, Monostatos addresses Pamina as a "tender dove"; in an added scene (Act II, Scene 2)

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<sup>219</sup> See for example Kate van Orden, "Sexual Discourse in the Parisian Chanson: A Libidinous Aviary," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 48, no. 1 (1995); Leach, *Sung Birds*. Therefore, birdsong had been a prominent feature in operatic gardens of love, long before Marguerite's "O beau pays" in *Les Huguenots*: notable eighteenth-century examples include Act V, Scene 6 of Rameau's *Hippolyte et Aricie* ("Rossignols amoureux, répondez à nos voix par la douceur de vos ramages," full of echo effects and imitation of birdcalls by two solo flutes and two violins) and Act V, Scene 2 of both Lully's and Gluck's settings of Quinault's *Armide* libretto, in which Renaud is surrounded by the Pleasures and happy lovers who extol the "thousand birds heard night and day in our grove" ("Mille oiseaux qu'en nos bois nuit et jour on entend").

<sup>220</sup> "Acte Deuxième. Deuxième Tableau. Le harem de Monostatos. — Vaste serre fermée par des grilles d'or. — Hamacs suspendus, palmiers, lotus, etc." *La / Flute Enchantée / opéra fantastique en quatre actes / en sept tableau / par / MM. Nutter et Beaumont / musique de / Mozart / Représente pour la première fois, à Paris, sur le Théâtre-Lyrique, / le 23 février 1865* (Paris: Lévy, 1865), 18.

during which Monostatos orders his slaves to search for the missing Pamina, the slave Bamboloda responds, “Soon, I hope, the bird that flew away will return to her cage.”<sup>221</sup>

Similar constructions are found in operas and ballets of earlier decades, as well. In Act III of Verdi’s *Jérusalem* (1847), set in the gardens of the harem, women of the harem laugh at Hélène’s despair (“O belle captive”), while some dance and others lie on cushions. After a ballet that included a solo *pas* featuring dancer Adèle Dumilâtre and a florid flute solo, the Emir appears with some Arab sheiks; “upon their approach, the women veil themselves and disperse in the gardens like a flock of birds,” according to the libretto.<sup>222</sup> The péris of the Gautier/Burgmüller/Coralli ballet *La Péri* (1843) are also described as “fluttering and leaping like a flock of released birds” upon crossing the liminal divide between their celestial fairy oasis and the seraglio of Prince Achmet’s palace. Thus, they have escaped from their own idyllic enclosure for another (the harem), becoming the new odalisques of Achmet’s opium-induced dreams.<sup>223</sup>

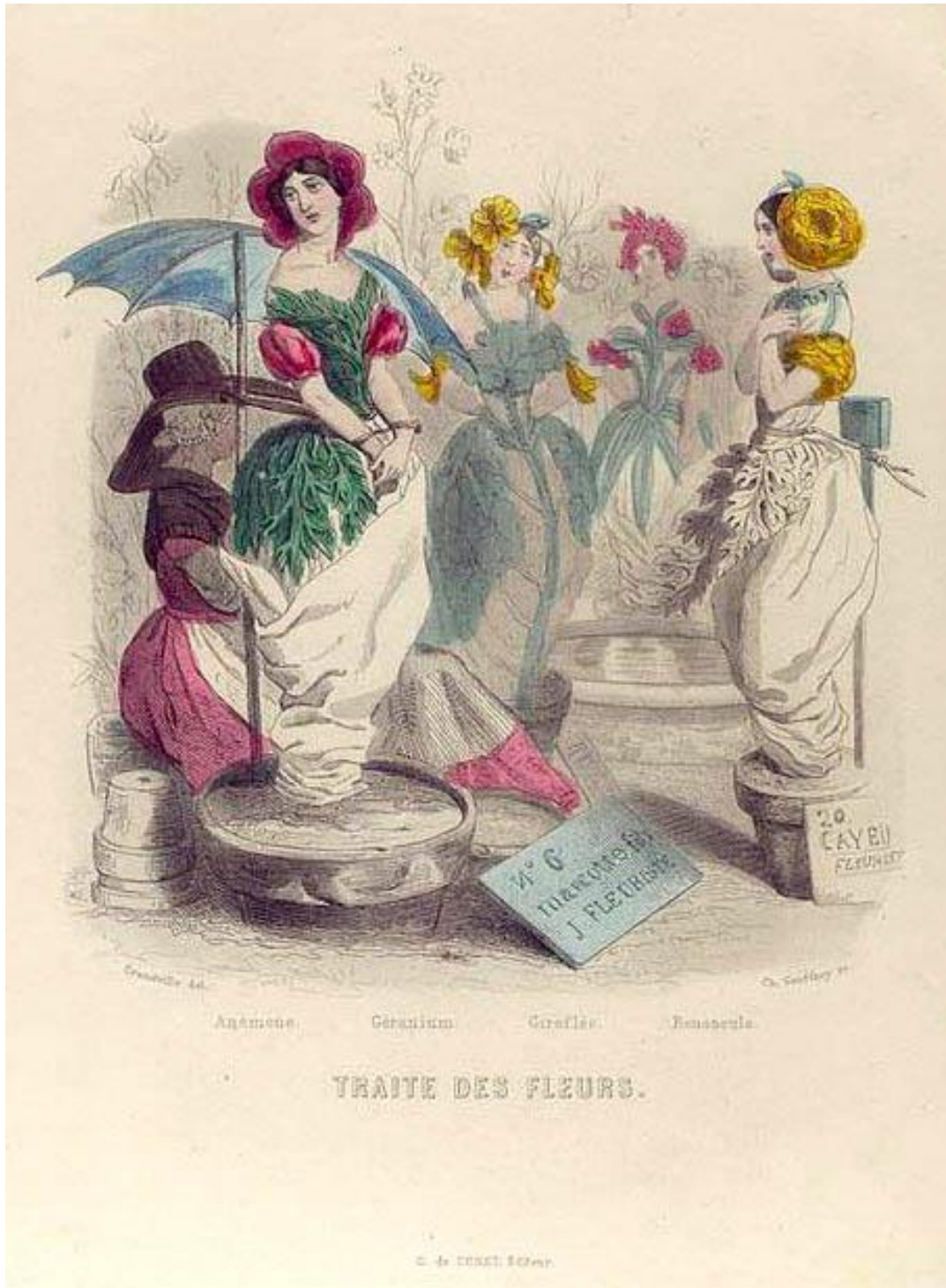
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<sup>221</sup> “Bientôt, j’espère, l’oiseau envolé rentrera dans sa cage.” Ibid., 19.

<sup>222</sup> “L’Emir paraît, accompagné de quelques cheiks arabes, à leur approche les femmes se voilent et se dispersent dans les jardins comme une volée d’oiseaux.” *Jérusalem, / opéra en quatre actes, / paroles / de MM. Gust. Vaez et Alph. Royer, / musique de G. Verdi, / Représenté, pour la première fois, à Paris, sur / le théâtre de l’Académie Royale de Musique, / le 26 novembre 1847* (Brussels: Lelong, 1847), 33.

<sup>223</sup> “Les Péris franchissent la limite qui sépare le monde idéal du monde réel, et descendent dans la chambre en voltigeant et en sautillant comme un essaim d’oiseaux lâchés.” *La Péri / ballet fantastique en deux actes / par / MM. Théophile Gautier et Coralli, / musique de M. Burgmuller / décorations du 1er acte, de MM. Séchan, Diéterle et Despléchin; décora- / tions du 2me acte, de MM. Philastre et Cambon. / Représenté pour la première fois sur le Théâtre de l’Académie Royale / de Musique, le lundi 22 février 1843, 3rd ed.* (Paris: Jonas, 1845), 9.





**Figure 3.9.** Grandville, “Traite des Fleurs” (Flower Market) from *Les Fleurs Animées*. New York Public Library Digital Gallery.





Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 3.10.** Philippe Chaperon, sketch of décor for Act II of *La Flûte Enchantée* (Théâtre Lyrique, 1865). F-Po BMO D.345 (I,21/1).

The metaphor of the seraglio as aviary is reinforced in *Le Cheval de Bronze* by Stella’s virtuosic cavatine, full of decorative figures and birdsong effects similar to Marguerite’s “O beau pays” in *Les Huguenots*. However, the meaning of Stella’s coloratura is more ambiguous than Marguerite’s: in a more conventional sense, it signifies her communion with nature and seductive, siren-like abilities; yet it also points to her status as a “caged bird.” For though she reigns over a court of female subjects who

pamper her with luxuries, Stella is a captive woman. She is trapped on the planet Venus by an evil enchanter whose spell can only be broken if a man withstands Stella's allure for an entire day—that is, if he does not kiss her. Therefore, she is more closely akin to the chief odalisque within a harem than to an autonomous queen. Unlike her happy followers, who sing of the planet's endless intoxicating pleasures, Stella bemoans her captivity and longs to escape her idyllic prison. Indeed, in the seraglios of opera and ballet, there may be a psychological or emotional disconnect between a troupe of contented odalisques and one woman from their ranks, usually a jealous sultana, a desolate hostage, or a melancholy new initiate to the harem. Such is the case, for example, in Act III of *Jérusalem*, mentioned above: Hélène's misery is juxtaposed with the mockery and celebratory ballet of the harem women.

The women of Stella's seraglio are not so cruel. Instead, they express their delight in the "seductive intoxication" of their celestial gardens in tones of near-angelic bliss. These sentiments do not comfort Stella, who fears that the enchanter's spell will never be broken and laments, "alas, in slavery, there are no sunny days." Her entrance music is marked by harp flourishes that not only complement her regal, bejeweled costume, but also act as a type of golden musical "cage" or container for her vocal utterances (Example 3.1).

As Stella sings of her hope that she might be released from this planet-*cum*-seraglio, her newly optimistic emotional state awakens her to the delights of nature. By projecting Stella's psyche onto the wind, water, and birds of her environment, Scribe encourages the perception of Stella as a nymph or nature deity, as well as a construction of the garden landscape as a feminized body:

Tout a changé dans la nature	Everything has changed in nature
L'air est plus doux, l'onde plus pure!	The air is sweeter, the water more pure!
Des oiseaux les chants amoureux	The amorous songs of birds
Sont pour moi plus harmonieux!	Are more harmonious to me!

In Auber's setting of this passage, Stella participates in the soundscape of nature by imitating birdsong figures in the flute and clarinet, much like Marguerite in *Les Huguenots* (Example 3.2). This "avian" vocal masquerade aligns both women with the mythological siren: not only was the siren renowned for her dangerously beautiful singing, but she also inhabited a hybrid body, half-woman and half-bird. Indeed, later in Act III, Stella's use of coloratura in her duet with Prince Yang is specifically associated with her powers of musical seduction: her most florid passages are on the word "pouvoir" (power) and ecstatic cries of "ah" and "-jà" (of "déjà").<sup>224</sup> Yet Stella's bird-like singing also signifies her captivity: through this musical idiom, she is positioned as a captive bird that nonetheless still sings hopefully within the gilded cage of the seraglio-like planet Venus.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Stella and Yang are trying to pass the remaining half-hour until the day is up, marking the end of Yang's trial and the key to Stella's freedom. She suggests music as a consoling balm; however, the aural delights of her voice cause this plan to backfire. Yang's passion is inflamed, and he kisses her, only to descend immediately to earth and leave her still imprisoned.

<sup>225</sup> Of course, this archetype of the captive woman as caged bird is not an invention of nineteenth-century opera. In the coloratura showpiece "La Fauvette" from Grétry's *Zémire et Azor*, Zémire charms the beast Azor into letting her see her father and sisters again. Zémire is able to both dazzle with her vocal birdsong effects and appeal to Azor's sympathy by aligning herself with the "warbler" of the song, parted from her family by a cruel fowler. The sad plight of the captured bird is a clear metaphor for Zémire's own condition, and Azor relents. "La Fauvette" is an example of stage music or diegetic music, which has an intense focalizing effect. According to Zoppelli, focalization is a dramatic technique whereby onstage characters channel the emotional situation of characters portrayed in the diegetic song, as in the case of Desdemona's Willow Song. Luca Zoppelli, "'Stage Music' in Early Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 2, no. 1 (1990). The convention of the caged female bird was subverted for a fantastic and even grotesque effect in Jacques Cazotte's prose poem *Ollivier* (1762), in which beautiful bird-women capture the knights Enguerrand and Barin in a giant cage laid with a rich carpet and sumptuous feast. The women serve the fairy Strigilline, who – once the spell is broken – loses her feathers and becomes a monstrous harpy. A more humorous reversal of gender roles is in *Vert-Vert*, first a ballet-pantomime (1851), then an opéra-comique by Offenbach (1869). In *Vert-Vert*, a young man must subject himself to captivity by taking the place of Vert-Vert, the recently deceased parrot much beloved by the

**Example 3.1.** Auber, *Le Cheval de Bronze*, Act III, No. 13: “En vain de mon jeune âge.”  
 Transcribed and reduced from the printed full score, F-Po A.596b (II). Paris:  
 Troupenas, 1835. 414–415.

The musical score consists of four systems. The first system is labeled 'Harp' and includes the instruction '+ sustained strings'. The second system is labeled 'Hp.' and includes the vocal line for 'STELLA:'. The lyrics are: 'En vain de mon jeune âge leurs soins charmaient le cours hé-'. The third system is also labeled 'Hp.' and continues the vocal line: 'las dans l'es-cla- va - ge il n'est point de beaux jours hé - las dans l'es - cla-'. The fourth system is labeled 'Hp.' and continues the vocal line: '- va - ge il n'est point de beaux jours hé - las hé - las dans l'es - cla-'. The final line of the score shows a complex arpeggiated figure in the harp part and a vocal line with triplets: 'va - ge il n'est point de beaux jours.'

queen’s ladies-in-waiting. The aviary as a place of self-imposed homosocial segregation and female autonomy appears in the Thérèse Elssler ballet *La Volière* (1838).

**Example 3.2.** Auber, *Le Cheval de Bronze*, Act III, No. 13: “Tout a changé de la nature.” Transcribed and reduced from the printed full score, *F-Po* A.596b (II). Paris: Troupenas, 1835. 420–424.

flute (8va), clarinet, harp (8va) STELLA.

tout a chan - gé dans la na -  
 - tu - re tout a chan - gé dans la na - tu - re des oi - seaux les chants a - mou  
 reux sont pour moi plus har - mo - ni - eux des oi - seaux les chants a - mour -  
 reux sont pour moi plus har - mo - ni - eux des oi - seaux les chants a - mou -  
 reux sont pour moi plus har - - - - - mo - ni - eux

The archetypal motif of a caged bird-woman seeking freedom from her confines can also be read into the role of Stella from a metatheatrical approach. In a review of *Le Cheval de Bronze* at the Opéra-Comique in 1835, critic Jules Janin of the newspaper *Journal des débats* complained that the third act was musically inferior to the previous acts, since it was too much of a vehicle for the soprano Alphonsine-Virginie-Marie Dubois (Casimir). According to Janin, Act III was “consecrated to M<sup>me</sup> Casimir, and M<sup>me</sup> Casimir sang as she always does, composing new airs on the air given to her by the composer.”<sup>226</sup> Janin’s critique projects an anxiety about virtuosic improvisation by a (female) performer who has been provided with a specific musical framework by a (male) composer. From a performative perspective, then, Casimir in the role of Stella

<sup>226</sup> “Toutefois ce dernier acte ne vaut pas les deux autres; il est consacré à M<sup>me</sup> Casimir, et M<sup>me</sup> Casimir l’a chanté comme elle chante toujours, on composant des airs nouveaux sur l’air que lui a donné le musicien.” Janin, 3.

envoiced her character's desire to break through and surpass the boundaries imposed on her by a powerful male "magician"/composer. As a manifestation of excessive female ambition, these vocal embellishments were resented by a critic such as Janin, who would have preferred that Casimir remain within the inked and penciled bars of Auber's score.

### **The Qu'ranic Paradise Garden**

The Venusian gardens of *Le Cheval de Bronze* are not merely evocative of a dream-world seraglio (as Lacombe has already pointed out), but also – and perhaps more accurately – can be understood as a Western fantasy of the Qu'ranic paradise and its angelic population of beautiful young virgins. Like the seraglios of veiled odalisques who bathe and prepare their *toilette* amid fragrant gardens, the Qu'ranic paradise was another garden setting that exercised great power in Western fantasies about the Muslim world. As we have seen, the harems of Middle Eastern countries were depicted by Western writers and artists as enclosed "gardens of women"; in a similar manner, Western depictions of the Qu'ranic paradise emphasize its population of houris, beautiful virgins who emerge from a lush garden landscape. Indeed, these two *jardins des femmes* were inextricably linked in the Western imagination. After all, both stimulated the male heterosexual desire to penetrate a forbidden feminine realm and be enveloped by its exotic women. In theatrical works, the Qu'ranic paradise is portrayed as a celestial harem, full of virginal yet sexually inviting odalisques.

The Venusian women of *Le Cheval de Bronze* are not explicitly labeled "houris" in the libretto or staging manual. Instead, the more generic term "nymph" is used: in the libretto, Stella describes her companions as "seductive nymphs" (*nymphes séduisantes*);

the staging manual describes these women as both “aerial/celestial women” (*femmes aériennes*) and nymphs, and notes that Stella’s maid-of-honor Lo-Mangli is “dressed as a nymph” (*vêtue en nymphe*).<sup>227</sup> Yet critics and chroniclers recognized Act III of *Le Cheval de Bronze* as a theatrical representation of the Qu’ranic paradise, and described the women of Stella’s court as houris and the Venusian gardens as an “Oriental paradise.”<sup>228</sup> One review of the 1835 Opéra-Comique version, appearing in *Gazette des Théâtres*, illustrates how the sensual pleasures of the gardens are embodied by the houris, who sing and dance in diaphanous costumes:

Voilà des palais de gaze, de vapeurs et de fleurs, de délicieuses jeunes filles chantant, dansant aux sons d’une harmonie divine, dans le voluptueux costume des houris [...].<sup>229</sup>

Here are palaces of gauze, vapors, and flowers, of delightful young girls singing, dancing to the sounds of a divine harmony, in the voluptuous costume of houris.

Similarly, Berlioz’s review of the 1857 Opéra version describes the Act III setting as “a marvelous palace where, in luminous and fragrant groves, the most charming houris

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<sup>227</sup> “Pantalon-maillot couleur de chair, tunique en mousseline; ceinture et bretelles à paillons d’argent; bandeau semblable dans les cheveux; bracelets pareils; une guirlande de fleurs d’argent à la main.” Duverger, *Mise en Scène du Cheval de Bronze*, 4.

<sup>228</sup> For example : « Avec elle [Péki] nous arrivons dans un véritable paradis de houris [...]. » (We arrive with her [Péki] in a veritable paradise of houris.) In the same article, Stella is described as “la reine des houris” (the queen of the houris). M. Ulysse Tencé, “Chronique pour 1835 – Mars 23. *Théâtre de l’Opéra-Comique*. Ire représentation de: *Le Cheval de bronze*, opéra-féerie en trois actes, paroles de M. Scribe, musique de M. Aubert [sic],” in *Annuaire Historique Universel pour 1835* (Paris: Thoissier-Desplaces, October 1836), 123. Regarding the 1857 Opéra production: “Les décors sont splendides. [...] pour le troisième, c’est un spécimen éblouissant et magnifique d’un paradis oriental.” Paul Smith, “Théâtre Impérial de l’Opéra. *Le Cheval de Bronze*, opéra-ballet en quatre actes, paroles de M. Scribe, musique de M. Aubert. (Première représentation le 21 septembre 1857.),” *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris*, 27 September 1857, 314.

<sup>229</sup> Unsigned, “Théâtre de l’Opéra-Comique: *Le Cheval de bronze*, opéra fantastique en trois actes de M. Scribe, musique de M. Aubert, décorations de MM. Filastre et Cambon,” *Gazette des Théâtres: Journal des Comédiens*, 26 March 1835.

sing.”<sup>230</sup> Such a formulation reveals how landscape is readily imagined in terms of female bodies: otherworldly houris sing from the foliage, as if the voice of nature itself is a female choir; furthermore, the placement of these women among trees and verdure positions their bodies as outgrowths of nature, as if they were wood-nymphs or dryads.<sup>231</sup> A minor, but perhaps telling detail is that Berlioz ties the women’s bodies not to the sky, but to the earth. Likewise, critic Castil-Blaze found the Venusian women earthy, sensual, and physical, rather than ethereal or spiritual: “In the third act, we rise at last to the regions of ‘Sylphery’ where the beautiful Stella reigns over a community of pretty women, very physical, very coquettish, and who have nothing of the celestial.”<sup>232</sup> Castil-Blaze’s observation speaks to a common Western stereotype of the Qu’ranic paradise as a debased, “false” heaven in which sensual instead of spiritual gratification is promised.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> “Le cheval la transporte dans un palais merveilleux où chantent, dans des bosquets lumineux et odorants, les plus charmantes houris.” (The horse transports her [Péki] to a marvelous palace, where, in luminous and fragrant groves, the most charming houris sing.) Hector Berlioz, “Théâtre de l’Opéra: *Le Cheval de bronze*, opéra-ballet en quatre actes, paroles de M. E. Scribe, musique de M. Auber,” *Journal des débats*, 30 September 1857.

<sup>231</sup> Berlioz’s comment is complicated by a review appearing in *La Revue de Paris* (1 September 1857), in which the critic L. Girard claimed that the introductory chorus had been eliminated, with Auber’s music now serving as a purely instrumental introduction: “L’introduction instrumentale du troisième acte est un motif plein de suavité et d’une nouveauté remarquable: M. Auber est certainement l’inventeur de cette forme mélodique. On reconnaîtra sans doute plus tard tout le mérite des innovations dont ce maître a enrichi l’art, tant dans le domaine de l’harmonie que dans celui de la mélodie, et dont les compositeurs ont fait leur profit. Le motif dont nous parlons servait autrefois d’accompagnement à un chœur de femmes qui devait produire un délicieux effet ; ce chœur a été retranché, nous ne savons pourquoi.” \*\*\*\*, “Chronique des Théâtres,” *La Mode*, 25 December 1841, 659. Girard’s statement raises the question as to whether Berlioz based his review more on the published libretto than the performance. Another intriguing possibility is that even without the actual chorus, the women’s voices might be imagined, as if etherealized within the instrumental texture.

<sup>232</sup> “Le troisième acte nous montre enfin les régions de Sylphirie, où règne la belle Stella sur un peuple de jolies femmes, très-sensibles, très-coquettes et qui n’ont rien d’aérien. C’est la planète de Vénus; le cheval de bronze y conduit sans cesse des hommes, il est le pourvoyeur de ce département.” (... This is the planet Venus; the bronze horse constantly leads men here; it is the purveyor of this department.) Castil-Blaze, “Chronique Musicale: Le Cheval de Bronze,” *La Revue de Paris*, 1 March 1835, 340. “Sylphery” is a reference to the 1832 ballet *La Sylphide*, which introduced the character of the Sylph, a female supernatural being of the air.

<sup>233</sup> In his *La Raison du christianisme ou preuves de la religion, tirées des écrits des plus grands hommes* (1834–35), the French ecclesiastic Antoine Eugène Genoude denounced the “paradis de Mahomet” as



In this construction, houris are positioned not as pure, virginal angels but rather as supernatural odalisques in a Muslim paradise that is portrayed as a highly sexualized inversion of the Christian paradise.

To better understand the equation of the Qu’ranic paradise with the seraglio in the Western imagination, let us consider an early Scribe opéra comique co-authored with Mélesville, *Le Paradis de Mahomet, ou la Pluralité des femmes*, premiered 23 March 1822 at the Opéra-Comique. In Act I, the Persian officer Nadir insists that the “paradise of Mohammed” will be a divine counterpart to the earthly seraglio: both places promise multiple couplings with a variety of women. As in the seraglio, ethnic and national diversity among the women of the Qu’ranic paradise is a major attraction. Nadir urges his friend Balanchou, “Just think of the charming women...Georgians, Circassians, Frenchwomen...because all are there among the houris, as you will see.”<sup>234</sup>

In Act II, Nadir is tricked into thinking he has ascended to the Qu’ranic paradise. In fact, he has been taken to the Persian lord Nathan’s opulent palace gardens, surrounded by waterfalls and clusters of flowering bushes; to the right is the façade of a magnificent

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calculated to appeal to the earthly desires of Middle Eastern men. “Ce faux prophète adapta ses promesses aux désirs des hommes qui vivaient dans un climat où la chaleur était étouffante, et qui désiraient des femmes, des rivières, des bocages ombragés et des fruits délicieux. Comme le pays était excessivement chaud et sec, et comme les habitants étaient débauchés et licencieux, il leur promit de les satisfaire avec des jardins où il y aurait beaucoup de ruisseaux, où ils se reposeraient à l’ombre des arbres du paradis, où il y aurait des vêtements de la soie la plus belle, ainsi que des bracelets d’or et de pierres précieuses.” (This false prophet adapted his promises to the desires of men who lived in a climate where the heat was stifling, and who desired women, rivers, shady groves, and delicious fruit. As the land was excessively hot and dry, and as the inhabitants were debauched and licentious, he promised to satisfy them with gardens where there would be many streams, where they would rest in the shade of trees of paradise, where there would be clothing of the finest silk and bracelets of gold and precious stones.) Genoude, *La Raison du Christianisme*, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (Paris: Pourrat; Sapia, 1836), 548.

<sup>234</sup> “Songe donc que de femmes charmantes...Des Géorgiennes, des Circassiennes, des Françaises...car il y a de tout parmi les Houris, et tu verras que...” *Le Paradis de Mahomet, ou la pluralité des femmes, opéra-comique en trois actes, paroles de Mrs. Scribe et Mélesville; musique de Mrs. Kreutzer et Kreubé; représenté, pour la première fois, à Paris, sur le Théâtre Royal de l’Opéra-Comique, le 23 mars 1822* (Paris: Fages, 1822), 19.

temple with agate and porphyry tripods housing golden censors burning aloes and perfumes. Nadir sleeps on a bank of flowers amid the female attendants of Nathan's daughter Zéneyde. Dressed as houris, the women play harps and theorbos, weave flower garlands, gather baskets of fruits, dance, pour perfume into the censors, and sing:

Gloire à toi, céleste séjour!...	Glory to you, celestial dwelling!
Du prophète divin empire !...	Divine empire of the prophet!
C'est dans ton sein que l'on respire	It is in your breast that one breathes
Pour le bonheur et pour l'amour. <sup>235</sup>	For happiness and for love.

Although a self-conscious illusion crafted to fool Nadir, the *jardin des femmes* of *Le Paradis de Mahomet* nonetheless exemplifies the blend of sacred and carnal associations projected onto the Qu'ranic paradise garden.<sup>236</sup> This same sensualized religious atmosphere is apparent in *Le Cheval de Bronze*, as well. Scribe calls for many of the same exotic elements that he had used in *Le Paradis de Mahomet*: a magnificent palace, gardens in bloom, a hazy atmosphere (either from clouds or incense), women in diaphanous dresses, and intimate music-making on plucked string instruments (lutes, theorbos, and harps). In the opening number of Act III of *Le Cheval de Bronze*, a chorus of Venusian women exalt the intoxicating pleasures of their heavenly sphere. Their blissful sentiments (given below) are similar to those of the "houris" of *Le Paradis de Mahomet* (1822), who had appeared over a decade earlier on the Comique stage:

O séduisante ivresse !	O seductive ecstasy!
O volupté des cieux !	O heavenly pleasure!

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>236</sup> Nadir soon realizes that his plural marriage to these celestial wives is more a curse than a blessing, as all of the "houris" vie for his attention and affection (a polyamorous dilemma that also figures in harem narratives). By the end of Act II, Nadir begs to be released from this purported paradise. The concluding moral of this *opéra-comique* is delivered by the French officer Adolphe: "une seule femme qui nous aime... voilà le paradis sur terre!" (a single woman who loves us...this is paradise on earth!) Ibid., 62. Not surprisingly for an Orientalist work, the sole European character must "educate" Nadir in supposedly Western values such as monogamy.

Vous habitez sans cesse  
En ce séjour heureux !

You dwell forever  
In this happy place!

According to the anonymous critic of the *Gazette des Théâtres*, quoted above, this opening chorus was both sung and danced “to the sounds of a divine harmony.” Indeed, the scenographic construction of a Qu’ranic paradise garden is accomplished not only through visual and textual cues, but also through Auber’s music (Example 3). A combination of melodic and harmonic stasis creates the impression of temporal suspension, which in turn has associations of supernatural eternity and a vast, endless landscape. It is in through this sonic environment that the audience is granted a revelatory vision of an angelic choir: the chorus sings in block chords, as if intoning or chanting in a religious ceremony. The harmony eventually departs from tonic (A-flat Major) only to the subdominant (D-flat Major, IV), before demurely retreating to the borrowed minor subdominant (D-flat minor, Biv) and returning to tonic. In addition to the religious connotations of plagal sonorities, they may be construed less as a cadence than an extension of tonic, as William Caplin has argued in a study of classical harmony.<sup>237</sup> In other words, without any significant functional harmonic movement, a sense of timelessness and open space are perpetuated.

Around this melodic and harmonic stasis, however, is a flurry of movement. The harp outlines arpeggios that rise and fall in a metaphoric wave formation, and the contrary motion between the right hand’s sixteenth-note line (reinforced by flute and clarinet) and left hand’s eighth-note line (reinforced by the violins, violas, and cellos)

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<sup>237</sup> In challenging the existence of a plagal “cadence,” Caplin notes, “Inasmuch as the progression IV-I cannot confirm a tonality (it lacks any leading-tone resolution), it cannot articulate formal closure [...]. Rather, this progression is normally part of a tonic prolongation serving a variety of formal functions — not, however, a cadential one.” William Caplin, *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 43–45.

results in a metaphoric enclosure, a bounding of the intervallic space between A-flat<sup>2</sup> and A-flat<sup>5</sup>. Indeed, the shape created by the notation of the harp part even resembles the mandorla that surrounds saints and divinities in religious iconography. Moreover, harps are a well-established signifier of celestial music, supported by a long iconographic history of angelic harpists and lutenists; woodwinds, especially flute, have pastoral associations with the literary *locus amoenus*.<sup>238</sup> Auber thus creates a sonorous aura or halo that illuminates the dazzling spectacle of the paradise garden while framing the female bodies of this otherworldly realm as objects of the audience's gaze. This metaphoric musical light may even seem to emanate from the women themselves, thus positioning them as embodiments of this heavenly landscape.<sup>239</sup>

The textural-harmonic configuration of “Ô séduisante ivresse” is similar to music used to underscore divine visions and otherworldly music-making in numerous later theatrical works; examples from ballet scores include Adam's *Giselle* (1841) and *Griseldis* (1848), Benoist's *Pâquerette* (1851), and Burgmüller's *La Péri* (1843, discussed below). Therefore, I offer that this configuration might be designated as a “celestial” topic or medium, since it is used in musico-dramatic works to signal a shimmering vision or mirage, often surrounded by luminous clouds.<sup>240</sup> Common features

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<sup>238</sup> On the *locus amoenus* and topic theory, see Monelle, *The Musical Topic*, 14–16.

<sup>239</sup> Here I borrow from Mary Ann Smart, who writes that gestural music “can swim around performing bodies; it can even seem to sing through them.” Smart, *Mimomania*, 6.

<sup>240</sup> Although the term “topic” is more commonly used in music scholarship, my preference is for the term “medium,” used by David Charlton in his work on orchestration and musical meaning. In one of the most important early articles on musical gesture and topic theory, Charlton coined the term “expressive medium” to describe a particular orchestral configuration appearing in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century dramatic music in conjunction with the emotions of “mutual affection or love, untroubled by irony or premonition.” Charlton's use of the term “medium” rather than gesture or *topos* is particularly effective when discussing theatrical music because, as Charlton points out, “it is intended to embody the notions of an ‘environment’ and ‘the liquid vehicle with which pigments are mixed for use.’” Charlton, “Orchestra and Image in the Late Eighteenth Century,” 1. Thus, in a genre that encompasses the visual arts of set and

of the celestial medium are as follows: duple meter; preference for flat keys; slow harmonic rhythm and limited harmonic movement; a repetitive sixteenth-note arpeggio pattern in the harp that ascends and descends in a metaphoric “wave” formation; string tremolo effects; sustained pedal tones, often in lower strings, horns, bassoons, and/or clarinets; and solo woodwinds.<sup>241</sup>

The religious overtones of this chorus also offer another possibility for how Stella’s subsequent cavatine might be read. Above, I primarily discussed Stella’s ornate entrance aria through the metaphors of the siren and the caged bird. However, she also acts as a powerful sorceress, who awakens nature through her incantations. Indeed, coloratura can also have religious or devotional implications, as in the case of the eponymous Druid high priestess in Bellini’s *Norma*. For, as Gurminder Bhogal has recently argued in the case of Delibes’s *Lakmé*, a character’s coloratura need not necessarily be linked to the usual associations of madness or sexuality, but can signal her status as a priestess able to achieve otherworldly communion. Bhogal challenges the oft-stated interpretation of the voice as a signifier of corporeal materiality, positing that when used to invoke mysticism, coloratura can “[transcend] material conventions to signify the attainment of spiritual bliss.”<sup>242</sup>

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costume design, the term “medium” is most effective in understanding how music contributes to the construction and “painting” of an environment.

<sup>241</sup> A late nineteenth-century example of this celestial medium is the chorus “O divine Esclarmonde” from Massenet’s *Esclarmonde* (1889), described by Lacombe in his study of nineteenth-century French opera. As Lacombe notes, *Esclarmonde* “was among the last of its kind. Its writing reflects the survival of a lyric style of poetry, based on images and sensations adapted to the realm of sound.” Lacombe, *The Keys to French Opera in the Nineteenth Century*, 153.

<sup>242</sup> Bhogal, “Lakmé’s Echoing Jewels,” 195.

**Example 3.3.** Auber, *Le Cheval de Bronze*, Act III, No. 13: “Ô séduisante ivresse.”  
 Transcribed and reduced from the printed full score, F-Po A.596b. Paris:  
 Troupenas, 1835. 409–410.

The image shows a musical score for the piece "Ô séduisante ivresse" from Act III, No. 13 of the opera *Le Cheval de Bronze* by Daniel Auber. The score is transcribed and reduced from the printed full score (F-Po A.596b, Paris: Troupenas, 1835, pp. 409–410). The score is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of three flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor). The instruments and voices included are:

- Female Choir:** The vocal line, with lyrics: "Ô séduisante ivresse, ô volup-té des cieux".
- Flute (8va) and Bb clarinet:** The woodwind line, featuring a melodic line with grace notes and slurs.
- Harp:** The harp line, providing harmonic support with arpeggiated figures.
- Strings:** The string line, playing a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes.

Bhogal advocates a more nuanced view of coloratura and ornament in non-exotic works, and her work on *Lakmé* might indeed be applied to earlier French operas. Granted, the attribution of elaborate coloratura or fioratura to a wealthy or powerful female character in nineteenth-century French opera is often linked to that character’s frivolity, extravagance, dangerous sexuality, and even moral corruption. The vocal pyrotechnics of

Marguerite's pastorale "O beau pays," for example, carry connotations of questionable morality, in accordance with the simultaneous fascination and suspicion aroused by extreme musical virtuosity of the nineteenth century, as well as views of the performing woman as a type of prostitute.<sup>243</sup> As Mary Ann Smart summarizes: "Sung while the queen looks at herself in a mirror and set against a decadent background of bathing beauties and voyeurism, the aria perfectly captures the heady combination of seduction and risk attached to Italianate singing in the grand operas of the 1830s."<sup>244</sup>

However, I contend that characters such as Stella (*Le Cheval de Bronze*), Marguerite (*Les Huguenots*, Chapter II), and Inès (*La Favorite*, Chapter IV) also act as quasi-religious figures whose incantations are intended to conjure Venus or another divine personification of love. This theory is supported by the limited melodic interest of the female chorus: in fact, they seem more like priestesses intoning in a religious ceremony than lascivious nymphs. The garden, therefore, functions as a type of Temple of Venus in which the rites of love are conducted. I do not pretend that Stella, Marguerite, and Inès take on a purely spiritual role of mystic or chaste goddess. And, to be sure, Stella's vocal ornaments point not only to spiritual transcendence but also to her embrace of the material—a sort of musical analogue to glittering jewelry (see Figure 3.12a, below). Instead, these soprano roles are more closely akin to what Stephen Huebner has identified as the curious mix of eroticism and spirituality in priestess figures of the later nineteenth century.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> See for example Chapter V, "The Erotic Culture of the Stage," in Berlanstein, *Daughters of Eve: A Cultural History of French Theater Women from the Old Regime to the Fin de Siècle*, 104–34.

<sup>244</sup> Smart, "Roles, Reputations, Shadows: Singers at the Opéra, 1828–1849," 111.

<sup>245</sup> See Huebner's discussion of Thaïs as "The Magdalen Revisited": Huebner, *French Opera at the Fin de Siècle: Wagnerism, Nationalism, and Style*, 148–52.

Further evidence of how the Qu’ranic paradise was portrayed as a garden of celestial women surrounded by radiant light and lush foliage can be gleaned by a comparison of *Le Cheval de Bronze* with the ballet-pantomime *La Péri* (1843), based on a libretto by Orientalist writer Théophile Gautier and choreographer Coralli.<sup>246</sup> Strictly speaking, peris are fairies or fallen angels of Persian folklore, whereas houris are divine companions described in the Quran and Islamic mystical writings. However, nineteenth-century Western authors often used the terms *peri* and *houris* interchangeably to denote Eastern angelic beings. Such is the case with *La Péri*: in the ballet’s apotheosis, peris are the messengers who transport Prince Achmet and Léïla (human avatar of the peris’ queen) to a “Muslim paradise” with “marvelous and fantastic architecture.”<sup>247</sup>

Earlier in the ballet, as well, the Qu’ranic paradise garden functions as an exotic, fantastic destination for Romantic reverie and escape. In Act I, Scene 4, Prince Achmet smokes opium and has a hallucination in which his harem is transformed into an *oasis*

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<sup>246</sup> *La Péri* offers a more serious treatment of the Quranic paradise garden than is typically found in *opéras comiques* like *Le Paradis de Mahomet*, where it was often used for comedic, even derisive effect. In *Le Paradis de Mahomet*, Nadir’s dream of a celestial harem becomes a nightmare when he is swarmed by too many women demanding his attention; and in *Le Cheval de Bronze*, the inability of men to control their sexual urges in an all-female paradise is a running joke—Prince Yang holds out for an unprecedented twenty-three and a half hours, Tsing-Sing manages to last for two hours, and Péki’s beloved Yanko succumbs almost instantaneously.

<sup>247</sup> *La Péri*, 15. Indeed, visions of the Muslim paradise as verdant garden full of houris and peris were often used for apotheosis scenes, thus using the Orientalist imagination to channel the apotheosis tradition of French court ballet and the scenic convention of wedding finales in imperial gardens (as in, for example, *La Chatte métamorphosée en femme*). Of course, for Orientalist writers, Muslim and Hindu paradisiacal realms were often interchangeable, reflecting a vague and generic Eastern Otherworld. These Oriental celestial gardens allow for unions not permitted or otherwise possible on earth, and *La Péri* ends with one such scene of divine communion: the clouds part, the heavens open, and the Pèris lead Achmet and Léïla (human avatar of the Queen of the Peris) to a marvelous *paradis musulman*. Other examples of apotheosis within an Orientalist paradise garden include Auber’s *Le Dieu et la Bayadère*, in which the Unknown (the god Brahma) and Zoloé rise up into the clouds, into an Indian paradise; *Le Papillon* (1860), in which Farfalla and Djalma are led by fairies to an enchanted palace that rises behind gardens; Massenet’s opera *Le Roi de Lahore* (1877), in which Act III takes place in the gardens of the blessed in the Paradise of Indra and Act V sees the lovers Nair and Alim welcomed into paradise by Indra; and the Petipa/Minkus ballet *La Bayadère* (1877), in which Solor is reunited with Nikiya in the Kingdom of the Shades, above the Himalayan mountains.



*féerique*, populated by peris. Through this transformation, *La Péri* exemplifies the thin line between harem and Qu’ranic paradise: both the harem and fairy oasis are full of beautiful, exotic women clad in diaphanous fabrics and sparkling jewels; the kingdom of the peris, however, exists on a higher spiritual plane. As described in the libretto, this paradise garden is fashioned from precious stones and illuminated by mysterious light: “blue and pink vapors rise in the background, then fade, revealing an immense space, full of azure and sun, a fairy oasis with crystal lakes, emerald palm trees, trees with gemstone flowers, lapis-lazuli and mother-of-pearl mountains, lit by a transparent and supernatural light.”<sup>248</sup>

Gautier’s vision of the peris’ realm as a paradise garden is particularly evident in his open letter to Gérard de Nerval, published in *La Presse*. Gautier’s praise for the décor of Achmet’s dream scene emphasizes the designers’ ability to create “supernatural light” worthy of Jan Brueghel the Elder’s paintings of Eden:

Si tu as été dans les cafés des fumeurs d’opium et que tu aies fait tomber la pâte enflammée sur le champignon de porcelaine, je doute que, devant tes yeux assoupis, il se soit développé un plus brillant mirage que l’oasis féerique exécutée par MM. Séchan, Dieterle et Despléchin, qui semblent avoir retrouvé la vaporeuse palette du vieux Breughel, le peintre du paradis. Ce sont des tons fabuleux, d’une tendresse et d’une fraîcheur idéales; un jour mystérieux, qui ne vient ni de la lune

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<sup>248</sup> “Des vapeurs bleuâtres et rosées s’élèvent dans le fond, et en se dissipant, laissent apercevoir un espace immense, plein d’azur et de soleil, une oasis féerique avec des lacs de cristal, des palmiers d’émeraude, des arbres aux fleurs de pierreries, des montagnes de lapis-lazuli et de nacre de perle, éclairé par une lumière transparent et surnaturelle.” Ibid., 8. Gautier later used similar imagery – including specific reference to “Brueghel of Paradise” [Brueghel the Elder] – in his libretto for the ballet *Pâquerette* (1851): in an Act III dream sequence, clouds part and the scene is “plunged into an ocean of gold and azure, in an infinite light. — A magical landscape with diamond waters, emerald verdure, and sapphire mountains displays its blue perspectives like an Eden of Brueghel of Paradise.” (Les nuages, qui pendant cette scène ont amoncelé sur le théâtre leurs flocons opaques, se replient, se dissipent et s’envolent : les murailles enfumées de l’auberge ont disparu, et le regard tout à l’heure borné par de misérables obstacles plonge dans un océan d’or et d’azur, dans un infini lumineux. — Un paysage magique aux eaux de diamant, aux verdure d’émeraude, aux montagnes de saphir, étale ses perspectives bleues comme un Eden de Breughel de Paradis.) *Paquerette, / ballet-pantomime en 3 actes et 5 tableaux, / de / MM. Théophile Gautier et Saint-Léon, / Musique de M. Benoist; / Décorations de MM. Desplechins, Cambon et Thierry, / représenté pour la première fois / sur le Théâtre de l’Opéra, le 15 janvier 1851* (Paris: Jonas, 1851), 21–22.

ni du soleil, baigne les vallées, effleure les lacs comme un léger brouillard d'argent, et pénètre dans les clairières des forêts magiques; la rosée étincelle en diamants sur des fleurs inconnues dont les calices sourient comme des bouches vermeilles; les eaux et les cascades miroitent sous les branches; c'est un vrai songe d'Arabe, tout fait de verdure et de fraîcheur. Jamais, peut-être, à moins de frais, l'Opéra n'avait obtenu un plus brillant effet.<sup>249</sup>

If you have been in the cafes of opium-smokers and have dropped the burning paste on the porcelain mushroom [pipe], I doubt that, before your sleeping eyes, a more brilliant mirage would develop than that of the fairy oasis created by MM. Séchan, Dieterle, and Despléchin, who seem to have found the vaporous palette of the elder Brueghel, the painter of paradise. These are fabulous colors, of an ideal tenderness and freshness; a mysterious light that comes neither from the moon nor from the sun bathes the valleys, skims the lakes like a light silver mist, and penetrates the clearings of the magical forests; the dew sparkles in diamonds on the unknown flowers whose calyxes smile like vermillion mouths; water and waterfalls shimmer under the branches; it is a true dream of an Arab, made up entirely of greenery and freshness. Never, perhaps, for a lesser cost, has the Opéra obtained a more brilliant effect.

Gautier's description of the *La Péri* fairy oasis in *La Presse*, given above, is notable not only for its imagery of celestial light, but also for its erotic feminization of nature, a trademark of Gautier's writings: flowers are conceptualized as women, adorned with diamonds (dewdrops) and smiling with their "vermillion mouths" (calyxes). The melding of the peris' bodies with the landscape of this fairy oasis is especially apparent in a contemporary lithograph that depicts the *pas de deux* between Achmet and the Queen of the Peris (Figure 3.11). The peris seem to emerge from and fade into the mist, and their curved arms mirror the shape of the trees that surround them. The same phenomenon is illustrated by the lithograph of the *pas de séduction* from the 1857 Opéra production of *Le Cheval de Bronze* (given above as Figure 3.8): the shapes and forms of dancing female bodies are mapped onto a verdant tropical landscape, thus resulting in a kinetic experience of environmental seduction.

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<sup>249</sup> Théophile Gautier, "A Mon Ami Gérard de Nerval, au Caire," *La Presse*, 25 July 1843, 2.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 3.11.** Marie-Alexandre Alophe, lithograph of the *pas de deux* in Act I of *La Péri*, appearing in *Le Ménestral*. F-Pn Mus. Est. Pisani B.001.

Burgmüller’s score for *La Péri* musically conveys the mysterious light that “bathes” and “penetrates” the peris’ Act I oasis: below a lyrical melody in oboe, bassoon, and first violins, string tremolos correspond to the shimmering aura of sparkling light and water, while also underscoring Achmet’s tremulous awe at this miraculous sight. The harp accompaniment is a frequent marker of otherworldly visions; moreover, its repetitive arpeggio pattern in contrary motion (between left and right hands) within a limited compass has a metaphoric “streaming” effect, as if descending in rays from the mysterious light source described by Gautier (Example 3.4).

**Example 3.4.** Burgmüller, *La Péri* (1843), Act I, scene 4: “Le Rêve” (arrival of Léïla).  
Transcription from the manuscript full score, F-Po A.539a (I).

The image shows a musical score for the piece "Le Rêve" from Act I, scene 4 of the opera "La Péri" by Frédéric Chopin. The score is in 2/4 time and features a flat major key signature. It includes staves for oboe, violin 1, bassoon (8vb), strings, and harp. The harp part is characterized by repetitive arpeggiated accompaniment, while the strings play a tremolo. The woodwinds have melodic lines with long notes and ties.

Indeed, Burgmüller’s musical depiction of the peris’ paradise garden is similar to the celestial medium used by Auber to illustrate the Venusian gardens of *Le Cheval de Bronze*: both works feature repetitive arpeggiated harp accompaniments, tremolo strings, flat major key signatures, duple meter, woodwinds (though *La Péri* uses the more typical “Eastern” or exotic double reeds), and a slow harmonic rhythm with tonic pedal point. Furthermore, these pieces share a distinctive plagal progression that slides from the subdominant to the borrowed minor subdominant before returning to tonic: IV–Biv–I. Though more supporting examples remain to be identified, I posit that this harmonic progression is associated with affective meanings that include magic, mystic ritual, and mirage. After all, much like the peris’ opulent jewel garden, the Venusian women’s silver flowers, golden fountain, and diamond/pearl accessories connote a shimmering artificial paradise rather than a bucolic *locus amoenus*.

Further parallels between the houris of *Le Cheval de Bronze* and the peris of *La Péri* are evident in their costuming (Figures 3.12–3.15). Both communities of supernal women are clothed in luminous fabrics, decorative star motifs, pearl necklaces, jeweled bracelets, and tiaras of stars and/or gems. Additionally, Alfred Albert’s Venusian houri wears a golden sash decorated with red flowers and trimmed with pearl beads, seemingly modeled after the sash of Paul Lormier’s peri (compare Figures 3.14 and 3.15). Another likely possibility, of course, is that the two designs had a shared iconographic model not yet identified.

### **The Cosmic Gardens of Venus**

*Le Cheval de Bronze* does not merely align exotic women with tropical flora and flowing waters, as is quite common in the garden scenes of opera and ballet. A particularly unusual feature of this opéra-féerie is that its invocation of feminine Otherness bridges Orientalist representation with science fiction: to position these houris as divine beings in a celestial garden, their paradise is situated on the planet Venus. Thus, Scribe takes the metaphoric image of “heavenly bodies” to a new level by importing references to astronomy and astrology. The science-fiction bent to this work is instigated in Act I when Prince Yang tells of having consulted the astrologers and savants of China and Tibet about his dreams of a beautiful princess. In the opéra comique version, some of these sages ascertain that Stella is “a habitant of the stars,” while others claim she is a “charming princess” who has been transported by an enchanter to some unknown planet.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 3.12.** Louis Maleuvre, Costume of M<sup>lle</sup> Casimir in the role of Stella in *Le Cheval de Bronze* (Paris: Martinet, 1835). F-Po BMO C.261 (10-958).



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 3.13.** Costume of Carlotta Grisi in the role of the Queen of the Peris in *La Péri* (Paris: Marinet, 1843). F-Po C.261 (16-1617)





Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 3.14.** Alfred Albert, costume design for an “inhabitant of the planet [Venus]” in *Le Cheval de Bronze* (1857 Opéra version). F-Po D.216-18 (42).





Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 3.15.** Paul Lormier, costume design for a peri in *La Péri* (1843).  
F-Po D.216-14 (56).

That planet in question is Venus, meaningful for both its astronomical and astrological connotations. With its extremely hot temperature and dense atmosphere, Venus shared traits with the Orient, imagined in theatrical works as a place of humidity and torpor; such a tropical climate necessitated refreshment like bathing, fanning, and sorbet-drinking and was linked to the languid ennui of its people, especially its women.<sup>250</sup> More importantly, though, as the bright “morning star” and “evening star,” the planet Venus had been associated with pagan sky deities and fertility goddesses since ancient times: these avatars included Isis, Anahita, and Ishtar. Of course, the association between the planet and the Roman goddess of love was the most lasting. Situating a luxuriant *jardin des femmes* on the planet Venus allowed Scribe to make a pun with the mythological gardens of Venus. Serious mythological or Anacreontic operas and ballets had become unfashionable by the 1820s, and the gardens of Venus were last staged at the Opéra with Blache and Schneitzhoeffler’s ballet *Mars et Vénus* (1826–37). Therefore, *Le Cheval de Bronze* offered a new, humorous variation on the gardens of Venus by transporting this erotic feminine *topos* to outer space.

Scribe’s fanciful imagining of Venus as an all-female planet invited some mockery in the press, including a sarcastic remark by the critic of *L’Indépendant*. Here, the critic’s evaluation of the physical appearance of the Venusian women through binoculars is likened to the examination of heavenly bodies through a telescope:

Il existe dans le monde imaginé par M. Scribe, une planète appelée *Etoile de Vénus*, habitée exclusivement par des femmes, toutes jeunes et jolies (à l’aide de notre télescope en forme de binocle, nous en avons remarqué quelques-unes qui manquent essentiellement à ces conditions). Parmi elles (les jolies), est une princesse du Mogol nommée Stella, qui ne pourra redescendre sur la terre, que

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<sup>250</sup> On this point, see Lacombe, “The Writing of Exoticism in the Libretti of the Opéra-Comique.”

lorsqu'il se sera rencontré un homme qui aura résisté pendant un jour aux charmes dont on l'entoure dans la planète fortunée.<sup>251</sup>

There exists in the world imagined by M. Scribe a planet named *Star of Venus*, inhabited exclusively by women, all young and pretty (with the aid of our telescope, in the form of binoculars, we noticed some essentially lacking these conditions). Among them (the pretty ones), is a Mogul princess named Stella, who will be able to descend to earth when she meets a man who has resisted the charms that surround him on the fortunate planet for one day.

Critic Jules Janin was more derisive, noting that Scribe's libretto was "within reach of the most simple-minded audience members, as long as they do not know astronomy."<sup>252</sup> Janin also made fun of Scribe's decision to name the Mogul princess "Stella," while all other characters in the opera had stereotypical "Chinese"-sounding names:

Cette jeune beauté s'appelle *Stella*, ce qui veut dire étoile en chinois et en latin. Ici M. Scribe fait preuve d'une grande érudition et d'une grande hardiesse. Pourquoi *stella* tout court, et pourquoi pas *stella-kuo*, *stella-ki*, *stella-sing* ou *singe* ; j'aimerais assez *stella-singe*, pour faire pendant à *tsing-singe*. M. Scribe, en homme indépendant et qui sait fort bien que le latin est la langue universelle, même en Chine, ne s'est pas donné la peine de donner une terminaison chinoise au nom de son héroïne Stella. Grande liberté dont M. Scribe aura à répondre devant les lettrés de Pékin !<sup>253</sup>

This young beauty is called *Stella*, which means star in Chinese and in Latin. Here M. Scribe demonstrates great scholarship and great boldness. Why simply *Stella*, and why not *Stella-Kuo*, *Stella-Ki*, *Stella-Sing* or *Singe* [Monkey]; I would not mind *Stella-Singe* [Monkey], to be a counterpart to *Tsing-Singe* [Tsing-Sing, the Mandarin who is trying to take Péki as his fourth wife]. M. Scribe, an independent man who well knows that Latin is the universal language, even in China, has not taken the pains to give a Chinese ending to the name of his heroine Stella. A great liberty for which M. Scribe will be accountable to the scholars of Beijing!

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<sup>251</sup> Unsigned, "Spectacles: Opéra-Comique — *Le Cheval de bronze*, opéra-féerie en 3 actes, de MM. Scribe et Auber," *L'Indépendant*, 26 March 1835, 2. The author mocks the sort of faux-Chinese names used not only in *Le Cheval de Bronze* (Péki, Yang, Tsing-Sing, Yan-Ko, Tchín-Kao, Lo-Mangli), but also in other *chinoiseries* staged at the Opéra. *La Chatte métamorphosée en chatte* (1837), for example, includes such characters as Oug-Lou, Kiang-Ssé-Long, Kie-Li, and Kan-Kao.

<sup>252</sup> "La poëme est à la portée des plus simples auditeurs pourvu qu'ils ne sachent pas l'astronomie." "L'Hiver," *La Nouveauté*, 6 January 1827, 3.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

In the above section (The Qu’ranic Paradise Garden), I considered how metaphors of light and the heavens were used in both the music and costume design of *Le Cheval de Bronze* to connote the imagery of a Qu’ranic paradise garden teeming with beautiful houris. As we have seen, *Le Cheval de Bronze* and *La Péri* shared a similar aesthetic in which houris and peris are depicted as star-spangled nymphs surrounded by an aura of supernatural light. However, in *Le Cheval de Bronze* these same signifiers are multivalent, easily transferred to meanings associated with science-fiction: astronomy, outer space, interplanetary travel, extraterrestrial beings, and the future.<sup>254</sup>

For example, the silver spangles of the Venusian women’s belts, shoulder straps, hairbands, and bracelets in the 1835 Opéra-Comique production point not only to their angelic or heavenly associations, but also to their cosmic environment. The glittering, starry appearance of the Venusian women is further enhanced by their garlands of silver flowers and Stella’s elaborate jewelry of gold/silver bracelets and pearl/diamond earrings (see again Figure 3.12). For the 1857 Opéra production, Alfred Albert’s costume design for a Venusian woman (an “inhabitant of the planet”) was even more inspired by astronomical motifs, with a crown of stars and a blue skirt decorated with numerous gold stars (see again Figure 3.14). This imagery represents the Venusian women of *Le Cheval de Bronze* not only as houris, but also as fanciful galactic “star maidens” clad in luminous fabrics and jewels that mimic the sheen of futuristic materials.

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<sup>254</sup> Though this detail is not included in the original libretto of *Giselle*, Gautier’s open letter to Heine describes the Wili Queen Myrtha as having a star on her head: “The reeds part and there come in view, first, a little twinkling star, then a crown of flowers, then two beautiful blue eyes, looking gently startled and set in an oval of alabaster [...]” Théophile Gautier, “A M. Henri Heine, à Cauteretz,” *La Presse*, 5 July 1841. Quoted and translated in Karen Eliot, *Dancing Lives: Five Female Dancers from the Ballet d’Action to Merce Cunningham* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 33. Myrtha is not a science-fiction star maiden, of course; however, the star on her head does position her as alien, extraterrestrial, and ethereal.

In addition, Auber's celestial medium evokes the seeming timelessness of outer space, along with metaphoric qualities of smoothness, luminescence, and metallic color, all of which are commonly imagined as attributes of extraterrestrial material artifacts. Parisian critic Castil-Blaze, for one, noted the harp's ability to lend a color appropriate to the music of Venusian women in his review of *Le Cheval de Bronze* appearing in *La Revue de Paris*:

Dans le troisième acte, la harpe se mêle aux accompagnements, pour donner une couleur particulière à la musique destinée à nous traduire les discours des dames de la planète de Vénus.<sup>255</sup>

In the third act, the harp mingles with the accompaniments to give a particular color to the music intended to translate for us the discourse of the women of the planet Venus.

Castil-Blaze's description of this music as having the ability to "translate" the language of women from outer space hints at a key function of the harp in nineteenth-century dramatic music as a signifier of transport to distant times, exotic places, and the realm of dreams and the supernatural. Furthermore, Castil-Blaze's mention of the harp's "particular color" invites the possibility of synesthetic hearing in nineteenth-century Parisian culture.<sup>256</sup> The harp's glittering timbre, particularly when coupled with flute and clarinet, not only evokes an otherworldly – indeed, cosmic – atmosphere, but also serves as a sonic analogue to the women's silvery costumes and accessories.

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<sup>255</sup> Castil-Blaze, "Chronique Musicale: Le Cheval de Bronze," 342.

<sup>256</sup> Indeed, Lacombe notes that the nineteenth-century Parisian press perceived metaphors of color and light in the textures and timbres of the opera orchestra. See Lacombe, *The Keys to French Opera in the Nineteenth Century*, 153.

## Conclusions

*Le Cheval de Bronze* offers an extremely colorful example of how the imagined Otherness of feminine space could be represented on the 1830s Parisian stage as an exotic fantasy world. The three imagined places invoked by Stella's Venusian gardens – seraglio, Qu'ranic paradise, and outer space – flow seamlessly into one another: the Turkish harem as mysterious “garden of women” is transported to heaven, where it becomes a Muslim paradise garden; and the doubly sensual and celestial associations of houris invite their transference to the planet Venus, named for the mythological goddess of love. Unusual for its time, *Le Cheval de Bronze* adds a science-fiction or astrological dimension to the construction of Islamic women's Otherness.

What I hope to make clear over the course of this study is the magnitude of librettist Eugène Scribe's influence in systematizing the scenic convention of the *jardin des femmes*, an example of the pervasive visual ideology in which landscape is imagined as a female body, and visa versa. The appearance of the *jardin des femmes* convention in *Le Cheval de Bronze* suggests that this was an evocative system of imagery used by Scribe in works produced at both the Opéra and Opéra-Comique. A tantalizing possibility, though one that falls outside the scope of the present study, is that this convention was developed by Scribe in the crucible of opéra comique before bringing it to grand opera in *Les Huguenots*.

In any case, in reviews of the premiere of *Les Huguenots*, several critics claimed that this new opera displayed a certain hybridity of genre: namely, that the first three acts seemed to rely on the musico-dramatic style of opéra comique. The anonymous critic of the periodical *Courrier des Théâtres* (2 March 1836), for one, described *Les Huguenots*

as “an opéra comique in three acts and a tragédie lyrique in two.”<sup>257</sup> Similarly, the critic of *L'Entracte* claimed that the first three acts of Meyerbeer's score seemed like “an opéra comique within a grand opera.”<sup>258</sup> Indeed, the similarities between Princess Stella's gardens in Act III of *Le Cheval de Bronze* and Queen Marguerite's gardens in Act II of *Les Huguenots* suggest that much might be gleaned from increased attention to opéra comique in studies of musico-dramatic conventions in nineteenth-century French opera.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> “Ici, on a un opéra-comique en trois actes et une tragédie lyrique en deux.” Unsigned, “Nouvelles de Paris,” in *Courrier des Théâtres* (1836), 4.

<sup>258</sup> The critic of *L'Entracte* noted that the first three acts of *Les Huguenots* were characterized by variety of tone, use of local and historical color, and the union of Italian, French, and German styles; presumably, these were qualities that contributed to a perceived affinity between *Les Huguenots* and the genre of *opéra-comique*. “Les trois premiers actes de la partition de M. Meyerbeer sont, en quelque sorte, un opéra comique dans un grand opéra. Variété de ton, couleur locale et historique, réunion des trois écoles italienne, française et allemande, voilà les qualités qui distinguent cette partie de l'ouvrage.” “Académie Royale de Musique (3me article). *Les Huguenots* – La Musique et les Acteurs,” *L'Entracte*, 5 March 1836, 2.

<sup>259</sup> While *grand opéra* has certainly received greater attention than early nineteenth-century *opéra comique*, this is not to imply a complete absence of resources that address both genres. See, for example, Pendle, *Eugène Scribe and French Opera of the Nineteenth Century*. See also Lacombe, *The Keys to French Opera in the Nineteenth Century*. An in-depth study of *opéra comique* at mid-century is Mary Jean Speare, “The Transformation of Opéra-Comique: 1850–1880” (Ph.D. dissertation, Washington University, 1997). Works premiered at the Opéra-Comique later in the nineteenth century, such as *Carmen*, *Lakmé*, and *Esclarmonde*, have of course generated much more scholarly investigation.

CHAPTER IV  
THE VOYAGE TO CYTHERA IN *LA FAVORITE*

As we have seen in the previous chapters, the *jardin des femmes* was a scenic convention cultivated by Eugène Scribe in his libretti for both the Opéra-Comique and the Opéra. Most famous and frequently performed of these works was Scribe and Meyerbeer's grand opera *Les Huguenots* (1836), whose second act became emblematic of the *jardin des femmes* convention: it was reproduced hundreds of times on the Opéra stage, its *chœur des baigneuses* was appropriated and repurposed in vaudevilles, and its musical techniques were touted by critics as epitomizing stereotypically feminine qualities of "grace" and "freshness." *Les Huguenots* was not, however, the only grand opera in which a *jardin des femmes* was staged. Another prominent example is found in Act I, Tableau 2 of Donizetti's *La Favorite* (1840), in which the protagonist Fernand journeys to the Isla de León for a clandestine encounter with his beloved Léonor and is welcomed to the island by Léonor's confidante Inès and other ladies-in-waiting, who revel in the delights of their paradisiacal refuge.

Critics immediately recognized parallels between Léonor's island retreat in *La Favorite* and Marguerite's gardens in *Les Huguenots*, and with good reason: *Les Huguenots* librettist Eugène Scribe had a hand in the making of *La Favorite*, though the libretto is usually credited to Alphonse Royer and Gustave Vaëz. The addition of Tableau 2 (a *site délicieux* on the Isla de León) was among the revisions Scribe made to Royer and Vaëz's libretto during the complicated genesis of *La Favorite*, as the opera was transformed and reconstructed from Donizetti's earlier projects *Adelaïde* and *L'Ange de*



*Nisida*.<sup>260</sup> Scribe's reuse of the *jardin des femmes* convention in *La Favorite* implies his belief in its dramatic effectiveness: not only does the gendered space of the *jardin des femmes* allow for strong contrasts of character and scenography, but it also valorizes private pastoral fantasy within grand opera, a genre otherwise associated with magnificent public spaces and spectacles.

The dramaturgical significance of Tableau 2 in *La Favorite* is particularly evident when considered in the full context of Scribe's geographic vision of the opera. Scribe discarded the Neapolitan setting of Royer and Vaëz's *L'Ange de Nisida* libretto in favor of fourteenth-century Spain, with specific settings at the northern and southern extremes of the Iberian peninsula: the monastery of St. James de Compostela (Act I, Tableau 1; Act IV), the Isla de León (Act I, Tableau 2), the gardens of the Alcázar palace in Seville (Act II), and the interior of the Alcázar (Act III).<sup>261</sup> Scribe's new scenic plan for *La Favorite* might, at first blush, seem a strained attempt at imagined historical verisimilitude, since a fourteenth-century Iberian setting accommodated the story of legendary beauty Leonor de Guzmán (1310–1351), mistress to King Alfonso IX of Castile and León (1311–1350).<sup>262</sup> Scribe's translocation of Donizetti's opera to Spain might also be cynically regarded as evidence of an exploitative eye towards opportunities

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<sup>260</sup> For a full account of these changes, see Harris-Warrick, *La Favorite, opéra en quatre actes: Introduction, Sources, Critical Commentary*, 19–45. See also "The Parisian Sources of Donizetti's French Operas: The Case of *La Favorite*," in *L'Opera Teatrale di Gaetano Donizetti: Proceedings of the International Conference on the Operas of Gaetano Donizetti, Bergamo, 17–20 September 1992*, ed. Riccardo Allorto, Gabriel Dotto, and Roger Parker (Bergamo: Assessorato allo spettacolo, 1993), 77–92.

<sup>261</sup> *La Favorite, opéra en quatre actes: Introduction, Sources, Critical Commentary*, 39–40. Harris-Warrick identifies a letter from Scribe to Pillet, dated 3 September 1840 (F-Pan AJ<sup>13</sup> 204/2), in which the new settings of *La Favorite* are laid out. This letter is reproduced in full below.

<sup>262</sup> As Harris-Warrick reminds us, though, the real Leonor de Guzmán remained King Alfonso's mistress for twenty years, bearing him several children, and after Alfonso's death was executed on orders of his humiliated queen.

for local color, such as a divertissement featuring Moorish slaves in the gardens of the Alcázar palace of Seville.<sup>263</sup>

Yet place is not merely a background for dramatic action or an excuse for decorative exoticism; rather, a particular setting gives rise to distinctive character types and poetic themes, as literary critic J. Hillis Miller has argued.<sup>264</sup> Indeed, in the case of *La Favorite*, Scribe's choice of three specific locations in Spain – the monastery of St. James de Compostela, the Isla de León, and the Alcázar of Seville – illustrates the opera's key dramatic themes: pilgrimage, enclosure, and the pastoral impulse of retreat followed by return.<sup>265</sup> Moreover, by mapping the protagonists Fernand and Leonor's travel to and from these places, we can trace the trajectory of their respective emotional and spiritual journeys over the course of the opera.

### **Scribe's Revisions to *La Favorite***

To adapt Alphonse Royer and Gustave Vaëz's libretto for *L'Ange de Nisida* into *La Favorite*, Opéra director Léon Pillet recruited veteran librettist Eugène Scribe. Yet the full extent of Scribe's involvement in the *Favorite* libretto remains unclear, muddled by

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<sup>263</sup> Indeed, Rebecca Harris-Warrick asserts that “the change in location from Naples [*L'Ange de Nisida*] to medieval Spain [*La Favorite*] provided opportunities for Moorish and Spanish local color, but had minor impact on the plot whose outlines owe little to history, despite the librettists' grounding of the opera in the identifiable past.” Harris-Warrick, *La Favorite, opéra en quatre actes: Introduction, Sources, Critical Commentary*, 36. I disagree with Harris-Warrick, particularly since Santiago de Compostela and the Isla de León (which I read as a surrogate for the mythical island of Cythera) are meaningful pilgrimage sites and thus represent the polarity between sacred and secular for both Fernand and Léonor's spiritual journeys during the course of the opera.

<sup>264</sup> Miller proposes that the stories told in novels “are not so much placed against the background of the scene as generated by it” and that the mapping of these stories gives rise to “the metonymy whereby environment may be a figure for what it environs.” Miller, *Topographies*, 18–20.

<sup>265</sup> As Terry Gifford writes, “Whatever the locations and modes of pastoral retreat may be, there must in some sense be a return from that location to a context in which the results of the journey are to be understood.” Gifford, *Pastoral*, 81.

conflicting testimonies. The contradictory accounts and documents have been comprehensively addressed in Rebecca Harris-Warrick's critical edition of *La Favorite*, and I briefly summarize her findings here.<sup>266</sup> Scribe's contract with the Opéra for his work on *La Favorite* did not indicate collaboration with other librettists, and he was paid the same fee he usually received for an original libretto. This fee, Harris-Warrick suggests, may have been justified by Scribe's status and Pillet's desire to have an experienced librettist for *La Favorite*, which would be Royer and Vaëz's first libretto for the Opéra.

Other evidence suggests that Scribe was asked to work on *La Favorite* to assuage his concerns about the postponement of the Donizetti opera *Le duc d'Albe*, for which Scribe and Duveyrier had written the libretto. A letter from Alphonse Royer to Gustave Vaëz, purportedly dated 11 August 1840, stated that Pillet would ask Scribe to join the *Favorite* team merely to convince him to allow *Favorite* to be substituted for *Le Duc d'Albe*.<sup>267</sup> However, this letter was published late in the century, when Scribe's heirs sought to include *La Favorite* in a complete works edition and Scribe's actual role in the writing of the libretto became a point of contention. Also among the evidence minimizing Scribe's contributions was a questionnaire directed from Pillet to Vaëz, possibly intended to be used for Pillet's defense when he was sued in 1843–44 by Donizetti and Scribe over the abandonment of *Le Duc d'Albe*.<sup>268</sup> This questionnaire consisted of what Harris-Warrick describes as “very leading questions,” seemingly intended to elicit Vaëz's

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<sup>266</sup> See Harris-Warrick, *La Favorite, opéra en quatre actes: Introduction, Sources, Critical Commentary*, 35–41.

<sup>267</sup> The relevant portion of this letter is reproduced in *ibid.*, 35.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, 39, fn 40. This lawsuit is recounted in Herbert Weinstock, *Donizetti and the World of Opera in Italy, Paris and Vienna in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Pantheon, 1963), 297–301.

confirmation that Scribe was not hired as indemnification for the substitution of *La Favorite* for *Le Duc d'Albe*, and that Scribe's role in the creation of *La Favorite* was relatively limited.

Nevertheless, Pillet's questionnaire to Vaëz identifies Scribe as responsible for half of the libretto ("collaborateur par moitié"), a designation that also appears in a list of flats painted for the opera's décor ("La favorite, opéra en 4 actes par M.M. Alphonse Royer et Gustave Vaez pour une moitié et M. Eugène Scribe pour l'autre moitié, musique de Donizetti...").<sup>269</sup> By September 1840, the press reported that Scribe had taken part in revising *La Favorite*, but these revisions were not explicitly defined.<sup>270</sup> Further adding to the ambiguity of Scribe's degree of authorship are various published and manuscript materials: Scribe's name was listed first of the librettists in three printed Schlesinger scores and the staging manual, his name did not appear on the published libretto, the manuscript score copied for use at the Opéra, or Donizetti's autograph score.<sup>271</sup>

Although the full extent of Scribe's work on the libretto of *La Favorite* is unknown, a letter addressed to Opéra director Léon Pillet and dated 3 September 1840 suggests that Scribe's major contribution was the development of a new scenic structure: he changed the setting of the opera to Spain, established specific locations for each act, split the first act into two contrasting tableaux (the monastery of St. James de Compostela and the Isla de León), and situated the main ballet divertissement within a dramatically

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<sup>269</sup> Harris-Warrick, *La Favorite, opéra en quatre actes: Introduction, Sources, Critical Commentary*, 39.

<sup>270</sup> Scribe's involvement was mentioned in the following periodicals: *La France Musicale* (6 September), *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris* (13 September), and *Le Ménestrel* (18 September).

<sup>271</sup> Harris-Warrick, *La Favorite, opéra en quatre actes: Introduction, Sources, Critical Commentary*, 40–41.

justifiable place (King Alphonse's royal gardens of Alcázar in Act II).<sup>272</sup> Scribe's description of the new settings and décor appears as follows (as Harris-Warrick notes, this letter is "casually written," with missing diacritical marks and various misspellings, preserved here):<sup>273</sup>

Mon cher directeur

Voici les decorations de *La Quérída* (la favorite)

Le premier acte se passe en Galice dans l'église et le couvent de *St Jaques de Compostelle* (en 1340 – )

1<sup>ere</sup> partie de l'acte – un decor de deux plans representant une salle du couvent de St Jaques – à gauche l'entrée de l'église – le dit decor sévere et sombre pour faire opposition avec le decor suivant (*changement a vue*)

2<sup>eme</sup> partie – l'ile de Léon près de Cádiz séparée du continent par un bras de mer de 600 brasses – de sorte qu'on doit voir dans le lointain la ville de Cádiz.

Il faut que cette ile offre l'aspect le plus riant, le plus voluptueux, un ciel chaud et animé, des gazons, des fontaines, des bosquets, des fleurs – que tout cela n'empêche pas de voir la mer – attendu que l'on doit voir aborder un barque qui amène le héros – (*decor de moyenne entendue*)

Acte 2<sup>eme</sup>

La scene est à Séville dans les jardins de l'Alcazar ancien palais des rois Maures achevé par Pierre le Cruel, remarquable par l'elegante bizarrerie de ses constructions, ses marbres, ses stucs, et ses jardins – extérieur qui pour ne pas ressembler aux jardins de l'acte precedent – décor assez vaste – c'est la que se passera le ballet – divertissement donné par le roi à sa favorite et dans lequel figureront des esclaves moresques et des espagnols.

Acte 3<sup>eme</sup>

Un riche salon de l'Alcazar – decor intérieur laissé à l'imagination du peintre pourvu que nous ayons une porte au fond – deux portes laterales et à gauche, une table pour écrire –

Acte 4<sup>eme</sup> (effet de jour naissant)

Le cloître et campo-santo ou cimetiere de St Jaques de Compostelle – des tombeaux – un coté de l'église avec ses vitreaux a droite – et tout autour des arcades dans le genre de celle du *cloître de Robert le Diable* mais au fond un rang d'arcade beaucoup plus élevé et dont la partie supérieure servira au dénouement à une espece d'apothéose.

Voici mon cher ami, aussi clairement que possible par écrit du decor qui a besoin d'être expliqué de vive voix.

Tout a vous [signé] E. Scribe<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> Ibid., 39–40.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid., 39, fn 41. I have reproduced the letter here exactly as it appears in Harris-Warrick.

<sup>274</sup> F-Pan AJ<sup>13</sup> 204/2, reproduced in *ibid.*, 40.

My dear director

Here are the decorations for *La Quériada (La Favorite)*

The first act takes place in Galicia in the church and convent of St. James of Compostela (in 1340 –)

First part of the act – a décor in two planes representing a hall of the convent of St. Jacques – to the left the entrance to the church – a severe and somber décor in opposition to the following décor (*transformation scene*)

Second part – the island of León near Cádiz, separated from the mainland by a 600-fathom arm of the sea – such that we should see the city of Cádiz in the distance.

It is necessary that this island offers the most pleasant, most voluptuous appearance: a warm and vibrant sky, meadows, fountains, groves, flowers – all of this does not prevent us from seeing the sea – given that we must see the approach of the boat carrying the hero – (*mid-range décor*)

#### Act II

The scene is in Seville in the gardens of Alcazar, ancient palace of the Moorish kings that Pierre the Cruel finished building, remarkable for the elegant bizarreness of its constructions, its marble, its stucco, and its gardens – an exterior that does not resemble the gardens of the preceding act – décor large enough – the ballet will take place here – *divertissement* given by the king for his favorite, featuring Moorish slaves and Spaniards.

#### Act III

A rich hall in the Alcazar – interior design left to the imagination of the painter as long as we have a door in the background – two lateral doors and, at the left, a writing table –

#### Act IV (effect of daybreak)

The cloister and sacred ground or cemetery of St. James of Compostela – tombs – to the right, a side of the church with its stained glass – and all around arcades like those of the *cloister of Robert le Diable* but in the background a much higher arcade row, of which the highest part will serve as a type of apotheosis at the denouement.

My dear friend, here it is as clearly as possible in writing—the décor, which needs to be explained in person.

At your service, [signed] E. Scribe

Based on this letter, we can surmise that one of Scribe's major changes in the making of *La Favorite* from the material of *L'Ange de Nisida* was the new structuring of Act I as two distinct tableaux: the monastery of St. James of Compostela, followed by the island of León. Scribe may have written the new texts demanded by this change, or else

his new scenic structure provided the framework for new texts by Royer and Vaëz.<sup>275</sup>

Though no conclusive evidence exists either way, I favor the possibility that Scribe wrote the text for Tableau 2 of *La Favorite*, in light of its striking similarities to Scribe's other *jardins des femmes* such as Act II of *Les Huguenots* and Act III of *Le Cheval de Bronze*.

Scribe's letter to Pillet reveals several other important points about the *jardin des femmes* of Tableau 2. First, he emphasizes the pastoral setting of Tableau 2 by insisting that the city of Cádiz and the approach of Fernand's boat be visible to the audience. In other words, Scribe valorizes specific attributes of the pastoral, including distance from the city and the requisite travel to this pleasant destination. Scribe also positions Tableau 2 as a double scenic foil against both the monastery of Tableau 1 and the ornamental gardens of Alcazar in Act II. Whereas the Tableau 1 monastery is an all-male indoor space with a "somber and severe décor," the Tableau 2 island is an all-female outdoor space filled with sunlight, bright blue sky, and an abundance of plant life. Although the island is a relatively "open" space compared to the monastery, it is nonetheless a private realm enclosed by the sea; thus, it functions as a feminine pastoral counterpart to the sacred male space of the monastery.<sup>276</sup>

Finally, Scribe points out that the decorative gardens of Alcazar "do not resemble the gardens of the preceding act": the palace gardens are characterized by Moorish architecture and exotic *fabriques*, while the gardens of the Isla de León are less structured and more "natural." I posit that Scribe's emphasis on strong scenic contrasts between these first three décors has great dramaturgical significance, since these contrasts of space

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<sup>275</sup> Ibid., 38–39.

<sup>276</sup> Lacombe has commented on the importance of spatial contrasts (open/closed, indoor/outdoor) in the *mis-en-scènes* of nineteenth-century French opera. See Lacombe, *The Keys to French Opera in the Nineteenth Century*, 90–95.

and place can be understood as metaphors for the characters' psychological states. In short, the monastery is initially a place of confinement and repression for Fernand; his journey to the Isla de León is a quest for secular, erotic love and freedom from monastic law. The island is also a place of freedom for Léonor, whereas the Alcazár gardens are a place of confinement and shame in her role as the king's mistress. These scenic-dramatic contrasts will be examined in greater detail below, but let us first consider how Act I, Tableau 2 of *La Favorite* fulfills the typical elements of Scribe's *jardin des femmes* convention.

### **The Isla de León as *Jardin des Femmes***

After confessing his love for a mysterious woman to his superior Balthasar at the beginning of Act I, the novice Fernand renounces his vows and departs from the monastery of St. James of Compostela. The scenery changes to “un site délicieux,” a *locus amoenus* on the shore of the Isla de León, where the libretto indicates that “young girls are grouped on the banks of the sea, and fill baskets with flowers; slaves hang rich fabrics from tree branches to create thicker shade; other young girls unite their dances with the songs of their companions.”<sup>277</sup> The published staging manual clarifies that there was a clear division of labor: women of the chorus “unite their songs with the dances of their companions” (note the slight change from the libretto), while women of the *corps de ballet* were the ones responsible for activities of physical movement — not only dancing,

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<sup>277</sup> From the libretto: “Le théâtre représente un site délicieux, sur le rivage de l'île de Léon. Des jeunes filles sont groupées sur le bord de la mer, et emplissent de fleurs des corbeilles ; des esclaves suspendent aux branches des arbres de riches étoffes pour rendre l'ombrage plus épais; d'autres jeunes filles unissent des danses aux chants de leurs compagnes.” *La Favorite, opéra en quatre actes, paroles de MM. Alphonse Royer et Gustave Vaez, musique de M. G. Donizetti, divertissemens de M. Albert. Représenté pour la première fois, à Paris, sur le Théâtre de l'Académie Royale de Musique, le 2 décembre 1840* (Paris: Marchant, 1840).



but also more stylized movement such as forming groups, gathering flowers, and hanging fabrics.

Moreover, these dancing and singing roles were visually separated in the *mis-en-scène*: according to the directions of the published staging manual, the women of the chorus stand in two rows on both sides of the stage, while the women of the ballet are in three groups (stage right, upstage center, stage left) that form a rough semicircle around Inès, Léonor's confidante and chief lady-in-waiting, who stands downstage center. This staging, with a static chorus visually distanced from the action and dancers placed in the middle, is an old-fashioned practice, even reminiscent of Lullian "body doubles."<sup>278</sup> In Lully's operas, the chorus and corps de ballet represent the sonic and physical components, respectively, of the same characters: in other words, dancers represent the characters' bodies, and the largely stationary chorus represents their voices.<sup>279</sup> This earlier operatic practice is not really how the women of the Isla de León are represented: rather, some women in Léonor's entourage sing and others dance or gracefully complete tasks. Nevertheless, the staging of this tableau invokes an older era and, I offer, may be

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<sup>278</sup> On this topic, see Lois Rosow, "Performing a Choral Dialogue by Lully," *Early Music* 15, no. 3 (1987): 329; Mary Cyr, "The Dramatic Role of the Chorus in French Opera: Evidence for the Use of Gesture, 1670–1770," in *Opera and the Enlightenment*, ed. Thomas Bauman and Marita Petzoldt McClymonds (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 106–12; Antonia Banducci, "Staging and its Dramatic Effect in French Baroque Opera: Evidence from Prompt Notes," *Eighteenth-Century Music* 1(2004): 10–11; Lois Rosow, "Lully's Musical Architecture: Act IV of *Persée*," *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music* 10, no. 1 (2004): par. 5.1; <http://www.sscm-jscm.org/v10/no1/rosow.html>.

<sup>279</sup> Although iconography suggests that Lully's chorus did sometimes make subtle gestures, by the mid-eighteenth century the Paris Opéra chorus was rigidly static in their two lines at the sides of the stage; by the 1760s, though, the chorus began to shift towards a more naturalistic approach, with more integration in the action. "Lully's Musical Architecture: Act IV of *Persée*," par. 5.1; Cyr, "The Dramatic Role of the Chorus in French Opera: Evidence for the Use of Gesture, 1670–1770," 108–12.

one of the ways in which this particular *jardin des femmes* is positioned as not only geographically distant, but temporally distant as well.<sup>280</sup>

The seeming temporal distance of this female community is also apparent in Théophile Gautier's review of *La Favorite*, in which he likens the Isla de León to the enchanted realms of the mythological and literary sorceresses Calypso (Homer's *Odyssey*), Armide (Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*) and Alcine (Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*):

Le théâtre change et nous voici dans un site délicieux sur le rivage de l'île de Léon ; des jeunes filles vêtues de blanc suspendent des étoffes aux branches des arbres, remplissent des corbeilles de fleurs et se livrent à toutes sortes d'exercices plus ou moins anacréontiques et célèbrent dans un gracieux chœur en *fa* la paix, le plaisir, l'amour, les rayons dorés, le tiède zéphir. Quelle est cette retraite équivoque et mystérieuse ? Une île de Calypso, un palais d'Armide, un jardin d'Alcine : — un peu de tout cela.<sup>281</sup>

The scene changes and we are now in a delightful place on the shore of the Isla de León; young girls dressed in white hang fabrics from the tree branches, fill baskets with flowers, indulge in all sorts of more or less Anacreontic exercises, and celebrate peace, pleasure, love, golden light, and the warm zephyr in a graceful chorus in the key of F. What is this ambiguous and mysterious retreat? An island of Calypso, a palace of Armide, a garden of Alcine: — a bit of all of these.

After all, the realm of Alcine is a place of “atemporal happiness,” as Jean

Starobinski reminds us in his *Les Enchanteresses* (2005):

In the palace and gardens of Alcina, time stops, beauty shines forth unalterably, spring and youth are in perpetual vigor, and voluptuousness is not exhausted. [...] For a warrior hero, to set foot on Alcina's island means to leave behind the

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<sup>280</sup> Different techniques are used to achieve temporal distance in other *jardins des femmes*: for example, Meyerbeer's quotation of “Le Temps et l'Amour” in the bathers' chorus of *Les Huguenots* harkens back to the eighteenth-century *ancien régime* (Chapter II), the courtesans of *La Reine de Chypre* sing of the ancient days of Cythera in an exotic-sounding A-minor chorus (Chapter V), and so forth.

<sup>281</sup> Gautier, “Académie royale de Musique. — *La Favorite*, opéra en quatre actes, paroles de M. Alphonse Royer et Gustave Vaëz, musique de Donizetti,” 1.

glorious adventure and to see both the future and the past fall into oblivion.  
Clocks have stopped.<sup>282</sup>

The illusion of temporal suspension or even temporal regression on the Isla de León is evinced by Gautier's description of the women's dances as "more or less Anacreontic exercises." This reference to "Anacreontic exercises" invokes the old style of Anacreontic ballet, which flourished in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Anacreontic ballets featuring mythological characters in pastoral settings: a notable example is Didelot's *Flore et Zéphire* (1796). By the 1830s and 40s, however, Anacreontic subjects were unfashionable at the Opéra. Gautier's claim that the island women of *La Favorite* performed a "more or less Anacreontic" style of movement suggests two things: first, the Isla de León is imagined as a place where one might access a distant, forgotten time; second, the women who populate this pastoral space are imagined as Classical nymphs. The libretto describes these women as "young Spanish girls," yet their exoticism in this tableau is linked not to their Spanish identity, but rather to the temporal and supernatural Otherness of Greek mythological nymphs.

Indeed, Gautier describes the silent women of Léonor's protective circle as "nymphes-soubrettes" (coy or coquettish nymphs), and when Fernand arrives to the island, he addresses the women who escort him as "discreet nymphs" (*nymphes si discrète*).<sup>283</sup> The costuming of these women also reinforces their representation as Anacreontic nymphs: according to the staging manual, they wear flesh-colored stockings, "light dresses, very short, in white gauze," and golden belts; their arms are bare and their

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<sup>282</sup> Starobinski, *Enchantment*, 142. In Chapter IX, "The Magic of Alcina," Starobinski examines Handel's *Alcina* (1735).

<sup>283</sup> Gautier, "Académie royale de Musique. — *La Favorite*, opéra en quatre actes, paroles de M. Alphonse Royer et Gustave Vaëz, musique de Donizetti," 1.

hair hangs in long braids down their backs. Paul Lormier's costume design for the young Spanish girls largely adheres to these directions, although it is much more modest, with long sleeves and flowing skirt (Figure 4.1). However, press reviews indicate that the women had bare arms and short skirts, as indicated in the staging manual. The critic of *La Revue des deux mondes* commented on the sight of the dancers' arms, purple with cold; and Gautier wryly noted their short skirts should have signaled to Fernand that Léonor was not the morally upright woman he imagined her to be:

Pour lui [Fernand], Léonor est un ange de pureté, quoique son séjour sur le rivage d'une île enchantée et suspecte au milieu d'un troupeau de jeunes filles, vêtues d'uniformes très succincts, eut bien dû éveiller ses soupçons.<sup>284</sup>

For him, Léonor is an angel of purity, though her dwelling on the shore of an enchanted and suspicious island, in the middle of a flock of young girls clad in very scanty uniforms, might well have aroused his suspicions.

The women of Léonor's entourage are, of course, no more nymphs than the bathing ladies-in-waiting in *Les Huguenots* are. However, their onstage activities and white diaphanous costumes link them to the typical iconography of the nymph, thus positioning them as mythological nature beings associated with a particular place or landform. As in other *jardins des femmes*, the women's gauzy dresses and stylized movements (rather than formal dance numbers) are emblematic of an anthropomorphized landscape that comes to life through female bodies. Furthermore, the graceful undulations and poses of dancing women are an embodiment of the imagined sexual energy of this place.<sup>285</sup> Therefore, the materiality of nature takes shape through the physicality of dance;

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<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> A matter for future inquiry is the possibility that the women of the Isla de León performed movements and poses characteristic of the "ancient" or "Classical" style described by nineteenth-century dance writers, theorists, and choreographers such as August Bournonville. See Arkin and Smith, "National Dance in the Romantic Ballet," 36–37, 42.

at the same time, the association of ballet with fantasy worlds also allows dance to capture the transcendent qualities of nature.

The female embodiment of nature's awakening is also expressed through text and music. The young Spanish girls of the Isla de León are linked to the landscape they inhabit through two choruses, "Rayons dorés, tiède zéphyr" and "Doux zéphyr lui sois fidèle." Led by Inès, Léonor's confidante, the women sing of this "delightful place" (*site délicieux*) filled with gentle breezes and the sighs of love:

Rayons dorés, tiède zéphyr,  
de fleurs parez ce doux séjour,  
heureux rivage qui respire  
la paix, le plaisir et l'amour

Golden rays, warm zephyr,  
adorn this sweet place with flowers,  
happy shore that exhales  
peace, pleasure, and love.

The text of "Rayons dorés" invokes the pathetic fallacy of the pastoral: the "happy shore [...] breathes peace, pleasure, and love." Since it is Inès and the women who happily sing of (and thereby "exhale") peace, pleasure, and love, their personification of the island is self-reflexive.<sup>286</sup> In other words, they are the "happy shore" or the harbor that invites Fernand to their banks. Similarly, they ask the gentle zephyr to perfume the shore with scents of jasmine and orange blossoms in "Doux zéphyr"; it is the women, though, who have been gathering flowers and lending their own fragrances to the island. Thus, Inès and the young Spanish girls implicate their own bodies as outgrowths of or surrogates for the anthropomorphic landscape. In so doing, they affirm the island's identity as a feminine space.

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<sup>286</sup> In her analysis of Susanna's aria "Deh, vieni" from Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Wye Allanbrook reminds us of the reciprocity of the pathetic fallacy: "Because all natural elements in the magic garden take on human habits, humans merge naturally with the landscape. Susanna seems to be a nymph or dryad, some minor local deity murmuring incantatory promises [...]." Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart: Le Nozze di Figaro and Don Giovanni*, 174.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 4.1.** Paul Lormier, costume maquette for a young Spanish girl in *La Favorite* (1840). F-Po D.216-13 (47).

Beyond the poetic texts of these two pieces, how does Donizetti’s music contribute to the image of a feminized landscape? The music of “Rayons dorés” was taken from the chorus “Qui posa il fianco” in Act I, scene 6 of Donizetti’s earlier opera *Pia de’ Tolomei* (Venice, 1837), where it had a similar dramatic function: Pia’s lady-in-waiting Bice leads a chorus of women in singing of an anthropomorphized garden with perfumed air and waves of flowers, where “everything breathes and speaks.”<sup>287</sup> In the context of Donizetti’s planned Parisian opera *L’Ange de Nisida*, however, the music of “Rayons dorés” was to be sung by a chorus of male and female peasants to the text “Le ciel a béni l’étrangère.”<sup>288</sup> In transforming *L’Ange de Nisida* into *La Favorite*, Donizetti eliminated male voices and changed several choral passages into solos for Inès—otherwise, “Le ciel a béni l’étrangère” and “Rayons dorés” are musically identical.<sup>289</sup> One could make the argument that Scribe’s scenic plan for *La Favorite*, which included a *jardin des femmes* in Tableau 2, restored the original dramatic and scenographic connotations for which Donizetti’s chorus was originally written. Despite the roots of Donizetti’s “Rayons dorés” music in a feminine pastoral scene, Donizetti did not originally envision “Doux zéphyr” as a chorus sung by women relaxing along the water in a peaceful garden. Rather, the music of “Doux zéphyr” was to be sung by Don Gaspar and a male chorus to the text “Le sommeil te berce encore.” For “Doux zéphyr,”

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<sup>287</sup> “Qui posa il fianco. E vivida. / Quest’ ora del mattino, / Imbalsamata é l’aura, / Che move dal giardino: / Di vaghi fior smaltato / Ve’ come ride il prato, / Qui tutto spira e parla / Celeste volluttá...” *Pia de’ Tolomei, tragedia lirica in tre parti da rappresentarsi nel Teatro Nuovo di Barcellona in occasione dell’apertura di opera nella primavera del 1844; parole del Sig. Savadore Cammarano; musica del Sig. Gaetano Donizetti* (Barcelona: J. Roger, 1844), 12. The orchestration of “Qui posa il fianco” is, however, different from that of “Rayons dorés” (previously “Le ciel a béni l’étrangère” in *L’Ange de Nisida*); among the differences between these two orchestrations is a prominent triangle part in “Qui posa il fianco.”

<sup>288</sup> Harris-Warrick, *La Favorite, opéra en quatre actes: Introduction, Sources, Critical Commentary*, 107.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.* This includes an identical orchestration, as Harris-Warrick observes.

Donizetti rewrote the male parts in a female vocal range (but kept the same key) and added harp and *trompette ordinaire* to his orchestration; otherwise, though, the music is identical.<sup>290</sup>

Given this genesis of the two female choruses in Tableau 2 of *La Favorite*, one might argue that we cannot read too deeply into text-music relationships or the possible scenographic qualities of Donizetti's music—after all, Donizetti himself viewed these pieces as workable within other scene types. Nevertheless, once performed with new texts and within the new scenic context of the bucolic Isla de León, Donizetti's music becomes part of the cultural and theatrical imaginary in which women and landscape are conflated. That Donizetti did not see fit to substantially alter these pieces with added pictorial effects or radically different orchestrations suggests several possible explanations that are not mutually exclusive: he was an efficient (a harsh critic might say lazy) recycler of his own existing material; he was not particularly concerned with revising these choruses to include environmental sounds or a distinctly “feminine” affect; he believed that these pieces were already musically suggestive of their new scenic context (this is particularly plausible for “Rayons dorés”); or he recognized that within a tableau of girls in white dresses along the shores of an island retreat, this music would actually be “heard” as sweet, delicate, and feminine.<sup>291</sup> Indeed, an audience's ability to

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<sup>290</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>291</sup> Ralph Locke has made one such argument for exotic music that does not necessarily “sound” exotic but that, in the full context of costuming, set design, plot, and character stereotypes, functions as musical exoticism. See Locke, “A Broader View of Musical Exoticism.” Nevertheless, as we shall see below, the anonymous critic of *La Revue des deux mondes* found “Rayons dorés” lacking in comparison to the evocative environmental imitation of the bathers' chorus “Jeunes beautés” from *Les Huguenots*.



selectively hear specific musical attributes that align with a given visual image has been theorized by Nicholas Cook.<sup>292</sup>

What, then, are the musical gestures or attributes of “Rayons dorés” and “Doux zéphyr” with the “potential” (as Cook puts it) to reinforce the scenography of a *jardin des femmes* on the banks of the sea? Set in the pastoral key of F Major and the relaxed tempo of *Andantino*, “Rayons dorés” establishes a soothing, even hypnotic atmosphere in its opening measures through a *pianissimo* eighth-note arpeggiated accompaniment pattern in the violas and cellos (Example 4.1). The contour of this accompaniment pattern, as first introduced, rises and falls through the tonic arpeggio in a melodic arch (A–C–F–C); repetition of this arch creates a metaphoric “wave” shape. This repetitive melodic wave shape, under the musical force of inertia, can be likened to the gentle physical motion of lapping water, steady breezes, or undulating foliage in an idyllic landscape.<sup>293</sup> Even after the viola and cello accompaniment breaks from its wave formation, it continues in other types of oscillating or flowing arpeggiated motion.

Donizetti’s “Rayons dorés” differs from a piece like Meyerbeer’s “Jeunes beautés” in that it uses relatively slow arpeggio patterns rather than waves of rapid scales; nevertheless, this accompaniment might still be perceived as a type of water music, albeit calmer, gentler, and less directly mimetic. Additionally, just as water surrounds the Isla de León, this arpeggiated accompaniment in the low strings can also be read as a type of

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<sup>292</sup> Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia*; “Theorizing Musical Meaning,” 170–95.

<sup>293</sup> On the theory of melodic forces developed by Larson, see Chapter IV, “Melodic Forces: Gravity, Magnetism, and Inertia,” in Steve Larson, *Musical Forces: Motion, Metaphor, and Meaning in Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 82–109. Seraglio bathing and toilette scenes often used relaxed string arpeggio patterns to imitate the motion of water and the swaying movements of veiled women, as in the opening tableau and *pas des femmes* in Act I of Burgmüller’s ballet *La Péri* (1843) or the Act II bathing scene of Labarre’s ballet *La Révolte au Sérail* (1833), with its rich seven-part string texture.

enclosure: its limited range of motion and relatively static harmonic activity evoke the temporal concepts of eternity and cyclicity attributed to walled and circular gardens. The harmonic foundation of “Rayons dorés,” largely an alternation between tonic and dominant function, is a type of moving in place akin to the gentle swaying of dancing women and the rich fabrics hung from the tree branches.<sup>294</sup>

Within this relatively static harmonic motion, however, are brief touches of delicate harmonic color: chromatic escape tones in the flute, clarinet, and voice on “tiède” (warm) and “qui respi[re]” (that exhales); chromatic lower neighbor tones in the voice and clarinet (in the flute, a chromatic escape tone) on “ce doux” (this sweet [place]); and a borrowed F minor chord with the entrance of the chorus and piccolo on “dor[és], tiè[de]” (golden, warm). These occasional chromatic tinges highlight the imagery of color, climate, and fragrance found in the text and décor. Subtle chromatic inflections also contribute to a characterization of these women as coy, gently teasing, and inviting; their metaphoric “bending” of a pitches within the key has the same slight suggestiveness as the physical motion of a wink or raised eyebrow.<sup>295</sup> In particular, the melodic gesture of the opening words “Rayons dorés” — a large upward leap and staccato descent — is associated with coquettishness. When Fernand first arrives on the island and the young girls refuse to answer him, their elusiveness is cued by the “Rayons dorés” coquette gesture (Example 4.2).

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<sup>294</sup> Susan Youens has described the alternation between tonic and dominant as analogous to “walking in place” in the context of the opening song “Das Wandern” from Schubert’s *Die schöne Müllerin*. See Susan Youens, *Schubert, Die Schöne Müllerin*, Cambridge Music Handbooks (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 74.

<sup>295</sup> A more extreme example of how chromatic slippage is equated with flirtatiousness and eroticism is found several decades later, in Carmen’s “Habañera”: as Susan McClary notes, “Carmen’s number is further marked by chromatic excess, as her melodic line teases and taunts, forcing the attention to dwell on the moment — on the erogenous zones of her inflections.” McClary, *Georges Bizet: Carmen*, 75.

**Example 4.1.** Donizetti, *La Favorite*, Act II, No. 2: “Rayons dorés, tiède zéphyr.”  
 Transcribed and reduced from the critical edition full score. Milan: Ricordi, 1999.

**Andantino**

The musical score is divided into three systems. The first system features Inès singing the lyrics "Ray - ons do-rés, tiè - de zé-phy - re, de fleurs pa-rez ce doux sé- jour, heu -" while the violin, flute, and clarinet play accompaniment with dynamics *p* and *fp*, and the viola and cello play a rhythmic pattern with dynamic *p*. The second system shows Inès singing "reux ri - va - ge qui res - pi - re la paix, le plai-sir et l'a - mour, l'a-mour." and the choir singing "Ray -". The third system shows Inès singing "Oui, l'a - mour, oui, l'a - mour, ah! l'a - mour" and the choir singing "ons do - rés, tiè - de zé-phy - re, de fleurs pa - rez, pa - rez ce doux sé - jour". The accompaniment includes a piccolo and trumpet in the third system.

Another melodic gesture in this tableau that indicates feminine playfulness and frivolity is the sixteenth-note triplet followed by staccato notes. This figure, heard in flute, clarinet, and first violins, dominates the next chorus performed by Inès and the women, “Doux zéphyr” (Example 4.3). In addition to its bright timbres of staccato flute, clarinet, and violin, “Doux zéphyr” also features a repetitive sixteenth-note arpeggio

pattern in the harp; as mentioned above, this harp part was added to “Doux zéphyr,” one of Donizetti’s few noticeable changes in transforming the piece from a male chorus to a female chorus. Much like the harp flourishes in “Jeunes beautés,” this rapid harp oscillation implies entry into a gilded fantasy world. The harp pattern creates an aura that frames the music (and the scene) in a delicate glow of not only sunlight and sparkling water, but also nostalgia and magic. It may even convey a sweet-scented cloud of gently wafting fragrances from the jasmine and orange blossoms mentioned in the text:

Doux zéphyr sois lui fidèle  
pour conduire sa nacelle  
aux bords où l’amour l’appelle  
à la voile sois léger

Sweet zephyr, be faithful to him  
in leading his vessel  
to the banks where love calls him.  
To the sail be gentle.

et ravis sur ton passage  
pour embaumer cette plage  
le parfum qui se degage  
des jasmins, de l’oranger

And steal on your way  
to embalm this beach  
the perfume that emerges  
from jasmine and orange trees.

**Example 4.2.** Donizetti, *La Favorite*, Act II, No. 4: the “coquette” gesture. The young girls shake their heads and signal to Fernand that they cannot answer him. Transcribed and reduced from the critical edition full score. Milan: Ricordi, 1999.



As is evident in the given excerpts from “Rayons dorés” and “Doux zéphyr” (see again Examples 4.1 and 4.3), the musical relationship between Inès and the chorus of young Spanish girls is unlike that Stella and her attendants in *Le Cheval de Bronze* (Chapter II), Marguerite and her ladies in *Les Huguenots* (Chapter III) or Lucrezia and the village nobles in *Carmagnola* (Chapter IV). In the typical *jardin des femmes*, the

featured soprano soloist has an ornate coloratura role, thus adding musical pyrotechnics to the dazzling visual marvels of the garden. Inès's role is not, however, particularly virtuosic: rather, she and the chorus engage in a fairly straightforward call-and-response. In the case of "Rayons dorés," this call-and-response structure allowed Donizetti to easily adapt an existing chorus into an *air avec chœur* by giving some lines formerly sung by the chorus to Inès. Given the short timeframe in which *La Favorite* needed to be prepared for performance at the Opéra, efficient strategies for quickly revising existing material were essential. Aside from this practical matter, leading mezzo-soprano Rosine Stoltz's artistic demands prevented the writing of a more florid and important part for a supporting soprano role.<sup>296</sup> Indeed, critic Camille Berru of *L'Indépendant* regretted that the role of Inès had not given the soprano M<sup>me</sup> Elian adequate opportunity to display her vocal talents:

Le seul regret qui nous reste, c'est qu'un rôle plus étendu, des morceaux plus importants n'aient pas fourni à Mme Elian l'occasion de déployer toutes les richesses de sa vocalisation aisée, de l'entraînement le plus suave et le plus profond. M. Donizetti lui doit une revanche.<sup>297</sup>

The only regret we have left is that a larger role with more important pieces has not provided the opportunity for Mme Elian to deploy all the riches of her easy vocalization, of the sweetest and most profound allurements. M. Donizetti owes her a rematch.

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<sup>296</sup> As Smart reports, Rosine Stoltz "refused to share the stage with any other principal soprano, thus almost single-handedly making obsolete the convention of paired lyrical and virtuosic female leads." Smart, "Roles, Reputations, Shadows: Singers at the Opéra, 1828–1849," 123.

<sup>297</sup> Camille Berru, "Académie Royale de Musique. Première représentation. — *La Favorite*, opéra en quatre actes, poème de MM. Alphonse Royer et Gustave Vaëz, musique de Donizetti, divertissement de M. Albert, décors de MM. Philastre et Cambon pour les 1er et 3e actes, de MM. Léon Feuchères, Séchan, Diéterle et Despléchins pour les 2e et 4e," *L'Indépendant*, 6 December 1840, 1.

**Example 4.3.** Donizetti, *La Favorite*, Act II, No. 3: “Doux zéphyr, sois lui fidèle.”  
 Transcribed and reduced from the critical edition full score. Milan: Ricordi, 1999.

**Allegretto**

Inès  
 Doux zé - phyr, sois-lui fi - dè - le, pour con -

Choir  
 Doux zé - phyr, sois - lui fi - dè - le,

violin, cello, flute, clarinet

Harp

Inès  
 dui - re sa na - cel - le

Choir  
 pour con - dui - re sa na - cel - le

Hp.

Even if it was not a particularly melismatic or virtuosic role, the inclusion of a featured part for Inès in these two opening choruses of Tableau 1 nevertheless confirms the convention of the *jardin des femmes*, in which a higher-ranked soprano character leads a subsidiary female chorus in singing of the pleasures found in nature. Moreover, this soprano soloist is usually not the principal romantic heroine: in the case of florid roles like Marguerite, these women’s voices are too virtuosic, too artful, and too

seductive to serve as an “appropriately” demure love interest.<sup>298</sup> Instead, the queen, enchantress, or guardian of the *jardin des femmes* lures the male protagonist into a world of pleasure and love. This enchanted realm may be a place of trial, where the protagonist must resist sexual temptation; or, in the case of both Marguerite and Inès, the featured soprano is a sort of “procurer” who guides the male protagonist to the woman for whom he is intended (Valentine and Léonor, respectively).<sup>299</sup> The garden’s female sovereign, therefore, inspires and ignites the protagonist’s desire, a desire that will be redirected onto the heroine. The heroine cannot behave similarly, or else she would lose her (desirable) qualities of decency and purity; instead, this secondary soprano role functions as the heroine’s seductive surrogate.

Although Inès does not have a brilliant vocal part laced with *fioratura*, she is nonetheless the first female voice heard in *La Favorite*; therefore, her voice ushers both the audience and Fernand into the all-female realm of the Isla de León, a place of clandestine romantic encounters and pastoral delights. In addition, the *mise-en-scène* places her as the centerpiece of “Rayons dorés,” encircled by silent dancers with their stylized movements and “Anacreontic exercises,” and framed by the stationary, seemingly disembodied chorus at the sides of the stage. On this magical, even mythological island, Inès is positioned as a sort of conjurer who summons nymphs from the landscape and directs their rituals.

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<sup>298</sup> See Mary Ann Smart’s discussion of this vocal and character distinction between Marguerite and Valentine in *Les Huguenots*, and Eudoxie and Rachel in *La Juive* in Smart, “Roles, Reputations, Shadows: Singers at the Opéra, 1828–1849,” 110–11. Smart points out that these roles were performed by specific singers who specialized in these vocal/character types: Marguerite and Eudoxie were premiered by Julie Dorus-Gras; Valentine and Rachel by Cornélie Falcon.

<sup>299</sup> This convention is also common in ballet: for example, the fairy Alcine tests Fernand’s love for Lea in *La Tempête* (1834), Queen Myrtha lures Albrecht away from the protection of a tombstone cross by forcing his beloved Giselle to dance for him in *Giselle* (1841), the Lilac Fairy leads Prince Désiré of the sleeping Aurora in *The Sleeping Beauty* (1890), etc.

Inès takes particular initiative in leading the women's movements during the chorus "Doux zéphyr." In an opening recitative, Inès urges the women to be quiet ("Silence...silence!") and take heed of Fernand's approaching boat. According to the staging manual, Inès and all of the women (both chorus and ballet) move upstage and look left, off in the distance. As soon as the sprightly *Allegretto* of the "Doux zéphyr" chorus begins, the women return downstage and members of the ballet recommence dancing. Between the first and second verses of the chorus, the women repeat this action: they move upstage and look left during seven measures of "tiptoeing" music in the strings (Example) but return downstage and resume their dances with the return of the *Allegretto* theme ("Et ravis sur ton passage..."). The women's movements do not merely celebrate nature, but might also be read as an embodiment of the gentle zephyr they invoke: their dances enact the same volutions and enlacings as the breezes that steer Fernand's boat and capture the garden's fragrances of orange and jasmine. This collusion of the movement of women's bodies with the movement of nature reinforces the image of a feminized landscape by positioning the women as constituents of an "animated garden": through their dancing and singing bodies, nature is revived, as if through a pagan animistic ritual.

The final feature commonly found in the *jardin des femmes* archetype is the introduction of a male protagonist into the enclosed all-female space, usually under conditions of secrecy. Fernand arrives to the island by boat, blindfolded and flanked by four young girls. The shielding of Fernand's eyes with a blindfold, a motif borrowed from *Les Huguenots* (as critics noticed), marks his journey into a private world: like a brand new initiate, he is not allowed to know the way to this secret location. The



blindfold is also an obvious reference to the “love is blind” metaphor, particularly since Fernand’s complete devotion to Léonor causes him to remain oblivious to her position as the king’s mistress. Finally, in the seemingly archaic world of this island, the blindfold is another old-fashioned touch: it invokes the game of *colin-maillard* (blindman’s buff or blindman’s bluff), an amorous countryside game enjoyed by nobility of the *ancien régime* and depicted in Rococo scenes of *fêtes galantes* and *fêtes champêtres*. The ludic context of *colin-maillard* “provides the frame for physical intimacy that would otherwise be shocking,” as art historian Jennifer Milam has noted in her reading of Fragonard’s five blindman’s buff paintings.<sup>300</sup> Additionally, the restriction of Fernand’s vision heightens other sensual experiences, particularly the sound of the women’s voices, the touch of their hands as they guide him from the boat, and the smell of the flowers gathered from their garden. The eventual removal of the blindfold, moreover, floods his visual perceptive mode and fulfills his anticipation with the sights of an idyllic garden landscape: peaceful ocean waters, grassy banks, sheltering trees, and coquettish nymph-like women.

The clear parallels between the bucolic gardens, exclusively female communities, and blindfolded male protagonists of *La Favorite* and *Les Huguenots* provided fodder for Parisian critics’ frequent accusations that Donizetti’s operas relied on existing formulas. Of course, *La Favorite* had been strategically calculated to appeal to Parisian tastes; however, Donizetti’s attempt to write a characteristically French opera for French audiences only provoked critics’ suspicions that he had borrowed heavily from successful musical numbers of Halévy, Meyerbeer, and his own *Les Martyrs* (1840). Among those

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<sup>300</sup> Milam, “Fragonard and the Blindman's Game,” 3.

who noted parallels between Tableau 2 of *La Favorite* and Act II of *Les Huguenots* was Guénot-Lecoite, critic of the periodical *La Sylphide*:

Voilà donc Fernand amoureux et pauvre, qui débarque sur les beaux rivages de l'île de Léon. Des jeunes filles chantent et tressent des guirlandes. Il y a dans tout cela de vagues réminiscences du chœur des Baigneuses de Meyerbeer, et il faut dire que le livret y contribue pour beaucoup.<sup>301</sup>

Here then is Fernand, poor and in love, who disembarks on the beautiful shores of the Isla de León. Young girls sing and weave garlands. In all of this, there are vague reminiscences of Meyerbeer's bathers' chorus, and it must be said that the libretto [of *Les Huguenots*] contributes much [to *La Favorite*].

Likewise, a review appearing in *La Revue des deux mondes* criticized *La Favorite* for recycling familiar scenes and character types from *Les Huguenots*: "this Léonor among her court of bathers, this is Marguerite de Navarre of *Les Huguenots*."<sup>302</sup> It is curious that both of these reviews liken the women of the Isla de León to the bathing ladies-in-waiting of *Les Huguenots*. For, in fact, no actual onstage bathing is indicated in the libretto, staging manual, or reviews of *La Favorite*. Yet the press reception cited above suggests that the garland-weaving women of *La Favorite* were instantly recognized as analogous to the river-frolicking women of *Les Huguenots*, even if Léonor's court of "nymphs" never entered the water. On one hand, this recognition speaks to the preeminence of the second act of *Les Huguenots* as standard-bearer of the female ensemble scene in the late 1830s and 40s. Yet I would also add that these tableaux were understood as variations on a shared theme due to *La Favorite*'s adherence to the parameters of the *jardin des femmes* scenic convention: a secondary female lead as featured soloist, a female chorus, stylized movement performed by dancers of the ballet,

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<sup>301</sup> Guénot-Lecoite, "Théâtres. Académie-Royale de Musique. *La Favorite*, opéra en quatre actes, paroles de MM. Alphonse Royer et Gustave Vaez, musique de M. Donizetti," 8.

<sup>302</sup> "[...] cette Léonor au milieu de sa cour de baigneuses, c'est la Marguerite de Navarre des *Huguenots*." "Revue Musicale," 874.

and the positioning of these women as ecomorphic beings through a combination of décor, costume, music, movement, and text.

Critics' recognition that the Isla de León in *La Favorite* was analogous to Marguerite's gardens in *Les Huguenots* prompted comparisons of their respective musical settings. In this match-up, Donizetti's music was generally deemed inferior to that of Meyerbeer. In particular, Donizetti's female chorus "Rayons dorés" was evaluated most unfavorably in comparison to Meyerbeer's *chœur des baigneuses* "Jeunes beautés." As discussed above, "Rayons dorés" was not originally written with the tableau of an all-female island in mind; additionally, it does not have the same highly mimetic environmental sound effects as "Jeunes beautés." It was this latter point that led the critic of *La Revue des deux mondes* to find Donizetti's "Rayons dorés" lacking the sort of musical scenography that allowed Meyerbeer's "Jeunes beautés" to transport the audience to a balmy, idyllic landscape. To make this argument, the critic in question emphasized the obvious physical distress of the female performers, forced to sing and dance in a freezing performance space, clad only in very thin, revealing costumes:

Vous vous souvenez de cette jolie scène des baigneuses au second acte des *Huguenots*? Quelle fraîcheur! quelle grace! quelle mélodie dans les voix! quelle imitation heureuse dans l'orchestre! Weber n'a jamais mieux rendu le frémissement des eaux sous les arbres. Eh bien! voici la même action qui va se reproduire ; encore des jardins au bord du fleuve, encore de mystérieuses voluptés et des danseuses à demi nues ; mais cette fois, comme tout cela vous semble triste, abandonné, désert ! D'où vient le sentiment pénible qui vous afflige à ce spectacle ? est-ce de ce que vous voyez devant vous ces pauvres créatures souffreteuses qui frissonnent en chantant les amours et le printemps par une température de décembre : Rayons dorés, tiède zéphire [...] Ou n'est-ce pas plutôt de ce que toute inspiration manque ? S'il y avait là de la musique, si la verve du maître animait les scènes, on ne s'apercevrait de rien ; mais en l'absence de toute idée généreuse, de toute passion dramatique, je ne sais quel frisson vous gagne et vous fait prendre en compassion ces malheureuses filles qui posent leurs bras violets l'un sur l'autre, et, blêmes de froid, regardent de tous côtés si quelque

poële bienfaisant ne leur enverra pas de la coulisse une tiède bouffée de ce vent du sud qu'elles célèbrent en grelottant.<sup>303</sup>

Do you remember the pretty scene of the bathers in the second act of *Les Huguenots*? What freshness! What grace! What melody in the voices! What happy imitation in the orchestra! Weber never better rendered the rustling of water under the trees. Well, here is the same action that will recur; again gardens on the bank of the river, again mysterious pleasures and semi-nude dancers; but this time, how sad, abandoned, deserted all of this sounds! Whence comes the painful feeling that afflicts you in this spectacle? Is it from seeing in front of you these poor sickly creatures who shiver while singing of love and springtime in a December temperature: "Golden rays, warm zephyr"? Or is it not rather that this all lacks inspiration? If there was music, if the spirit of the master animated the scenes, one would not notice anything; but in the absence of any generous ideas, of any dramatic passion, I do not know what thrill overtakes you, and makes you take pity on these unfortunate girls who pose their purple arms one on the other, and, pale with cold, look to all sides to see if some benevolent stove will send from the wings a warm breath of the southern wind they celebrate while shivering.

Both of the above reviews criticize Tableau 2 of *La Favorite* for imitating – and falling short of – Act II of *Les Huguenots*. Yet what these critics may not have known was that the appearance of scenic elements from *Les Huguenots* in *La Favorite* was most likely an act of self-borrowing by Scribe. Scribe's name is omitted from the published libretto of *La Favorite*, where the text of the opera is attributed to Alphonse Royer and Gustave Vaëz. Therefore, most reviews of *La Favorite* – including the two cited above –

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<sup>303</sup> Ibid., 876. The comparison between Weber's music and Meyerbeer's music for Act II of *Les Huguenots* had previously been noted in this same periodical, but here the verdict was that Meyerbeer had relied too heavily on Weber's work: "L'air, si plein de goût et de délicatesse, que chante la reine Marguerite au milieu de ses femmes, rappelle trop ouvertement la première cavatine d'*Euryanthe*. En général, il y a chez M. Meyerbeer, durant tout ce second acte, une préoccupation trop marquée, sinon de la phrase même, du moins du style et de la couleur de la partition de Weber. Ce n'est pas que M. Meyerbeer en ait dérobé la note ou la mesure; ce qu'il en a pris, c'est ce parfum matinal qui s'en exhale, cette fine fleur qui la recouvre comme un beau fruit; cette musique sent *Euryanthe* comme la robe d'une belle jeune fille qui s'est assise dans la prairie, sent les violettes et le thym." (The air, so full of taste and delicacy, sung by Queen Marguerite amidst her women, recalls too overtly the opening cavatina of *Euryanthe*. In general, throughout the second act, Meyerbeer has too strong a preoccupation with Weber's score—if not the same phrases, at least the style and color. It's not that Meyerbeer has stolen notes or measures; what he has taken is the morning perfume that is exhaled from this fine flower that covers it like a beautiful fruit. This music smells of *Euryanthe* like the dress of a beautiful young girl sitting in the meadow smells of violets and thyme.) Henri Blaze, "Poètes et Musiciens de l'Allemagne. II. M. Meyerbeer," *ibid.* 15 March 1836, 698.

credited only Royer and Vaëz as the librettists, with no mention of Scribe or his revisions. However, as we have seen above, a crucial element of Scribe's input during the reworking of *La Favorite* from *L'Ange de Nisida* was his scenic plan, which included a new feminine pastoral tableau—the same *jardin des femmes* scene type that Scribe had used not only in *Les Huguenots* (1836), but also in the opéras-comiques *Le Cheval de Bronze* (1835), *Actéon* (1835), *La Fiancée* (1829), *Leicester* (1823), and *Le Paradis de Mahomet* (1822).

### **The Geography of *La Favorite***

Scribe's choice of specific locations in Spain for the various acts and tableaux of *La Favorite* was not a mere gesture of establishing geographic authenticity and dramatic verisimilitude. Rather, these places are invested with great significance, both culturally and spatially. Let us now consider how the scenic contrasts and gendered spaces of these tableaux elucidate the opera's dramatic trajectory and character psychology. First of all, the monastery of Santiago de Compostela – the setting of *La Favorite*'s opening and closing acts – signifies pilgrimage as a key dramatic theme of the opera. For, according to Christian tradition, the remains of the apostle James were buried in Galicia in northwestern Spain; first a chapel, then the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela was built on the site of the remains. The Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela soon became the destination point of the Way of St. James, one of three major Christian pilgrimage routes during the Middle Ages, along with Rome and Jerusalem. Yet for Fernand, the monastery of St. James is not a destination but a point of departure. At the end of Tableau 1, Fernand leaves the monastery to make a different type of pilgrimage: a secular

pilgrimage to the Isla de León for a secret encounter with Léonor, the mysterious “angel” for whom he has renounced his monastic vows.

The symbolism of the Isla de León is not explicitly laid out by Scribe, although some of its archetypal antecedents were acknowledged by critics: Gautier, quoted above, likened it to Calypso’s island, Armida’s palace, and Alcina’s gardens. I propose that the Isla de León represents yet another mythopoetic place of enchantment, one that was recognized as a pilgrimage site for lovers: the island of Cythera. The theme of embarkation to the pleasurable destination of Cythera was introduced by Houdar de La Motte’s *Amadis de Grèce* (1699), although the imagery of embarkation and pilgrimage to Cythera would later become most closely associated with the Rococo paintings of Watteau (Figures 4.2 and 4.3). These motifs of love and pilgrimage were also parodied in early eighteenth-century comic operas staged between 1713 and 1715 at the fair theaters of Saint-Germain and Saint-Laurent. In these fairground entertainments, Cythera is proposed as a secular, pagan counterpart to the Christian pilgrimage site of Compostela, as French literature scholar Mary Louise Ennis has pointed out:

Far different from the Opéra’s lofty voyages of courtly love, these earthy comic operas were preoccupied with sex. They parodied not only the pastoral tradition, but the dress of Pilgrims of Love at the turn of the eighteenth century. Inspired by pastoral novels, these secular pilgrims had derived their dress from the pilgrims of St. James the Great, a.k.a. St. Jacques de Compostelle, or Santiago. The apostle who converted Spain to Christianity, his emblems include the broad-brimmed hat, staff, purse, and drinking gourd—as well as the scallop shell, also the attribute of Venus. This fusion of Christian and pagan iconology into the Pilgrim of Love attire suggests the parallels Venus / St. James, Cythera / Compostela. The analogy is strengthened when one considers that only those who traveled to Compostela were properly termed pilgrims—for, as Dante recorded [in his *Vita Nuova*, 1295], those traveling to Rome were Romers, while Palmers went to Palestine.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>304</sup> Mary Louise Ennis, "From Gardens to Grub Street: Cythera After Watteau," in *Jardins et Châteaux*, ed. Roland G. Bonnel, *Dalhousie French Studies (Special Issue)* (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Dalhousie University, Winter 1994), 148. See also Ennis’s "The Voyage to Cythera: From Courtly Allegory to Erotic Utopia in French Literature, 1700–1750" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1990).

Based on Scribe's scenic plan, Fernand's journey to the Isla de León is conceived as a type of embarkation to Cythera: Scribe notes that the island's garden groves, flowers, and fountains must not eclipse the audience's vision of the sea and Fernand's arrival by boat. Unlike the pilgrimage route to Compostela, made on foot and often as a form of penance, Fernand's pilgrimage to Cythera is easy and pleasant, with gentle waters and a soft breeze (conjured, in part, by Inès and the young girls). After all, the Isla de León, though surrounded by ocean, is only about a kilometer from the Spanish mainland ("600 fathoms," according to Scribe) and is sheltered within the Bay of Cádiz (Figure 4.4).<sup>305</sup> Fernand's journey prefigures the sensual delights of the island: he is blindfolded and surrounded by four young girls, whom he describes as "nymphs." The restriction of his vision by a blindfold accomplishes several things, as noted above (see my discussion of the *scène du bandeau* in *Les Huguenots*, Chapter II): it builds his anticipation for the overwhelming sight of the beautiful place that awaits him; it marks that place as a secret location, to which he cannot learn the way; and it emphasizes the illusory qualities of the island through the aphorism "love is blind." For, indeed, Fernand travels to meet Léonor without even knowing her name. Moreover, Inès and Léonor's other followers refuse to reveal their lady's true identity to Fernand, and he remains ignorant of her status as the king's mistress until Act III.

Like Watteau's visions of Cythera, the Isla de León in *La Favorite* is a realm of fantasy in which ephemeral romantic encounters and carefree frivolity are freely enjoyed amid the balms of nature. Scribe's description of the "warm and vibrant sky, meadows, fountains, groves, [and] flowers" of the island gardens provides an environmental

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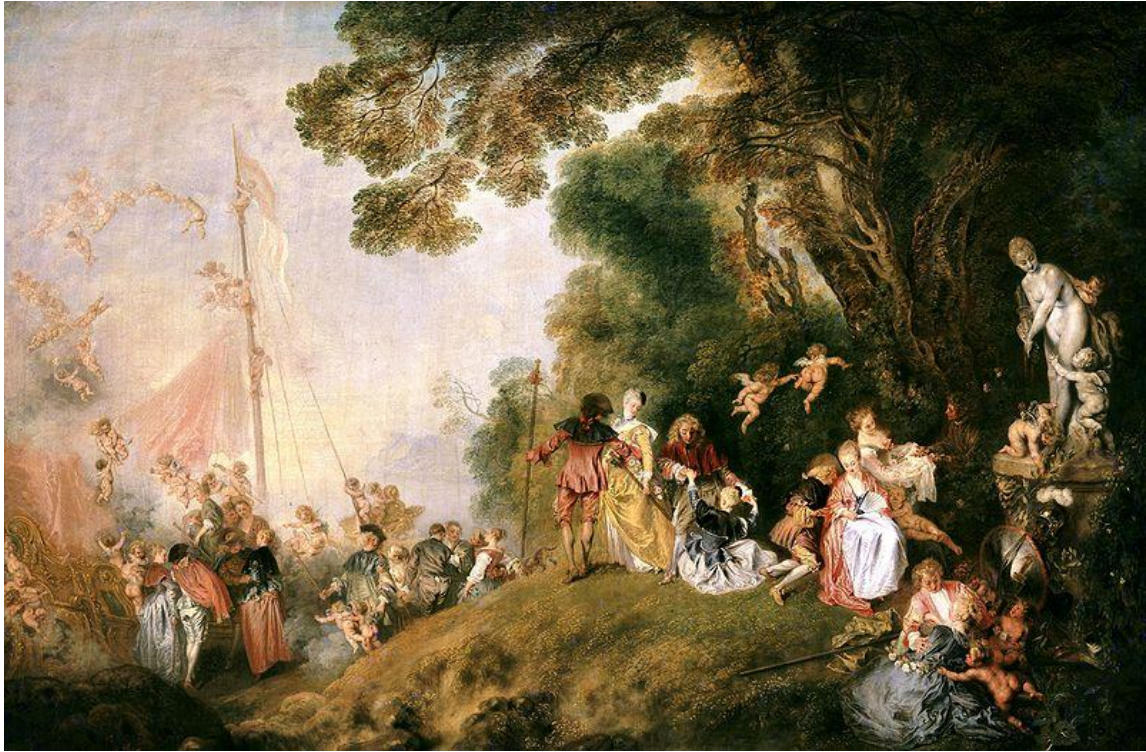
<sup>305</sup> After 1813, the Isla de León was renamed San Fernando. Today, San Fernando is no longer an island but a peninsula, now connected to the mainland.

metaphor for Fernand's awakening to the joys of carnal love. Furthermore, it is only here on the Isla de León that Léonor and Fernand are freed from the constraints of church and state (that is, the King) to experience an amorous encounter. Yet their rendezvous must remain clandestine, hidden among the other secrets contained by this island of love. Therefore, much as in the *fêtes galantes* of Watteau's Cythera, the Isla de León is ultimately tinged with sadness for an impossibly lost golden world. This emphasizes a principal characteristic of the pastoral mode: it is a retreat from the noise, filth, and social upheaval of civilization, but may only provide a temporary idyll.



**Figure 4.2.** Antoine Watteau, *Le Pèlerinage à l'île de Cythère* (1717). Musée du Louvre.

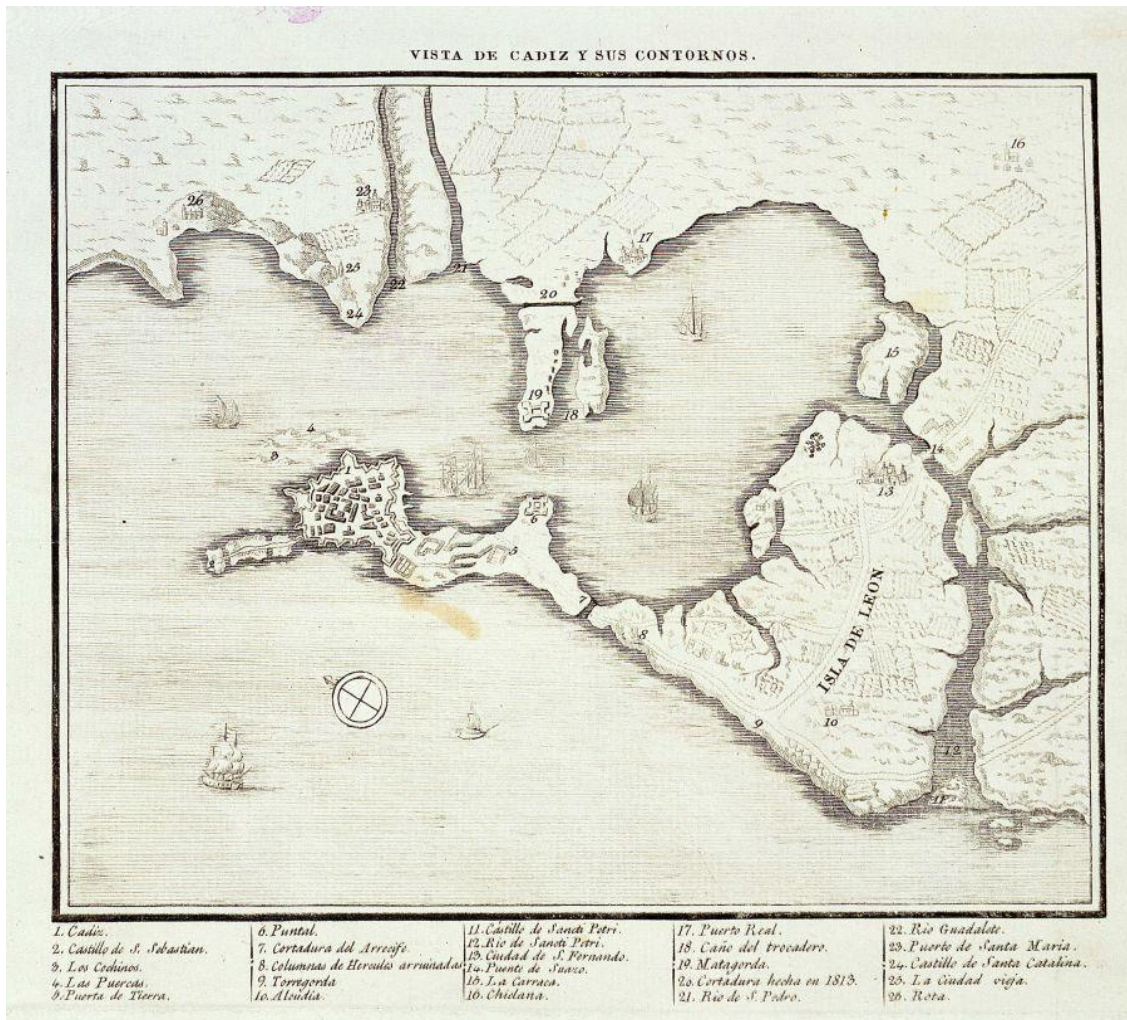




**Figure 4.3.** Watteau, *L'Embarquement pour Cythère* (1718–21). Schloss Charlottenburg, Berlin.

The audience sees only the final leg of Fernand's journey to the Isla de León, a pleasant and relaxing boat ride. However, the actual geographic locations of *La Favorite* demand that this pilgrimage would have been a major undertaking: Santiago de Compostela is in Galicia, the northernmost autonomous community of Spain, while the Isla de León lies off the southern coast of Spain (Figure 4.5). In fact, these two places are at opposite directional extremes, a detail of setting that I would argue is crucial to the narrative of *La Favorite*. As Scribe writes in his scenic outline, the monastery of St. James is "severe and somber décor in opposition to the following décor," which he describes as having the "most pleasant, most voluptuous appearance." In terms of geography, character, and gendered space, then, Tableaux 1 and 2 are polar opposites: the

northern monastery is indoors, dark, cold, rigid, serious, celibate, and exclusively male;  
the southern island is outdoors, bright, warm, free, cheerful, erotic, and exclusively female.



**Figure 4.4.** Map of the Bay of Cádiz (1813). The westernmost extremity of the island is the city of Cádiz, with the Isla de León to the right, separated from the Spanish peninsula by a thin sliver of ocean. Wikimedia Commons.





**Figure 4.5.** Map of Spain at roughly the time of *La Favorite*'s historical setting, marked with the various locations that appear as settings in *La Favorite*. Act I, Tableau 1 and Act IV: Santiago de Compostela, in the northern region of Galicia. Act I, Tableau 2: Cádiz (adjacent to the Isla de León) off the southern coast. Act II: the Spanish capital Seville (with the palace and gardens of Alcazar), in the southern Andalusian region. Modification of "Spain 1212–1492" from William R. Shepherd, *Historical Atlas* (New York: Holt, 1923). Perry-Castañeda Map Collection – UT Library Online: [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/shepherd/spain\\_910\\_1492.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/shepherd/spain_910_1492.jpg)

Thus, when Fernand rejects the enclosed masculine space of the Christian monastery for the pastoral feminine space of the Isla de León, a type of Cythera, his pilgrimage from north to south is symbolic of his spiritual journey. In the far north of Spain, Compostela is metaphorically and topographically represented as “up,” which in turn carries associations of the sacred, spiritual, and transcendent. At the opposite geographic extreme is the Isla de León, in the far south, which is metaphorically

understood as “down.” “Down” is equated with the secular, carnal, and sinful. Therefore, the opposition of Compostela and Cythera as sacred and secular pilgrimage sites, respectively, is realized through spatial-cartographical metaphors.

When plotted on a map, Scribe’s specific geographic designations – Santiago de Compostela and the Isla de León – map a north/south, up/down, sacred/secular polarity that corresponds to Fernand’s choice of sexuality over celibacy and the pagan over the holy in the first act of *La Favorite* (Table 4.1). By the end of the opera, however, both Fernand and Léonor will journey north (and “upward”) to Compostela as penitent pilgrims. Here, the lovers are finally able to achieve spiritual transcendence, as depicted in a famous lithograph of Rosine Stolz and Gilbert Duprez in the final act of *La Favorite* (Figure 4.6). Fittingly, Scribe’s scenic plan imagined a daybreak lighting effect and the use of a higher level of arcade to frame Fernand and Léonor’s apotheosis.

Although the spatial metaphor of Compostela as “up” or “high” and the Isla de León as “down” or “low” applies to both the geographic and spiritual disposition of these places, their respective musical depictions rely on an opposite metaphoric mapping. The “somber and severe” masculine space of the monastery is portrayed with timbres typically thought of as “low” and “dark”: for example, the opening procession and chorus of monks is accompanied by low strings (violas, celli, basses) and bassoons. Similarly, in the Act I duet between Fernand and his superior Balthasar (a bass), the elder monk’s vocal line (marked *avec douleur*, “with sadness”) is often doubled by the violas. This musical association is based on the metaphor “sad is down,” the generally lower pitch

and deeper timbre of male voices, and the dim light and dark hues of the monastery décor (Figure 4.7).<sup>306</sup>

**Table 4.1.** Scenic/Spatial Polarities between Tableau 1 and Tableau 2 of *La Favorite*.

<b>Act I, Tableau 1: Santiago de Compostela</b>	<b>Act I, Tableau 2: Isla de León</b>
Compostela (sacred pilgrimage: Way of St. James)	Cythera (secular pilgrimage)
Galicia (Western, European, Catholic)	Andalusia (Eastern, Moorish, Islamic)
north	south
masculine (monastery)	feminine ( <i>jardin des femmes</i> )
cold	warm
dark	bright
somber	joyful
enclosed	open
indoors	outdoors
landlocked	oceanfront
rigid architecture	soft flora
sterile	fecund
prosaic	exotic
measured time (chiming bells)	atemporal ( <i>locus amoenus</i> w/nymphs)
asceticism	sensuality
repression	freedom
divine/chaste love	carnal/erotic love
elevated morality	degraded morality
apotheosis	abyss

In contrast, the feminine world of the Isla de León/Cythera is characterized by higher tessituras, lighter melodic gestures, and brighter instrumental timbres such as flutes, clarinets, and violins. These sounds invoke a web of allusions: women’s voices, sunlight, happiness, and even magic. Indeed, glimmers of high woodwind color first enter with Fernand’s fantasizing about Léonor in Act I (“Une ange, une femme inconnue”). Thus, the spatial metaphor “Compostela is up; Cythera is down” is contradicted by musical metaphors that depict Compostela with low, dark instrumental timbres and the

<sup>306</sup> Lakoff and Johnson identify the physical basis for the orientational metaphor “happy is up; sad is down”: “Drooping posture typically goes along with sadness and depression, erect posture with a positive emotional state.” George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 15.

Isla de León with high, light instrumental timbres. For, to be sure, Fernand’s secular outlook in the first three acts equates spiritual or moral superiority with physical repression (“lowness”). In contrast, the magical, sparkling timbres of the Isla de León promise peace, happiness, and pleasure. However, the island and its seductions prove to be an artificial paradise, and Fernand’s embrace of worldly delights ultimately results in disillusionment and spiritual degradation.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 4.6.** Émile Desmaisons, lithograph after Gabriel Lépaulle: Rosine Stoltz and Gilbert Duprez as Léonor and Fernand in Act IV of *La Favorite* (1840–41). F-Pn Est.StoltzR.003.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 4.7.** Philippe Chaperon, sketch of décor for Act I, Tableau 1 of *La Favorite* (1895 production). F-Po BMO D.345 (II, 14/1).

The importance of geography, space, and place as a metaphoric mapping of characters’ psychology and situation is also evident in the contrast between Tableau 2 and Act II (Table 4.2). Recall that Scribe indicated the Act II gardens of Alcazár should not resemble the gardens of the preceding act: while the gardens of the Isla de León are an uninhibited and pristine *locus amoenus*, the grounds of the Alcazár are ornately decorated with Moorish architecture (Figure 4.8). In other words, the gardens of Tableau 2 are more “natural,” unadorned, and open-air, while the gardens of Tableau 2 are more structured, manicured, and enclosed. Furthermore, the Isla de León is slightly offshore, while the Alcazár is located in Seville, in the southern interior of the Spanish peninsula. The geographic location of these two places, then, reflects the contrast between their



respective gardens: the Isla de León is free and open to the sea, while Alcazár is contained within the mainland.

**Table 4.2.** Scenic/Spatial Polarities between Act I, Tableau 2 and Act II of *La Favorite*.

<b>Act I, Tableau 2: Isla de León</b>	<b>Act II: Alcazár of Seville</b>
female-governed (Léonor, Inès & Spanish women)	male-governed (King Alphonse)
simple	complex
unadorned	ornately decorated
flora	marble & stucco architecture
natural	artificial
oceanfront (island)	landlocked (inland)
open	enclosed
freedom	captivity
less structured, figurative dances	formal, staged divertissement



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 4.8.** Charles Cambon, maquette for Act II of *La Favorite* (1875 production).  
F-Po Maq.8.



The dichotomy between these two garden settings – one free, simple, and open; the other constructed, richly detailed, and enclosed – is emblematic of Léonor’s experience in these two different places. Even though her retreat on the Isla de León is a secret garden, she is nonetheless able to relax in the protective circle of her ladies and enjoy a brief romantic tryst with Fernand (“Mon idole”). On the other hand, the gardens of Alcazár are a place of captivity for her, as she complains to King Alphonse. While the Tableau 2 setting is a true *jardin des femmes*, in which women have autonomy, Alcazár is a male-dominated garden in which women are contained, displayed, and controlled. To illustrate this point, let us briefly consider three numbers from Act II: Alphonse’s aria “Léonor, viens,” the duet between Alphonse and Léonor upon her arrival, and the ballet *divertissement* staged by the king for her entertainment.

In the opening of Act II of *La Favorite*, King Alphonse admires the beauty of the Alcazár palace and gardens, alongside his confidante Don Gaspar. Addressing the gardens themselves, Alphonse confesses his love of “promenading under your old sycamores” and there experiencing “amorous dreams that intoxicate my heart.” Left alone by Don Gaspar, Alphonse engages in one such amorous dream in his aria, “Léonor, viens” (Example 4.4). Above a pastoral accompaniment of undulating triplet arpeggios in the strings, Léonor takes shape in Alphonse’s imagination through a meandering flute solo that wafts like a perfume or essence. The use of solo winds (particularly flute) to prefigure a woman’s entrance characterizes her demeanor and physical movements as graceful and, in so doing, fetishizes her body by inviting the audience to imagine her presence before she has even appeared. Such is the case with “Léonor, viens”: the solo flute, as a musical reminder of Léonor’s body, provokes desire for her in both Alphonse

and the audience. Alphonse's painful longing can even be heard in an embodied viola "groan" gesture after he calls, "Léonor, viens."<sup>307</sup>

While contemplating the garden and traversing its paths, Alphonse "confesses the sexual stimulation he receives in nature," as William Ashbrook puts it.<sup>308</sup> In this way, Alphonse's aria epitomizes the visual ideology of the feminization of nature: by looking at landscape, Alphonse imagines the body of his mistress and summons her presence. The sensual experience of the garden's fragrant, lushly textured plant life is thereby equated with sexual desire for a woman. This sexualization of the landscape is, perhaps unsurprisingly, intimately linked to the politics of power.<sup>309</sup> In his opening recitative, "Jardins d'Alcazar," Alphonse ruminates on how these gardens were conquered from Moorish kings; now, these treasured grounds belong to him. Therefore, Alphonse's sexual stimulation in nature is derived from the narcissistic pleasure of ownership: beautiful land added to his territorial holdings is conflated with the beautiful Léonor—the woman who he "owns" as sexual property.

The intoxication of power is particularly apparent by the conclusion of Alphonse's aria. The dreamy lyricism of the opening *Larghetto* gives way to a militaristic cabaletta, "Léonor, mon amour brave," in which Alphonse's self-important boasts of defying the universe and God for Léonor's sake are musically portrayed as bombastic posturing through martial dotted rhythms, *marcato* angular leaps, and accompanimental fanfare figures. Ashbrook complains that "unfortunately the perfumed eroticism of this

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<sup>307</sup> Mary Ann Smart has identified the "sigh" or "groan" gesture as a musical mimesis of the body in pain, particularly the works of Bellini; see Smart, *Mimomania*, 71–73.

<sup>308</sup> William Ashbrook, *Donizetti and His Operas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 444.

<sup>309</sup> For a Marxist interpretation of the feminization of nature, see Chapter V, "Looking at Landscape: The Uneasy Pleasures of Power" in Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, 86–112.

aria is dispelled by the old-fashioned cabaletta”; however, I offer that Alphonse’s character flaws are to blame for the sudden shift in tone, and Donizetti’s musical portraiture effectively captures the king’s lust for power.<sup>310</sup>

**Example 4.4.** Donizetti, *La Favorite*, Act II, No. 6: “Léonor, viens.” Transcribed and reduced from the critical edition full score. Milan: Ricordi, 1999.

**Larghetto**

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system shows the instrumental introduction with a solo flute and strings. The second system begins with the vocal line for Alphonse, with lyrics: "Léonor, viens, j'abandonne Dieu, mon". The third system continues the vocal line with lyrics: "peuple, mon peuple et ma couronne". The score includes staves for bass, treble, and bass clefs, with various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamics.

<sup>310</sup> Ashbrook, *Donizetti and His Operas*, 444.

Alphonse's fear of losing control and his reliance on material wealth as leverage is evident in his subsequent duet with Léonor. Léonor complains to Alphonse that she came to the royal palace thinking she would become his wife, not his mistress. After Léonor expresses discontent with her status as his mistress, "hiding in shadows" of his garden grove, Alphonse attempts to convince her of the benefits of her station. As a means of enticement, he reminds her that she "walks on flowers" and sings a more decorative line, answered by the flute; Léonor responds with the same gesture, but insists that the pretty baubles and decorative gardens of the Alcazár are a façade that only gilds her inner dissatisfaction.

ALPHONSE:

Dans ce palais règnent pour te séduire  
tous les plaisirs; tu marches sur des fleurs  
Autour de toi quand tu vois tout sourire,  
ange d'amour, d'où viennent tes douleurs?

In this palace reign, to seduce you,  
all the pleasures; you walk on flowers  
When you see all smiling around you,  
angel of love, whence come your sorrows?

LÉONOR:

Dans vos palais, ma pauvre âme soupire,  
Cachant son deuil sous l'or et sous les fleurs;  
Dieu seul le voit, sous mon triste sourire  
Mon cœur flétri dévore bien des pleurs.

In your palace, my poor soul sighs,  
Hiding its grief beneath gold and flowers;  
God alone sees that, beneath my sad smile,  
My withered heart devours many tears.

Léonor's feelings of captivity are further emphasized towards the end of the duet, when she and Alphonse sing together in parallel motion ("O mon amour"/"Quoi! mon amour"). This is, arguably, one of the most intimate-sounding moments of the opera: the two voices begin and end in parallel thirds; and much of the rest of the passage is in parallel sixths. Yet, in fact, this is the point at which their relationship is fracturing. Alphonse cannot understand why Léonor has grown cold towards him, and is utterly confounded by the impotence of his love and his wealth in securing her affection. Léonor, meanwhile, confesses her secret, "chaste" love for another man (Fernand) and attempts to

suppress these feelings. Though their voices are aligned in consonant tandem, the king and his mistress retreat into their own interiority, and utter their lines as asides:

ALPHONSE:

Quoi ! mon amour, stérile flamme,  
Est sans puissance pour son âme!  
Est-il pourtant destin plus beau?  
Mais son bonheur semble un fardeau.

What! My love, sterile flame,  
Has no power over her soul!  
And yet can there be a fate more beautiful?  
But her good fortune seems to be a burden.

LÉONOR:

Ô mon amour! ô chaste flamme!  
Brûle dans l'ombre de mon âme,  
Consume-toi comme un flambeau  
Dans un tombeau.

O my love! Oh chaste flame!  
Burn in the shadows of my soul,  
Consume yourself like a torch  
In a tomb.

The “closeness” of Alphonse and Léonor’s voices indicates not an intimacy in their relationship with each other, but rather a shared bondage. At the end of their affair, they are united in a shared desperation, frustration, and unhappiness. Moreover, Léonor is still held captive by Alphonse, a ruined woman with nowhere to take refuge. Even after telling Alphonse of her miserable state, he commands her to take part in the festivities he has ordered for her entertainment. As is befitting the opulent palace gardens of Alcazár, the ballet *divertissement* features local color in the form of Moorish slaves. And much as Alphonse’s gardens function as a place to contain and possess his mistress Léonor, the *divertissement* staged in these gardens also allows the king to showcase his wealth and extravagance through the display of exotic women in richly decorated costumes (Figures 4.9 and 4.10).



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 4.9.** Paul Lormier, costume design for a Moorish woman in *La Favorite* (1840). F-Po D.216-13 (51).



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 4.10.** Costume maquette for the *pas almée* in Act II of *La Favorite* (1866 revival), also used in *La Source* (1866), a fairy-tale ballet set in the Middle East.<sup>311</sup>  
F-Po D.216-23 (74).

<sup>311</sup> Marian Smith has remarked on the sharing of costumes between genres at the Opéra: “Costumes were even occasionally lent back and forth between opera and ballet-pantomime—an easy way to economize in a house in which large numbers of costumes were called for, and in which operas and ballets shared so many character types.” Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 45.

Furthermore, the Act II *divertissement* highlights the scenic and spatial contrasts outlined by Scribe: the dichotomy between the free, open-air, female-governed gardens of Tableau 2 and the ornately designed, enclosed, male-governed gardens of Act II is reflected by the types of dance performed in these two settings. On the Isla de León, the women of the ballet perform graceful stylized movements (described by Gautier as “Anacreontic exercises”) and diegetic activities such as gathering flowers and hanging fabrics. In contrast, the *corps de ballet* performs a structured set of choreographed *pas* in the formal gardens of the Alcazár palace. Thus, the natural, pastoral, and organic landscape of the Isla de León is embodied through a comparable vocabulary of movements and gestures; so, too, is the artifice and architecture of the Alcazár gardens embodied by the decorative choreography and costumes of Moorish and Spanish slaves. Although only Tableau 2 fits the *jardin des femmes* scenic convention, both garden settings illustrate how landscape and place are projected onto dancing female bodies.

## Conclusions

Donizetti’s *La Favorite* might seem at first a curious and even problematic opera in which to examine the musical and visual typology of the *jardin des femmes* convention. For, as we have seen, the music designated for the predominantly female tableau on the Isla de León was not originally composed with that scenic type in mind. Nor were these choruses significantly revised to suit their new environment, although the reassignment of solo lines for a higher-ranked soprano character reinforces the structural expectations of the *jardin des femmes* convention. Regardless of Donizetti’s original conception of these pieces, however, they participated in the theatrical construction of



feminine space as soon as they were stitched into Act I, Tableau 2 of *La Favorite*. Moreover, the entrance of *La Favorite* into the standard repertoire of the Paris Opéra during the nineteenth century meant that this tableau was a frequently performed representation of the garden landscape as a gendered and sexualized space.

Though this opera is plagued by thorny questions of libretto authorship – as Rebecca Harris-Warrick points out in her exhaustive critical edition – one of the larger points I propose over the course of this study is that Eugène Scribe was a key codifier and proponent of the *jardin des femmes* as a scenic type. Though the precise role played by Scribe remains ambiguous, he does seem to be the librettist responsible for the inclusion of a *jardin des femmes* tableau in *La Favorite*. Therefore, the similarities between Tableau 2 of *La Favorite* and Act II of *Les Huguenots*, observed by critics at the time of *La Favorite*'s premiere, can be better understood as a reiterated system of images favored by Scribe in the creation of dramatic, spatial, and character contrasts. More than a pale echo of *Les Huguenots*, then, the *jardin des femmes* on the Isla de León is another active participant in the performativity of female gender at the Opéra.

Scribe's scenic revisions to the libretto of *La Favorite* illuminate the need to give greater attention to the significance of place in opera. For all of its exoticism and local color, Spain was also a repository of locations rich in cultural meaning, and these locations were aptly mined by Scribe to emphasize the important dramatic themes of *La Favorite*. The motif of sacred/secular pilgrimage is highlighted by the settings of Santiago de Compostela and the Isla de León, an idyllic island of love functioning as a type of Cythera. In addition, the dichotomy between freedom and captivity is brought out

by the contrast between the seaside haven of Isla de León-as-Cythera and the Alcazár palace gardens, emblematic of the spoils of war and conquest.

The unspoken invocation of Cythera is a subtlety that has not been previously observed in the few existing studies of *La Favorite*, but one which I believe is crucial to understanding Tableau 2 as a place of ephemerality and irrevocable loss. The presence of Venus and Cythera is, furthermore, a recurring feature of the *jardin des femmes* convention: thus far, we have seen the Cythera motif in perhaps its most outlandish form in *Le Cheval de Bronze*. In the next chapter, Cythera emerges as an even more prominent *topos* in another type of *jardin des femmes*, the aristocratic pleasure garden where *fêtes champêtres* and *fêtes galantes* are hosted. As we shall see in the case of *La Reine de Chypre*, the myth of Cythera is directly referenced; however, Cythera has been transformed from the bittersweet, nostalgic landscape of the Isla de León in *La Favorite* into a decadent realm of bacchanalia and political intrigue.

CHAPTER V  
ARISTOCRATIC PLEASURE GARDENS AND  
THE CORRUPTION OF CYTHERA IN *LA REINE DE CHYPRE*

In the previous chapters, I introduced the scenic convention of the *jardin des femmes* as it appears in the opéra comique *Le Cheval de Bronze* (1835) and the grand operas *Les Huguenots* (1836) and *La Favorite* (1840): a male protagonist is transported to an exclusively female domain, where nymph-like women led by their sovereign extol the pleasures of nature within a secret garden retreat.<sup>312</sup> In this chapter, I explore a variation on the *jardin des femmes* convention through the depiction of aristocratic pleasure gardens and *fêtes champêtres*. In this variation, a mixed company of both men and women take part in a private garden party; yet, as I shall argue, these tableaux place women as the focal point of the festivities and position them as a musico-visual representation of the garden's sensual delights. Indeed, the imagined erotic energy of the aristocratic *fête champêtre* is manifested through the scenic convention of the *jardin des femmes*, in which women metaphorically envoice and embody the landscape.

Following a survey of the characteristics and dramatic functions of aristocratic garden parties in works staged at the Opéra during the 1830s and '40s, I turn to the example of Act III from the Saint-Georges/Halévy opera *La Reine de Chypre* (1841), set in the illuminated gardens of a casino in the Cyprian capital of Nicosia. In these gardens, the villainous Mocénigo and the Council of Ten plot the assassination of Gérard de Coucy,

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<sup>312</sup> As pointed out in Chapter II of the present study, the opéra-comique *Le Cheval de Bronze* (1835), offers a humorous twist on the typical seductions staged in the *jardin des femmes*: the heroine Péki is only disguised as a man, and therefore immune to the temptations of the garden.

the former fiancé of Caterina Cornaro, who is now betrothed to the King of Cyprus. Meanwhile, Venetian and Cypriot noblemen drink, gamble, and enjoy entertainment provided by a troupe of Cypriot courtesans. The courtesans' *chœur dansé*, though of relatively short duration in the context of the act, was widely recognized by contemporary critics as a significant point in the drama: not only did this number mark the apex of the nobles' debauched bacchanal, but it also served as an analogue to the entwining branches and fragrant verdure of the nocturnal gardens. Press reception of *La Reine de Chypre*, therefore, offers insight as to how the *jardin des femmes* convention paired the seductions of women with those of nature.

Moreover, *La Reine de Chypre* exemplifies how negative characterizations of the nobility in stage works of the July Monarchy were linked to specific constructions of place and gender — namely, through a “garden full of beautiful women” that appears in conjunction with excessive luxury and indolence. As we shall see, *fêtes galantes* and *fêtes champêtres* in opera and ballet of this era illustrate aristocratic pleasures as hedonistic, ephemeral and even dangerous. In the case of *La Reine de Chypre*, the Acts III *fête champêtre* thinly masks moral corruption and malevolent political machinations: the Cypriot courtesans' allurements are a distraction from the assassination attempt on Gérard, launched simultaneously in the darker recesses of the garden. Above all, these aristocratic pleasure gardens are coded as feminine realms, thus giving rise to social stereotypes of women as frivolous, sybaritic, and deceptively attractive.

## ***Fêtes Champêtres* on the Paris Opéra Stage, 1830–1848**

The *fête galante* or *fête champêtre*, a garden party in which idle aristocrats enjoy the pleasures of love, nature, and luxury, is particularly associated with the activities of the eighteenth-century *ancien régime* and their stylized portrayal in Rococo paintings. Therefore, it may initially seem anachronistic to use the term *fêtes champêtres* to describe the aristocratic garden parties that appear in nineteenth century opera and ballet of the first half of the nineteenth century. Yet I use this term for several reasons: first of all, it appears in the libretto of at least one representative work. In the ballet-pantomime *Le Diable Amoureux* (1840), based on Cazotte's Fantastic novel of the same name (1772), the courtesan Phoebe hosts an elegant gathering in the park of her villa to honor her lover, Frédéric. This event, with its gaming table, gallant conversations, and garden setting, is labeled a *fête champêtre* in both the libretto and *argument* (a broadsheet description detailing the plot and stage action, published and circulated in advance of performances).<sup>313</sup> Secondly, this term – along with *bals champêtres* – was used in periodicals of the late 1820s and 1830s to describe the social functions and entertainments held in Parisian public gardens such as Tivoli.<sup>314</sup> Finally, the strong association of this term with Rococo art proves useful in light of the contradictory sentiments associated with Rococo one hundred years after its apogee.

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<sup>313</sup> From the published libretto: “Une fête champêtre est dans tout son éclat.” *Le Diable Amoureux, ballet pantomime en trois actes et huit tableaux, par MM. de Saint-Georges et Mazilier, Musique de Messieurs Benoits (1er et 3me actes) Rébert (2me acte), Décors de MM. Philastre et Cambon, Représenté pour la première fois, à l'Académie Royale de Musique, le 23 Septembre 1840* (Brussels: Lelong, 1843), 7. From the published *argument*: “Phœbée donne à Frédéric une fête champêtre dans son parc.” *Académie Royale de Musique. / Argument.—Ballet. / Le / Diable Amoureux, / ballet-pantomime en trois actes, / programme de MM. Saint-Georges et Mazilier; musique le MM. Réber et Benoist; / décors de MM. Philastre et Cambon, / Représenté pour la première fois sur le théâtre de l'Académie royale de Musique, le 23 Septembre 1840* (Paris: Roulet, 1840), 2.

<sup>314</sup> This term was also used for gatherings held by the Société Linnéenne de Paris. The first of these *fêtes champêtres* was celebrated in 1822 on 23 May, in honor of Linnaeus's birthday (23 May).

During the July Monarchy, an idealized Rococo past of pleasure and pastoral retreat was prized by aristocrats of the Faubourg Saint-Germain and bohemian artists such as Théophile Gautier, Gérard de Nerval, and other members of *les Jeunes France* (later, *le petit cénacle*). Positioning themselves against contemporary bourgeois materialism, Romantic writers of the *petit cénacle* held Rococo-inspired gatherings in their headquarters on the Impasse du Doyenné, where artists such as Camille Rogier, Théodore Chasseriau, Camille Corot, and Théodore Rosseau were asked to paint murals of *jardins d'amour* and *fêtes galantes*. Nerval even suggested a countryside outing in which members would recreate Watteau's iconic *Pilgrimage to Cythera* as a *tableau vivant*.<sup>315</sup> Though denigrated during the Revolutionary period, Watteau had returned to fashion in the 1830s, as part of a Rococo revival that included Gautier's short stories "Omphale" (1834) and "Le petit chien de la marquise" (1836), and his poems "Watteau" (1835), "Versailles" (1837), and "Rocaille" (1838).<sup>316</sup>

The Rococo impulse in French literature of the 1830s blended affectionate nostalgia for a lost "golden age" with a fetishistic attention to intricate details of color, light, and form. Art historian Carol Duncan argues that this was not simply a superficial whim, but rather possessed deep meaning for France's new bourgeois society, which sought to appropriate aristocratic culture of the *ancien régime*. Cultivation of the Rococo, according to Duncan, reflected two primary impulses: longing for a pleasurable life free

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<sup>315</sup> Allison Unruh, "Aspiring to *La Vie Galante*: Reincarnations of Rococo in Second Empire France" (dissertation, New York University, 2008), 24–25.

<sup>316</sup> Ken Ireland, *Cythera Regained? The Rococo Revival in European Literature and the Arts, 1830–1910* (Cranbury, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006), 53, 63. In Gautier's "Omphale" a nobleman is haunted by the spirit of a Regency-era marquise, depicted in a tapestry as Omphale; this story would later become the premise for Michel Fokine's ballet *Le Pavillon d'Armide* (1907), in which the myth of Omphale and Hercules is exchanged for that of Armide and Renaud.

of sociopolitical tumult, and a desire to revive an enchanted past.<sup>317</sup> Yet other scholars have noted themes of irony and melancholy in Rococo-inspired poetry of this time: the conclusion of the evening *fête galante* in Victor Hugo's "La Fête chez Thérèse" (1840), for example, has been interpreted as tinged with regret and even "premonitions of damnation," anticipating Verlaine and the Symbolists.<sup>318</sup> Gautier's "Pastel" (originally entitled "Rococco" [sic], 1836) similarly balances nostalgia for an irrevocably lost past with images of death, decay, and disillusionment. Here, Rococo as invoked as a flowery, feminine dream-world, destroyed by the ravages of time and the gloom of nineteenth-century modernity.

The *fête champêtre* had particularly pejorative connotations in musico-dramatic works performed at the Opéra during the 1830s and '40s.<sup>319</sup> In short, these aristocratic

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<sup>317</sup> Carol Duncan, *The Pursuit of Pleasure: The Rococo Revival in French Romantic Art* (New York: Garland, 1976), 55.

<sup>318</sup> John A. Frey, *Les Contemplations of Victor Hugo: The Ash Wednesday Liturgy* (University Press of Virginia, 1988), 28–29.

<sup>319</sup> The clearest example of a Rococo-inspired work at the Opéra is the ballet-pantomime *Manon Lescaut* (1830), with a libretto by Scribe after Prévost's 1731 novel, music by Halévy, and choreography by Aumer. The character of Manon – a naïve, vapid female intent on acquiring pretty things – is not a positive reflection of Rococo sensibility and aspirations. Set at the end of the reign of Louis XV, *Manon Lescaut* drew its historical color in large part from its Act I *mis-en-abîme*, an Opéra performance attended by Manon and the Marquis. The performance is a ballet set to the music of Rameau, featuring décor after Boucher and Watteau, and starring famous eighteenth-century ballet dancers Marie Camargo, Marie Sallé, and "M<sup>lle</sup> Petit-Pas." (The historical M<sup>lle</sup> Petipas was a soprano, not dancer, who appeared at the Opéra alongside Camargo and Sallé. However, the obvious pun of her surname ["Petit-Pas"] likely inspired Scribe to include her among the *danseuses* of *Manon Lescaut*.) The first two *entrées de ballet*, described in Scribe's libretto, are typical scenes of pastoral romance enacted by shepherds, shepherdesses ("with powder, *mouches*, and ribbons"), naiads, and river-demigods. At the Opéra-Comique, two early works by Ambroise Thomas also used Rococo as an historical backdrop: *La double échelle* (The Stepladder, 1837), set during the reign of Louis XV; and *Le Perruquier de la Régence* (The Wigmaker of the Regency, 1838), set in 1717. A review of *La double échelle* reveals negative associations of the word "rococo" in 1830s Parisian society: "En attendant, le petit acte que l'on vient de jouer sous le titre de *la Double Échelle*, fait de plus en plus plaisir. C'est un ouvrage charmant, un opéra-comique *rococo*, peut-être, mais tout à fait dans le gout du nombreux public qui affectionne ce théâtre." (Meanwhile, the little act that has just played under the title *The Stepladder* is more and more pleasing. It is a charming work, a *rococo* opéra-comique, perhaps, but entirely in the taste of the large public that loves this theater.) B. Davons, "Mosaïque," *L'Indépendant*, 31 August 1837.

garden parties showed nobles behaving very badly: gambling away their fortunes, drinking and eating with gluttonous appetites, and promiscuously engaging in sexual encounters. These pleasures of the *fête champêtre* might be presented as a product of Satanic necromancy (as in the ballet-pantomime *Le Diable boiteux*) or a deceptive calm before the storm, during which nobles arrogantly imagine themselves far removed from any discord (as in the opera *Carmagnola*). As staged in opera and ballet-pantomime of this era, certain activities characterized the aristocratic garden party as a place of luxury and idleness: musical entertainment on plucked string instruments, gourmet food and drink, and games of chance (Table 5.1).<sup>320</sup> Let us now briefly consider how each of these activities functions as marker of aristocratic privacy and privilege.

**Table 5.1.** *Fêtes Champêtres* in Selected Works Staged at the Opéra

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***Le Diable boiteux* (1836), ballet-pantomime**

I.12. Park of a Moorish chateau, conjured by the devil Asmodée for Cléophas. Nymphs emerge from the verdure, bearing fruits and flowers. The women carry Cléophas on a sedan chair in a magnificent procession.

***Le Diable amoureux* (1840), ballet-pantomime**

I. Park of the courtesan Phoebée's villa. Phoebée and other women surround Frédéric in an elegant pavilion. Frédéric is attracted to Lillia and gives her a ring, provoking Phoebée's jealousy; Frédéric loses all of his money at one of the gaming tables.

***Carmagnola* (1841), opéra**

I: Gardens of Castruccio, the governor of Brescia. Lords and ladies sit in the garden: some women play lute or mandolin, others consume ice cream and sorbet; cavaliers play chess or dice; pages wave broad fans to give the women air.

***La Reine de Chypre* (1841), opéra**

III: Gardens of a casino in Nicosia at night. The gardens are brilliantly illuminated by moonlight and candelabras on tables and chandeliers suspended from tree branches. A vast trellis extends its branches, forming an arbor under which Venetian and Cypriot lords drink and gamble. A troupe of Cypriot courtesans mingles with the men, singing and dancing to the accompaniment of the zither.

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<sup>320</sup> I have previously noted the presence of plucked string instruments in seraglio gardens (Chapter III), where these instruments likewise signify private music-making and idle activities.



***La Jolie Fille de Gand* (1842), ballet-pantomime**

III: The park of San Lucar's villa at night; flowers and greenery are everywhere. In the background, the waters of the Brenta bathe the paths of the park. The park is lit by multi-colored chandeliers and moonlight on the river. It is at the end of a joyful orgy: tables are laden with gold plate and bottles are strewn in the groves of the park. Young lords mingle with brilliant courtesans in costumes of nymphs and bacchantes. Some of the lords lie on mossy banks at the feet of their mistresses, while others finish drinking; others seem to sleep on the grass, drunk with the wine of San Lucar and the charms of their beauties.

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Libretti descriptions of *fêtes champêtres* might indicate onstage music-making, particularly on instruments such as theorbo, lyre, lute, and mandolin, since the soft volume and personal, Orphic associations of these instruments makes them appropriate for private concerts heard by only a small, elite noble audience.<sup>321</sup> This type of music is also associated with clandestine amorous activities, due to the musical emblem of the garden serenade.<sup>322</sup> While the garden serenade is usually performed by a male suitor, small consorts are usually performed by women, who thereby present themselves as the source of entertainment within the royal garden. The importance of music-making as a visual marker of socio-economic stratification is described in Richard Leppert's analysis of the early seventeenth-century painting *Spring* by Flemish painter Abel Grimmer. Leppert notes the distinction between the manual laborers in the foreground and a group

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<sup>321</sup> These instruments also appear in feminine scenes as symbols of leisure activity and private space: the libretto of *La Chaste Suzanne* (1839) indicates that some of Suzanne's women play theorbos during the Act II bathing scene, and Scribe's libretto for *Le Cheval de Bronze* indicates that members of Stella's court play lutes and theorbos at the opening of Act III, although the staging manual seems to indicate that these were replaced by garlands of silver flowers (see Chapter IV). Another frequent convention is the bored ruler, surrounded by servants who attempt to distract said ruler from his or her ennui with musical entertainment. The ballet *Griseldis, ou les cinq sens* (1848) opens with one such scene: in a gallery overlooking the royal park, Prince Elfrid lounges nonchalantly, half-asleep, while young girls dance around him and play various (unspecified) instruments. *Griseldis, / ou / Les Cinq Sens / ballet-pantomime en trois actes et cinq tableaux / de MM. Dumanoir et Mazilier; / Musique de M. Adolphe Adam; / Décorations de MM. Cambon et Thierry, / représenté pour la première fois, a Paris, sur le Théâtre de / l'Académie Royale de Musique, le 16 février 1848* (Paris: Lévy/Jonas, 1848), 3.

<sup>322</sup> It is not only Mozart's Don Giovanni who serenades, but also the count Don Alphonse who woos Léonor from the garden of her tutor's home in the ballet *Le Sicilien* (1827) and Léopold who woos Rachel in *La Juive* (1835), albeit below her window and not from a garden.

of nobles in the background, who enjoy the sounds of lute and viol while relaxing under a shady bower:

[...] music — a particular kind of music — represents itself as the sonic simulacrum of one sort of life, private life, with *private* conflated with privilege and prestige. Private music, ironically represented ‘in public’ so that privacy as such can be visually valorized, is the sonic overlay that gives meaning to the entire scene, both for the revelers and for the laborers who may overhear sounds that define what they themselves are not.<sup>323</sup>

Leppert’s analysis is equally germane to the world of opera and ballet, where diegetic music-making is often linked to elevated political, social, and economic status. Even without the presence of lower class characters, the staging of plucked string instrument playing in works such as *Carmagnola* and *La Reine de Chypre* connotes leisure and the sensual pleasure of music itself.

Another prominent activity of the *fête champêtre* is feasting on delicacies and drinking alcohol. This gastronomical pleasure is equated with the beautiful women who are a metaphoric “feast” for the eyes: aristocratic gluttony thus extends from food and drink to sex and lasciviousness. In Act 1, Scene 3 of *Le Diable Boiteux* (1836), the devil Asmodée transports the poor student Cléophas to the grounds of a Moorish palace, planted with fragrant Spanish trees and flowers. In this magnificent park, a table of rich foods arises from the ground and beautiful girls emerge from the bushes, bearing fruits and flowers. Another example from ballet-pantomime comes from Act III, Tableau 1 of *La Jolie Fille de Gand* (1842), in which the park of San Lucar’s villa is seen at the end of a “joyful orgy.” At this nocturnal *fête champêtre*, tables are laden with gold plates, bottles are strewn in the bushes, and young lords mingle with courtesans. As Saint-Georges’s

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<sup>323</sup> Richard Leppert, *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 24.

libretto indicates, some of the lords are asleep on the grass, “drunk with San Lucar’s wine and the charms of their beauties.”<sup>324</sup>

In addition to rich food and wine, a particularly exotic treat that might be enjoyed by aristocratic revelers was sorbet. Sorbet was not the frozen dessert we know today; rather, it was first known as a type of beverage similar to lemonade that originated in the Middle East. The 1835 edition of the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française* acknowledges sorbet as both a food and beverage; this entry also reveals the distinctly Eastern associations of sorbet in nineteenth-century France, with references to sorbet from the Levant and the drinking of sorbet by Turks:

SORBET. s. m. Composition faite de citron, de sucre, d’ambre, etc. *Une boîte de sorbet. Un pot de sorbet du Levant.* Il se dit aussi Du breuvage que l’on fait de cette composition battue avec de l’eau. *Un verre de sorbet. Les Turcs boivent du sorbet. Du sorbet glacé.* Il se dit également de Certaines liqueurs à demi glacées. *Un sorbet au marasquin, au vin de Champagne.*

Composition made from lemon, sugar, amber, etc. *A box of sorbet. A jar of sorbet from the Levant.* It is also said of the beverage made of this composition beaten with water. *A glass of sorbet. The Turks drink sorbet. Iced sorbet.* It is equally said of certain liquors, half-frozen. *A sorbet of maraschino, of Champagne.*

The association of sorbet with the East is particularly evident in ballet and opera libretti of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including *Tarare* (1787), *La Tentation* (1832), *Ali Baba* (1833), *Griseldis* (1848), *Le Nabab* (1853), and *Le Corsaire* (1856).<sup>325</sup> In fact, given that the consumption of sorbet was most often found in

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<sup>324</sup> *La / Jolie Fille de Gand, / Ballet-Pantomime en trois Actes et neuf Tableaux. / Par MM. de Saint-Georges et Albert, / Musique de M. Adolphe Adam, / Décorations de MM. Cicéri, Philastre et Cambon, / Représente pour la première fois sur le Théâtre de l’Académie Royale / de Musique, le mercredi 22 juin 1842* (Paris: Jonas, 1842), 18.

<sup>325</sup> In the Beaumarchais/Salieri opera *Tarare* (1787), Act III features an elaborate nighttime *fête* in the illuminated gardens of the seraglio; at the conclusion of the ballet in Scene 4, slaves bring vases of sorbets made from liquors and fruits to the king Atar and the sultan. Similar action is found in the opening of Act II, Tableau 3 (“Le Toucher”) of the ballet-pantomime *Griseldis, ou les cinq sens* (1848): Hassan, the governor of Belgrade, is surrounded in his palace gardens by his harem of women, who play various games

Orientalist dramatic works, often in conjunction with other sensual pleasures and seductions, it seems that the enjoyment of ices and sorbets by European ladies in a work such as *Carmagnola* aligned them with women of the harem. Indeed, subtle yet potent signifiers of Eastern luxury frequently appear in the *fêtes champêtres* depicted in libretti and lithographs: the noblewomen of *Carmagnola* drink sorbet, Cléophas holds court at a Moorish chateau in *Le Diable boiteux*, and a lionskin carpet cushions the bacchantes of *La Jolie Fille de Gand* (Figure 5.1, below). Additionally, private garden serenades on lutes, harps, and theorbos, mentioned above as a feature of the *fête champêtre*, were shared by Orientalist garden scenes detailed in the libretti of the *opéras-comiques* *Le Paradis de Mahomet* (1822) and *Le Cheval de Bronze* (1835), as well the opera *La Chaste Suzanne* (1839). These visual cues are a technique for suggesting negative – or at least morally suspicious – characterizations, whereby Orientalist stereotypes of extravagant dictators and languorous odalisques are projected onto European nobles to create the image of an idle, effeminate, “Orientalized” ruling class basking in luxury.

A final activity typically found in the *fêtes champêtres* of ballet and opera is gambling, cards, and other games. In addition to the games of dice and checkers played in

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while slaves bring him coffee and sorbet. Act I of the Scribe-Halévy opéra-comique *Le Nabab* (1853) opens near Calcutta, in the gardens of the estate of British East India Company stockholder Lord Evendale. Evendale’s wife, Corilla, rests on a couch while Indian slaves cool the air with feather fans; English officers and ladies mill about while servants pass trays of ices and sorbets. Granted, sorbet was not necessarily limited to garden parties. According to the libretto of the ballet-opéra *La Tentation* (1833), sorbet, smoking (“in the Oriental custom”), bathing, and *toilette* are the refreshments enjoyed by the women of the luxurious Act IV harem, while eunuchs bring coffee and tobacco to the sultan’s apartment. Sorbets are offered during a lavish party at the fortress of Ali Baba in Act IV of the opera *Ali Baba, ou les quarante voleurs* (1833): in scene 7, some women bring out a richly-laid table while others carry trays of wines, sorbets, and coffee; later in the scene, young slaves surround Ours-Kan with a multi-sensory barrage of seductions, including drink, sorbets, his pipe, perfumed censers, and, of course, *danses gracieuses*. A similar, though more private, seduction occurs in the second tableau of *Le Corsaire* (1856). In a magnificent subterranean palace, the beautiful Greek slave Médora waits on the pirate Conrad in their love scene: she refills his cup, serves him sorbet, and brings him his chibouk, all the while dancing gracefully as the corsair “steals kisses” from her (Act I, Tableau 2, scene 6).

*Carmagnola* (1841), noblemen are seen gambling in the garden parties of *Le diable amoureux* (1840), *La Reine de Chypre* (1841), and *La Jolie Fille de Gand* (1842). The game-playing of *Carmagnola* and *La Reine de Chypre* serves mainly to characterize the noble characters as idle and – in the case of *La Reine de Chypre* – capable of far more insidious calculations and political “games.” However, in the ballet-pantomimes *Le diable amoureux* and *La Jolie Fille de Gand*, the effects of gambling are immediately disastrous, spelling financial ruin for the dashing male leads (Frédéric and San Lucar, respectively) whose luck has expired. Both men respond with desperate, ill-conceived plans to regain their fortunes: Count Frédéric consults books about occult magic and decides to summon Beelzebub, much to the consternation of his tutor, Hortensius. San Lucar, on the other hand, decides to gamble his “possession” of his new mistress Beatrix; inevitably, he loses Beatrix to his friend Bustamente, who then attempts to rape her. When San Lucar comes to Beatrix’s defense, Bustamente is flung from the balcony and killed in their duel. Horrified by this world of intrigue and crime, Beatrix suddenly awakens to discover that it was all just a nightmare; heeding its warning, though, she subsequently spurns the Marquis’s invitation to elope with her. The nocturnal garden orgy scene, then, is the crucible from which Béatrix’s ultimate realizations about the dissolute and dangerous lifestyle of the Marquis are borne.

### **The Fête Champêtre as Jardin des Femmes in Opera and Ballet**

The multisensory pleasures of an opulent *fête champêtre* are both projected onto and embodied by the women contained in the garden; thus, desire is created through a transcoding of gender, sexuality, and place. Even within the mixed company of men and

women, the *fête champêtre* prominently features women as the focal point for both the audience and onstage characters. This profusion of alluring and sexually available women in the aristocratic pleasure garden contributes to a characterization of nobles as debauched. The theatrical representation of the *fête champêtre* as a *jardin des femmes* is exemplified by the Scribe/Thomas opera *Carmagnola* (1841). Although *Carmagnola* was a flop at the Opéra, with only nine performances, it is nevertheless worth brief consideration here because it enumerates all of the stereotypical behaviors within the aristocratic pleasure garden: private music-making on lute and mandolin; playing games; eating and drinking exotic delicacies; and seeking coolness and refreshment (see again Table 5.1). Even more importantly for the purposes of this study, the opening scene of *Carmagnola* as described in the libretto demonstrates how the aristocratic *fête champêtre* functioned as a type of *jardin des femmes*. Finally, *Carmagnola* offers further evidence of Scribe's role in systemizing the *jardin des femmes* as a scenic convention.

The opening tableau of *Carmagnola* is decidedly centered on the women: they are the music-makers and the ones indulging in ices and sorbets; meanwhile, the pages fan the women, thus both serving them and creating a visual frame for the audience's gaze. Thomas's score seems to imitate the diegetic sounds of this opening scene: *pizzicato* cello arpeggios correspond to the women's leisurely serenade on lutes and mandolins; above this accompaniment, a flute and oboe figure evokes the sounds of laughter and an atmosphere of frivolity with a flippant sixteenth-note triplet followed by staccato semitone alternations (Example 5.1).

Typical of aristocratic *fêtes champêtres* is *Carmagnola*'s opening chorus of lords and ladies, who rejoice in the delights of their idyllic retreat. Although this chorus is sung

by both men and women, the sentiments and images of its text are reminiscent of such *jardins des femmes* as *Les Huguenots* and *La Favorite*. Pleasure and love are celebrated under the shelter of lush foliage that protects the nobles from the heat of the sun; in this pastoral refuge, they also imagine themselves to be sheltered from such unsavory realities as war and turmoil:

Loin de la guerre et de l'orage,	Far from war and storm,
Et loin des feux brûlans du jour,	And far from the burning glare of the day,
Que sous ce dôme de feuillage	Under this dome of foliage
Règnent les plaisirs et l'amour !	Let pleasures and love rule!

**Example 5.1.** Thomas, *Carmagnola* (1841), Act I, No. 1: Introduction. Possible diegetic sounds of mandolin serenade (pizzicato cello) and frivolous laughter (woodwinds). Transcribed and reduced from the MS score, F-Po A.531a (I).

Although this particular aristocratic garden belongs to Castruccio, the governor of Brescia, it is his wife, Lucrezia, who is featured in a decorative cavatina that immediately follows the opening chorus. This fulfills expectations of the *jardin des femmes* scenic convention, in which a (usually virtuosic) soprano noblewoman, supported by a chorus of loyal followers, conjures images of pastoral delight in her role as queen, guardian, and high priestess of the garden:

O fortunés rivages!	O fortunate shores!
Séjour aimé des dieux!	Beloved dwelling of the gods!
Sous ton ciel sans nuages,	Under your cloudless sky,
Vivre, c'est être heureux!	To live is to be happy!
Qui t'a vue, Italie,	Whoever has seen you, Italy,
Te nomme ses amours!	Calls you his love!
Et, comme sa patrie,	And, like his homeland,
Veut te revoir toujours!	Always wants to see you again!

Unlike Stella of *Le Cheval de Bronze* or Marguerite of *Les Huguenots*, Lucrezia does not directly engage in the mimetic nature sounds of birdsong. Instead, her carefree, even coquettish attitude is encoded by the same serenade-like accompaniment of plucked strings and “laughing” woodwind punctuations heard in the opening music of the scene (Example 5.2; see also Example 5.1, above). In addition, Lucrezia’s status as beautiful, decorative wife – and her potential for sexual impropriety – is signaled by an introductory flute cadenza (Example 5.3) and florid vocal embellishments on words such as “amours” and the pleasure-sound “ah” (Examples 5.4 and 5.5). Solo woodwind cadenzas, especially those performed by flute, frequently appear when a beautiful, desirable, or ornamental female character is introduced: examples include Marguerite in Meyerbeer’s *Les Huguenots* (1836), Pauline in Donizetti’s *Les Martyrs* (1840), and Olympia in David’s *Herculanum* (1859).<sup>326</sup> Thus, a florid woodwind cadenza both choreographs the female character’s entrance and encourages the audience to imagine her as delicate, ornate, and sexually enticing.<sup>327</sup> Furthermore, Lucrezia’s melismatic phrases that approach wordless, “pure” song are moments of vocal *jouissance*, sonic outbursts linked

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<sup>326</sup> Of these characters, Pauline is introduced by clarinet, the rest by flute.

<sup>327</sup> As Mary Ann Smart has written of dramatic gestural music and its ability to both direct onstage action and audience reactions to particular characters and events: “this music can swim around performing bodies; it can even seem to sing through them.” Mary Ann Smart, *Mimomania*, 6.



to sexual paroxysm and abandonment of self-control.<sup>328</sup> These moments of sexualized musical energy hint at her susceptibility to the overtures of the mysterious “Carmagnola,” from whom she receives a bouquet and accompanying note proclaiming that he will soon arrive to seduce her.

**Example 5.2.** Thomas, *Carmagnola* (1841), Act I, No. 1: “O fortunés rivages.” Transcribed and reduced from the MS score, F-Po A.531a (I).

Musical score for Example 5.2, showing vocal lines for Lucrezia and instrumental accompaniment for cello and flutes/oboe. The score is in G minor (two flats) and 3/4 time. The vocal line is in the soprano register. The instrumental parts include a cello part marked *pizz.* and a flute/oboe part marked *flutes & oboe*. The lyrics are: "O for tu-nés ri - va - ges! Se - jour ai-mé des dieux! Sous ton ciel sans nu - a - ges, Vi - vre...c'est é - tre heu-reux!"

**Example 5.3.** Thomas, *Carmagnola* (1841), Act I, No. 1: introductory flute cadenza. Transcribed from the MS score, F-Po A.531a (I).

Musical score for Example 5.3, showing a solo flute cadenza. The score is in G minor (two flats) and 3/4 time. The cadenza is marked *solo flute* and *a piacere*. It features a complex, melodic line with many accidentals and a trill at the end.

**Example 5.4.** Thomas, *Carmagnola* (1841), Act I, No. 1: “...des amours.” Melismatic setting of text from Lucrezia’s cavatine “O fortunés rivages.” Transcribed from the MS score, F-Po A.531a (I).

Musical score for Example 5.4, showing a melismatic setting of the text “...des amours.” The score is in G minor (two flats) and 3/4 time. The melisma is marked *tr* and features a long, flowing line of notes with many accidentals, ending with a trill.

<sup>328</sup> See Poizat’s interpretation of wordless song as *jouissance* in his influential post-Lacanian psychoanalytic study of opera. Michel Poizat, *The Angel’s Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera*, trans. Arthur Denner (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).

**Example 5.5.** Thomas, *Carmagnola* (1841), Act I, No. 1: “...ah, te revoir toujours!”  
Melismatic setting of text from Lucrezia’s cavatine “O fortunés rivages.”  
Transcribed from the MS score, F-Po A.531a (I).



Far from being simply picturesque and pretty, there is a specific dramatic purpose achieved by this opening number. Lucrezia is the prized possession of Castruccio and the most beautiful “flower” in his gardens: indeed, the entire plot of *Carmagnola* centers on the successful machinations of the duplicitous Comte de Carmagnola (masquerading as the Marquis de Riparda) to seduce Lucrezia and thus cuckold Castruccio. Thus, by employing the *jardin des femmes* convention in the opening tableau of the opera, Scribe establishes Lucrezia as an object of desire and paints Castruccio’s gardens as a false idyll doomed to ruination, much like Act II of *Les Huguenots*.

The structural principles and dramatic functions of the aristocratic *fête champêtre* as a type of *jardin des femmes* was also reinforced by ballet-pantomime of this era. For example, let us briefly consider the Act III orgy scene from *La Jolie Fille de Gand*. As a display of the marquis San Lucar’s wealth, power, and privilege, the park of his villa is luxuriously decorated, not simply with flowers and plants, but also with beautiful courtesans (Figure 5.1). Thus, women and landscape are coded as interchangeable bodies: in particular, the women’s flowing, luminous pastel dresses visually align them with the pale pink-and-white blossoms that adorn the garden hedges, as well as the moonlit fountain’s streaming water. Such images reinforce the agenda of heterosexual male hegemony, in which groups of women are not only objects to be admired, but also tracts

to be owned, groomed, and consumed.<sup>329</sup> In a similar manner, fountains, statues, candelabras, and other architectural ornaments of the aristocratic garden are often given female form in set designs and lithographs.<sup>330</sup> In Deshayes’s lithograph of the *Jolie Fille de Gand* orgy scene, San Lucar’s gardens are illuminated by immense candelabras that are in fact statues of women, holding candles above their hands in poses that accentuate their breasts as objects for perusal.



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**Figure 5.1.** Célestin Deshayes, lithograph of Act III, Tableau 1 of *La Jolie Fille de Gand*. F-Po Estampes Scènes Jolie Fille de Gand (2). In addition to the caryatid candelabra, note the leopard-skin rug, an Orientalizing feature.

<sup>329</sup> The feminization of nature has been critiqued by numerous feminist critics, particularly cultural geographers. See for example Chapter V, “Looking at Landscape: The Uneasy Pleasures of Power” in Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, 86–112.

<sup>330</sup> In Chapter II of this study, we saw the same phenomenon in the fountain and palace from Thierry’s set design for Act III of *Le Cheval de Bronze*.

Women are displayed in San Lucar's garden not only through lavish architecture and *couture*, but also through the arts of music and dance that characterize the aristocratic garden as a site of graceful entertainments and luxurious pleasures. Act III, Tableau 1 highlights the abilities of Diana, the premiere *danseuse* of Venice, a role first performed by Louise Fitzjames. As indicated in the violin répertoire, Diana dances to a clarinet solo, a piece described in *La France musicale* as a "delicious andante" (Example 5.6).<sup>331</sup> With its rippling harp accompaniment, flat key signature, and lyrical woodwind melody, this music offers a sort of nocturnal illumination and a sonorous spotlight for the featured dancer. Thus, she is musically framed as an illuminated object of beauty and admiration, intended to amuse both eye and ear.

Diana is not the lead role in *La Jolie Fille de Gand*; instead, the naïve and impressionable Beatrix is the ballet's protagonist. Diana, on the other hand, functions as a beautiful, ornamental woman who decorates the rich entourage of the Marquis San Lucar. Through her featured dance in the Act III orgy scene, Diana embodies the sensual extravagance of this aristocratic fête, rather than necessarily advancing the plot. This is not to say that her role is superfluous: a secondary female lead in a "decorative" role was appreciated – and even expected – in works staged at the Opéra. Moreover, this type of role in itself helped create the dramatic effects and character contrasts crucial to making the plot meaningful. Indeed, the absence of such a role generated criticism in the press, as we shall see in the case of *La Reine de Chypre*, the work that is the main focus of this chapter, and to which I now turn.

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<sup>331</sup> "Au troisième acte, dans la scène de l'orgie, il y a un délicieux andante de clarinette [...]" (In the third act, in the orgy scene, there is a delightful clarinet andante). Escudier, "Académie royale de Musique. *La Jolie Fille de Gand*, ballet-pantomime en 3 actes et 9 tableaux, par MM. de Saint-Georges et Albert; musique d'Adolphe Adam; décorations de MM. Ciceri, Filastre et Cambon," *La France Musicale* 1842, 232.

**Example 5.6.** Adam, *La Jolie Fille de Gand*. Act III, No. 1: Diana's solo *pas*.

Transcribed and reduced from the manuscript score and violin répétiteur, F-Po A.536 (III) and Matériel 19 [339 (23).

The image displays a musical score for Example 5.6, featuring a Clarinet in Bb and Harp. The score is arranged in three systems. The first system includes a Clarinet in Bb part and a Harp part. The Clarinet part begins with a melodic line, and the Harp part provides accompaniment with eighth notes. The second system continues the Clarinet and Harp parts. The third system also continues the Clarinet and Harp parts. The score is in 3/8 time and features a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb). The Harp part is marked *pp* (pianissimo). The Clarinet part is marked with *pp* sustained horns and bassoons, *pp* string block chords (eighth notes), and *pp* cello/bass pizzicato (beats 1 & 3).

***La Reine de Chypre* and the Corruption of Cythera**

Act III of Saint-Georges and Halévy's opera *La Reine de Chypre* (The Queen of Cyprus, 1841), set in the gardens of a casino in Nicosia, epitomizes the theatrical *fête champêtre* as a decadent and dangerous *jardin des femmes*. In Act III, the action shifts

from Venice to the island of Cyprus, where Venetian noblemen await the arrival of Catarina Cornaro, affianced to the Cyprian king Jacques de Lusignan. The noblemen pass their time in the casino gardens, where they drink, gamble, and mingle with courtesans under an illuminated arbor. Meanwhile, however, Catarina’s former lover Gérard de Coucy has been sighted in the gardens; fearing that his presence will threaten the impending marital alliance between Venice and Cyprus, Mocénigo of the Venetian Council of Ten orders Gérard’s assassination. Thus, the casino gardens in Act III of *La Reine de Chypre* emblemize the noblemen’s sybaritism and gluttony, and further suggest that these characters are capable of even worse moral transgressions—political intrigue, duplicity, and even murder.

Like other aristocratic *fêtes champêtres*, the casino garden party of *La Reine de Chypre* is a type of *jardin des femmes*. This is not immediately obvious, particularly since the act begins with an all-male company of Venetian and Cypriot lords, whose rousing drinking chorus (“Buvons à Chypre/À Venise la belle”) culminates in a nationalist feud and drawn daggers. Yet Mocénigo breaks up the fight, reminding them that a Venetian queen (Catarina) will soon arrive to “consecrate peace” with her marriage to the Cypriot king. Placated, the noblemen turn to gambling (“Au jeu, mes amis!”) and are soon joined by a troupe of Cypriot courtesans who emerge from the garden to mingle with the men, inviting them to experience love and pleasure:

Ô des banquets, joyeux apprêts  
 Douce gaîté, jeune beauté  
 Venez unir par le plaisir  
 Ces fiers guerriers aux cœurs altiers  
 (Venez, venez.)

Oh joyful preparations of the banquets,  
 Sweet gaiety, young beauty  
 Through pleasure come unite  
 These proud haughty-hearted warriors  
 (Come, come.)

Naissez plaisirs, suivez nos pas  
 Que les soupirs n’attristent pas

Pleasures, be born, follow our steps  
 Let sighs not sadden

Les tendres cœurs qu'amour remplit  
Devant les pleurs l'amour s'enfuit.

The tender hearts filled with love  
In the face of tears, love flees.

C'est ici l'île consacrée  
Où les hommages des mortels  
De la déesse Cythérée  
Venaient entourer les autels.  
(Oui, c'est ici l'île consacrée  
à la déesse, la belle Cythérée.)

This is the sacred isle  
Where mortals' tributes to  
The goddess Cytherea  
Came to surround the altars.  
(Yes, this is the isle consecrated  
To the goddess, the beautiful Cytherea.)

Que par nos soins sur cette heureuse terre  
Des temps passés renaissent les beaux jours  
Ah, revenez déesse fugitive  
Sur vos autels l'encens brûle toujours

By courtesy of us, on this happy land  
Let the beautiful days of the past be reborn  
Ah, return, fugitive goddess  
On your altars, the incense is still burning.

Naissez plaisirs...

Pleasures, be born...

Entendez-vous la joyeuse fanfare  
Et les accords du luth de la cythare  
Entendez-vous la joyeuse fanfare  
Ô gai festin qui pour vous se prépare  
Entendez-vous ces chants si doux  
D'heureuse ivresse et d'allégresse

Do you hear the joyous brass band,  
And the harmonies of the lute and zither?  
Do you hear the joyous brass band?  
Oh gay feast that is prepared for you!  
Do you hear these oh-so-gentle songs  
Of happy ecstasy and joy?

Joyeuse vie  
Vive folie  
Et l'on oublie  
Le mauvais sort

Joyful life  
Lively folly  
And one forgets  
Bad fortune

Unlike most of the other *jardins des femmes* examined in this study, the courtesans of *La Reine de Chypre* are not led by a beautiful princess, enchantress, or other secondary female lead.<sup>332</sup> In fact, the title character Catarina Cornaro is the only female role in *La Reine de Chypre*, in accordance with the influence and artistic demands of Opéra diva Rosine Stoltz, for whom the role of Catarina was written. Stoltz “refused to share the stage with any other principal soprano,” as Mary Ann Smart reports, “thus almost single-handedly making obsolete the convention of paired lyrical and virtuosic

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<sup>332</sup> For example, the ladies-in-waiting of *Les Huguenots* are led by Queen Marguerite, the young Spanish girls of *La Favorite* by Inès, the Venusian women of *Le Cheval de Bronze* by Princess Stella, and so forth.

female leads.”<sup>333</sup> This convention did not disappear without provoking comment from the press. The absence of a virtuosic female role, the primary purpose of which is to “amuse the ear,” was criticized in a review of *La Reine de Chypre* appearing in *Le Charivari*:

Ce qui contribue à rendre l’action languissante, c’est l’absence d’un second rôle de femme. Le public aime quelquefois à oublier les émotions fortes en écoutant quelques-uns de ces airs qui n’ont que la prétention d’amuser l’oreille. Les rôles de la reine Marguerite, et de la princesse Eudoxie, des *Huguenots* et de la *Juive* ajoutent beaucoup au charme de ces deux partitions.<sup>334</sup>

What contributes to making the action dull is the absence of a second female role. The public sometimes likes to forget strong emotions by listening to some of these airs that have no pretention other than to amuse the ear. The roles of Queen Marguerite and Princess Eudoxie in *Les Huguenots* and *La Juive* [respectively] add much to the charm of these two scores.

Recall from the previous chapter that a similar complaint had been lodged against another Stoltz vehicle, *La Favorite*, for not fully displaying the vocal talents of soprano M<sup>me</sup> Elian in the secondary role of Inès.<sup>335</sup> If the secondary female role was greatly reduced in *La Favorite*, it was eliminated altogether in *La Reine de Chypre*. Now, to be clear, the critic of *Le Charivari* did not specify that a coloratura soprano in a supporting

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<sup>333</sup> Smart, "Roles, Reputations, Shadows: Singers at the Opéra, 1828–1849," 122–23.

<sup>334</sup> Unsigned, "Académie de Musique. *La Reine de Chypre*, opéra en cinq actes, musique de M. Halévy, paroles de M. de Saint-Georges," *Le Charivari*, 24 December 1841. In Anne-Sophie Métérie, ed. *Fromental Halévy, La Reine de Chypre: Dossier de Presse Parisienne (1841)*, Critiques de l’opéra français du XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle (Weinsberg: Lucie Galland, 2005), 50. In the review, this particular critique appears under the subheading “Bruits du foyer” (Sounds of the House), suggesting that the critic was communicating opinions voiced by other audience members in the foyer during intermissions or after the performance.

<sup>335</sup> “Le seul regret qui nous reste, c’est qu’un rôle plus étendu, des morceaux plus importants n’aient pas fourni à M<sup>me</sup> Elian l’occasion de déployer toutes les richesses de sa vocalisation aisée, de l’entraînement le plus suave et le plus profond. M. Donizetti lui doit une revanche.” (The only regret we have left is that a larger role with more important pieces has not provided the opportunity for M<sup>me</sup> Elian to deploy all the riches of her easy vocalization, of the sweetest and most profound allurements. M. Donizetti owes her a rematch.)

Berru, "Académie Royale de Musique. Première représentation. — *La Favorite*, opéra en quatre actes, poème de MM. Alphonse Royer et Gustave Vaëz, musique de Donizetti, divertissement de M. Albert, décors de MM. Philastre et Cambon pour les 1<sup>er</sup> et 3<sup>e</sup> actes, de MM. Léon Feuchères, Séchan, Diéterle et Despléchins pour les 2<sup>e</sup> et 4<sup>e</sup>," 1. See Chapter IV.



female role should appear in the Act III garden scene of *La Reine de Chypre*. However, given the frequent placement of a secondary female lead as the sovereign, guardian, or beautiful centerpiece of a *jardin des femmes*, the casino orgy scene is most likely where one such temptress, enchantress, or ornamental woman would have been featured.

Yet even without a Queen Marguerite, Lady Inès, or Princess Stella at the helm, the courtesans of *La Reine de Chypre* still fulfill the most important expectation of the *jardin des femmes* convention: they are a community of women who personify the delights, temptations, and dangers of the garden through the visual and musical codes of a sensual *chœur dansé*. Moreover, the Cypriot courtesans bring together several motifs found in earlier *jardins des femmes* examined in this study: the ecomorphic nymphs of Classical mythology and the complex recurring fantasy of Cythera, as well as the exotic harems and houris of the Orientalist imagination. The significance of the courtesans as a feminized embodiment of place is particularly apparent in press reviews of *La Reine de Chypre*, in which various critics noted the exotic setting of Cyprus coupled with its exotic women, asserted that the entrance of the courtesans “completed” the Act III orgy scene, and linked the coiled vines and enlaced branches of the Act III gardens to the dizzying *tourbillon* of the women’s *chœur dansé*.

The exotic locale of Cyprus received a great deal of attention in reviews of *La Reine de Chypre*. Auguste Morel, for one, noted that Cyprus was now a “new land to add to the map of the dramatic world,” and speculated that the unfashionable status of mythological subjects had caused this island – associated with the cult of Venus – to be thus far neglected as a theatrical setting.<sup>336</sup> The particular connection between Cyprus and

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<sup>336</sup> “Si la mythologie n’était pas aujourd’hui tout-à-fait hors de saison, on pourrait dire de charmantes choses sur l’île de Chypre, cette terre consacrée dont Vénus, ainsi que M. de Saint-Georges nous le rappelle

Venus is noted in Saint-Georges's libretto, when the courtesans remind the noblemen that Cyprus is the "consecrated isle" where the goddess Cytherea (another name for Aphrodite, the Greek antecedent of Venus) was worshipped.<sup>337</sup> Therefore, it is not surprising to find this detail repeated in numerous reviews of *La Reine de Chypre*, since most critics at this time were heavily influenced by published libretti and *arguments*. Besides Morel, Théophile Gautier (*La Presse*) and Henri Blanchard (*Revue et gazette musicale de France*) were among the critics who mentioned the legendary status of Cyprus as "the ancient Cythera" and "the isle consecrated to Venus."<sup>338</sup> Blanchard's review also named specific places in Cyprus associated with the cult of Venus: the cities of Amathus and Paphos, and the forest of Idalium.<sup>339</sup> Building on these Classical associations, Blanchard added more recent cultural memories of Cyprus:

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dans son livret, doit en quelque sorte être considérée comme la première souveraine. On peut s'étonner qu'un pays recommandé par un souvenir aussi poétique ait été jusqu'à présent entièrement négligé par les dramaturges qui y ont trouvé tout au plus matière à quelques couplets bachiques en l'honneur de son vin savoureux. L'île de Chypre est donc une terre nouvelle à ajouter à la carte du monde dramatique." (If mythology was not entirely out of season today, one could speak of charming things about the isle of Cyprus, this consecrated land of which Venus, as M. de Saint-Georges reminds us in his libretto, must in some way be considered the first sovereign. It may be surprising that a land recommended by a poetic memory has been until now entirely neglected by playwrights who have found at most material for some Bacchic couplets in honor of its delicious wine. The isle of Cyprus is, then, a new land to add to the map of the dramatic world.) Auguste Morel, "Première Représentation. Académie Royale de Musique. *La Reine de Chypre*, opéra en cinq actes, paroles de M. de Saint-Georges, musique de M. F. Halévy; divertissemens de M. Coralli père; décors de MM. Philastre et Cambon," *Revue et Gazette des Théâtres*, 26 December 1841. In: Métérie, *Fromental Halévy, La Reine de Chypre: Dossier de Presse Parisienne (1841)*, 162.

<sup>337</sup> "C'est ici l'île consacrée / Où les hommages des mortels / De la déesse Cythérée / Venaient entourer les autels." (Here is the consecrated isle where mortals' homages to the goddess Cytherea surrounded the altars.) *La Reine de Chypre, / opéra en cinq actes, / Paroles de M. de Saint-Georges, / Musique de F. Halévy, / Membre de l'Institute, / Représenté pour la première fois / sur le Théâtre de l'Académie Royale de Musique, / le 22 décembre 1841* (Paris: Schlesinger, 1841), 19.

<sup>338</sup> "Le troisième acte se passe à Chypre, l'antique Cythère, l'île consacrée à Vénus!" Théophile Gautier, "Académie Royale de Musique. *La Reine de Chypre*," *La Presse*, 29 December 1841. In: Métérie, *Fromental Halévy, La Reine de Chypre: Dossier de Presse Parisienne (1841)*, 188.

<sup>339</sup> "L'action de ce libretto, éminemment musical, se passe dans l'île de Chypre ou Cypre comme la nommaient les anciens, dans cette île fameuse que l'antiquité avait consacrée à Vénus ; où se trouvaient Amathonte, Paphos, Cythère et la forêt d'Idalie." (The action of this libretto, eminently musical, takes place on the isle of *Chypre* or *Cypre* [Cyprus] as it was named by the ancients, on this famous isle that antiquity has consecrated to Venus; where Amathus, Paphos, Cythera, and the forest of Idalium are found.) Henri

[...] cette île rappelant Richard Cœur-de-Lion, qui en fit la conquête en allant en Terre-Sainte, et lord Byron y rêvant la régénération de la Grèce. Outre les riants souvenirs mythologiques et celui des croisades dont ces beaux lieux vous bercent l'imagination, on pense encore à l'excellent vin de Chypre, aux oranges délicieuses, aux mines d'or, d'argent et même d'émeraudes que cet heureux sol produit. Le poète devait nécessairement s'inspirer de si riches souvenirs topographiques et historiques [...].<sup>340</sup>

[...] this isle recalling Richard the Lionhearted, who conquered it on his way to the Holy Land, and Lord Byron's dreaming of the regeneration of Greece. In addition to the pleasant recollections from mythology and that of the Crusades, with which these beautiful places lull one's imagination, one also thinks of the excellent wine of Cyprus, of the delicious oranges, of the mines of gold, silver, and emeralds that this happy land produces. The poet [librettist] must have necessarily been inspired by such rich topographical and historical memories.

In the above catalogue of Cyprus's "topographical and historical memories,"

Blanchard transitions from the exoticism of the ancient world to the typical images and desirable objects of nineteenth-century Mediterranean exoticism: wine, oranges, precious metals, and emeralds. The piquant tastes and dramatic colors of these items align Cyprus with Orientalist discourse, in which the West imagines the East as a place of jeweled opulence and feminine voluptuousness. Other critics emphasized the proximity of Cyprus

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Blanchard, "Académie Royale de Musique. *La Reine de Chypre*, opéra en cinq actes, paroles de M. de St-Georges, musique de M. Halévy. Ballets de M. Coralli; décors de MM. Philastre et Cambon. (Première représentation)," *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris*, 26 December 1841. In: Métérie, *Fromental Halévy, La Reine de Chypre: Dossier de Presse Parisienne (1841)*, 151. Blanchard's list paraphrases Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, as evinced by the entry "Chypre" from the 1778 edition of the *Encyclopédie*: "CHYPRE, ou CYPRE (*Géog.*), en latin *Cyprus*. Le premier est le nom moderne, & le second est le nom ancien. Une des plus grandes îles de la Méditerranée, sur la côte d'Asie, entre la Cilicie au nord, & la Syrie à l'orient. La fable l'avoit consacrée à Vénus ; & comme elle y plaçoit le lieu de la naissance de cette déesse, on l'y honoroit d'un culte particulier. C'est dans cette île que font les lieux célèbres d'Amathonte, de Paphos, de Cythere, et de la forêt d'Idalie, si vantée par les poètes." Diderot and D'Alembert, *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire Raisoné des Sciences, des Arts et des Métiers*, 3rd ed., vol. 8 (Geneva: Pellet, 1778), 62–63. The various cities named in the *Encyclopédie* as consecrated to Venus are, in turn, taken from Virgil's *Aeneid*, in which Amathus, Paphos, Cythera, and Idalium (or Idalia) are cited as her sacred dwellings. In addition, Venus protects the young Ascanius by sheltering him in the forest of Idalium in Book I of the *Aeneid*. This legendary forest is also where Venus's lover Adonis is killed by a wild boar.

<sup>340</sup> Blanchard, "Académie Royale de Musique. *La Reine de Chypre*, opéra en cinq actes, paroles de M. de St-Georges, musique de M. Halévy. Ballets de M. Coralli; décors de MM. Philastre et Cambon. (Première représentation)." In: Métérie, *Fromental Halévy, La Reine de Chypre: Dossier de Presse Parisienne (1841)*, 151.

to the Middle East and Asia, thus lending the island a veil of Orientalist mystery that complemented its associations with the ancient world and the mythological eroticism of Venus. Berlioz, for one, claimed the port of Nicosia reminded him of the port of Ispahan from *Le Diable amoureux*;<sup>341</sup> Gustave Héquet described the Nicosian casino as “a small monument of architecture half Ariac, half Egyptian, decorated in the most picturesque manner, and glittering with lights.”<sup>342</sup> The critic of *Le Constitutionnel* offered a particularly effusive description of how the destination of Cyprus conjured images of both Eastern and supernatural fantasy, a world perfectly suited for the imaginative world of the Opéra:

Ce titre : *la Reine de Chypre*, a je ne sais quel air splendide et tant soit peu fantastique. Toutes ces royautes issues de la chevalerie et de la croisade, tous ces royaumes placés du côté de l’Orient, semblent appartenir au monde de l’imagination et de la féerie. L’Opéra, qui ne vit que de magnificence et de prodiges, montre un goût bien légitime pour ce monde singulier ; il aime à s’aventurer au milieu de ses merveilles. Tout lui plaît et lui convient, la terre et le ciel. Il y trouve du soleil, des sites pittoresques et des palais magnifiques pour le pinceau des peintres, de riches costumes et des Bayadères pour ses danses ; des événements surnaturels pour les fantaisies du *libretto*, tandis que l’imagination du musicien peut varier à l’infini ses inspirations et ses chants, en courant à travers ce monde à la fois voluptueux et terrible. L’Opéra a donc tenté plus d’une invasion dans ces royaumes poétiques ; mais il n’en a jamais accompli, que je sache, une plus curieuse et plus splendide que celle qu’il vient de faire dans l’île de Chypre. Pour le luxe et l’éclat des choses, pour le plaisir et l’étonnement des

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<sup>341</sup> “La décoration change et représente la place et le *port* de Nicosie, capitale du royaume de Chypre, située dans l’intérieur de l’île. Ce port-là m’a rappelé le port d’Ispahan, du *Diable amoureux*.” Hector Berlioz, “Théâtre de l’Opéra. Première représentation de *la Reine de Chypre*, opéra en cinq actes, paroles de M. de St-Georges, musique de M. Halévy, décors de MM. Philastre et Cambon, divertissemens de M. Coralli,” *Le Journal des débats*, 26 December 1841. In: Métérie, *Fromental Halévy, La Reine de Chypre: Dossier de Presse Parisienne (1841)*, 129.

<sup>342</sup> “Quoi qu’il en soit, ce *casino* est un petit monument d’une architecture moitié ayriaque, moitié égyptienne, décoré de la manière la plus pittoresque, et étincelant de lumières.” Gustave Héquet, “Revue Musicale. Académie Royale de Musique. *La Reine de Chypre*, opéra en cinq actes, paroles de M. de St-Georges, musique de M. F. Halévy, ballet de M. Coraly, décors de MM. Philastre et Cambon,” 25 December 1841. In: Métérie, *Fromental Halévy, La Reine de Chypre: Dossier de Presse Parisienne (1841)*, 102.

yeux, on se croirait en plein *cabinet des fées*, ou voyageant avec la belle Scheherazade dans le pays des *Mille et une Nuits*.<sup>343</sup>

This title, *The Queen of Cyprus*, has a certain kind of splendid and somewhat fantastic air. All the royal lineages generated by chivalry and the Crusades, all these kingdoms bordering the East seem to belong to the world of fancy and magic. The Opéra, which does not live but for magnificence and miracles, shows quite a legitimate taste for this particular world; it loves to venture among its marvels. Everything pleases and suits it, the heavens and the earth. In [this world], it finds sunshine, picturesque sites and magnificent palaces for the painters' brush, rich costumes and bayadères for its dances; supernatural events for the fantasies of the libretto, while the composer's imagination can infinitely vary its inspirations and songs, running through this world at once voluptuous and terrible. The Opéra has thus attempted more than once to invade these poetic realms; but it has never accomplished, to my knowledge, a more curious and more splendid invasion than the one it has just done on the isle of Cyprus. For the luxury and brilliance of things, for the pleasure and astonishment of the eyes, it feels like being in a fairy tale, or traveling with the beautiful Scheherazade to the country of the *Thousand and One Nights*.

The critic of *Le Constitutionnel* hints that a female travel guide (Scheherazade) is required for a journey to the Orient; Prévost claimed that *La Reine de Chypre* as a whole embodied the passionate music and people of Italy's "southern" climate:

Venise et Chypre sont successivement les lieux où est transporté le théâtre de l'action dramatique ; tout est méridional dans l'ouvrage, les caractères, les physionomies, les passions. Le compositeur nous semble s'être appliqué et avoir réussi à en traduire la chaleur, l'ardeur et la vivacité, et l'on peut répéter à propos de cette musique ce que le poète latin a dit des femmes de l'Italie : *Color verus, corpus solidum et succi plenum*.<sup>344</sup>

Venice and Cyprus are, successively, the places where the theater of dramatic action is transported; everything is southern in the work—the characters, the physiognomies, the passions. The composer seems to have worked hard to and has succeeded in translating its heat, ardor, and vivacity, and one might repeat of

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<sup>343</sup> A., "Académie Royale de Musique. *La Reine de Chypre*, opéra en cinq actes, paroles de M. de St-Georges, musique de M. F. Halévy, ballet de M. Coraly, décors de MM. Philastre et Cambon," *Le Constitutionnel*, 24 December 1841. In: Métérie, *Fromental Halévy, La Reine de Chypre: Dossier de Presse Parisienne (1841)*, 63–64.

<sup>344</sup> Hippolyte Prévost, "Spectacles. Académie Royale de Musique. – *La Reine de Chypre*, opéra en cinq actes, paroles de M. de Saint-Georges, musique de M. F. Halévy ; divertissements de M. Coraly père ; décorations de MM. Philastre et Cambon," *Le Moniteur Universel*, 1 January 1842. In: Métérie, *Fromental Halévy, La Reine de Chypre: Dossier de Presse Parisienne (1841)*, 210.

this music what the Latin poet [Terence] has said of the women of Italy: *True complexion, solid body, and full of vitality.*

In the above quotation, Prévost's reference to Terence suggests an imagined association in which the female body is representative of a given place and its requisite musical character. Indeed, the courtesans' *chœur dansé* in Act III of *La Reine de Chypre* illustrates how the seductions of a place are embodied by singing and dancing women who emerge from its landscape. Much as the barcarolle of gondoliers in Act II functions as a marker of Venetian local color, the Act III *chœur dansé* functions as an emblem of Cyprus. Although there are certainly other "community" numbers in this act, such the noblemen's drinking chorus, the women's *chœur dansé* brings both the Eastern and mythological associations of Cyprus to the foreground, all the while projecting these associations onto female bodies.

With the scenic shift from Venice to the island of Cyprus in Act III of *La Reine de Chypre* came a requisite shift in local color, achieved through a combination of text, music, choreography, costume, and décor. The third act introduces Cyprus as a new setting and establishes its distinctive atmosphere, which, according to Richard Wagner, was governed by sensuality and the "frenzied desire for pleasure." In the fourth and final article in Richard Wagner's extensive analysis of the opera, published in the *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris*, he identified the Cypriot courtesans' *chœur dansé* as the culmination of Act III bacchanalian festivities. Indeed, the entrance of these seductive women epitomizes the nobles' sybaritic ways. Wagner also admired how this number

was integrated into the dramatic action,<sup>345</sup> and praised Halévy's ability to perfectly match the visual and dramatic sensuality of the tableau with rich melodic and timbral invention:

La sensualité, le désir effréné de jouir qui forment le caractère distinctif de tout ce tableau, atteignent leur point culminant dans le *chœur dansé* qui suit. On voit que le compositeur a voulu se surpasser ici lui-même, en prodiguant tout ce que son talent lui fournissait de richesses mélodiques : le délire de l'orgie ne saurait être rendu avec des couleurs plus enivrantes.<sup>346</sup>

Sensuality and the frenzied desire for pleasure, which form the distinctive character of this entire tableau, reach their climax in the *chœur dansé* [danced chorus] that follows. One sees that the composer wanted to outdo himself here, by being unsparing of that which his talent had furnished him in melodic wealth: the delirium of the orgy could not be rendered with more intoxicating colors.

Another critic noted that the *chœur dansé* added the requisite amatory component to the *fête galante*, as the courtesans envelop the men in a swirling vortex equivalent to the intoxication of wine and gambling:

Qu'est-ce que le jeu et le vin, sans l'amour ? Venez donc, ô légères Cypriotes, venez en robe de gaze et le front couronné de fleurs ; formez des groupes galans, exécutez vos danses attrayantes, entraînez tous ces chevaliers couverts d'or et de velours dans votre tourbillon.<sup>347</sup>

What are games and wine, without love? Come then, oh light Cypriots, come in gauze dresses and crowned with flowers; form *galant* groups, perform your

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<sup>345</sup> By a similar token, Hippolyte Prévost contrasted the Act I dancing – a staged *divertissement* with the “vener” of a piece having the sole purpose to generate applause – with the Act III *chœur dansé*, which was “perfectly related to the action.” “Si le divertissement du premier acte nous a paru un placage qui n’a l’excuse que d’offrir à nos applaudissements, dans un pas de trois, Petipas et les gracieuses sœurs Dumilâtre, celui du troisième acte est, au contraire, parfaitement lié à l’action, et la partie essentiellement chorégraphique en est dessinée avec beaucoup d’art et de goût.” Hippolyte Prévost, “Académie Royale de Musique. *La Reine de Chypre*, opéra en cinq actes, paroles de M. de St-Georges, musique de M. F. Halévy (1er représentation),” *Le Commerce*, 24 December 1841. In: Métérie, *Fromental Halévy, La Reine de Chypre: Dossier de Presse Parisienne (1841)*, 60.

<sup>346</sup> Prévost, “Spectacles. Académie Royale de Musique. – *La Reine de Chypre*, opéra en cinq actes, paroles de M. de Saint-Georges, musique de M. F. Halévy ; divertissements de M. Coraly père ; décorations de MM. Philastre et Cambon.” In: Métérie, *Fromental Halévy, La Reine de Chypre: Dossier de Presse Parisienne (1841)*, 255.

<sup>347</sup> A. “Académie Royale de Musique. *La Reine de Chypre*, opéra en cinq actes, paroles de M. de St-Georges, musique de M. F. Halévy, ballet de M. Coraly, décors de MM. Philastre et Cambon.” In: Métérie, *Fromental Halévy, La Reine de Chypre: Dossier de Presse Parisienne (1841)*, 69.

attractive dances, lead all these chevaliers covered with gold and velvet in your whirlwind.

Herein lies a crucial feature of the *chœur dansé* as it appears in the *jardin des femmes* convention: it is not a formal set of dances, as in a *divertissement*. Rather, its danced component is meant to be an organic outgrowth of the dramatic action and to communicate the sexual energy of a particular landscape or place through the movement of female bodies. This is particularly true in the case of *La Reine de Chypre*. In Act III, the entwining vines and branches of the casino garden parallel the physicality of the Cypriot courtesans, who encircle the noblemen with their dances and embraces (Figures 5.2 and 5.3). By this token, women embody landscape and the landscape functions as a scenic metaphor for women. The significance of the enlacing foliage of the Act III casino gardens can be gleaned from several critics' descriptions of the décor. For example, the critic of *Le Constitutionnel* remarked that the landscape of Act III offered a veritable invitation to hedonism—what else was one to in such a luxuriant environment to do but drink, sing, gamble, and consort with courtesans?

Vive Chypre ! et les jardins de Chypre ! quels arbres ! quel ciel ! quelle verdure ! voyez-vous ces pampres enlacés et ces riches tapis attachés aux branches et étendus dans toute leur magnificence, pour amortir l'ardeur du soleil ! Que fait-on à Chypre dans ces jardins enchantés ? la foule dorée des gentilshommes cypriotes et vénitiens se livrent au plaisir et entonnent des chants joyeux !<sup>348</sup>

Long live Cyprus! And the gardens of Cyprus! What trees! What sky! What verdure! You see these enlaced vines and these rich carpets of green attached to the branches and extended in all their magnificence, to dampen the ardor of the sun! What does one do in Cyprus in these enchanted gardens? The golden crowd of Cypriot and Venetian gentlemen surrender to pleasure and break into joyful songs!

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<sup>348</sup> A. "Académie Royale de Musique. *La Reine de Chypre*, opéra en cinq actes, paroles de M. de St-Georges, musique de M. F. Halévy, ballet de M. Coraly, décors de MM. Philastre et Cambon." In: Métérie, Fromental Halévy, *La Reine de Chypre: Dossier de Presse Parisienne (1841)*, 68.





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**Figure 5.2.** Charles Cambon, sketch of the décor for Act III of *La Reine de Chypre* (1841). F-Po BMO Esq. Cambon-149.

Gautier similarly attributed qualities of enchantment to the enlacing vines of the casino gardens:

Le théâtre représente un casino de Nicosie, une de ces vignes féeriques qui enlacent leurs pampres sur des colonnes de marbre et mêlent leurs vrilles et leurs grappes aux acanthes des chapiteaux : des candélabres, – des lustres d’or chargés de bougies roses étoilent ce plafond de feuillage sous lequel sont assis, buvant et jouant, des seigneurs vénitiens et cypriotes.<sup>349</sup>

The theater represents a casino in Nicosia, one of these magical vineyards that entwines its branches over marble columns and mingles its tendrils and its clusters with the acanthus of the capitals: candelabras, – golden chandeliers loaded with pink candles spangle this ceiling of foliage under which Venetian and Cypriot lords sit, drinking and gambling.

<sup>349</sup> Gautier, "Académie Royale de Musique. *La Reine de Chypre*." In: Métérie, Fromental Halévy, *La Reine de Chypre: Dossier de Presse Parisienne* (1841), 188.



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**Figure 5.3.** Charles Cambon, sketch of the décor for Act III of *La Reine de Chypre* (1841). F-Po BMO Esq. Cambon-140.

So, too, did the critic of *Le Cabinet de lecture* note the magical aura surrounding this nocturnal garden, illuminated by moonlight and a constellation of a thousand candles, and comprised of clusters of trees forming “mysterious labyrinths.”<sup>350</sup> The symbolic image of the labyrinth suggests spiritual pilgrimage, clandestine ritual, and intricate amorous games. Moreover, the labyrinth might shield immoral activities or contain secret

<sup>350</sup> « Nous partons alors pour l’île de Chypre, où nous trouvons des seigneurs qui boivent et jouent au clair de la lune et à la clarté de mille bougies dont on a constellé un grand jardin dans lequel des massifs d’arbres forment de mystérieux labyrinthes. » F.W., “Théâtres. Académie Royale de Musique. – *La Reine de Chypre*, opéra en cinq actes, paroles de M. de Saint-Georges, musique de M. F. Halévy,” *Le Cabinet de Lecture*, 5 January 1842. In: Métérie, *Fromental Halévy, La Reine de Chypre: Dossier de Presse Parisienne* (1841), 226.

monstrosities. It is within this maze that the courtesans surround the gambling noblemen and overwhelm them with promises of sensual delight.

The courtesans urge the men to follow them (“suivez nos pas”) in order to experience newly born pleasures. As if in a trance, the men join in the chorus, repeating the courtesans’ words slowly and urging each other – and all pleasures – to follow the women (Example 5.7). This passage exemplifies how music, scenery, and movement coalesce: according to the libretto, the women surround the men while dancing and singing to the accompaniment of the zither; this circling about the men is evident in both the music and set design. As seen in the above figure and described in the libretto, the arbor is formed by enlacing branches and verdure; in a similar way, the prominent viola countermelody entwines around the musical texture and moves in an ascending sequences, as if “following” in the steps of the courtesans and seeking union with them. Above this, the women continue in the gently syncopated, lulling melody, filling in the space between the men’s punctuations.

Of the female choruses examined in this study, the music for the *chœur dansé* of courtesans in *La Reine de Chypre* is the most overtly exotic: after two measures of timpani and triangle downbeats, oboe and bassoon introduce the courtesans’ swaying, hypnotic melody in the key of A minor. Several critics noted the musical exoticism of this chorus: Berlioz wrote, “the melody, syncopated [and] in the minor mode, has something of the plaintive and foreign that is reminiscent of Moorish songs.”<sup>351</sup> In

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<sup>351</sup> « N’oublions pas un chœur des femmes cypriotes dont la mélodie, syncopée dans le mode mineur, a quelque chose de plaintif et d’étrange qui rappelle les chansons mauresques. C’est heureusement inventé. » Berlioz, "Théâtre de l'Opéra. Première représentation de *la Reine de Chypre*, opéra en cinq actes, paroles de M. de St-Georges, musique de M. Halévy, décors de MM. Philastre et Cambon, divertissemens de M. Coralli." In: Métérie, *Fromental Halévy, La Reine de Chypre: Dossier de Presse Parisienne (1841)*, 133.

addition, Henri Blanchard described the music of the third act as having “a charming vivacity” and “a sort of blend of Italian madness and Asiatic softness.”<sup>352</sup>

**Example 5.7.** Halévy, *La Reine de Chypre*, Act III, No. 12: “Naissez plaisirs.”  
Transcribed and reduced from the manuscript full score, F-Po A.534a.

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system includes a choir part with lyrics: "nais - sez plai - sirs sui - vez nos pas que les sou - pirs n'at - tris - tent pas" and a viola part. The second system includes a choir part with lyrics: "les ten - dres cœurs qu'a - mour rem - plit de - vant les pleurs l'a - mour s'en - fuit sui - vez leurs pas" and a viola part. Instrumental parts for flute and oboe are indicated above the choir staves.

This *chœur dansé* also emphasizes Cyprus’s mythological past, with the courtesans functioning as nymph-like messengers from an imagined Classical world. Théophile Gautier, for one, noted that the ancient Greeks had designated Cyprus as the “realm of beauty” (in other words, the domain of the goddess Aphrodite/Venus). Among the Cypriot courtesans, Gautier assessed the dancers as particularly well qualified to live in such a locale:

<sup>352</sup> Il y a ici, dans la musique, un entrain, une vivacité charmante ; c’est en quelque sorte un mélange de la folie italienne et de la mollesse asiatique. Blanchard, "Académie Royale de Musique. *La Reine de Chypre*, opéra en cinq actes, paroles de M. de St-Georges, musique de M. Halévy. Ballets de M. Coralli; décors de MM. Philastre et Cambon. (Première représentation)." In: Métérie, *Fromental Halévy, La Reine de Chypre: Dossier de Presse Parisienne (1841)*, 156.

Des essaims de danseuses aux corsets d'or, en jupes de gaze, couronnées de roses et de myrtes comme il convient dans un endroit aussi mythologique, accourent sous la tonnelle et l'orgie devient complète. Ici est enchâssé un pas exécuté fort agréablement par Mlles Sophie Dumilâtre, Carrez, et Forster, charmante danseuse qu'on ne voit pas assez souvent et qui semble être chez elle dans cette île où les Grecs avaient placé le royaume de la beauté.<sup>353</sup>

Swarms of dancers in corsets of gold, in skirts of gauze, crowned with roses and myrtles – as is appropriate in a place so mythological – flock under the arbor and the orgy becomes complete. Here is set a *pas* performed most agreeably by Mlles Sophie Dumilâtre, Carrez, and Forster, a charming dancer one does not see often enough and who seems to be at home on this isle where the Greeks had placed the realm of beauty.

Gautier's description of the costuming for the dancing courtesans combines exotic Eastern luxury (golden corsets) with the equally eroticized world of Classical mythology: gauze skirts and rose-and-myrtle crowns align these women with Classical nymphs, much like the Venusian court of *Le Cheval de Bronze*, the bathing ladies of *Les Huguenots*, or the young Spanish girls of *La Favorite*. Over thirty years later, costume designs sketched by Eugène Lacoste for the 1877 reprise of *La Reine de Chypre* are even more sexually suggestive in their equation of the female body with nature: a large pink rose, strategically cushioned within the courtesans' cleavage, encourages a visuality in which breasts are understood as flowers (Figures 5.4, 5.5, and 5.6). This rose-breast metaphoric mapping is similar to other soft pornographic images of the Second Empire, such as the apple-breast metaphor in Henri Gray's "La marchande de pommes" (1884) from the cover of *Le Courrier Français* (Figure 5.7).<sup>354</sup>

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<sup>353</sup> Gautier, "Académie Royale de Musique. *La Reine de Chypre*." In: Métérie, Fromental Halévy, *La Reine de Chypre: Dossier de Presse Parisienne (1841)*, 189.

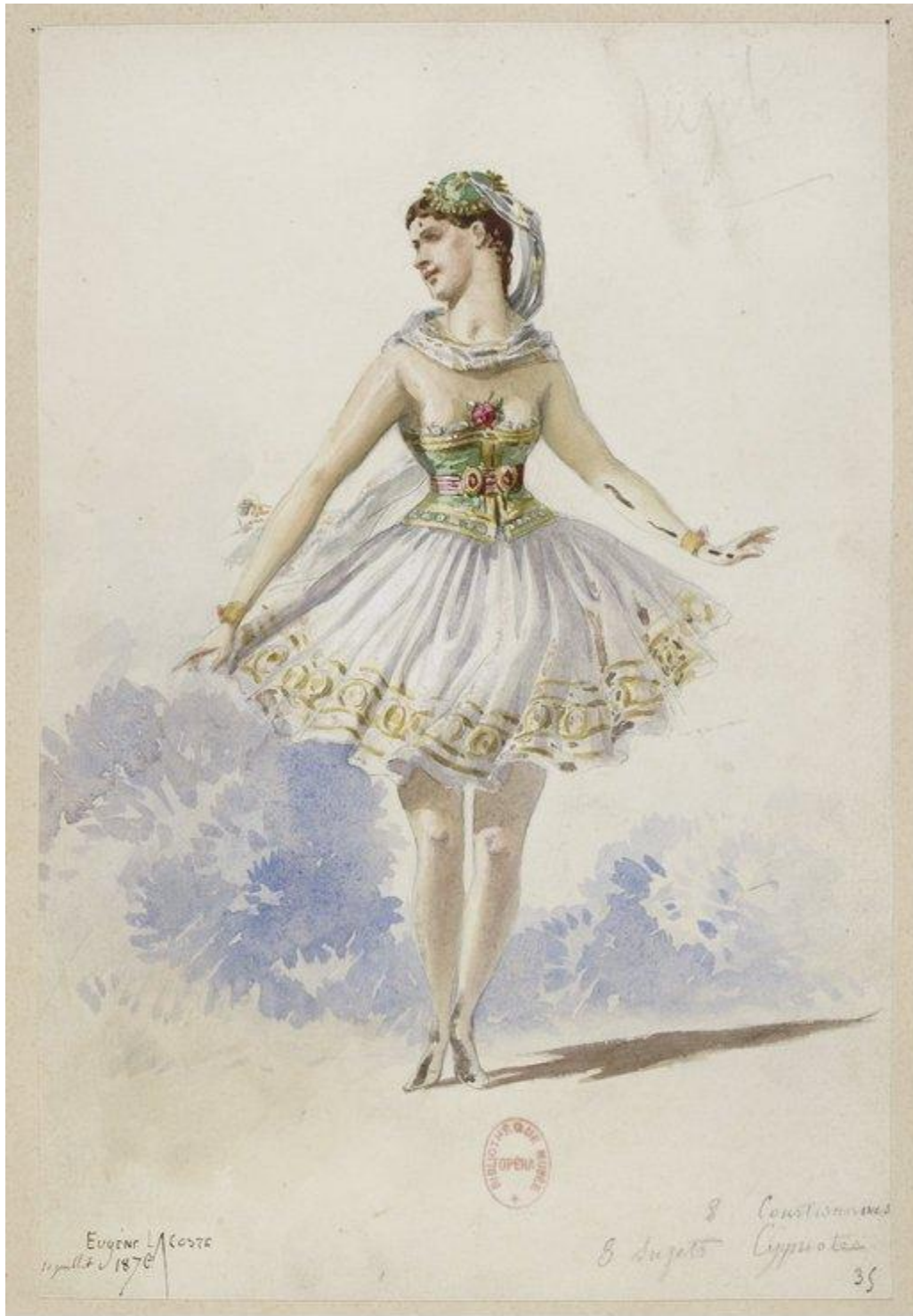
<sup>354</sup> For this and other images of women as flowers, fruits, and insects in late nineteenth-century Parisian visual culture, see Chapter V, "Les fleurs du mal" in Menon, *Evil By Design: The Creation and Marketing of the Femme Fatale*, 127–63.



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**Figure 5.4.** Eugène Lacoste, costume maquette for a dancing courtesan in the 1877 reprised production of *La Reine de Chypre*. F-Po D.216-27 (34).





Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 5.5.** Eugène Lacoste, costume maquette for a dancing courtesan in the 1877 reprised production of *La Reine de Chypre*. F-Po D.216-27 (35).



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 5.6.** Eugène Lacoste, costume maquette for a dancing courtesan in the 1877 reprised production of *La Reine de Chypre*. F-Po D.216-27 (43).





LA MARCHANDE DE POMMES

Ohé la marchande de pommes, est-ce qu'on peut  
choisir dans le TAS ?

**Figure 5.7.** Henri Gray, “La Marchande de Pommes,” *Le Courrier Français*, 30 November 1884.

In addition to their costumes, suggestive of Classical nymphs with a slight exotic flair, the courtesans are also aligned with the ancient world when, according to the libretto, they enter singing and dancing to the accompaniment of the *cythare*. The *cythare*, or zither, is an instrument associated with ancient Greece; even if it not necessarily carried onstage as a prop, this instrument is also mentioned in the text of the

chorus, towards the end of the number.<sup>355</sup> Mingling with the noblemen, the courtesans invite them to carnal pleasures, reminding them that Cyprus was once home to a prominent cult of the goddess Cytherea (Venus): “Here is the consecrated isle where the homage of mortals to the goddess Cytherea surrounded the altars.”<sup>356</sup> The critic of *La Mode* contrasted the Cypriots’ praise of Venus and the Pleasures with the Venetians’ praise of St. Mark and the Madonna: in other words, Cyprus is positioned as a pagan counterpart to the Christian Venice. The same critic described the Cypriot courtesans as “descended, without a doubt, from ancient priestesses of Aphrodite.”<sup>357</sup>

As “priestesses” of Venus, the Cypriot women lead the noblemen in a faux-sacred incantation to Venus, singing of the “consecrated island” in a hymn texture colored by subtly suggestive chromatic inflections. The courtesans even claim abilities of divine or otherworldly mediation, proposing that their bodies are portals to the lost, happy days of Cythera: “Que par nos soins sur cette heureuse terre/Des temps passés renaissent les beaux jours.” That is to say, sexual encounter is equated with spiritual communion and temporal-geographic travel: exploring the courtesans’ bodies is synonymous with

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<sup>355</sup> “Entendez-vous/La joyeuse fanfare?/Les doux accords de la cythare,/Au gai festin qui se prépare,/Mes amis, nous appelent tous!” (Do you hear the joyous brass band? My friends, the soft chords of the zither are calling everyone to the gay feast which is being prepared!)

<sup>356</sup> “C’est ici l’île consacrée / Où les hommages des mortels / De la déesse Cythérée / Venaient entourer les autels.”

<sup>357</sup> “Un essaim de courtisanes, descendant sans doute des anciennes prêtresses d’Aphrodite, se mêlait à ces jeux.” \*\*\*\*, “Chronique des Théâtres,” 409. Another counterpart to the Act III *chœur dansé* is the Act I *chœur dansé* that marks the wedding festivities of Catarina and Gérard at the beginning. Both *chœurs dansés* embody latent sexual energy of a place or event. Act I, though, invokes the Virgin Mary as “queen of heaven” while Act III invokes Venus as its guiding deity; Act I celebrates a (would-be) Christian religious marriage ceremony while Act III encourages transitory extramarital sexual encounters; and preparation of the wedding altar in Act I is contrasted with the imagery of a pagan altar surrounded by incense in Act III. In turn, the interrupted wedding festivities of Act I are contrasted with the extreme pomp of Catarina’s royal wedding in Act IV, replete with a triumphal march, a *pas de deux jeunes Cypriotes* performed by Louise and Nathalie Fitzjames, and a much-admired *saltarelle pas de deux* for the dancers Mabelle and Maria.

journeying to a nostalgic landscape in a metaphoric “voyage to Cythera.” Thus, spiritual and carnal impulses are blended in this imagined Cytherean pilgrimage, as images of mythological religious rites and burning incense are eroticized by their link to the courtesans’ offers of physical access to the lost material world of Cythera.<sup>358</sup> Halévy’s setting of this section is in the relative key of A Major, with a relaxed, soothing melodic line and fluttering viola accompaniment that lends a quality of blurred vision and mirage (Example 5.8).

**Example 5.8.** Halévy, *La Reine de Chypre*, Act III, No. 12: “...que par nos soins.”  
Transcribed and reduced from the manuscript full score, F-Po A.534a.

The image displays a musical score for two systems. The first system consists of a Choir part (treble clef, A major key signature) and a Viola (Vla.) part (bass clef). The Choir part has lyrics: "que par nos soins sur cette heu-reu-se ter-re". The second system also consists of a Choir part and a Viola part. The Choir part has lyrics: "des temps pas-sés re-nais-sent les beaux jours". The Viola parts feature a consistent, light, fluttering accompaniment throughout both systems.

Within the fifteenth-century setting of *La Reine de Chypre*, references to the goddess Venus and the island of Cythera signal a temporal shift to an ancient mythological past. Yet for nineteenth-century French audiences, these references also would have invoked a more recent mythic past, namely the *fêtes galantes* and *fêtes champêtres* of Watteau, wherein aristocrats indulge in leisurely pursuits and spontaneous

<sup>358</sup> By similar token, Starobinski has noted the “curious relation” between pagan magic and sacred miracles in *Parsifal*: 3/4 time for both the Flower Maidens’ music and the Good Friday Spell, the parallel between the Flower Maidens of Klingsor’s enchanted garden and the “enchantress flowers’ (*Wunderblumen*) of nature’s rebirth celebrating the miracle of Easter,” and the dualism of the Holy Spear. Starobinski, *Enchantment*, 27.

amorous encounters on an enchanted isle. Therefore, the quasi-religious overtones of this *chœur dansé* are ironic, contributing instead to a developing image of Cythera as a *topos* of moral corruption and physical pollution. Indeed, during the courtesans' gentle enticements, members of the Council of Ten attempt to assassinate Gérard within the dark recesses of the garden.

Dramatic irony thus separates the carefree, hedonistic festivities in the brightly lit foreground from the Council's sinister plot, unfolding offstage in concurrent dramatic time. The contrast between conniving assassins and a picturesque location was noted by Wagner:

Si j'ai bien saisi le sens poétique du livret, le drame se fonde sur un conflit entre les passions humaines et la nature. Tout d'abord nous sommes frappés du contraste que l'égoïste Venise et son terrible Conseil des Dix forment avec l'île charmante que l'antiquité avait consacrée à Vénus. De la triste et sombre cité nous sommes transportés dans les bois enchanteurs de Chypre. Mais, à peine soulagés de l'anxiété qui nous oppressait, avons-nous respiré un air doux et voluptueux, que dans l'envoyé du Conseil des Dix, dans cet assassin froidement cruel, nous retrouvons avec effroi le principe destructeur.<sup>359</sup>

If I have understood the poetic meaning of the libretto, the drama is based on a conflict between human passions and nature. First, we are struck by the contrast that selfish Venice and its terrible Council of Ten form with the charming island that antiquity had consecrated to Venus. From the sad and somber city we are transported to the enchanted woods of Cyprus. But, just as we had barely been relieved of the anxiety that oppressed us and had started breathing a soft and voluptuous air, in the envoy of the Council of Ten, in this coldly cruel assassin, we recognize with dread the destructive principle.

Further adding to the dramatic irony is that earlier in the act, Council of Ten leader Mocénigo had resolved a would-be dagger fight between Venetian and Cypriot lords, reminding the men: "Besides, what place have you chosen for your quarrels? This

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<sup>359</sup> Richard Wagner, "Halévy et *La Reine de Chypre*. Troisième Article," *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris*, 24 April 1842. In: Métérie, *Fromental Halévy, La Reine de Chypre: Dossier de Presse Parisienne (1841)*, 250.

brilliant casino, asylum of pleasure, whose pleasant gardens and green arbors should resound only with joyous songs.”<sup>360</sup> Yet, as the trajectory of Act III suggests, aristocrats who would engage in drunken brawls with each other and in wild orgies with sex workers might also take part in murderous intrigues. Thus, the opulent casino garden and its various entertainments encodes the aristocratic revelers as morally suspicious; moreover, it contributes to the characterization of Mocénigo and his co-conspirators as scheming, debased politicians.

As in other *fêtes champêtres*, the luxurious setting and sensual behaviors of the Act III garden orgy at first seem safely distanced through a complex of Orientalist and mythological references. Yet even amid these exoticizing elements, the press nevertheless recognized parallels between the Nicosian casino of *La Reine de Chypre* and the places of contemporary Parisian society where wine, women, and song were celebrated. One critic likened this scene, with its sensual debauchery, to Paris’s own Jockey Club: “The Venetians gather at the *casino (jockey’s club)* of Nicosia, drinking the wine of Cyprus like water, watching the Cypriots dance, playing dice, and celebrating the pleasures of Venus on the isle consecrated to her.”<sup>361</sup>

The Act III casino gardens were also described as the “Tivoli, Prado, Vauxhall, Chaumière, Ermitage or *île d’Amour* of the island of Chiffre” in Alcide Joseph Lorentz’s

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<sup>360</sup> Quel lieu choisissez-vous, d’ailleurs, pour vos querelles? Ce brillant Casino, l’asile du plaisir,/Dont les riants jardins, dont les vertes tonnelles,/Du bruit des chants joyeux doivent seuls retentir. *La / Reine de Chypre, / opéra en cinq actes, / Paroles de M. de Saint-Georges, / Musique de F. Halévy, / Membre de l’Institute, / Représenté pour la première fois / sur le Théâtre de l’Académie Royale de Musique, / le 22 décembre 1841*, 17.

<sup>361</sup> “Les Vénitiens réunis au *casino (jockey’s club)* de Nicosie, boivent à flots le vin de Chypres, regardent danser les Cypriotes, jouent aux dés et célèbrent les plaisirs de Vénus dans l’île qui lui fut consacrée.” Unsigned, “Académie de Musique. *La Reine de Chypre*, opéra en cinq actes, musique de M. Halévy, paroles de M. de Saint-Georges.” In: Métérie, *Fromental Halévy, La Reine de Chypre: Dossier de Presse Parisienne (1841)*, 48.

illustrated parody *La Reine de Chiffre, ou le Calcul de l'Amour déjoué par Mocieunigaud, membre politicodécimal du Conseil des Dix* (The Number Queen, or the Calculation of Love foiled by “Mr. Idiot,” politico-decimal member of the Council of Ten), published in Charles Philippon’s short-lived satirical newspaper *Musée Philippon*.<sup>362</sup> Thus, according to Lorentz, the Nicosian gardens are aligned with the various public gardens, garden cafés, ballrooms, and *guinguettes* of contemporary Paris where dancing, entertainment, and refreshments were enjoyed: the *Jardin de Tivoli* (Rue St. Lazare), *Prado d'Été* (Place du Palais de Justice), *Vauxhall* or “*Wauxhall*” *d'Été* (Boulevard St. Martin), *L'Ermitage* (Rue de Provence) *La Chaumière* (Boulevard Montparnasse) and *L'Ile d'Amour* in Belleville.<sup>363</sup> These public gardens were associated with persons and activities of ill repute; therefore, Lorentz’s invocation of these locations emphasizes a cynical view of the nobles who commune in the casino gardens of *La Reine de Chypre*.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> Lorentz, “La Reine de Chiffre ou le Calcul de l'Amour déjoué par Mocieunigand, membre politicodécimal du Conseil des Dix. Méli-mélo-drame lyrique de l'Académie royale de Musique,” in *Musée ou Magasin Comique de Philippon* (Paris: Aubert, 1843), 19. “Chiffre” means number or figure; therefore, the “reine de Chiffre” in this parody is named “4arina” (“Quatre-arina”), as opposed to the eponymous Catarina of *La Reine de Chypre*.

<sup>363</sup> Nearly all of these sites of public balls and *fêtes champêtres* are mentioned in an 1827 article from the periodical *La Nouveauté*, in which the winter season is lamented for its inability to match the festivities of summertime; the amorous dances and promenades prized by the author are distinctly linked to the outdoor gardens in which they take place: “Avec la belle saison, que de plaisirs ont disparu pour elle! Adieu, fêtes champêtres à Tivoli! bals à l'Ermitage, où la société était toujours *si bien composée!* [...] Hélas! il faut y renoncer: plus de serremens de mains, plus de walses, de promenades dans les bosquets... Ah! c'est une bien vilaine chose que l'hiver! En vain le Prado, le Vauxhall et le Colysée essaient-ils de remplacer ces réunions dont le souvenir fait encore palpiter le cœur du la jeune fille; ils n'offrent pas l'assemblage des jeux qui la charmaient à Tivoli et à la Chaumière: en vain une mise soignée est-elle de rigueur, elle ne peut remplacer pour la jolie grisette le charmant *laisser-aller* des bals champêtres.» (Along with the summer season, she has lost so many pleasures! Farewell, *fêtes champêtres* at Tivoli and balls at the Hermitage, where society was always *so well composed!* [...] Alas! She must give them up—no more handshakes, no more waltzes, no more strolls in the groves... Ah, winter is such an unpleasant thing! In vain Prado, Vauxhaull, and the Coliseum are trying to replace these gatherings, the memory of which still makes the young girl's heart palpitate. They do not offer the collection of games that charmed her at Tivoli and at La Chaumière: neatness is *de rigueur* but to no avail; for the pretty grisette, it cannot replace the charming free-and-easiness of the *bals champêtres*.) “L'Hiver,” 2–3.

<sup>364</sup> Named after London's Vauxhall pleasure gardens, the gardens of Vauxhall d'Été are described in a nineteenth-century travel guide for British tourists to Paris as a place of ill repute: “Wauxhall d'Été, Rue de

This analogy also works in reverse, to criticize contemporary society: Parisians who frequent public gardens are considered brethren to the squabbling, lascivious, drunken Venetian and Cypriot lords.

In fact, I posit that Act III of *La Reine de Chypre* might be situated within the emerging nineteenth-century discourse that reimagined Cythera as a place marred by debauchery, disease, and even death. By mid-century, the myth of Cythera had become significantly degraded, its aura of enchantment stifled by the anxieties of modernity. The theme of Cythera defiled has largely been studied as development in French literature and art of the latter half of the nineteenth century, although Mary Louise Ennis has examined Cythera's evolution "from courtly Paradise to perverted Garden of Earthly Delights" and "from pastoral to pornographic" during the eighteenth century.<sup>365</sup> More typical, though, is the approach of Michael Charlesworth, who traces variations on the image of Cythera as a lost, degraded world in literary works by Gérard de Nerval (*Voyage en orient*, 1844; *Sylvie*, 1853), Charles Baudelaire ("Un voyage à Cythère" from *Les fleurs du mal*, 1852) and Victor Hugo ("Cérigo," 1855).<sup>366</sup> Charlesworth, along with numerous art historians, has also analyzed Édouard Manet's controversial painting *Olympia* (1863) as a deconstruction and subversion of Titian's *Venus of Urbino* (1538).

The corruption of Venus and her mythological domain can be gauged by the shift in colloquial meaning of the term "voyage to Cythera." Though this phrase originally

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Bondi. In the gardens here balls and *fêtes champêtres* are given on Sundays, Mondays, and Thursdays during summer; and in winter there is a rotunda for dancing. Concerts and *assauts d'armes* occasionally take place here. The company is very promiscuous. Admission, 1fr.; ladies, 50c." J. Steward, *The Stranger's Guide to Paris*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Baudry's European Library, 1837), 314.

<sup>365</sup> Ennis, "Cythera After Watteau," 144.

<sup>366</sup> See "Cythera and the Loss of Venus in France" in Michael Charlesworth, *Landscape and Vision in Nineteenth-Century Britain and France* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008).

referred to pastoral pilgrimages of courtly love, it was codified as slang for sexual intercourse by the 1860s in Alfred Delvau's *Dictionnaire érotique moderne* (1864). Delvau's dictionary of erotic slang contains several variations on the word "Venus" that indicate a popular image of Venus as courtesan or prostitute (rather than goddess) for her association with sexual intercourse. Most tellingly, Delvau defines "common Venus" as "the girl of the street, who asks only two francs for a voyage to Cythera."<sup>367</sup> Over twenty years prior to the publication of Delvau's dictionary, however, *La Reine de Chypre* offers evidence of this vulgarized reimagining of Venus and Cythera through the overtures of Cypriot courtesans who promise to lead men to Cythera. Though certainly not nearly as gruesome or horrifying as Baudelaire's nightmarish "Voyage à Cythère," Act III of *La Reine de Chypre* nonetheless illustrates how Cythera was increasingly viewed through a lens of disillusionment.

## Conclusions

The *jardin des femmes* in Act III of *La Reine de Chypre* accomplishes several dramatic functions: it emphasizes the centrality of beautiful and alluring women within the hedonistic festivities of the aristocratic *fête champêtre*, it communicates the mythic and geographic exoticism of the island of Cyprus, and it channels the latent sexual energy of the casino gardens through the female performing bodies of the *chœur dansé*. To be sure, other *jardins des femmes* surveyed in this study have projected ambivalent sentiments onto the garden as a place of trial, temptation, and ephemeral pleasure. Yet the

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<sup>367</sup> Quoted in Jennifer Shaw, "The figure of Venus: rhetoric of the ideal and the Salon of 1863" in *Manifestations of Venus: Art and Sexuality*, ed. Caroline Arsiccott and Katie Scott (New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), 90–108: 93. See also Charlesworth and Ennis.



negative attributes and potential dangers of the pastoral are more fully realized in the portrayal of aristocratic *fêtes champêtres*, as in works such as *La Reine de Chypre*.

The *fête champêtre* is, therefore, a dramatic tool whereby noble characters might be unfavorably characterized as foolishly naïve, self-indulgent, and even villainous.<sup>368</sup> Thus, a particular landscape space generates a given set of expected activities and character types, rather than simply functioning as a decorative background. As in the case of other *jardins des femmes*, the aristocratic pleasure garden of *La Reine de Chypre* projects multiple layers of alterity: geographic Otherness through Orientalist imagery, temporal Otherness through references to Classical mythology, and supernatural Otherness through pagan ritual activity. In so doing, a theatrical space is created in which members of the noble class might be safely critiqued and even vilified.

Finally, the aristocratic pleasure garden as an erotically charged place of socioeconomic privilege became contested by the development of an increasingly cynical discourse around Venus, Cythera, and the Rococo imagery of *fêtes galantes* and *fêtes champêtres*. Predating literary works by Nerval and Baudelaire that take up this theme, *La Reine de Chypre* offers an early example of how the nymphs of Venus are transformed into courtesans and the island of Cythera is overtaken by moral decadence and mortal danger. To follow this trajectory in which the *jardin des femmes* might be inverted from pastoral paradise into a place of horror, death, and the grotesque, we shall turn in the next chapter to the example of the ballet-pantomime *Giselle* (1841).

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<sup>368</sup> Another dramatic technique that uses place to character nobles in an unflattering light is the hunt scene. Like the aristocratic garden scene, the hunt scene portrays nobles as self-indulgent, power-hungry, and negligent rulers. However, while the garden scene is used for the more decadent, naïve characters, the hunt scene is used for more brutal, cruel characters. For more on the implications of the hunt scene, see Marian Smith, "The Cortège at the Opéra from *La Muette* to *Le Prophète*" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society, New Orleans, LA, 2012).

## CHAPTER VI

### DEATH AND REBIRTH IN THE GARDEN:

#### MYRTHA'S FOREST GLADE AS *JARDIN DES FEMMES* IN *GISELLE*

Thus far, we have considered how the *jardin des femmes* operated as a dramatic device in grand opera and *opéra comique* of the 1830s and 40s; and in fact, I have suggested that this scenic convention was transplanted from *comique* to grand opera by librettist Eugène Scribe. In addition, we have seen three brief examples in which the *jardin des femmes* convention was parodied in vaudeville, in these cases using the music of the *Huguenots* bathers' chorus as a signifier of female community in a garden setting. In this chapter, I turn to ballet-pantomime, another musico-dramatic genre in which the *jardin des femmes* took root. For, indeed, operas and ballets of the July Monarchy era shared the Paris Opéra stage, often on the same evening; moreover, these genres also shared costumes, sets, and scenic conventions.<sup>369</sup>

I have already suggested in previous chapters that the scenic convention of the *jardin des femmes* was shared by the genre of ballet-pantomime, citing such examples as the fairy oasis in Act I of *La Péri* (Chapter III) and the park of San Lucar's villa in Act III of *La Jolie fille de Gand* (Chapter V). Here I focus on *Giselle* (1841), the-Romantic ballet-pantomime that has had the greatest staying power in the repertory. Act II of *Giselle* offers a particularly evocative treatment of the ecomorphic female body as a fantastic – and even grotesque – construction. Furthermore, *Giselle*'s supernatural second act fulfills the same structural expectations as the operatic *jardin des femmes*: a lush garden space marked as temporally and geographically distant; an extravagant entrance

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<sup>369</sup> *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*.

for a powerful queen who consecrates the grounds; an entourage of dancing nymph-like women who embody features of the garden ecosystem through their music, costuming, and movement; and an erotic encounter between the male protagonist and one of these nymphs (Table 6.1). As we shall see, the ecomorphic Wilis of *Giselle* reflect a discursive *topos* in Fantastic literature and Parisian society of the 1830s and '40s: namely, the imagining of dancing women in fashionable apparel as an enchanted conservatory of anthropomorphic insects. Moreover, as a Sublime type of the *jardin des femmes*, Myrtha's forest glade offers one of the few examples of a dystopic garden, in which seductive demonic women personify a perilous, disorienting landscape that devours human trespassers.

**Table 6.1.** The *Jardin des Femmes* Convention in *Giselle*: Structural Equivalencies

Typical Musical Numbers in the Operatic <i>Jardin des Femmes</i>	Corresponding Musical Numbers in Act II of <i>Giselle</i>
Queen's entrance aria	No. 10: Apparition et scène de Myrthe Andante ( <i>apparition et scène de Myrthe</i> ) Andantino non troppo ( <i>elle voltige ça et là</i> ) Plus animé – Allegro Andante ( <i>elle cueille la branche de Romarin; évocation magique</i> )
Women's <i>chœur dansé</i>	No. 10: Apparition et scène de Myrthe Andante ( <i>apparition des autres Wilis; groupe général des wilis-papillons</i> ) Andante ( <i>pas de Myrtha</i> ) [Wilis in groups & poses] Allegro non troppo ( <i>pas des 1<sup>ers</sup> Wilis</i> ) [Fantastic ball begins: Zulma & Moyna perform Spanish, Indian <i>pas</i> ] Allegro con moto [Fantastic ball] No. 14: Scène des Wilis Allegro feroce ( <i>Bacchanale des Wilis</i> ) No. 14a: Fugue
Love duet	No. 13: Entrée d'Albert et Wilfride Andante ( <i>Albert reste seul</i> ) – Animato ( <i>il aperçoit l'ombre de Giselle</i> ) – Andante 1 <sup>re</sup> Tempo – Andante moderato – Larghetto ( <i>Danse</i> ) – Allegro – Plus lent No. 15: Grand Pas de deux

## Myrtha's Forest Glade as Sublime Garden and Feminine Space

The Act II setting of *Giselle* is not usually thought of as a garden, but rather a forest. However, the distinction between forest and garden was not always clear-cut, particularly in Romantic ideology.<sup>370</sup> The English landscape garden style, which emerged in England in the eighteenth century and influenced such notable French gardens as Ermenonville, Parc Monceau, and the *Jardin de la reine* at Versailles, privileged the chaotic, wild, disorienting, and even terrifying qualities of nature. Therefore, this garden style is sometimes also referred to as the “Sublime” garden, in keeping with philosopher Edmund Burke’s theory of the Sublime in nature, defined as that which induces astonishment and “some degree of horror.”<sup>371</sup> Textual descriptions and iconographic representations of *Giselle*’s Act II décor illustrate trademark features of the Sublime garden: a dizzying array of verdure, knotted branches, and the numinous glow of moonlight (Figure 6.1). As described in Gautier and Saint-Georges’s libretto, the Act II setting is a moist, fertile woodland, in which grasses, flowers, and trees grow in abundance:

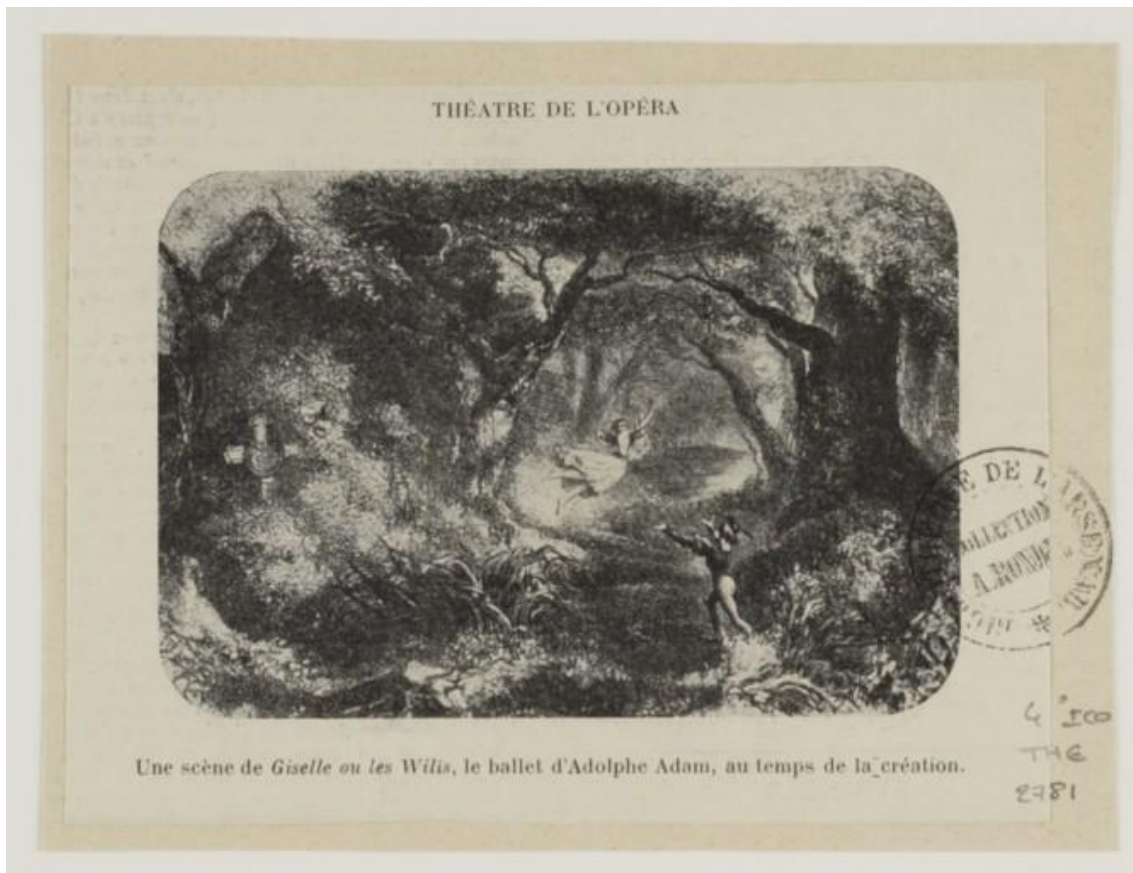
The setting represents a forest on the banks of a pond. A damp and chilly spot where rushes, reeds, clumps of wild flowers, and aquatic plants grow. Birch trees, aspens and weeping willows droop their pale foliage to the ground. To the left, beneath a cypress, stands a white marble cross on which Giselle’s name is engraved. The tomb is overgrown with the thick vegetation of grasses and

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<sup>370</sup> Likewise, Renaissance garden design featured ambiguous boundaries between forest and garden in the *sacro bosco* (“holy grove”), explained by Schama as “not a forest but a carefully untended area on the fringe of the garden.” Like the similarly recessed *nymphaeum* grotto, the *sacro bosco* was imagined as a site of pagan desire and pleasure, and “to discover any of these places was, in effect, to travel backward from the second, pastoral arcadia [of Theocritus, Virgil, et al.], to the first, archaic site of raw, unpredictable nature.” Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 534.

<sup>371</sup> Christopher Thacker, *The History of Gardens* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979), 212; Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, Oxford World’s Classics (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 53.

wildflowers. The bluish gleam of a very bright moon gives a cold and misty appearance to the scene.<sup>372</sup>



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 6.1.** Lithograph of Act II of *Giselle*, ca.1841. F-Pn 4-ICO THE-281.

In this description, the forest glade is a place of extreme fecundity and the rapid generation of new life; in fact, it is so fruitful that the trees bend under the weight of their overgrown branches and Giselle's tomb is already covered with "thick vegetation," even though she has (presumably) been buried only recently. Yet amid this profusion of botanical life, Giselle's marble tombstone cross stands as a cold, inanimate monument that marks the finality of Giselle's death and the perpetuity of her memory. Therefore, the setting of Act II is not merely a Sublime garden, but also a cemetery, a type of ritual

<sup>372</sup> Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 67.

garden in which the cycle of life, death, and rebirth is profoundly felt: tombstones memorialize the deceased persons buried in the earth, while grasses and flowers sprout forth around these monuments and atop burial sites.<sup>373</sup> The link between the garden and the cemetery is further explained by Julian Johnson in terms of how both sites spatialize concepts of time and memory:

The cemetery is of course cultivated like a garden, since both spaces, in their different ways, produce metaphors of rebirth. In both cases, the spatial separation from the outside world also creates a temporal separation. The normal passage of time is suspended here. Time in the garden moves very slowly, in a cyclical turning over within a bounded space. Time in the cemetery has the effect of obliterating the oppositions of present and past necessary to 'lived life,' such that spatial presence dominates over temporal direction.<sup>374</sup>

One such metaphor of rebirth in *Giselle's* Act II cemetery garden occurs when the gamekeeper Hilarion stumbles upon Giselle's tomb and tells the other hunters about his lost (unrequited) love. As Johnson indicates, time in the cemetery garden is suspended: indeed, Giselle's crown from the vintage festival is still fresh. When Hilarion first sees the cross inscribed with the name "Giselle," a brief, somber chorale conveys religious solemnity and reverence, marking the gravesite as a sacred space. Hilarion then shows Giselle's grave to the hunters: in the libretto, he tells them of her love for dancing and shows them her crown from the vintage festival; in Henri Justamant's staging manual, he becomes even more emotional, telling the hunters, "Ah my friends, you remember this

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<sup>373</sup> Cross-culturally and throughout history, ritual gardens were threshold sites where mortals might encounter divine beings or cross into the realm of the dead; the ritual garden might therefore be understood as an "anteroom to the netherworld." Michel Conan, "Introduction: The Cultural Agency of Gardens and Landscapes" in *Sacred Gardens and Landscapes: Ritual and Agency* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2007), 7. Moreover, both the garden and cemetery are tirthas, sacred sites of pilgrimage and ritual activity in which the liminal veil between realms of life/death, human/divine, and physical/spiritual is thinnest.

<sup>374</sup> Julian Johnson, *Webern and the Transformation of Nature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 37.

young girl Giselle who I loved and who died so sadly.”<sup>375</sup> A reminiscence motive – the flute melody associated with Giselle’s dancing at the vintage festival – allows Hilarion to relive a moment from a happier past. (Of course, Hilarion’s nostalgia obscures the bitter fact that while Giselle was alive, she snubbed him in favor of “Loys”/Albrecht.) In addition, this reminiscence motive allows Giselle herself to be resurrected within the enclosed spaces of both Hilarion’s memory and her cemetery garden plot.

An even more potent metaphor of rebirth in the cemetery garden of *Giselle* is the Act II landscape itself, which is marked as a wild feminine space: its life-giving abilities, its tangled and overgrown foliage, and its damp climate are all properties stereotypically associated with the reproductive organs of the female body. Additionally, its diversity of plant life covers and shelters Giselle’s body like a pseudo-maternal enclosure; as such, it is aligned with the many literary gardens that function as “archetypally womb-like, romanticized feminine spheres,” to quote literary critic Shelley Saguaro.<sup>376</sup> Indeed, it is not just grasses and wildflowers that spring forth from the fertile soil of this cemetery garden: the Wilis themselves will also emerge from the verdant landscape, birthed from flowers and shrubs (Figure 6.2).

The feminization of this garden landscape is particularly apparent in Gautier’s open letter to Heinrich Heine, published in *La Presse* (5 July 1841). Here Gautier provides a somewhat different description of the Act II setting than the one given in the

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<sup>375</sup> Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 234; Henri Justamant, *Giselle ou Les Wilis: Ballet Fantastique en deux actes*, Faksimile der Notation von Henri Justamant aus den 1860er Jahren. Frank-Manuel Peter, ed. (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2008), 131.

<sup>376</sup> Shelley Saguaro, *Garden Plots: The Politics and Poetics of Gardens* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 3.

*Giselle* libretto — one that even more obviously codes the Act II landscape as a feminine space:

The stage represents a forest by the edge of a lake, overhung by tall pale trees with their roots steeped in the grass and the bulrushes, and with water lilies spreading their broad leaves on the placid surface of the water silvered here and there by the moon with a trail of white patches. Reeds emerge from their smooth brown sheaths to shiver and tremble in the intermittent night breeze. The flowers are half open, languidly spreading their heady scent like those large blooms of Java that madden all who inhale them, and a sort of burning sensuous atmosphere circulates in this dense and humid darkness. At the foot of a willow tree, lost and embedded among the flowers, lies Giselle. On the white marble cross that marks her grave hangs, still fresh, the crown of leaves with which she was crowned at the vintage festival.<sup>377</sup>



**Figure 6.2.** Lithograph depicting Act II of *Giselle* (Rupp, 1849). F-Po Estampes Scènes *Giselle* (8).

<sup>377</sup> Gautier, "A M. Henri Heine, à Cauteretz." Quoted and translated in Guest, *Gautier on Dance*, 98–99.



Giselle's body is "embedded among the flowers," and the even the flowers themselves are anthropomorphized, taking on female traits as they fall under the male gaze: like bathing nymphs extending their limbs, the water lilies "spread their broad leaves" across the water; like disrobed female bodies, the reeds "shiver and tremble" in the night breeze; like perfumed courtesans, the flowers "languidly spread their heady scent." All of these images also exploit the voyeuristic thrill of viewing something partially concealed, partially revealed: the water lilies float in the lake; the reeds emerge from protective "smooth brown sheaths"; and the flowers are "half open," much like the Wilis themselves will first appear veiled. The pleasures associated with looking at this feminized landscape are not innocent: the perception of landscape as a feminized, eroticized entity is the result of gender politics, much like the male heterosexual gaze looks "actively, possessively, sexually, and pleasurably" at female nudes in Western art.<sup>378</sup> Moreover, Gautier's evocative images of feminized nature are a precursor to the visual pleasures offered by the actual women who will later appear within this landscape.

Another notable discrepancy between the two descriptions of *Giselle's* Act II décor is that while Gautier and Saint-Georges's libretto specifies a "chilly" German forest, Gautier's letter to Heine portrays this setting as a humid tropical jungle seemingly better suited to Orientalist fantasy. Gautier's letter likens the wildflowers to "large blooms of Java" and imbues the forest with a "burning sensuous atmosphere." Indeed, the flowers in Gautier's *La Presse* article seem to embody the Eastern odalisque, as imagined by nineteenth-century writers: partially revealing herself, she induces madness with her intoxicating perfume, while incense burns in the background. I posit that Gautier invoked

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<sup>378</sup> Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, 88.

this Orientalist imagery not only to exaggerate the geographic distance between urban Paris and a remote German forest, but also to position Act Two of *Giselle* as a site of heightened sensuality, sexual escapism, and latent danger, traits stereotypically associated with the East.<sup>379</sup> Given the Western construction of the East as a sexually receptive female, the appearance of Orientalist features in settings that are not necessarily Asian or Middle Eastern was a dramatic technique by which a particular place might be feminized and eroticized.<sup>380</sup> Thus, through an established cultural fantasy that linked gender, sexuality, landscape, and race, a particular place might be invested with the same qualities of sexual energy, danger, and fertility that were projected onto the East.

The earliest staging manual for *Giselle*, created by Henri Justamant in the 1860s, also encodes the Wilis' glade as a feminine space. According to Justamant's staging

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<sup>379</sup> Said notes that these stereotypes were particularly prevalent among nineteenth-century French Orientalist writers, citing examples from Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Nerval, and Flaubert: "Woven through all of Flaubert's experiences, exciting or disappointing, is an almost uniform association between the Orient and sex. In making this association Flaubert was neither the first nor the most exaggerated instance of a remarkably persistent motif in Western attitudes to the Orient. And indeed, the motif itself is singularly unvaried, although Flaubert's genius may have done more than anyone else's could have to give it artistic dignity. Why the Orient seems still to suggest not only fecundity but sexual promise (and threat), untiring sensuality, unlimited desire, deep generative energies, is something on which one could speculate: it is not the province of my analysis here, alas, despite its frequently noted appearance." Said, *Orientalism*, 188. Feminist cultural geography makes efforts to address this phenomenon: to take but one prominent example, the image of the South Sea maiden as a body that signified to European colonialists the promise of both sexual exploration and land ownership has been critiqued in Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies, Vol. 1: Women, Floods, Bodies*, trans. Chris Turner, Stephen Conway, and Erica Carter (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 296; Bloch and Bloch, "Women and the Dialectics of Nature in Eighteenth-Century French Thought," 37; Linda Nochlin, *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), 139–41; Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, 94.

<sup>380</sup> Ralph Locke has already suggested the link between exotic women and lush vegetation in Orientalist opera: "Not just Aida but Dalila, Lakmé, and Cio-Cio-San, too, are associated with nature's irresistible attractions for the duty-bound male. Dalila awaits her love-thirsty tenor, Samson, in a hideaway abounding in creepers and other plant life. Gérald, ready for adventure, first encounters Lakmé in a beautiful floral garden, on whose pond the audience has previously seen Lakmé and her maid Nélika[sic: Mallika] gliding in a boat and singing the magically graceful (and not at all foreign-sounding) Flower Duet. And Cio-Cio-San and Suzuki, in Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, will twenty years later have a (similarly non-exotic-sounding) Flower Duet of their own." Ralph Locke, *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 186. Elaborating on Locke's work, I propose that the conflated image of alluring Eastern Woman and fertile tropical Landscape was but one possible application of what I am identifying in this study as a broader theatrical schema, namely, the *jardin des femmes* convention.

manual, the tolling of bells signaling midnight (and the witching hour) frightens the Hilarion and the hunters, who try to leave via stage left. Their exit, however, is blocked by the appearance of *feux follets*, or will-o'-the-wisps. The *feux follets* are elements of the Fantastic, in accordance with literary theorist Tzvetan Todorov's classic definition: for both the hunters and the audience, they "hesitate" between the natural atmospheric phenomenon of marsh gas and the supernatural phenomenon of ghostly apparitions.<sup>381</sup> Moreover, the *feux follets* are a distinctly feminine Fantastic, as indicated by Justamant's staging manual.<sup>382</sup> Justamant's notation is color-coded according to gender: male roles and directions are given in black, while female roles and directions are in red. The *feux follets*, which we might initially assume to be gender-neutral environmental phenomena, are assigned red ink—in other words, they are identified by Justamant as female characters or at least a feminine presence.<sup>383</sup> This is fitting, since the *feux follets* act as sentinels – or perhaps even avatars – of the Wilis by bewildering, terrifying and even trapping the men who enter the Wilis' sacred space.<sup>384</sup> Thus, before Queen Myrtha and her followers have even appeared onstage, the *feux follets* presage the Wilis' female

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<sup>381</sup> Todorov writes: "There is an uncanny phenomenon which we can explain in two fashions, by types of natural causes and supernatural causes. The possibility of a hesitation between the two creates the fantastic effect." Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), 26. In musicology, Todorov's work on the literary Fantastic has been used by Francesca Brittan and Marianna Ritchey. See Brittan, "Fairy Magic, Natural Science, and the *Scherzo fantastique*"; Marianna Ritchey, "Echoes of the Guillotine: Berlioz and the French Fantastic," *Nineteenth-Century Music* 34, no. 2 (2010).

<sup>382</sup> On supernatural feminine representations of alterity in French Fantastic literature, see Amy Ransom, *The Feminine as Fantastic in the Conte fantastique: Visions of the Other, The Age of Revolution and Romanticism* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995).

<sup>383</sup> See Justamant, *Giselle ou Les Wilis*, 132–33.

<sup>384</sup> In Gautier's original scenario for *Giselle* (under the working title *Les Wilis*), the *feux follets* are heralds of the Wilis: "Midnight sounds, and from every point on the horizon, led by will-o'-the-wisps, come the ghosts of girls who died dancing." Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 174.

embodiment of nature and delineate their Sublime garden as a threatening feminine domain, off limits to male intruders.

### **The Queen's Entrance: Myrtha as Priestess, Nymph, and Witch**

As we have seen in operatic repertoire, the *jardin des femmes* is typically ruled or at least stewarded by a queen, princess, or other noblewoman. This “queen of the garden” is usually the secondary rather than principal female role: she functions not as the romantic heroine, then, but rather as a tempting enchantress or, less insidiously, liaison and even matchmaker between the male protagonist and female lead. Most importantly, though, she is the first representative of the *jardin des femmes* encountered by the audience; therefore, she is the character most closely linked with this place. In her *cavatine* or opening *air*, she exercises her authority over the garden, possibly with dazzling coloratura; however, this piece also positions her as native to the garden, a “natural” outgrowth or product of its landscape. Her close relationship to nature might be illustrated in several different ways: imitation of birdsong or other ecological sounds, invocation of the pathetic fallacy of the pastoral, physical interaction or alignment with the landscape (lying down on the riverbank, for example), or religious gestures that suggest an animistic connection to pagan nature deities.

In the world of ballet-pantomime, Myrtha and her Wilis do not have an introductory *air avec cœur* in the same manner as Stella and her nymph-houris, Marguerite and her ladies-in-waiting, or Inès and the young Spanish girls. However, Myrtha's *entrée* functions much like the typical *cavatine* for the queen of a *jardin des femmes*. To be clear, I do not mean that Myrtha “sings” or even that her *entrée* is

structurally related to the operatic *cavatine*. Rather, I suggest that Myrtha's *entrée* fulfills the same basic dramatic and scenographic function as the entrance aria typically sung by the female ruler of the operatic *jardin des femmes*. Both pieces introduce their subjects as deeply connected to the plant and animal life of the garden, to the point that the queen's body seems to fuse with her environment. Over the course of her three-part *entrée*, Myrtha is aligned with the landscape of her Sublime garden through a series of characterizations, namely three female archetypes associated with pagan nature-worship in mythology and folklore: a serene high priestess of the moon (or even the goddess Diana herself), a frolicking earthbound nymph, and a grotesquely virtuosic witch. Consideration of these three choreo-musical characterizations offers a more nuanced understanding of the role of Myrtha than the present-day canonic interpretation as a one-dimensional ice queen. In fact, as we shall see, Myrtha's initial appearance is coded as ethereal, delicate, gentle, and deceptively sweet; her darker side only becomes apparent in the final section of her solo entrance scene.

Myrtha's arrival is heralded by E-flat Major chords in the brass, which signal her regal status, and arpeggios in the harps, which suggest a world of magic and enchantment. According to the libretto, Myrtha appears among the bulrushes, emerging "from the depths of the humid foliage"; in other words, she seems to have been generated by the landscape itself. Indeed, the connection between Myrtha and her forest habitat is, of course, also signaled by her botanical name, "Myrtle." The libretto goes on to describe Myrtha as surrounded by a luminous aura: "She carries with her a mysterious radiance that suddenly illuminates the forest, piercing the shadows of the night." Fittingly, then, her appearance and first solo dance are musically scored with a textural-harmonic

convention labeled the “nocturne style” by Janice Dickensheets and the “moonlight *topos*” by Sarah Clemmens Waltz: moderately slow tempo, multiple flats in the key signature, a lyrical melody, a slow – almost static – harmonic rhythm, and a repetitive arpeggiated triplet accompaniment prominently featuring the harp.<sup>385</sup>

Adolphe Adam’s use of harps for Myrtha’s moonlit entrance not only positions the Wilis’ haunted forest as a distant realm from the rustic country village of Act I, but also evokes “flowing” or “streaming” imagery, including moonlight, water, and even music itself.<sup>386</sup> The Aeolian harp in particular was often linked to moonlight in nineteenth-century writings because, as Waltz has shown, both were considered emblems of otherworldly inspiration and “divine invasion” (just as moonlight radiates through the night sky via a distant celestial body, the Aeolian harp is “played” by the unseen movement of wind rather than by human hands).<sup>387</sup> Furthermore, Adam’s use of a moonlight *topos* for Myrtha’s entrance can be understood as a means of linking the Wili queen to the mythological figure of Diana, the Roman goddess of the hunt and symbol of the forest (particularly oak trees), the moon, and chastity. This parallel is apt since Diana

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<sup>385</sup> Dickensheets, “The Topical Vocabulary of the Nineteenth Century,” 106–08; Waltz, “In Defense of Moonlight,” 10.

<sup>386</sup> Just as in *Les Huguenots* (discussed in Chapter II of the present study), harps are *tacet* in the first act of *Giselle*, heard for the first time in the female-dominated second act. In both works, the golden timbre of the harp frames the setting not only as a feminine space, but also as a dream-world or artificial paradise.

<sup>387</sup> Waltz, “In Defense of Moonlight,” 42. The moonlight topic had been used elsewhere in nineteenth-century opera to indicate communion with the divine. A well-known example is Norma’s aria “Casta Diva” from Bellini’s *Norma* (1831), in which the Druid priestess cuts a sacred branch of mistletoe while invoking the moon goddess. Norma serves as mediatrix between her people and the animistic spirits of the forest and sky, and her connection to the mysteries of the natural world is symbolized not only by her ritual cutting of the mistletoe branch (a prop that might be likened to Myrtha’s rosemary branch scepter), but also through the musical convention of the moonlight topic. Another example of how the moonlight topic indicated communion with the divine is found in the Prologue of Verdi’s *Giovanna d’Arco* (1845), in which Giovanna (Joan of Arc) falls asleep under an oak tree and has visions of both angels and demons. After the demons urge her to abandon her vocation, the clouds disperse and moonlight fills the forest, while angelic voices command her to rise and fulfill her divinely ordained mission.

– like Myrtha – is served by a retinue of virgin nymphs who, in the words of Wendy Heller, “maintain an existence that is linked to nature and pre-civilized notions of society: this is an entirely female sphere in which women operate in an autonomous fashion, hunting, riding, and pleasuring in the woods, while disdain[ing] male company.”<sup>388</sup> In addition, when men trespass into this sylvan realm – as in the myth of Acteon, who spied on Diana and her nymphs at their bath – both Diana and Myrtha angrily transform into fierce warrior-queens who commandeer a band of ruthless hunters.<sup>389</sup>

The connection between Myrtha and the Roman moon goddess was also noted in the earliest press reviews of *Giselle*. Gautier’s letter to Heine in *La Presse* likens the first Myrtha, ballerina Adèle Dumilâtre, to both Diana and Camilla, a favorite votary of Diana:

The reeds part and there come into view, first, a little twinkling star, then a crown of flowers, then two beautiful blue eyes, looking gently startled and set in an oval of alabaster, and then finally the whole of that lovely form – slender, chaste, graceful, and worthy of Diana of old – that we know as Adèle Dumilâtre. [...] With that melancholy grace that is characteristic of her, she frolics in the pale starlight, skimming across the water like a white mist, poising on the bending branches, stepping on the stalks of the flowers like Virgil’s Camilla who walked on the corn without bending it, and with a wave of her magic wand summons her subjects, the other wilis, who emerge in veils of moonlight from tufts of reeds, clusters of shrubbery and blooms of flowers.<sup>390</sup>

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<sup>388</sup> Wendy Heller, *Emblems of Eloquence: Opera and Women’s Voices in Seventeenth-Century Venice*, 180.

<sup>389</sup> Laura Colombo draws this parallel, further noting that Myrtha assumes all three identities associated with the Diana myth: Artemis/Diana, the cruel virgin; Hecate, the queen of hell; and Selena, the moon goddess. Laura Colombo, “Les Pas de la Déesse: Enquête sur les Transformations de la Figure de Diana dans les Livrets de Ballet Français,” in *“La Cruelle Douceur d’Artémis”: Il Mito di Artemide-Diana nelle Lettere Francesi*, ed. Liana Nissim (Milan: Cisalpino, 2002), 357. Colombo does not directly discuss Myrtha’s musical characterization; however, my analysis of Myrtha’s *entrée* (here) and the Wilis’ *ballabile* and *bacchanale* (below) supports Colombo’s interpretation.

<sup>390</sup> Gautier, “A M. Henri Heine, à Cauteretz.” Quoted and translated in Guest, *Gautier on Dance*, 99.

Likewise, in Jules Janin's review of *Giselle* (*Journal des Débats*, 30 June 1841) Myrtha/Dumilâtre's beauty is interwoven with – and even attributed to – the image of moonlight. Janin does not invoke the Diana archetype, but rather the Romantic imagination and its valorization of the moon as a source of mystery and the supernal:

The vapor is Myrtha, the Queen of the Wilis. The first rays of the September moon have given Myrtha the fine contours of her beautiful form. A strange light accompanies her mysterious majesty. She has wings because it is her whim, a white tunic because it is the fashion at balls given under old oaks to the song of crickets, beating bat wings, and the thousand unexpected laments murmured in the forest's gloomy depths.<sup>391</sup>

In addition to a musical *topos* associated with the visual phenomenon of moonlight, Myrtha's entrance music also includes invisible, ethereal voices, even though Adam's score does not actually include an offstage *choeur aerien*. Instead, the first violins play in a high tessitura, muted, mimicking the sound of a wordless female chorus. In their periodical *La France Musicale*, the Escudier brothers drew particular attention to this "orchestral effect, so new, that accompanies the appearance of the queen of the Wilis":

Sur des arpèges de harpe, quatre premiers violons, avec sourdine, exécutent, dans les notes les plus élevées, une mélodie à quatre parties, dont l'effet est réellement magique. En vérité, on se croirait tout à coup transporté dans le domaine de la féerie. Cette combinaison d'instruments est entièrement nouvelle, et l'effet en est excellent.<sup>392</sup>

Over harp arpeggios, four muted first violins play – in the uppermost register – a melody in four parts, of which the effect is truly magical. In fact, it is as if all of a sudden one was transported to the fairy-world. This combination of instruments is entirely new, and its effect is excellent.

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<sup>391</sup> Jules Janin, *Journal des Débats*, 30 June 1841. Quoted and translated in Eliot, *Dancing Lives*, 53.

<sup>392</sup> Escudier, "Académie Royale de Musique. *Giselle* ou *Les Willis*, Ballet fantastique en deux actes, par MM. Th. Gautier, de Saint-Georges et Coraly; musique de M. Ad. Adam, décors de M. Cicéri. (1re représentation.)," *La France Musicale*, 4 July 1841, 236.



The “magical” associations of Adam’s orchestral effect are due not only to the spectral timbre of muted first violins in the high register, but also to the violins’ descending melodic contour, which metaphorically traces the downward path of supernatural beings as they approach the earth. In other words, the violins symbolize a choir of angels or fairies who temporarily descend from the heavens and with their pure vocalization, express that which surpasses human understanding.<sup>393</sup> Indeed, similar effects using a *chœur sur le théâtre* or *chœur aérien* appear in Act I, scene 3 of Auber’s opera *Le lac des fées* (1839), when Albert hears “distant fairy harmonies” after summoning the fairy Zéila from her celestial abode, and in Act II, scene 3 of Schneitzhoeffter’s ballet *La Tempête* (1834), when the lovers Fernand and Lea are lulled to sleep with a supernal music conjured by Caliban.<sup>394</sup> The use of this musical gesture

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<sup>393</sup> This metaphor of violins-as-voices works in large part due to the otherworldly attributes frequently associated with wordless song. Wordless song achieves what Michael Poizat terms “lyric *jouissance*,” or the “dissolution of meaning under the effect of a logic of musical composition that then escapes the logic of verbal expression”; this *jouissance* has mystical or angelic connotations, as a music that surpasses the limitations of human language. Poizat, *The Angel’s Cry*, 44–45. Poizat describes the tension between word and music in liturgical singing (46–48); the use of wordless song as part of “mankind’s aspiration to emit the mysterious, hermetic, musical language of the angels” is examined in Lori Kruckenberg, “Neumatizing the Sequence: Special Performances of Sequences in the Central Middle Ages,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 59, no. 2 (2006): 266–77. The absence of verbal logic does not imply an absence of meaning or even simply a desire for the ineffable. As Evelyn Gould has argued, the *tra la la la la* refrain of Carmen’s “Bohemian Song” (Bizet, *Carmen*, 1875) may seem like nonsensical vocables, but this refrain takes on new meanings with each repetition: “(1) with seduction and/or the induction to listen; (2) with physical affectivity and/or the kinesthetic reiteration of sound; and (3) with *jouissance* and/or an abandonment to musical intoxication.” Evelyn Gould, *The Fate of Carmen* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 131.

<sup>394</sup> Offstage female voices are most often associated with ballet and symphonic works of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: “Waltz of the Snowflakes” (Act I, No. 9) from Tchaikovsky’s *The Nutcracker* (as snowflakes dance around Clara and the Prince in a moonlit pine forest), Ravel’s *Daphnis et Chloé*, “Sirènes” from Debussy’s *Nocturnes*, and “Neptune” from Holst’s *The Planets*. The use of wordless female chorus in *Daphnis et Chloé* is most commonly traced to the influence of Debussy’s “Sirènes,” and indeed, Debussy’s symphonic poem may well have provided the most immediate model for Ravel.<sup>394</sup> Yet the ethereal sound of offstage wordless female voices was an important dramatic device in French ballet and opera dating back to the 1830s and 40s, used most commonly to connote fairy voices that beckon both onstage protagonists and audience alike into otherworldly realms. For one more example, the seductive lure of a disembodied voice also haunts the protagonist Elfrid in the second tableau (“L’Ouïe”) of the ballet *Griseldis* (1848); this voice, however, is texted. Nevertheless, its seemingly otherworldly origin causes Elfrid to wonder: “Est-ce la voix d’un ange...est-ce la voix d’une femme?”

during Myrtha's first solo dance implies two things about her character: first, that she is an innocent, angelic creature who originates in a heavenly realm (this is, of course, later proven to be untrue); and second, that she is a conduit to the divine, much like a pagan priestess accompanied by a chorus of devoted votaries or obedient spirits.

While the first section of Myrtha's *entrée* introduces her as a graceful lunar deity who glides weightlessly across the lake, the second section endows her with a more earthly sensibility. In the libretto, Myrtha "leaps now to this tuft of flowers, now to a willow branch, flying here and there, traversing and seeming to explore her tiny empire whither she comes each night to reclaim possession. She bathes herself in the water of the lake, then suspends herself from the willow branches and swings to and fro."<sup>395</sup> Not all of these activities appear in Justamant's staging manual, but Justamant's figures and annotations do indicate that Myrtha picks flowers, climbs trees, and delights in the simple pleasures of her woodland garden. Here she is more Flora than Diana, more playful dryad or flower-fairy than celestial nymph or moon goddess. Appropriately, Adam's music for this second section of Myrtha's *entrée* is no longer ethereal, but now more weighty and grounded: accented syncopations and grace notes add a particularly rustic flavor. The folk-like melody closes with a broken arpeggio, echoed by the flute at phrase endings, in a seeming mimesis of echoing birdsong in the forest.<sup>396</sup> In fact, Justamant's notation shows Myrtha in a listening pose, hand to ear, and his prose indicates that she positions herself to listen to the echo.<sup>397</sup> This gesture gives her attributes of a woodland animal:

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<sup>395</sup> Translated in Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 234.

<sup>396</sup> This echo effect also evokes the feelings of distance and solitude associated with the forest, as in Heine's poem "Ich wandelte unter den Bäumen," in which the sorrowful narrator wanders through the forest, tormented by birdsong that uncannily echoes his lover's voice.

<sup>397</sup> Justamant, *Giselle ou Les Wilis*, 137.

even when reveling in the flora of her forest sanctuary, she is hyper-vigilant and sensitive to all environmental sounds. Recall, too, that this metaphor of Myrtha as a shy forest animal appeared in Gautier's letter to Heine, quoted above: when first spotted by human onlookers, Myrtha displays a "gently startled" expression, much like a doe or fawn.

After this characterization of Myrtha as a gentle, flower-gathering forest sprite, harp arpeggios mark the transition to her next solo dance. More importantly, though, the harp acts as a sonic gesture of magical transformation: lest the audience think of Myrtha only as a peaceful nature girl, the harp reminds the audience of her supernatural essence; and in the third section of Myrtha's solo scene, her identity as a diabolical witch is finally revealed. Though the introductory measure of harp accompanimental chords gives the initial impression of a simple waltz, the entrance of the melody in the second measure betrays a grotesque quality through both orchestration and melodic contour. Adam gives the melody to the upper woodwinds, and the combination of piccolo and oboe in particular lends a shrill, piercing timbre reminiscent of other musical portrayals of the grotesque, such as the E-flat clarinet solo in the fifth movement "Dream of a Witches' Sabbath" from Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*. In addition, the melody opens with large upward leaps and a quick G octave alternation. This jerky motion, far removed from the smooth lyricism of Myrtha's entrance, dehumanizes Myrtha with a musical representation that uses the awkward, angular, distorted melodic movement and excessive, mechanical virtuosity associated with automatons such as Olympia from *Tales of Hoffmann* or Coppélia.<sup>398</sup>

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<sup>398</sup> Rodney Stenning Edgecombe, "The Musical Representation of the Grotesque in Nineteenth-Century Opera," *Opera Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (2000).

Another unsettling effect heard during this dance is its second eight-measure phrase, which seems to figuratively “answer” Myrtha’s jerky waltz melody. The opening phrase is scored for flute, piccolo, and oboe in octaves; the second phrase adds clarinets and is harmonized in parallel thirds. The parallel thirds of the second phrase seem to conjure forth a choir of fellow witches, cackling in concert with Myrtha and lending their pledges of support. Moreover, the shift from a unison melody (albeit with octave doublings) into parallel thirds can be metaphorically understood as the splitting from one “voice” into two, an act of reproduction. After all, Myrtha has self-replicating abilities: she is able to multiply her evils forces by summoning Wilis from the landscape and by creating new Wilis, as she does with Giselle. Furthermore, as mentioned above, one of the ways in which the Wilis’ Sublime garden is coded as a feminine space is through its intense, even hyperactive impetus towards reproduction. Just as the Wilis’ habitat is overgrown with shrubs, grasses, and enormous trees, their queen has supernatural abilities to generate a vast sisterhood of vampiric nymphs.

Myrtha confirms her powers to generate, initiate, and coordinate an army of Wilis at the conclusion of her third solo dance. She cuts a branch of rosemary and the violins play three ascending sixteenth-note triplet figures, akin to a series of “flourish” gestures as Myrtha brandishes her “flowery scepter” (as it is dubbed by the libretto).<sup>399</sup> According

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<sup>399</sup> Myrtha’s rosemary branch has at least two precedents in opera: the mistletoe branch in Bellini’s *Norma*, and the cypress branch in Meyerbeer’s *Robert le diable*. In *Norma*, the eponymous Druid priestess cuts a bough of sacred mistletoe as part of a ritual honoring the moon goddess; in *Robert le diable*, the fiendish Bertram urges Robert to steal a mystical cypress branch from the marble effigy of St. Rosalie, housed in the saint’s ruined convent. Seduced by the ghosts of debauched nuns, Robert steals the branch – and a kiss from the abbess Hélène – then uses the cypress wand to become invisible and enter the chambers of his beloved Isabelle, with intent to abduct her (Figure 3.3). However, upon Isabelle’s declaration that she loves him, Robert breaks the branch, thus ending its magic spell. The mistletoe and cypress branches in *Norma* and *Robert le diable*, respectively, are invested with otherworldly powers and an aura of reverence; so, too, is the case with Myrtha’s rosemary branch. And like the cypress branch in *Robert le diable*, Myrtha’s rosemary branch will also be broken, though not of her own volition. Later in the century, Mérante’s ballet

to Justamant's staging manual, Myrtha takes the branch and walks around the stage in a circle: thus, she uses the rosemary branch not merely as a scepter, symbol of temporal and political power, but also as both crosier and censer with which she demarcates and consecrates the Wilis' ritual enclosure. After all, much like a bishop, she is shepherd to her flock, and by holding out the rosemary branch as she walks, she spreads its aromatic fragrance like incense.<sup>400</sup> Furthermore, the branch is a botanical "limb" that acts as analogue to and extension of Myrtha's own arm: thus, Myrtha's body is once again aligned with the landscape, encouraging the audience to imagine her as a type of hamadryad or other ecomorphic woman (Figure 6.3).

Myrtha's branch is also a magic wand that she uses to summon her Wilis constituents from the earth. She "speaks," according to Justamant's staging manual, holding her branch and addressing each side of the stage: "All of you who sleep in this earth and who, like me, died for love...I, your queen, want to see you—come out of your tombs."<sup>401</sup> This passage, marked *évocation magique* in Adam's score, is a four-part chorale intoned by two English horns and two bassoons. The unusual timbre of two English horns lends a particularly antique, religious atmosphere: as Berlioz would later write about the English horn in his *Grand traité d'instrumentation et d'orchestration modernes* (Paris, 1844), "it is a melancholy, dreamy voice, dignified too, with a retiring, remote quality which makes it superior to every other instrument when it comes to

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*Yedda* (1879) employs the same magical branch motif and, in fact, evinces a larger thematic influence from Act II of *Giselle*: the heroine Yedda visits Sakourada, Queen of the Spirits of the Night, and receives a wish-granting branch from the Tree of Life. The parallel between Sakourada and Myrtha has been noted in Hélène LaPlace-Claverie, *Écrire pour la Danse: Les livrets de ballet de Théophile Gautier à Jean Cocteau (1870–1914)* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2001), 192.

<sup>400</sup> Justamant, *Giselle ou Les Wilis*, 143. "Elle prend le rameau, et en marchant fait un rond, au tour de la scène."

<sup>401</sup> *Ibid.*

arousing images and feelings of the past, or when the composer wants to pluck the secret string of memory.”<sup>402</sup>



**Figure 6.3.** Jules Bouvier, lithograph of Adèle Dumilâtre in the role of Myrtha (1843).

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<sup>402</sup> MacDonald, *Berlioz's Orchestration Treatise: A Translation and Commentary*, 109. Berlioz praises the most famous use of two English horns in opera, the introduction of Eléazar's final aria in Halévy's *La Juive* (1835).

Above, I have considered how Myrtha's initial appearance is framed as a divine revelatory vision through its moonlight *topos* and angelic "choir" of muted violins. The religious qualities of Myrtha's *entrée* have also been emphasized by Cyril Beaumont, who imagines Myrtha as a sort of demonic Norma: "Her dance, its direction, and her sweeping gestures are really a kind of incantation, a consecration of the mystic grove to the unholy rites shortly to take place."<sup>403</sup> It is in Myrtha's magical invocation, though, that the audience is given visual and musical confirmation of the Wilis' circle as a ritual garden and sacred space. The sacral attributes of this place and its rites are reinforced in subsequent scenes, as well: chorale textures similar to the *évoation magique* appear when the Wilis present themselves before Myrtha in Act II, scene 4 (No. 10) and when Giselle kneels before Myrtha to be initiated as a new Wili in Act II, scene 5 (No. 11).

Dramatic motifs of love, death, and remembrance are also highlighted in this scene through flower symbolism. I have briefly mentioned above that Myrtha's botanical name closely associates her with the landscape; however, the nineteenth-century connotations of myrtle further illuminate Myrtha's character. Today, myrtle is usually identified as a symbol of death; however, the bestselling and widely imitated flower dictionary *Le Langage des Fleurs* (Paris, 1819) designated myrtle as an emblem of love, noting that in classical mythology, the myrtle was the tree of Venus.<sup>404</sup> And in fact, three

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<sup>403</sup> Cyril Beaumont, *The Ballet Called Giselle* (London: Dance Books, 1996 [first pub. 1944]), 120.

<sup>404</sup> To bolster this association, evidence cited by "Madame Charlotte de la Tour," the pseudonymous author of *Le Langage des Fleurs*, included that the first Roman temple to Venus was surrounded by a myrtle grove, she was worshipped by the name "Myrtie" in Greece, and she was clothed with a thousand-colored scarf and a myrtle wreath after she appeared amid the waves. Charlotte de la Tour, *Le Langage des Fleurs*, 7th ed. (Paris: Garnier, 1858), 28. Ovid identified Venus's particular use of myrtle as a screen behind which she shielded herself from the male gaze after bathing: "She was naked and drying her wet hair on the seashore. Satyrs – that naughty band – saw the goddess. She sensed it and screened her body by placing myrtle in the way: by that act she was watched over [...]." Ovid, *Fasti*, 4.141–44. Quoted and translated in Richard J. King, *Desiring Rome: Male Subjectivity and Reading Ovid's Fasti* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006), 133. King points out that men who watched goddesses bathing were usually

of the most successful ballet-pantomimes of the early nineteenth century opened with a tableau in the sacred myrtle grove of Venus: Milon and Lefebvre's *Héro et Léandre* (1799), Gardel and Lefebvre's *Vénus et Adonis* (1808), and Blache and Schneitzhoeffter's *Mars et Vénus, ou les Filets de Vulcain* (1826).<sup>405</sup> Too often in present-day productions of *Giselle*, interpretations of Myrtha reduce the Wili queen to a cold-hearted and vengeful tyrant, and dance historians often position Myrtha as the diametric opposite of the self-sacrificing title heroine: Giselle is loving and merciful, while Myrtha is uniformly malicious and vindictive.<sup>406</sup> Yet the symbolic meaning of Myrtha's name, along with the annotations in Justamant's staging manual, highlight the root cause of her demonic transformation: she died for the sake of love, albeit likely a love unrequited or betrayed. In addition, Myrtha's plucking of a rosemary branch is significant: *Le Langage des Fleurs* equates rosemary with the sentiment "your presence revives me" (*votre présence*

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punished (as in the case of Acteon, who spied on Diana), but Venus's use of the myrtle protected her from the lusty satyrs' gaze. Thus, myrtle functions "as a screen through which *venus*, or sex, can be seen." Ibid. By restricting the male heterosexual gaze, this classical image of myrtle also sanctions and even invites its presence. So, too, does the Queen of the Wilis protect her subjects from trespassing male spectators, while simultaneously encouraging the male gaze. Given this reference, we might consider the Wilis' realm as yet another nineteenth-century transmutation of the mythological gardens of Venus, a recurring motif that we have already seen in *Le Cheval de Bronze* (the celestial gardens of the planet Venus), *La Favorite* (Isla de Léon as Cythera), and *La Reine de Chypre* (Cyprus as ancient cultic site of Venus). This association, when applied to *Giselle*, offers further evidence of how Cythera and the gardens of Venus were increasingly conceptualized as places of decadence, disease, and death by the mid-nineteenth century.

<sup>405</sup> According to LaJarte, *Héro et Léandre* "eut beaucoup de succès," with 48 performances between 31 December 1799 and 3 August 1810; *Vénus et Adonis* was an "immense succès," with 90 performances between 4 October 1808 and 11 April 1821; and *Mars et Vénus* a "grand succès," with 105 performances from its premiere on 29 May 1826. LaJarte, *Bibliothèque Musicale du Théâtre de l'Opéra*, 2, 15, 67, 111. According to the Chronopéra database, *Mars et Vénus* was performed in whole or part 138 times, with its last performance on 22 February 1837, sharing a program with the Gide/Halévy/Coralli ballet-opéra *La Tentation* and Rossini's opera *Le Comte Ory*. Given the length of *La Tentation*, it is likely that this program excerpted one act of the ballet-opéra (such as the Act IV harem scene).

<sup>406</sup> For example, Karen Eliot describes Myrtha as "the icy counterpart to the forgiving, warm, and full-blooded Giselle" and, similarly, Joellen Meglin identifies Giselle and Myrtha as two facets of the female double: the angelic and the demonic, respectively. Eliot, *Dancing Lives*, 34; Meglin, "An Intertextual Reading of the *Ballet Fantastique*, Part Three," 135.



*me ranime*).<sup>407</sup> Therefore, it is fitting that the mere touch of Myrtha's magical branch is able to revive and reanimate the corpses of her fellow spurned women, now reborn as Wilis from the flowers and plants of the fertile garden landscape.

### The "Chorus" of Wilis as Embodiment of the Garden

In previous chapters, I have stressed the importance of the *chœur dansé* within the *jardin des femmes* convention, arguing that this subgenre is a means by which the garden landscape is both envoiced and embodied by its community of women. Too, I have suggested that the musical and visual imagery of the *chœur dansé* positions the women of the garden as ecomorphic beings, seemingly generated by the landscape itself. Thus, the women's *chœur dansé* can function as a feminized, corporeal representation of that landscape's imagined sexual energy. In a ballet-pantomime such as *Giselle*, however, the *chœur dansé* might seem impossible given the restrictions of the genre: where, after all, is the chorus of voices? Yet, drawing on the eighteenth-century conception of the ballet chorus (*chœur de danse*), Fiona Macintosh has recently posited the nineteenth-century *corps de ballet* as a women's chorus that represents an alternative community in counterpoint to the choruses of grand opera; Macintosh specifically identifies the *corps* in Act of *Giselle* as a "chorus of Wilis."<sup>408</sup> Applying Macintosh's argument to the present

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<sup>407</sup> Charles-Joseph Chambet, *Emblème des Fleurs, ou Parterre de Flore* (Lyon: Chambet, 1816), 65; Tour, *Le Langage des Fleurs*, 303. *Le Langage des Fleurs* also includes a legend in which the Danish countess Leonora Christina (1621–1698) develops an aversion to the smell of rosemary after her dead lover's bier is covered with these flowers. *Ibid.*, 131–32.

<sup>408</sup> "The predominantly male chorus of grand opera has been said to represent the power of the ground to determine political affairs and to have 'allowed nineteenth-century audiences to recognize the irresolvable dissonance of their own political order.' The *corps de ballet* at this time also represents communities but, as we have seen, marginal, unassimilable groups who lure, delight, but also destroy. This is true of the ballet chorus of nuns in Meyerbeer's opera [*Robert le diable*] and it is especially true of the famous chorus of Wilis in Act II of *Giselle ou les Wilis* (1841) [...]." Macintosh also points to the classical Olympian setting originally planned for Robert's finding of the cypress branch in *Robert le diable*, suggesting an

study, I propose that the Wilis' *ballabile* in Act II, scene 4 can be equated with the all-female *chœur dansé* of the operatic *jardin des femmes* convention.

To begin with, Gautier and Saint-Georges's libretto vividly portrays the Wilis as the forest glade's particular *genius loci*, or spirit of the place.<sup>409</sup> The fecundity and reproductive energy of this Sublime garden, discussed above, is realized in the Wilis' (re)birth from the landscape: "Scarcely has the Wili queen's flowery scepter rested on an object, a plant, a flower, a bush than it opens up, letting escape a new Wili who joins, in her turn, the graceful group that surrounds Myrtha [...]." <sup>410</sup> Of course, the appearance of the Wilis is not typically staged in this way, likely due to the inherent technological demands of Gautier and Saint-Georges's vision. Justamant's manual indicates the staging still familiar to today's audiences: posing in arabesque, Myrtha extends her rosemary branch (first facing stage right, then stage left) and "seems to call the Wilis," who slowly enter *en masse* from the wings.<sup>411</sup> Despite this discrepancy between libretto and staging practice, the libretto nevertheless contributes to the text-complex of *Giselle* and, in this case, reveals compelling evidence for the authors' conceptualization of Act II as an

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intertextuality between *Robert le diable* with its "chorus" of debauched nuns and the *Oresteia* with its chorus of Erinyes, or Furies. Fiona Macintosh, "Choruses, Community, and the *Corps de Ballet*," in *Choruses, Ancient and Modern*, ed. Joshua Billings, Felix Budelmann, and Fiona Macintosh (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 322–23. Here Macintosh quotes from Parakilas, "The Chorus," 92. It is my position, of course, that while male or mixed choruses may be more prevalent in grand opera than are women's choruses, examples of the latter are dramaturgically significant and have been overlooked in the historiography of grand opera.

<sup>409</sup> The significance of *genius loci* in (English-style) garden design is generally attributed to a poem from Alexander Pope's *Epistle IV, to Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington* ("Consult the genius of the place in all; That tells the waters to rise, or fall...").

<sup>410</sup> Translated in Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 235.

<sup>411</sup> "Elle coure ce poser en arabesque et semble appeler les Willis, puis vas faire de même de l'autre côté, puis descend ce placer au milieu dos au public. La reine dos au public semble les forcer à venir. Les Willis couverte d'un voile arrivent lentement et s'en ordre." Justamant, *Giselle ou Les Wilis*, 143–44. To be sure, this staging is much more straightforward and easily performed; however, attempting the stage action described in the libretto might be a worthy challenge for present-day directors.

embodied “garden of women.” Moreover, the “blossoming” of Wilis from this garden offers an important pendant to the end of the act, in which Giselle and her sisters are subsumed and re-integrated in the earth at daybreak. Not only does the pairing of these scenes poignantly illustrate the cycle of life and death within the garden (a conceit cryptically encapsulated by the famous pastoral motto “Et in Arcadia ego”), but it also depicts the Wilis as the *genius loci* of the garden, forever corporeally bound to this place.

As we have the seen in previous chapters, the *chœur dansé* of the operatic *jardin des femmes* convention tended to invoke the imagery of Classical nymphs: women in white diaphanous dresses sing and move gracefully in concert with the vibrations and undulations of the landscape.<sup>412</sup> Even in works with historical or folk settings, the mythological figure of the Classical nymph appeared as the female *genius loci* onto which pastoral fantasies of sexual freedom and availability were projected. In addition to sexual promise, the nymph archetype also epitomized other themes of the *jardin des femmes*, such as temporal distance (even apparent timelessness) and the mysterious rituals of nature-worship. In this same vein, the Wilis are introduced as a sisterhood of nymphs who perform secret rites in the recesses of nature, clad in white costumes that – in addition to connoting burial shrouds, wedding dresses, nuns’ habits, and ghostly apparitions – resemble the chitons worn by nymphs and votaries in Classical iconography.<sup>413</sup> Furthermore, Paul Lormier’s original costume design portrays the Wilis

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<sup>412</sup> Recall, for example, Castil-Blaze’s identification of Marguerite’s bathing ladies-in-waiting as slippered water-nymphs in his review of *Les Huguenots* (Chapter II) and Stella’s identification of her followers as “seductive nymphs” in the libretto of *Le Cheval de Bronze* (Chapter III), as well as Gautier’s descriptions of “more or less Anacreontic exercises” performed by young Spanish girls in *La Favorite* (Chapter IV) and “mythological” costuming for the Cypriot courtesans in the Act III orgy of *La Reine de Chypre* (Chapter V).

<sup>413</sup> Laura Colombo also links the Wilis to the ancient caryatids (namesake of the sculpted female architectural figures), young women of Caryae who danced and swung from tree branches in honor of

as ecomorphic women whose physical features and clothing link them to the air: handwritten notes on the maquette specify “very diaphanous wings” (*ailes très diaphanes*) and a white tunic with three layered skirts—a layering that gives the bottom skirt “the appearance of a light vapor” (*ce qui donnera à celle de dessous l’air d’une vapeur légère*) (Figure 6.4).

In addition to these ethereal qualities, Lormier’s design invests the Wilis with an earthly ecomorphism—after all, these supernatural women have emerged from the flora of Myrtha’s glade. Indeed, Lormier’s maquette is not the all-white mass of tulle typically seen in present-day productions.<sup>414</sup> The Wilis’ wings are, in keeping with the libretto, tinted azure—the color of the summer sky.<sup>415</sup> In addition, Lormier incorporates verdure into the Wilis’ costumes: a green ribboned neckline (*ruban vert*), silver belt (*ceinture argent*), and cutaway slit in the skirt are all trimmed with verbena and little flowers (*toutes les garnitures seront verveine à petites fleurs*); and in their hair, the Wilis wear a crown of reeds and verbena (*roseaux et verveine*).

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Artemis Caryatis (Artemis of the Walnut Tree). Colombo, “Les Pas de la Déesse,” 357. This suggestion is intriguing, but requires a minor clarification: Colombo claims that in the *Giselle* libretto, Myrtha bathes in the lake while the Wilis sway from trees; but to be specific, it is only Myrtha who “suspends herself from the willow branches and swings to and fro” and not the entire company of Wilis. Libretto translation taken from Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 234.

<sup>414</sup> The preference for exclusively white costuming is likely an aesthetic inherited from twentieth-century abstract art, exemplified in works such as Fokine’s modernist ballet *Les Sylphides* (1909). On the stark differences between the modernism of *Les Sylphides* and the Romanticism of *La Sylphide* (1832), see “*La Sylphide* and *Les Sylphides*,” in *Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer: Paris, 1830–1914*, ed. Annegret Fauser and Mark Everist (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 256–75.

<sup>415</sup> “This last named [Myrtha], hearing the azure wings of her subjects, then gives them the signal to dance.” Reproduced and translated in *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 235.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 6.4.** Paul Lormier, costume maquette for Giselle (and, presumably, the other Wilis) in Act II of *Giselle* (1841). F-Po D.216-13 (81).

Lormier's choice of verbena, or vervain, in his costume design is significant. According to the popular flower dictionary *Le Langage des Fleurs*, verbena symbolized enchantment and was associated with ancient pagan divinations; the pseudonymous author of *Le Langage des Fleurs* goes on to say that Venus Victrix (Venus the Victorious) carries a crown of myrtle interlaced with verbena, and that Germans traditionally give a chaplet of verbena to a newlywed bride, to place her under Venus's protection.<sup>416</sup> I have already mentioned Myrtha's connection to Venus by virtue of her name: myrtle was a plant considered sacred to Venus. Lormier's costume design likewise links the Wilis to Venus through the prominent use of verbena flowers, associated not only with the Roman goddess of love, but with other pagan rituals and mysteries, as well. The Wilis' crowns, moreover, are an ironic touch: if myrtle-and-verbena crowns are traditionally associated with Venus Victrix, the Wilis's reed-and-verbena crowns position them as nymphs in service of a love-thwarted Venus who achieves her victory through revenge against men.<sup>417</sup> Even more compelling is the association in *Le Langage des*

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<sup>416</sup> "La verveine servait chez les anciens à diverses sortes de divinations ; on lui attribuait mille propriétés, entre autres celle de réconcilier les ennemis ; et, toutes les fois que les Romains envoyaient des hérauts d'armes porter chez les nations la paix ou la guerre, l'un d'eux était porteur de verveine. Les druides avaient pour cette plante la plus grande vénération ; avant de la cueillir, ils faisaient un sacrifice à la Terre. C'est ainsi que les mages, en adorant le soleil, tenaient dans leurs mains des branches de verveine. Vénus victorieuse portait une couronne de myrte entrelacée de verveine, et les Allemands donnent encore aujourd'hui un chapeau de verveine aux nouvelles mariées, comme pour les mettre sous la protection de cette déesse." Tour, *Le Langage des Fleurs*, 82–83.

<sup>417</sup> Though often thought of as a gentle and softly voluptuous goddess, Venus also functioned as a triumphant warrior in her avatar as Venus Victrix. Moreover, the image of Venus as not only an ideal of feminine beauty but also a cold, immovable, vengeful, and destructive woman had previously appeared in Prosper Mérimée's "La Vénus d'Ille," first published in *La Revue des deux mondes*, 1837. On the 1820 rediscovery of the Venus de Milo sculpture and its impact on late nineteenth-century Parnassian poets, who displayed a "clear preference for the stone figure and warring Venus (or the hard Diana) over softer Venuses who patronize love and sexuality," see Gretchen Schultz, *The Gendered Lyric: Subjectivity and Difference in Nineteenth-Century French Poetry*, Purdue Studies in Romance Literatures (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1999), 128. On the manifestation of Venus as Venus Victrix, see Pamela Gordon, "Some Unseen Monster: Rereading Lucretius on Sex," in *The Roman Gaze: Vision, Power, and the Body*, ed. David Fredrick (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 101–04; Walter Burkert,

*Fleurs* between verbena crowns and German brides protected by Venus: thus, much like the waltzes that permeate Adam's score, the Wilis' verbena crowns are another marker of place in *Giselle*.<sup>418</sup> Moreover, the Wilis wear these crowns not as true brides, but rather to symbolize their desire for that which was prevented in their lifetimes; too, these crowns symbolize their fealty to Myrtha, a type of demonic Venus Victrix.

Of course, Myrtha can be understood as a folkloric treatment of not only Venus Victrix but also the huntress Diana; above I have mentioned Myrtha's connection to Diana, musically reinforced in Adam's score by the moonlight *topos*. And although Myrtha's solitary bathing described in Gautier and Saint-Georges's libretto is not included in Justamant's staging manual, the Wilis' *ballabile* contains gestures suggestive of a bathing scene, perhaps invoking the image of Artemisian nymphs at their bath. For, like that mythological female tribe, the Wilis hunt and kill the men who enter their private realm and witness their rituals.<sup>419</sup> Thus, this possible reference to bathing obliquely foreshadows the Wilis' murderous instincts—but it also reminds us of the gentle, peaceful side of the Wilis when sheltered within their own space of homosocial intimacy. As part of their *ballabile*, the Wilis prostrate themselves and repeatedly stretch their arms and upper bodies forward and back; Cyril Beaumont's simplified

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*Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth*, trans. Peter Bing (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), 80.

<sup>418</sup> On the German color associated with the waltz by nineteenth-century audiences, see Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 191–92.

<sup>419</sup> Though ballets and operas with mythological subjects were no longer in fashion, the myth of Diana, her nymphs, and the male voyeur Acteon was very much culturally current: examples include the humorous painting of this tableau in the Scribe/Auber opéra-comique *Actéon* (1835), along with Mérimée's novella *Carmen* (1845), in which men watch bathing women, readily imagining them as Diana and her nymphs without risking "the fate of Actéon." Though this scene is lost in Bizet's opera *Carmen*, the 1984 Francesco Rossi film version of Bizet's *Carmen* preserves some of this imagery: Carmen and her friends frolic in the water, watched first by an officer through binoculars and then by the village townsmen who lean over a wall.

choreographic script of *Giselle* offers one eye-witness account of how this movement was performed in productions of the early twentieth century: after forming a diamond-shaped figure, the Wilis “all kneel on [the left] knee facing to center, arms to floor, backs curved and heads to ground, and do a *port de bras* [four] times, the torso bending backward then forward, the [right] arm passing over head.”<sup>420</sup> This physical gesture is similar to the type of deep bows made in homage to a deity or ruler, and is therefore a sign of Myrtha’s royal authority over the Wilis. However, it is also reminiscent of a bathing scene, with the women’s curved backs and arm extensions as slow, stylized gestures that represent swimming or the splashing water onto oneself. Moreover, the Wilis’ arms create a wave-like motion that makes their bodies seem to anthropomorphize the gentle undulations of the pond, the rushes on its banks, and the moonlight that dapples its surface.

Perhaps it is due to these visual connotations of flowing water that the Wilis’ *ballabile* has been characterized as a barcarole by Rodney Stenning Edgecombe. Edgecombe notes that the barcarole was often associated with voyage to a supernatural world, and categorizes the Wilis’ *ballabile* as a “psychopompic barcarole” that “depicts a movement between mythologically demarcated worlds” and “[measures] the distance with an *incessus deificus* (godly motion).”<sup>421</sup> Attractive as this reading is, the music of the Wilis’ *ballabile* lacks the 6/8 meter and strong-weak (usually quarter note, eighth note) rhythms of a barcarole. The *ballabile* does, however, have other elements vaguely suggestive of water: an arpeggiated harp accompaniment that create a constant, circulating pattern; thirty-second-note triplet figures and trills in the flute that might be

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<sup>420</sup> Beaumont, *The Ballet Called Giselle*, 110.

<sup>421</sup> Rodney Stenning Edgecombe, "On the Limits of Genre: Some Nineteenth-Century Barcaroles," *Nineteenth-Century Music* 24, no. 3 (2001): 259.



likened to ripples and shimmers on the water's surface; and a syncopated melody that could suggest a treading or paddling of the water. This syncopated melody might also lend a vocal quality to this section, since syncopation and pitch repetition were among the techniques used by ballet composers of the 1830s and 40s to evoke speech patterns.<sup>422</sup> The waltzes of the Wilis' subsequent Fantastic ball are clearly dance music; this passage, on the other hand, is somewhat evocative of human voices, thus aligning it more closely with the operatic *chœur dansé*.

Another important characteristic shared by the Wilis' *ballabile* and the *chœur dansé* of the operatic *jardin des femmes* is relatively simple, largely unified movement.<sup>423</sup> As we have seen in previous chapters, the *chœur dansé* does not usually have the same virtuosic physical demands as would be found in the *divertissement*. Rather than dazzling the audience with technical feats, the *chœur dansé* of the *jardin des femmes* convention typically uses slower, stylized gestures and diegetic activities that align a group of

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<sup>422</sup> Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 111.

<sup>423</sup> Despite the obvious anachronism, similar conceptions of the *chœur dansé* can be found in early twentieth-century modern dance. Three of the best-known works to employ the *chœur dansé* are Ted Shawn's *Chœur dansé* (1926), Mary Wigman's *Totenmal* (1930), and Martha Graham's *Choric Dance for an Antique Greek Tragedy* (1932). Both Shawn's and Graham's pieces are neoclassical, and the three dancers of Shawn's *Chœur dansé* can even be understood as the Three Muses. The choric dance as a ceremonial expression of community gained particular prominence in the work of Mary Wigman, who classified dance into three categories: solo, group, and choric. For Wigman, choric dance was mass unison, characterized by stark simplicity of gesture; rather than individual variety and variation, choric dance drew its emotional and dramatic impact from the magnification of unified movement. Although Wigman viewed choric dance as the best expression of abstract, "pure" dance, her use of choric dance has been read as a "dance of the communal body" that thematized "the transformation of the individual [...] into the member of a group or community and the acceptance of the leader." Marion Kant, "Death and the Maiden: Mary Wigman in the Weimar Republic," in *Dance and Politics*, ed. Alexandra Kolb (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011), 128–30. Kant argues that Wigman's choric dance suggested a proto-fascist aesthetic. On Wigman's three categories of dance, see Mary Anne Santos Newhall, *Mary Wigman* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 126–27.

women with the natural world.<sup>424</sup> In keeping with this aesthetic, the Wilis' *ballabile* includes moments of mock-bathing and cotillion-like round dancing, though this idyllic pastoral imagery is soon subverted by an unsettling sequence of chug steps *en arabesque* (sometimes referred to as “cow hops”) that make the Wilis look like staggering, reanimated corpses—a veritable mid-nineteenth-century zombie army.<sup>425</sup>

Furthermore, I have argued that the vocabulary of movements used in *chœurs dansés* of the *jardin des femmes* convention does not merely associate women with nature, but can also position the women as mimetic mirrors or even topographical elements of the landscape itself—and simultaneously, the various shapes and sinuous curves of landscape merge with and are conceived as the movements and forms of a living female entity.<sup>426</sup> For, unlike formal *divertissements* that emphasize a variety of individual performances, the *chœur dansé* – and, for that matter, the *ballabile* – is a medium in which multiple (female) bodies fuse, forming a single communal body that functions as a spatial-corporeal metaphor for a feminized panorama surveyed by the desiring gaze. As one such united *corps*, the Wilis embody a Burkean Sublime landscape, with its uneasy yet nonetheless seductive blend of pleasure, wonder, and terror.

The aesthetics of Burke's Sublime in *Giselle* have been addressed by Debra Sowell, who describes the Wilis as “inspiring both attraction and fear” and their forest

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<sup>424</sup> Such is the case, for example, with the “bathing” women of *Les Huguenots* (who did not really bathe, but rather formed graceful poses and groups) and the flower-gathering, fabric-hanging women of *La Favorite*.

<sup>425</sup> To clarify, the technique of chug steps *en arabesque* – hopping forward on a single leg with the other leg extended behind – is in fact quite taxing on the performer; my description of the *chœur dansé/ballabile* movements as “relatively simple” refers to visual appearance from the audience's perspective.

<sup>426</sup> We have seen this, for example, in *La Reine de Chypre* (Chapter V), when the courtesans' dizzying “tourbillon” is analogous to the coiled vines of the casino garden.

glade as “a realm of terror as well as beauty.”<sup>427</sup> Indeed, Burke emphasizes darkness and obscurity as conducive to the Sublime, pointing out that for this reason “the druids performed all their ceremonies in the bosom of the darkest woods, and in the shade of the oldest and most spreading oaks.”<sup>428</sup> Fittingly, then, the Wilis’ dancing circle is enclosed by a thick forest, and they emerge only after midnight to perform their rituals (akin to the druidic sacrifices imagined by Burke). Yet I would go further than Sowell: the Wilis do not merely dwell in a Sublime realm and share its aesthetic properties; rather, they can be understood as a visual and physical realization of the Sublime landscape itself. For, in addition to darkness and obscurity, other attributes of the Burkean Sublime are vastness, infinity, and eternity; noting that “succession and uniformity of parts” could create an “artificial infinite.”<sup>429</sup> In their opening *ballabile*, the Wilis’ coordinated movements and uniformly white costuming constitute one such “artificial infinite,” or the impression of a vast, seemingly endless landscape.

Closely linked to the infinite in Burke’s theory of the Sublime is the concept of magnificence, a quality also exemplified by the Wilis’ *ballabile*. Burke defines magnificence as “a great profusion of things which are splendid or valuable in themselves,” using the starry heavens as an example: a large quantity of stars scattered

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<sup>427</sup> Sowell primarily focuses on the title character: “As a wili, Giselle embodies Burke’s notion of the sublime by inspiring both attraction and fear. [...] Her fate is not softened or tamed; she is consigned eternally to a realm of terror as well as beauty. Thus, the full weight of the ballet’s tragic sublimity—its mixed message of beauty and suffering—falls upon the ballerina’s shoulders.” Debra Hickenlooper Sowell, “Romantic Landscapes for Dance: Ballet Narratives and Edmund Burke’s Theory of the Sublime,” *Dance Chronicle* 34, no. 2 (2011): 211–12. Sowell’s analysis also incorporates Jay Appelton’s theoretical model of landscape as prospect, refuge, or hazard (*The Experience of Landscape*, 1975): “The wilderness setting of Act II, where Giselle’s grave is located, presents a distinct hazard, one that cannot be circumscribed by reason or explained by scientific analysis. Wilis, the spirits of young women who loved to dance and died before their wedding day, roam the forest at night and dance to death any men they encounter.” *Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>428</sup> Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, 55.

<sup>429</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

throughout the sky with seeming randomness gives the impression of “a sort of infinity.”<sup>430</sup> Certainly, the Wilis’ choreography as recorded in Justamant’s staging manual and Beaumont’s simplified choreographic script is neither random nor disorganized. Yet in their luminous white dresses, the Wilis still might be likened to the stars of Burke’s Sublime skyscape: their large number and shifting arrangements are not only magnificent, but also disorienting. Indeed, one of the dizzying pleasures of the *jardin des femmes* for male spectators and onstage protagonists alike is the overwhelming feeling of being embedded within Nature/Woman and the confusion of becoming lost, unable to discern one landform/female figure from the next.<sup>431</sup> This sentiment epitomizes the Sublime: as Burke notes, that which is “confused” and “uncertain” is more capable of inspiring “grander passions” than that which is “clear and determinate.”<sup>432</sup>

To be clear, although the Wilis’ initial appearance embodies the Sublime landscape through kaleidoscopic shifting patterns performed in shroud-chitons, the entirety of their communal dancing is not purely abstract *ballet blanc*—a misconception long since disproved by Lisa Arkin and Marian Smith.<sup>433</sup> The Wilis’ *ballabile* gives an

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<sup>430</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>431</sup> This sentiment is also experienced by the protagonist James in the ballet *La Sylphide* (1832): surrounded by the sylphs’ sisterhood in the forest of Act II, he is unable to locate his beloved Sylph—but delights in this confusing spectacle. Theorists in the Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytical tradition have interpreted wild, overwhelming feminized landscapes as representing male anxieties of engulfment and dissolution within the powerful (M)Other, simultaneously “desired and feared, [...] both phallic and castrated.” Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, 106. Rose summarizes the work of Kolodny, Stott, and Theweleit on this topic. Within the discipline of musicology, Christopher Morris has analyzed German cinematic, operatic, and symphonic representations of male masochism in relation to the Sublime landscape of Alpine mountains and glaciers, feminized as a cruel and powerful Mother. See Christopher Morris, “Music, Modernism and the Alpine Sublime” (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society, Indianapolis, IN, 2010); *Modernism and the Cult of Mountains: Music, Opera, Cinema* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012).

<sup>432</sup> Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, 58.

<sup>433</sup> Arkin and Smith, “National Dance in the Romantic Ballet,” 45–51. See also Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 191–95.

initial impression of “spectral uniformity” and the vast Sublime, but the Wilis soon display their various nationalities (Spanish, Indian, French, and German) in the Fantastic ball that follows.<sup>434</sup> The Wilis’ Fantastic ball is, moreover, a rich discursive nexus that encompasses two garden types prized for their variety: the botanical garden, motivated by desires to recreate the Edenic Paradise garden; and the conservatory, the sometime-zoological garden and sometime-greenhouse described by Simon Schama as “Arcadia under glass.”<sup>435</sup> Therefore, as we shall see, the construction of Myrtha’s forest glade as a “garden of women” is a dense and multilayered metaphor that draws on various gardens of myth, literature, and contemporary horticultural practice.

### **The Fantastic Ball as Botanical Garden and Conservatory**

Although the Wilis did not retain the ethnic costumes originally envisioned by Gautier, the final libretto still prescribed distinct nationalities for various members of Myrtha’s court: “First Moyna, the Odalisque, executing an oriental step; then Zulmé, the Bayadere, who displays her Indian poses, then two French women, dancing a sort of bizarre minuet; then the German women, waltzing among themselves.”<sup>436</sup> These

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<sup>434</sup> I borrow the term “spectral uniformity” from Gautier’s original scenario for *Giselle*, in which he envisions the various international Wilis in their native costumes: “All these costumes, exotic and otherwise, are discolored and they take on a sort of spectral uniformity.” Quoted and translated in *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 174.

<sup>435</sup> John Prest, *The Garden of Eden Botanic Garden and the Re-Creation of Paradise* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981); Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 560–70. Schama summarizes Prest’s findings on New World exploration and its impact on the botanical garden: “[...] the exploration of the New World, with the discovery of a marvelous range of hitherto unknown species, had created a rich new topography of paradise. Eden, it was speculated, not least by Columbus himself, might be in the Southern Hemisphere. If these wonders of the tropics and the Orient could be shipped home, collected, named, and arranged within the confines of the botanical garden at Padua or Paris or Oxford, an exhaustive, living encyclopedia of creation could be assembled that would again testify to the stupendous ingenuity of the Creator.” *Ibid.*, 537.

<sup>436</sup> Reproduced and translated in Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 235.

international Wilis – along with a Spanish Wili, seemingly held over from Gautier’s original plan – were likewise signaled with characteristic (if stereotypical) musical cues in Adam’s score.<sup>437</sup> This array of national dances at the Wilis’ Fantastic ball mirrored the fad for national dances in Parisian ballrooms and at the Opéra’s public ball *divertissements*, as Arkin and Smith have shown.<sup>438</sup> And since Opéra balls were held during Carnival season, the Wilis’ Fantastic ball can perhaps be recognized as an otherworldly, carnivalesque image of the Parisian *bal public*.<sup>439</sup>

Yet the gathering of representative Wilis from different countries might also be recognized as a type of botanical garden, in which the diversity of Myrtha’s court not only demonstrates the breath of her royal authority, but also represents a living horticultural museum. After all, the Wilis emerge from the earth and therefore can be

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<sup>437</sup> These brief passages of “ethnic” music are identified and reproduced in Arkin and Smith, “National Dance in the Romantic Ballet,” 48–49. See also Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 192–94.

<sup>438</sup> Arkin and Smith, “National Dance in the Romantic Ballet,” 17–20.

<sup>439</sup> A carnivalesque reading of the Wilis’ Fantastic ball, though beyond the scope of the present study, is an intriguing topic for future inquiry. Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of carnival and the carnivalesque was pioneered in his classic text *Rabelais and His World* (1965). For an interpretation of nineteenth-century Australian costume balls through the lens of Bakhtin’s carnivalesque, see Anita Callaway, *Visual Ephemera: Theatrical Art in Nineteenth-Century Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2000), 85–101. Masked balls at the Paris Opéra in the 1830s and ’40s is examined in Ann Ilan Alter, “Masked and Unmasked at the Opera Balls: Parisian Women Celebrate Carnival,” in *Masquerade and Identities: Essays on Gender, Sexuality and Marginality*, ed. Efrat Tseëlon (London: Routledge, 2001), 135–52; “Pursuing Pleasure at the Masked Balls at the Opera during the July Monarchy,” *Laurels: The Magazine of the American Society of the French Legion of Honor* 60, no. 2 (1989): 101–18. Alter points out that Louis Véron’s lowering of ticket prices for the Opéra balls effectively transformed this event “from an exclusive, sedate aristocratic preserve into a popular *bal vulgaire*, attracting as many as 6,500 to 7,000 Parisians from all social classes.” “Masked and Unmasked at the Opera Balls,” 138. This unusual intermingling of social classes is a trademark of the Bakhtinian “world upside down.” On the staging of public balls at the Opéra in the eighteenth century, see Richard Templar Semmens, *The Bals Publics at the Paris Opéra in the Eighteenth Century*, Dance and Music Series (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2004). The aesthetic of the Carnival ball was, of course, re-presented on the Opéra stage in the famous masked ball scene of Auber’s *Gustave III*, summed up by one critic as “an unbelievable profusion of women, gauze, velvet, the grotesque and the elegant, good taste and bad, trifles, affectations, wit, folly, verve...” Quoted and translated in Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 43. See Hibberd’s discussion of the carnivalesque in the *Gustave III* ball scene in Hibberd, *French Grand Opera and the Historical Imagination*, 71–75. Hibberd emphasizes the ability of carnival to “offer an ‘instant par excellence’ that arguably celebrated ‘nothing but itself,’” as defined in Jean Starobinski, *L’Invention de la liberté* (Geneva: Skira, 1987), 85–86.

understood as *femme-fleurs* (or, as we shall see below, rare entomological species). And in this Fantastic *jardin animé*, different nationalities of women are akin to different varietals of exotic flowers from around the world.<sup>440</sup> Previously, we have seen the image of an international “garden of women” as a metaphor for the seraglio, where ethnic variety was meant to appease different men’s sexual appetites—or one man’s desire to sample.<sup>441</sup> Viewing types of harem women as types of garden flowers is a longstanding cultural trope, as Joan DelPlato reminds us; and this image blends Orientalist eroticism with the Linnaean science of botanical taxonomy.<sup>442</sup> (Lest an Orientalist sensibility seem

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<sup>440</sup> A half century earlier, Carmontelle’s design of the Parc Monceau had compiled *fabriques* (architectural follies) from “all times and places”— a Dutch windmill, a miniature Egyptian pyramid, a temple of Mars, an Italian vineyard, a Tatar tent, and so forth. Carmontelle’s aim, however, was to create theatrical illusion within the confines of nature: “Si l’on peut faire d’un Jardin pittoresque un pays d’illusions, pourquoi s’y refuser? On ne s’amuse que d’illusions, si la liberté les guide, que l’Art les dirige, et l’on ne s’éloignera jamais de la nature... Transportons, dans nos Jardins, les changements de scène de l’Opéra; faisons-y voir, en réalité, ce que les plus habiles Peintres pourraient y offrir en décorations, *tous les temps et tous les lieux*.” (If one can make a picturesque garden a land of illusions, why not do it? One is amused solely by illusions, if liberty guides them, and art directs them, and one will never depart from nature... Let us convey, in our gardens, the scene changes of the Opéra; let us show, in reality, that which the most skilled painters could offer in décor, *all times and all places*.) Louis de Carmontelle, *Jardin de Monceau, près de Paris, appartenant à son altesse sérénissime Monseigneur le Duc de Chartres* (Paris: Delafosse, 1779), 4. Quoted in Robert Rosenblum, *Transformations in Late Eighteenth-Century Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 114, fn 28.

<sup>441</sup> See for example the presence of international women in the following harems: the Georgian, Circassian, French, and other ethnic women who populated Nadir’s wished-for “paradise of Mohammed” in *Le Paradis de Mahomet* (the Qu’ranic paradise was likened to a seraglio in Western writings); the international women (Russian, Spanish, English, Italian, and more) aboard the pirates’ ship in Act II of *L’île des Pirates*; and the four European women (Scottish, German, French, Spanish) introduced to Achmet’s harem in Act I of *La Péri*. One hundred years prior to *L’île des Pirates* (premiered 12 August 1835), the harem as *jardin des femmes* was staged in the third *entrée* of Rameau’s opéra-ballet *Les Indes galantes* (premiered 23 August 1735), titled “Les Fleurs: Fête Persane.” Set in the gardens of the palace of Ali, favorite of the Persian prince Tacmas, “Les Fleurs” culminates in “La Fête des Fleurs,” a pageant in which “pleasing odalisques from different countries of Asia” present themselves as the various flowers: rose, daffodil, and so forth. In this Persian flower festival, then, women are classified in terms of both national origin and species of flower.

<sup>442</sup> Joan DelPlato, *Multiple Wives, Multiple Pleasures: Representing the Harem, 1800–1875* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2002), 207. The sexualization of plant life was a major trend of eighteenth-century scientific thought, from Linnaeus to Erasmus Darwin’s *The Loves of the Plants* (1789). On the application of Linnaeus’s botanical classification to both human sexuality and geographic-political identity in European discourse, see Irvin C. Schick, *The Erotic Margin: Sexuality and Spatiality in Alteritist Discourse* (New York: Verso, 1999), 7. In her discussion of “bloom” as a vocabulary of sexual maturation and courtship in English novels, Amy King likewise points to Linnean botany as providing the scientific justification for longstanding associations between flowers and sexuality. See Chapter I, “Linnaeus’s

out of place in the German setting of *Giselle*, recall Gautier's open letter to Heine, quoted in full above, in which he likened the flowers of the forest glade to "large blooms of Java" and noted that "a sort of burning sensuous atmosphere circulates in this dense and humid darkness.") In this sense, Myrtha's botanical garden of women can be interpreted a nightmarish seraglio gone wrong: indeed, when the Wilis surround a group of drunken villagers traipsing through the forest in Act II, scene 6, "each of the Wilis seeks to detain the men, to please them with the figures of their native dance."<sup>443</sup>

The botanical garden was not only a metaphor for the seraglio, but also part of a colonialist impulse to re-assemble and re-create the Garden of Eden by locating, collecting, and classifying all species of Creation. The development of the botanical garden, as John Prest demonstrates, was spurred by the so-called discovery of the New World and the subsequent desire to gather its exotic specimens into a single garden that would recapture Eden and anticipate Paradise.<sup>444</sup> The colonialist agenda of the botanical garden is particularly apparent in the ballet-pantomime *Ozai* (1847), which includes among its cast fictionalized representations of the eighteenth-century French explorers Louis-Antoine de Bougainville and Jean-François-Marie de Surville. Act II, set in the gardens of Bougainville's mansion, features a glittering fête that celebrates international variety:

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Blooms: The Birth of the Botanical Vernacular," in King, *Bloom: The Botanical Vernacular in the English Novel*, 11–47.

<sup>443</sup> From Gautier and Saint-Georges's libretto, reproduced and translated in Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 235. Despite this indication in the libretto, Adam's score only includes musical cues for German and French Wilis (using Arkin and Smith's identifications).

<sup>444</sup> Prest, *The Garden of Eden*, 1. See also Dany Sautot, "À l'époque de Chateaubriand, le voyage des plantes entre imaginaire et exotisme," in *Jardins Romantiques Français: Du jardin des Lumières au parc romantique, 1770–1840*, ed. Catherine de Bourgoing (Paris: Musée de la Vie romantique, 2011), 141–44.



Les jardins sont remplis de personnes invitées, revêtues des costumes de tous les pays. Les danseurs se forment en quadrilles. Surville et M<sup>lle</sup> Bougainville se font remarquer dans un pas où figurent les quatre parties du monde. Les musiciens jouent des airs nationaux de chaque pays.<sup>445</sup>

The gardens are full of invited guests, clothed in costumes of all countries. The dancers form quadrilles. Surville and Mademoiselle Bougainville distinguish themselves in a *pas* where the Four Quarters of the World are represented. The musicians play national airs of each country.

Granted, the “Four Corners of the World” divertissement does not explicitly portray international women as flowers or plants. Rather, the libretto indicates six Provençales, a “quadrille of Europeans” (four male-female couples), eight bayadères, eight almées, eight Americans, fifteen Tahitians, and fourteen peasants of unspecified national origin; and Paul Lormier’s costume designs include sketches for women of Africa, Greece, America, Ispahan (Iran), Sezze (Italy), and two French women—a grisette and an *Arlésienne* (Figures 6.5–6.11).<sup>446</sup> Yet I would argue that these women of various countries – as the source of entertainment and visual pleasure – are the exotic specimens and ornamental “follies” of Bougainville’s garden. These women have been plucked from their native lands and transported to an opulent garden, where they are displayed as a composite whole for the delight of elite society and the “collector’s pride” of Bougainville. In a ballet centered on the exploration and conquest of both land (Tahiti) and woman (the island girl Ozaï), this “Four Corners of the World” divertissement functions as a *mise en abyme* that celebrates the colonialist acquisition of biological treasures from around the world. The staging of this divertissement within Bougainville’s

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<sup>445</sup> *Ozaï / ballet en deux actes et six tableaux / par M. J. Coralli, / musique de M. Casimir Gide, / décors de M. Cicéri, / représenté pour la première fois / sur le Théâtre de l'Académie Royale de Musique, / le 26 avril 1847* (Paris: Jonas, 1847), 12–13.

<sup>446</sup> There is some discrepancy between the libretto and costume designs: for example, Lormier’s maquette for an African woman is labeled “Africaine/Gallois,” but the libretto lists M<sup>lle</sup> Gallois as an almée.

garden, moreover, suggests the same type of colonialist science that fueled the rise of botanical gardens. As proprietor of this garden in which living female specimens are reassembled from the far expanses of the globe, Bougainville positions himself as the Adam – or even God – reigning over a new Eden.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 6.5.** Paul Lormier, costume maquette for M<sup>lle</sup> Gallois as an African woman in *Ozai* (1847). F-Po D.216-16 (9).



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 6.6.** Paul Lormier, costume maquette for a “young Greek girl of the archipelago” in *Ozai* (1847). F-Po D.216-16 (10).



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 6.7.** Paul Lormier, costume maquette for a grisette in *Ozai* (1847).

F-Po D.216-16 (11).



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 6.8.** Paul Lormier, costume maquette for an American [Indian] woman in *Ozai* (1847). F-Po D.216-16 (12).





Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 6.9.** Paul Lormier, costume maquette for an Arlésienne in *Ozaï* (1847).

F-Po D.216-16 (13).



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 6.10.** Paul Lormier, costume maquette for a young girl of Ispahan in *Ozaï* (1847).  
F-Po D.216-16 (14).



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 6.11.** Paul Lormier, costume maquette for a woman of Sezze in *Ozai* (1847).<sup>447</sup>  
F-Po D.216-16 (18).

What, though, does this ideology of the botanical garden have to do with *Giselle*, a work undoubtedly concerned with hierarchical power structures of gender and social class but lacking the colonialist plot of *Ozai*? I would suggest that the assortment of international women at the Wilis' Fantastic ball, if not part of a colonialist enterprise, is nevertheless representative of the botanical garden and the desire to reconstruct Eden. By bringing together Wilis of various nations within a sylvan garden, the Fantastic ball reverses the postlapsarian diaspora. Yet although Myrtha's garden is indeed a resurrected Eden – the mythic source of all earthly life – this realm of corpses reborn as *femme-fleurs*

<sup>447</sup> As evidence of costume designers' attention to geographic authenticity and local color, see for comparison the hair ribbons, muslin blouse, and colored bodice/vest of the woman pictured in Louis-Leopold Robert's *Tête de femme de Sezze* (1831).



is a demonic inversion of the original Garden; sullied by betrayal, death, hatred, and vengeance, this Eden is already fallen.

Like the botanical garden, the conservatory was another type of garden where exotic species were collected, and nineteenth-century industrial innovations allowed for glasshouses that gave the “illusion of a technologically produced Eden.”<sup>448</sup> Although the Wilis’ Fantastic ball is held in the middle of a forest, not indoors or under glass, it nevertheless shares an aesthetic vocabulary with the Fantastic ball scenes of nineteenth-century French literature. In these literary texts, the sensory overload and intoxication of the ball give way to kaleidoscopic, almost hallucinatory visions in which the intricate details, delicate fabrics, and iridescent colors of women’s fashions are imagined as marvels of the natural world, especially its entomological specimens. Furthermore, these scenes frequently invoke the greenhouse or conservatory as a metaphor for a variety of visual and textural wonders brought together in one place.

We can trace this imagery of the Fantastic ball as conservatory to the poem that first inspired Gautier to write *Giselle*: “Fantômes” from Victor Hugo’s *Les Orientales* (1829). In “Fantômes,” Hugo tells of a beautiful young Spanish girl – Giselle’s literary ancestor – who “loved the ball too much, and that is what killed her.”<sup>449</sup> Among the sensual pleasures of the “dazzling” and “delightful” ball (*Le bal éblouissant! Le bal délicieux!*) are the technologies of fashion: sparkling jewelry and gems; moire, also known as watered silk, a lustrous fabric characterized by its marbled or rippled pattern; and tissue fabrics that are “lighter than bees’ wings.” In cataloguing these extraordinary

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<sup>448</sup> Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 565.

<sup>449</sup> “Elle aimait trop le bal, c’est ce qui l’a tuée.” Quoted in Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 171. My literal translation here differs from Henry Carrington’s poetic translation, which appears in Smith.

fabrics, Hugo obliquely links the women of the ball to an enchanted landscape. Adorned with moire sashes, these women might – at a quick glance – resemble slippery undines; and in thin, delicate gauzes, they might take flight into the insect world:

Puis c'étaient des bijoux, des colliers, des merveilles!  
Des ceintures de moire aux ondoyants reflets ;  
Des tissus plus légers que des ailes d'abeilles ;  
Des festons, des rubans, à remplir des corbeilles ;  
Des fleurs, à payer un palais !

Then there were jewels, necklaces, marvels!  
Belts of moire with rippling reflections;  
Fabrics lighter than bees' wings;  
Festoons, ribbons, enough to fill baskets;  
Flowers, enough to buy a palace!

The ball scene of Gautier's Fantastic tale "Onuphrius" (1832) likewise imagines the gauzes worn by women as bees' wings. Other fabrics are so light and delicate that that seem to be woven by spiders (*toiles d'araignée*) or even spun from the very atmosphere itself (*air filé, brouillard tissu*). Moreover, the flurry of activity in Gautier's ball scene is described in terms of insect behaviors such as buzzing and fluttering:

La soirée était des plus brillantes, un coup d'œil magnifique : cela reluisait, chatoyait, scintillait ; cela bourdonnait, papillonnait, tourbillonnait. Des gazes comme des ailes d'abeilles, des tulles, des crêpes, des blondes, lamés, côtelés, ondés, découpés, déchiquetés, à jour ; toiles d'araignée, air filé, brouillard tissu ; de l'or et de l'argent, de la soie et du velours, des paillettes, du clinquant, des fleurs, des plumes, des diamants et des perles ; tous les écrans vidés, le luxe de tous les mondes à contribution. Un beau tableau, sur ma foi ! les girandoles de cristal étincelaient comme des étoiles ; des gerbes de lumière, des iris prismatiques s'échappaient des pierreries ; les épaules des femmes, lustrées, satinées, trempées d'une molle sueur, semblaient des agates ou des onyx dans l'eau ; les yeux papillottaient, les gorges battaient la campagne, les mains s'étreignaient, les têtes penchaient, les écharpes allaient au vent, c'était le beau moment ; la musique étouffée par les voix, les voix par le frôlement des petits pieds sur le parquet et le frou frou des robes, tout cela formait une harmonie de fête, un bruissement joyeux à enivrer le plus mélancolique, à rendre fou tout autre qu'un fou.<sup>450</sup>

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<sup>450</sup> Théophile Gautier, "Onuphrius Wphly," *La France littéraire* 3(1832): 411.

The evening was most brilliant, a magnificent spectacle: it glistened, shimmered, and sparkled; it buzzed, fluttered, and whirled. Gauzes like bees' wings, tulles, crêpes, blondes [silk bobbin laces], lamés, ribbed and watered fabrics; cut-outs, slits, and openwork; cobwebs, spun air, tissue of mist; gold and silver, silk and velvet, sequins, tinsel, flowers, feathers, diamonds, and pearls; every jewelry box emptied, drawing on the luxury of all worlds. A beautiful tableau, upon my word! The crystal chandeliers glittered like stars; sprays of light and iridescent rainbows escaped from the jewels; women's shoulders, lustrous, satiny, soaked with soft perspiration, seemed like onyx or agate under water. Eyes blinked, breasts beat wildly, hands clasped, heads inclined, scarves flew in the air—it was the high point of the evening. The music was drowned out by the voices, the voices by the clattering of little feet on the floor and the swish of dresses—all of this formed a festive harmony, a joyous rustling to intoxicate the most melancholic man, to madden anyone other than a madman.

The most extravagant of these ball scenes is Lady Dudley's ball in Honoré de Balzac's *Une fille d'Ève* (1838). *Une fille d'Ève* is not a Fantastic novel, but Balzac directly borrows the imagery of Lady Dudley's ball from the ball scene of Gautier's "Onuphrius," as Patrick Berthier has shown.<sup>451</sup> As in Gautier's ball scene, Balzac describes women's fashions as insects' wings and webs, cataloguing delicate and finely detailed fabrics according to different insect species: gauzes are likened to dragonfly wings, tulles to "the fantasies of entomological nature," and gold and silver embroidery to cobwebs. Balzac takes Gautier's metaphor one step further by imagining the ballroom with its assembly of fashionably dressed women as a "pretty greenhouse where rich horticulturists collect the most magnificent rarities":

Les salons offraient à l'œil un spectacle magique: des fleurs, des diamants, des chevelures brillantes, tous les écrins vidés, toutes les ressources de la toilette mises à contribution. Le salon pouvait se comparer à l'une des serres coquettes où de riches horticulteurs rassemblent les plus magnifiques raretés. Même éclat, même finesse de tissus. L'industrie humaine semblait aussi vouloir lutter avec les créations animées. Partout des gazes blanches ou peintes comme les ailes des plus jolies libellules, des crêpes, des dentelles, des blondes, des tulles variés comme les fantaisies de la nature entomologique, découpés, ondés, dentelés, des fils

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<sup>451</sup> Patrick Berthier, "Balzac lecteur de Gautier," *L'Année balzacienne* (1971): 282–85.

d'aranéide en or, en argent, des brouillards de soie, des fleurs brodées par les fées ou fleuries par des génies emprisonnés, des plumes colorées par les feux du tropique, en saule pleureur au-dessus des têtes orgueilleuses, des perles tordues en nattes, des étoffes laminées, côtelées, déchiquetées, comme si le génie des arabesques avait conseillé l'industrie française. Ce luxe était en harmonie avec les beautés réunies là comme pour réaliser un *keepsake*. L'œil embrassait les plus blanches épaules, les unes de couleur d'ambre, les autres d'un lustre qui faisait croire à la pression d'un cylindre, celles-ci satinées, celles-là mates et grasses comme si Rubens en avait préparé la pâte, enfin toutes les nuances trouvées par l'homme dans le blanc. C'étaient des yeux étincelants comme des onyx ou des turquoises bordées de velours noir ou de franges blondes ; des coupes de figures variées qui rappelaient les types les plus gracieux des différents pays, des fronts sublimes et majestueux, ou doucement bombés comme si la pensée y abondait, ou plats comme si la résistance y siégeait vaincue ; puis ce qui donne tant d'attrait à ces fêtes préparées au regard, des gorges repliées comme les aimait Georges IV, ou séparées à la mode du dix-huitième siècle, ou tendant à se rapprocher comme les voulait Louis XV ; mais montrées avec audace, sans voiles, ou sous ces jolies gorgerettes froncées des portraits de Raphaël, le triomphe de ses élèves. Les plus jolis pieds tendus pour la danse, les tailles abandonnées dans les bras de la valse. Les bruissements des plus douces voix, le frôlement des robes, les murmures de la danse, les chocs de la valse accompagnaient fantastiquement la musique. La baguette d'une fée semblait avoir ordonné cette sorcellerie étouffante, cette mélodie de parfums, ces lumières irisées dans les cristaux où pétillaient les bougies, ces tableaux multipliés par les glaces. Cette assemblée des plus jolies femmes et des jolies toilettes se détachait sur la masse noire des hommes [...].<sup>452</sup>

The drawing rooms offered a magical spectacle to the eye: flowers, diamonds, shining hair, all jewel-boxes emptied, all the resources of *toilette* put to use. The ball-room could be compared to one of those pretty greenhouses where rich horticulturalists collect the most magnificent rarities, — the same brilliance, the same delicacy of texture. Human industry likewise seemed to want to compete with living creations. Everywhere were gauzes, white or painted like the wings of the most beautiful dragonflies; crêpes; laces; blondes; tulles varied like the fantasies of entomological nature; cut out, watered, laced; spider's threads in gold and silver; mists of silk; flowers embroidered by fairies or decorated by imprisoned spirits; plumes colored by the fire of the tropics, drooping like weeping willows over proud heads; pearls twisted into braids; fabrics laminated, ribbed, pinked, as though the genius of arabesque had advised the French industry. This luxury was in harmony with the beauties gathered there as if to make a "keepsake." The eye took in the whitest shoulders, some the color of amber, others of a polished luster, these ones satiny, those ones matte and plump as if Rubens had prepared the flesh—all the nuances found by man in white. There were sparkling eyes like onyx or turquoise lined with black velvet or

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<sup>452</sup> Honoré de Balzac, *Une fille d'Ève: scène de la vie privée*, vol. 1 (Brussels: Meline, Cans & co., 1839), 123–25.

blonde fringes; profiles of various faces that recalled the most graceful types of different countries—foreheads sublime and majestic, or gently curved as if thinking abounded there, or flat as if resistance sat there unvanquished; then that which gives such an attraction to these fêtes, breasts in folds as George IV loved, or separated in the fashion of the eighteenth century, or brought forward as Louis XV wanted, but shown boldly without veils or under those pretty shirred gorgets as in the portraits of Raphael, the triumph of his students. The prettiest feet extended for the dance, waists surrendered to the embrace of the waltz. The rustling of the sweetest voices, the swishing of dresses, the murmurs of the dance, the impact of the waltz steps fantastically accompanied the music. A fairy’s wand seemed to have ordered this overwhelming sorcery, this melody of perfumes, these iridescent lights sparkling in crystal candelabra, these tableaux multiplied by mirrors. This assembly of the prettiest women and the prettiest *toilettes* stood out against the black mass of men [...].<sup>453</sup>

Balzac’s image of the ball as a living greenhouse tended by rich horticulturists exemplifies the most insidious conceptualization of the *jardin des femmes*: namely, as a collection of female specimens arrayed for male perusal and pleasure.<sup>454</sup> This function of the *jardin des femmes* as a domain of male power and privilege is reflective of real-life “ways of seeing,” to borrow a term used by John Berger and Denis Cosgrove to connote

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<sup>453</sup> This ball scene is discussed in Eric McKee, *Decorum of the Minuet, Delirium of the Waltz: A Study of Dance-Music Relations in 3/4 Time* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 101–02. McKee includes other literary descriptions, such as Frances Trollope’s account of a Viennese ball. McKee notes that Trollope – like Balzac – uses the metaphor of a horticulturist’s conservatory to describe the variety of color and texture brought together in the ballroom. (102)

<sup>454</sup> The living greenhouse image was not only a literary conceit, but also permeated real-life experiences of watching women. A *Giselle* parody published in *Musée Philipon* in 1843, which describes the women of the Opéra audience as a greenhouse of roses with a precious few camellias (i.e., beautiful duchesses): “Pendant l’entr’acte les lorgnettes parcourent la salle et s’arrêtent sur une ou deux belles duchesses, brillantes comme des camélias dans une serre de rosiers. Il n’y a guère qu’une duchesse par 30,000 hommes: il n’y a qu’une Carlota [sic] Grisi sur un million de Parisiens. — Ce million veut la voir. ‘Voir, c’est avoir,’ dit Béranger.” (During the entr’acte, lorgnettes roam the hall and stop on one or two beautiful duchesses, shining like camellias in a greenhouse of roses. There is scarcely one duchess per 30,000 men; there is only one Carlotta Grisi in a million Parisians. This million wants to see her. ‘To see is to have,’ says Béranger.) Lorentz, “Parodie de *Giselle* ou *les Willis*, ballet en deux actes,” *Musée Philipon* (1843): 68. Lorentz’s parody is entitled *Grise-aile*, a humorous portmanteau that combines the surname of dancer Carlotta Grisi (who premiered the role of *Giselle*) with *aile*, or wing. A near-homophone for *Giselle*, *Grise-aile* can be roughly translated as “winged Grisi.” Lorentz’s quotation of “To see is to have” is taken from the popular song “Les Bohémiens,” a setting of lyrics by Béranger to the tune “Mon père m’a donné un mari.”

visual ideologies.<sup>455</sup> After all, nineteenth-century European ball-goers were motivated not only by the desire to participate in the dancing, but also by the synesthetic delights of spectatorship; and, as Eric McKee reminds us, this spectatorship centered on the women who “provided the viewer a swirling concert of colors, perfumes, textures, and feminine forms all wedded to music that both reflected and motivated the dancers’ beauty.”<sup>456</sup>

Balzac emphasizes the women’s wide range of pleasing attributes, cataloguing not only their clothing and jewelry, but also their anatomical features: skin color, eye and hair color, figure, physiognomy, and breasts.<sup>457</sup> And “in capturing the aesthetic singularity of each woman’s beauty,” McKee observes, “Balzac tacitly postulates the infinite variety of feminine beauty.”<sup>458</sup> In particular, Balzac describes the women’s faces as having the various shapes associated with different countries and their skin tones as presenting a

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<sup>455</sup> See John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: BBC and Penguin, 1972). Cosgrove writes of “the landscape idea” that it “represents a way of seeing—a way in which some Europeans have represented to themselves and to others the world about them and their relationships with it, and through which they have commented on social relations.” Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, 1.

<sup>456</sup> McKee, *Decorum of the Minuet, Delirium of the Waltz*, 103. Indeed, Balzac’s image of *la masse noire des hommes* was apt, and the disappearance of color from nineteenth-century men’s fashion has been cleverly summarized in Iris Brooke’s twentieth-century narrative of Western European costume: “the fine peacock that graced the ballrooms of the eighteenth century was replaced by the penguin of the nineteenth and twentieth.” Iris Brooke, *Western European Costume, Seventeenth to Mid-Nineteenth Century, and Its Relation to the Theatre* (London: Harrap, 1940), 142. Quoted in Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera*, 169. Gerhard postulates that the disappearance of color was linked to the disappearance of the *ancien régime*, and that the emphasis on “color” in grand opera reflects “an attempt to restore in the theater something that had already vanished from everyday life.” *Ibid.*, 170. However, the uniformity of men’s fashion does not seem to have been shared in women’s fashion, particularly for balls and fêtes: if anything, the gap seems to have exponentially widened between staidness in men’s fashion and extravagant brilliance in women’s fashion. Indeed, Philippe Perrot argues that “bourgeois men displayed their glory or power in an oblique way, not through what they were but through what they owned. Men’s abandonment of sumptuous appearance and acceptance of exile from the bodies endowed women with a new function. The unchanged splendor of their toilettes and the opulence of their flesh signified the social status and the monetary power of their fathers, husbands, or lovers, who amassed wealth but did not exhibit it. [...] As signs of wealth and ornamental objects, women replaced the lace and jewels banished from men’s clothing by the Revolution.” Philippe Perrot, *Fashioning the Bourgeoisie: A History of Clothing in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Richard Bienvenu (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 34–35.

<sup>457</sup> On the correspondence between human physiologies and character types in Balzac, see Valerie Steele, *Paris Fashion: A Cultural History* (New York: Berg, 1998), 65–67.

<sup>458</sup> McKee, *Decorum of the Minuet, Delirium of the Waltz*, 102.

spectrum of “all the nuances found in white”; in a similar manner, the national dances of the Wilis’ Fantastic ball present a spectrum of recognized ethnic types and create variety within the whiteness of the dancers’ costumes.<sup>459</sup> And much as in the botanical garden where male proprietors attempted to recreate Eden, this ballroom/conservatory attempts to mimic Creation and its natural splendors through the technologies of human industry—that is, fashion design and manufacturing (“L’industrie humaine semblait aussi vouloir lutter avec les créations animées”).

These descriptions of ball scenes from Hugo to Balzac illuminate our understanding of *Giselle*: namely, that the Wilis’ Fantastic ball is part of a larger discourse in which the visual spectacle of balls was imagined as a phantasmagoric conservatory of insectean women. The French literary *topos* of the ball as a magical conservatory adds another contextual layer to the representation of Myrtha’s forest-glade-cum-ballroom as a supernatural garden of women. Furthermore, this *topos* of dancing women as insects – reflected in both the libretto and score of *Giselle* – offers one of the most explicit portrayals of female ecomorphism that we have yet encountered in the *jardin des femmes* convention. Certainly, Francesca Brittan’s study of the nineteenth-century musical Fantastic does much to explain the conflated image of fairies and insects as a byproduct of scientific innovations in entomology and botany—in particular, the development of microscopy.<sup>460</sup> Here, though, I offer another layer to Brittan’s discussion of the musical Fantastic. In a work such as *Giselle*, in which dancing and the ball are such

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<sup>459</sup> And, in most productions (save, of course, for Arthur Mitchell’s *Creole Giselle* with Dance Theatre Harlem), the whiteness of the dancers’ skin color: ballerinas of color are still rare, though there are notable exceptions such as Misty Copeland and Aesha Ash.

<sup>460</sup> See in particular the subsection “Microscopy, Entomology, Magic” in Brittan, “Fairy Magic, Natural Science, and the *Scherzo fantastique*,” 559–67.

crucial thematic elements, the Wilis' representation as fairy-insects reflects not only scientific technologies, but also the technologies of contemporary Parisian fashion and material culture, that which Balzac calls "l'industrie humaine."

The Fantastic slippage between women's ballroom fashions and fairy/insect wings recurs throughout Gautier and Saint-Georges's *Giselle* libretto. After Myrtha emerges from a sheaf of bulrushes, her costume immediately signals both her ecomorphic identity and adherence to *la mode*: "on the white shoulders of Myrtha, trembling and fluttering, are the diaphanous wings in which the Wili can envelop herself as though in a gauzy veil."<sup>461</sup> Although the wings included in Lormier's maquette are not actually large enough to serve as a veil or wrap – and, indeed, such a wardrobe would surely prove an impediment to the practicalities of ballet dancing – Gautier and Saint-Georges's likening of Myrtha's wings to a fashionable feminine accessory nonetheless demonstrates the elision between the conservatory's biological wonders and the ball's sartorial splendor within the Fantastic imagination.<sup>462</sup>

The *Giselle* libretto and score abound in further metaphoric mappings of the Wilis as dancing insects. Summoned by the touch of Myrtha's magical rosemary branch, Wilis emerge from the foliage to surround Myrtha "like bees around their queen"; and upon "hearing the azure wings of her subjects," Myrtha bids them dance.<sup>463</sup> This image of

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<sup>461</sup> Translated in Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 234. These "diaphanous wings" are included in Lormier's costume maquette for *Giselle* as a Wili, illustrated above.

<sup>462</sup> On the significance of shawls – particularly cashmeres – as symbolic of exotic sensuality, material possession, socioeconomic status, and even erotic surrogates or talismans, see Chapter III, "'Cashmere Fever': Virtue and the Domestication of the Exotic" in Susan Hiner, *Accessories to Modernity: Fashion and the Feminine in Nineteenth-Century France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 77–106. See also Debra H. Sowell, "Contextualising Madge's Scarf: The *Pas de Schall* as Romantic Convention," in *La Sylphide: Paris 1832 and Beyond*, ed. Marian Smith (Hampshire: Dance Books, 2012), 12–30.

<sup>463</sup> Reproduced and translated in Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 234–35.



Myrtha as queen bee not only emphasizes her sovereignty, but also draws on the ball scenes of Fantastic literature, in which women clothe themselves in gauzy fabrics as light and delicate as bees' wings (Hugo, Gautier), either white or tinted "like the wings of the most beautiful dragonflies" (Balzac). And in the *Giselle* score, this gathering of Wilis is labeled as *groupe général des wilis-papillons*; as Marian Smith points out, this was likely a holdover from Gautier's original libretto, in which a Spanish Wili's entrance is accompanied by "a swarming of white butterflies."<sup>464</sup> This image of swarming butterflies is manifested not only in the annotations found in Adam's score, but also the music itself: at a *pianissimo* dynamic, the second violins perform a sixteenth-note pattern (based on a semitone alternation) in an ascending and descending sequence, while the first violins play a lyrical descending gesture (C<sub>6</sub>-A<sup>b</sup><sub>5</sub>-F<sub>5</sub>-C<sub>5</sub>-B<sup>b</sup><sub>4</sub>; A<sup>b</sup><sub>5</sub>-F<sub>5</sub>-D<sub>5</sub>-B<sub>4</sub>); both parts then play repetitive figures that center around the dominant harmony, E<sup>b</sup> Major, with the addition of E<sup>b</sup>/B<sup>b</sup> *pizzicato* in the lower strings. This passage can be metaphorically understood as the soft buzzing of butterflies coupled with the downward trajectory of their flight before they alight on a chosen flower and hover in place. Thus, Myrtha does indeed "hear the azure wings of her subjects," as does the audience.

This musical idiom used by Adam to depict the arrival of *wilis-papillons* draws on the *style féérique* or "fairy style" pioneered by Mendelssohn and Berlioz in the 1820s and '30s.<sup>465</sup> Francesca Brittan situates this *style féérique* at the intersection of natural science

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<sup>464</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.

<sup>465</sup> "Fairy Music" is identified as a nineteenth-century musical *topos* in Dickensheets, "The Topical Vocabulary of the Nineteenth Century," 122–23. Dickensheets' work was originally published as "Nineteenth-Century Topical Analysis: A Lexicon of Romantic *Topoi*," *Pendragon Review* 2, no. 1 (2003). Dickensheets defines fairy music by the following features: "The orchestration will almost always feature a high, shimmering instrumentation that includes violins, flutes, piccolos, or the celeste. Glittering parallel thirds are common, and many melodic patterns include stepwise movement or small leaps. Melodic figuration rarely encompasses a range of more than a fifth, and sequences occur frequently. Fleet, running

and magical fairylore, and demonstrates how new musical techniques paralleled innovations in the scientific disciplines of entomology and botany (particularly the development of microscopy).<sup>466</sup> For indeed, Mendelssohn and Berlioz's *style féerique* is typified by rapid passagework, trills and tremolos, very soft dynamics, and ethereal timbres like flutes and string harmonics—musical effects that evoke sounds found in nature, such as fluttering wings and buzzing. In this way, a “microscopic” musical aesthetic equates fairies with insects, and Brittan analyzes this seemingly contradictory melding of fairylore and natural science as emblematic of the hesitation between magic and reality that characterizes the French literary Fantastic.<sup>467</sup>

To Brittan's work I would add that the musical innovations of the *style féerique* mirrored not only the technologies of natural science, but also the technologies of fashion. In nineteenth-century Paris, ball gowns were “intended to metamorphose women by etherealizing them,” as Philippe Perrot argues in his study of the nineteenth-century French fashion industry.<sup>468</sup> Perrot points to Henri Despaigne's fashion manual *Le Code de la mode* (1866), which prizes the fabrics of ball gowns for their celestial luminescence and delicate textures befitting aerial sylphs: “Shimmering silvery fabrics, magnificent fabrics like those intended for queens, light gossamer fabrics, materials made of

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eighth or sixteenth notes are most common [...]. Even though most examples are diatonic, the use of seventh, diminished, or augmented chords moves the style closer to the demonic, and in some cases the two are blended, in essence creating ‘evil’ fairies.” Indeed, Adam's “wasp” music for the Wilis (discussed below) – in contrast to his peaceful “butterfly” music – is in this hybrid style that positions the Wilis as evil fairies.

<sup>466</sup> Brittan, “Fairy Magic, Natural Science, and the *Scherzo fantastique*,” 535–59.

<sup>467</sup> Here Brittan draws on Todorov's definition of the Fantastic, cited above. Brittan also shows that the connection between fairies and sciences such as botany and entomology was indicative of larger nineteenth-century attempt to reconcile nature and the supernatural as parts of “a whole that had been fragmented, a lost totality that could be recovered.” *Ibid.*, 532.

<sup>468</sup> Perrot, *Fashioning the Bourgeoisie*, 97.

impalpable threads, like those worn by sylphs, golden brocaded cloth, twinkling like stars sown in the dark nocturnal heavens—these are the marvels that industry must create for her.”<sup>469</sup> Certainly, Despaigne’s manual was written much later than the period under discussion here, but nevertheless speaks to the persistent, enduring image of the Parisian ballroom as an enchanted conservatory.

Moreover, the notion of feminine “metamorphosis” in ballroom fashions, touched upon by Perrot, is particularly significant to the Fantastic ball of *Giselle*. After all, metamorphosis is a biological concept specifically associated with the insect life cycle, and since a young woman’s ball debut was a rite of passage marking her sexual maturation, the dramatic sartorial transformations of the ball lent themselves well to insect metaphors.<sup>470</sup> For at the ball, a young woman emerged from her protective cocoon as a dazzlingly decorated butterfly, and was thus poised to join the flitting, buzzing world of (insectean) adulthood. Such is the implication of Hippolyte Taine’s account of a young ball-goer from his *Notes on Paris* (1867):

[...S]he half sees, in a diaphanous and golden mist, a whole aurora of things. A very rose asleep while the vapors of morning are vanishing, and masses of luminous whiteness are spreading over the pearly sky, she listens, motionless and as in a dream, to the beatings of distant wings, the indistinct rustle of a whole world of insects which will soon come buzzing and murmuring around her heart.<sup>471</sup>

This buzzing, magical world of the Parisian ball – one to which the German peasant *Giselle* would not have had access in her lifetime – is realized in Myrtha’s *jardin*

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<sup>469</sup> Quoted and translated in *ibid.*

<sup>470</sup> Anthropomorphic and magical interpretations of insect life were common even in scientific texts such as Jean-Baptiste Lamarck’s *Système des animaux sans vertèbres* (1801) and Jules Michelet’s *L’insecte* (1858), as Brittan points out. Brittan, “Fairy Magic, Natural Science, and the *Scherzo fantastique*,” 563.

<sup>471</sup> Hippolyte Taine, *Notes on Paris*, trans. John Austin Stevens (New York: Holt, 1875), 160. Quoted in Perrot, *Fashioning the Bourgeoisie*, 228.

*des femmes*. As the *Giselle* libretto notes, it is in the Wilis' "new graceful metamorphosis" as bees and butterflies that they finally "surrender themselves furiously" to dancing.<sup>472</sup> The sounds of the Wilis' fluttering wings, buzzing, and rapid hovering motion can also be heard at the end of the Fantastic ball, when Myrtha announces that they will be joined by a new sister. Here, Adam's use of "butterfly" music further encourages the image of *wilis-papillons* suspended in the air around their queen, murmuring to each other in eager anticipation of meeting the newest Wili, Giselle. Giselle's transformation into a Wili is likewise described in terms of insect metamorphosis: "Her wings grow and unfold...her feet skim the ground. She dances, or rather she flutters in the air, like her graceful sisters."<sup>473</sup> Musically, however, Giselle's first dance as a Wili is not the delicate floating of a *wili-papillon* but rather a sort of tarantism, with a sudden *fortissimo* outburst and 6/8 tarantella rhythms.<sup>474</sup> Crowned by Myrtha and touched by her rosemary scepter, Giselle is poisoned by the Wili queen's venom and compelled to dance like a possessed fiend.

The duality of the Wilis as both beautiful, ephemeral fairies and demonic, manipulative witches is reflected in their characterization as different types of insects: as gentle, delicate creatures who delight in each other's company and retreat from human contact, the Wilis are butterflies; but as threatening, sadistic vampires, they become

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<sup>472</sup> Reproduced and translated in Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 235.

<sup>473</sup> Translated in *ibid.*

<sup>474</sup> Jules Janin described Adèle Dumilâtre in the role of Myrtha as infected with tarantism herself, albeit a much more carefree strain: "Bitten by the most innocent of tarantulas, she obeys with joy." Quoted and translated in Eliot, *Dancing Lives*, 53.

spiders who maliciously hunt, ensnare, and poison men.<sup>475</sup> As seen above, spiders are invoked in the ball scenes of Fantastic literature for their gossamer silks and intricately woven webs—phenomena of the natural world that human fashion seeks to outmatch. In the *Giselle* libretto, however, spider imagery reflects the Wilis at their most venomous and murderous. In Act II, scene 10, the Wilis surround their “victim” Hilarion, who is “completely enmeshed in this graceful and deadly web”; and upon discovering Albrecht hiding nearby, the Wilis immediately “hover around this new prey.”<sup>476</sup> Both their butterfly and spider guises reinforce the Wilis’ ecomorphic identity, and the Wilis’ liminal bodies – part humanoid, part insect – reflect not only a hesitation between science and the supernatural, but also a blurring of distinctions between the female body (including its vestimentary attributes) and the natural world. Thus, the Wilis embody the contradictory attractions and repulsions of wild, feminized Nature.

The transformation of supernatural women from beautiful to monstrous is a common motif in Fantastic literature: in Cazotte’s *Ollivier* (1762), for example, the feathered bird-women serving the fairy Strigilline are ultimately revealed to be hideous harpies. And in numerous *contes fantastiques*, dance scholar Joellen Meglin observes, “one moment one is lying beside a beautiful woman and the next moment one finds oneself sharing intimacies with a male demon.”<sup>477</sup> Yet this theme is rarely found in the genre of Fantastic ballet: *La Sylphide* (1832) features both sylphs and witches, but these

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<sup>475</sup> This metaphor of murderous female insects is even more directly realized in Jerome Robbins’s controversial ballet *The Cage* (1951), based on Act II of *Giselle*.

<sup>476</sup> Reproduced and translated in Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 237.

<sup>477</sup> Joellen A. Meglin, "Behind the Veil of Translucence: An Intertextual Reading of the *Ballet Fantastique* in France, 1831–1841. Part One: Ancestors of the Sylphide in the *Conte Fantastique*," *Dance Chronicle* 27, no. 1 (2004): 104.

women form two separate communities.<sup>478</sup> *Giselle* was the only Opéra work (ballet or opera) of its time to display the demonic turn typical of the Fantastic, in which ethereal women become evil creatures. I would argue further that in this demonic transformation, they become corporeal representatives of a Sublime landscape that threatens to overwhelm and subsume the mortal men who encounter its dangers. The Wilis' wrathful, ravenous capacity is frequently discussed in terms of plot, characterization, and choreography; how, though, is it musically depicted? I turn now to the musical gestures and *topoi* of Adam's score that specifically reveal the Wilis' demonic identity—sonic features that likewise mark Myrtha's forest glade as a dystopic garden.

### **The Soundscape of the Dystopic Garden: *Ombra*, Wasps, Bacchanale, Fugue**

The audience is first warned of the Wilis' infernal origins by two strategic uses of the *ombra* topic, a musical gesture first defined by Ratner.<sup>479</sup> Since the eighteenth century, the *ombra* topic had signified the visual and psychological experience of supernatural visitation through the use of minor keys, tremolos, rising scales or arpeggios, and dramatic changes in dynamics. And in the nineteenth century, this topic continued to prove effective for scenes of supernatural apparitions: indeed, its rising scalar or arpeggio figures were still a potent metaphor for spirits rising from the dead.<sup>480</sup>

The *ombra* topic first appears in Act I of *Giselle*, when Berthe warns her daughter and the

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<sup>478</sup> On the gestural and choreographic distinctions between these two supernatural “tribes,” see Baner, *Dancing Women*, 18–19.

<sup>479</sup> Leonard Ratner describes the *ombra* topic as related to the fantasia style and representing “ghosts, gods, moral values, or punishments.” Ratner, *Classic Music*, 24.

<sup>480</sup> For example, Ratner has identified examples of the *ombra* topic in nineteenth-century works such as Verdi's *Macbeth* (namely, Macbeth's vision of the ghosts of eight kings in Act III). See Ratner's *Romantic Music: Sound and Syntax*, 70.

other village girls about dancing too much and becoming a Wili; Gautier and Saint-Georges's libretto calls for "a lugubrious music" that reinforces Berthe's miming of "an apparition of dead people returning to the world."<sup>481</sup> The second appearance of the *ombra* topic is early in Act II, when the chiming of midnight terrifies the hunters, who are "expecting to see the apparition of airy phantoms." Their anxiety is realized with the sound of "a fantastic music" and the appearance of the *feux follets*.<sup>482</sup>

For both the "lugubrious music" of Berthe's ghost story and the "fantastic music" of the forest, Adam uses the exact same musical gesture, combining the *ombra* topic with flickers of fairy music (Example 6.1). Ominous tremolos in the upper strings evoke fear and trembling, while the subterranean voices of low strings and bassoons ascend through a minor arpeggio that arrives on a sinister half-diminished seventh chord. As in other examples of the *ombra* topic, this ascending figure in low strings and bassoons implies the physical gesture of spirits (or marsh gases) emerging from the earth. The Wilis do not appear immediately as ghostly apparitions, however, but rather are preceded by *feux follets*. Therefore, the *ombra* topic is answered by quick ascending chromatic flourishes in the flute and piccolo that mimic the sudden bursts of fiery light attributed to will-o'-the-wisp sightings. Adam's use of this composite *ombra/feux follet* gesture in both Act I, scene 6 (Berthe's story) and Act II, scene 2 (appearance of the *feux follets*) is dramatically potent: as a reminiscence motive, it connects the *feux follets* that surround the hunters with the ghostly Wilis of Berthe's story. Thus, Berthe's story is not mere superstition, but rather has been proven true.

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<sup>481</sup> Reproduced and translated in Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 231.

<sup>482</sup> Libretto translated in *ibid.*, 234.

**Example 6.1.** Adam, *Giselle*: the *ombra* topic, heard in both Act I, scene 6 when Berthe tells Giselle and the village girls about the Wilis and Act II, scene 2 when *feux follets* appear, terrifying the hunters. From an unpublished piano reduction by Lars Payne (2010).

Andante moderato

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The tempo is marked 'Andante moderato'. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor). The first system begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic in the right hand and a *pp* dynamic in the left hand. The second system continues with a *pp* dynamic in the left hand. The third system features a *sf* (sforzando) dynamic in the left hand and a *pp* dynamic in the right hand. The fourth system concludes with a *pp* dynamic in the left hand. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

Of course, the Wilis were not the first group of spectral women to arise from a ritual garden, presaged by *feux follets*. That distinction goes to the diabolical nuns in Act III, Tableau 2 of *Robert le diable* (1831).<sup>483</sup> Though the moonlit convent of Saint Rosalie

<sup>483</sup> The parallels between *Robert le diable* and *Giselle* are frequently cited in dance scholarship. Marian Smith notes that in an era when opera and ballet were more closely linked, *Giselle* shared theatrical motifs with operas such as *Der Freischütz* (1821), *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835), and *Robert le diable*: “Like *Robert le diable* (1831), it [*Giselle*] features a cross-clutching scene, a magical scepter that breaks, and a group of white-clad, ghostly virgins who emerge from their graves to dance by the light of the moon.”



in *Robert le diable* is an architectural structure, not a strictly outdoor setting, it nevertheless shelters a private ritual garden: the cloister garth, a square garden of study, contemplation, and refreshment central to monastic architectural design (Figure 6.12). In Cicéri's décor, the convent's cloister garth also functions as a cemetery replete with cypress trees, symbols of mourning—a cypress tree will later stand over Giselle's tombstone, as well.<sup>484</sup> And much like the Wilis of *Giselle*, the ghostly nuns of *Robert le diable* emerge from their cemetery garden, reborn as a sisterhood of the damned.<sup>485</sup> Moreover, the nuns' rebirth is anticipated by the appearance of *feux follets* that hover

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Ibid., 168. In comparing the Wilis to the nuns of *Robert le diable*, Sally Baner finds in both communities the portrayal of non-normative, even homoerotic female intimacy: "The Wilis, a cloistered, hierarchical company of virgins, were in a sense anti-nuns, dedicated to an unholy mission. This reversal of Christian values in an uncontrollable gang of women could connote sexual as well as political danger. For a group of women who only find pleasure in each other's company and go around killing men might well suggest lesbian 'perversions,' and the idea that nuns indulged in homosexual activities was already a familiar theme in literature at least since the eighteenth century." Baner, *Dancing Women*, 31. Like Baner, Peter Stoneley offers a queer reading of the nuns of *Robert le diable* and the Wilis of *Giselle*: "*Giselle* elaborates at greater length some of the themes and scenarios of 'The Ballet of the Nuns'. The sisterhood on this occasion is that of Wilis or fairies, but these fairies have the white, veiled mystique of the nuns. And there is again the spectacle of a queer eroticism that will end in death." Stoneley, *A Queer History of the Ballet*, 32. See also Joellen Meglin's detailed reading of the nuns of *Robert le diable* and the Wilis of *Giselle* within the literary context of Gautier's Fantastic tales such as "La Morte Amoreuse," in which the (violated) taboo of necrophilia and the fetishization of the "translucent female body" are common tropes. Meglin, "An Intertextual Reading of the *Ballet Fantastique*, Part Three," 113–38.

<sup>484</sup> "Cyprès—Deuil. Dans tous les lieux où ces arbres frappent nos regards, leur aspect lugubre pénètre d'idées mélancoliques. Leurs longues pyramides élevées vers le ciel gémissent agitées par les vents. La clarté du soleil ne saurait pénétrer leur sombre épaisseur, et, lorsque ses derniers rayons viennent à projeter leur ombre sur la terre, on dirait un noir fantôme. Au milieu de nos bosquets fleuris, le cyprès s'élève parfois comme ces images de la mort que les Romains montraient à leurs convives au milieu même des transports de leur folle joie. Les anciens avaient consacré le cyprès aux Parques, aux Furies et à Pluton : ils le plaçaient auprès des tombeaux." (Cypress—Mourning. In all places where these trees strike our gaze, their lugubrious appearance imparts melancholy thoughts. Their long pyramids rising toward the sky groan when agitated by the wind. Sunlight cannot penetrate their somber thickness, and when the sun's last rays project their shadow on the earth, it looks like a black phantom. In the middle of our flowering groves, the cypress rises somewhat like those images of death that the Romans showed to their guests in the midst of their wild joy. The ancients consecrated the cypress to the Fates, the Furies, and Pluto: they placed it at tombs.) Tour, *Le Langage des Fleurs*, 152.

<sup>485</sup> Of course, Cicéri's depiction of the nuns' entrance also shows nuns emerging from the floorboards and galleries of the convent. Therefore, although Act III, Tableau 2 of *Robert le diable* can be viewed in terms of the *jardin des femmes* convention, a work such as *Giselle* offers a more direct example of women who are physically generated by the garden landscape.

over their tombs, a supernatural effect depicted in Meyerbeer's score by flickering thirds that outline first a B minor seventh chord, then a B fully diminished seventh chord.<sup>486</sup>



**Figure 6.12.** Lithograph of Pierre-Luc-Charles Cicéri's décor for Act III, Tableau 2 of *Robert le diable* (1831). F-Po Estampes Scènes, *Robert le diable*.

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<sup>486</sup> When the nuns do materialize, they are immediately coded as grotesque reanimated corpses by the timbre of their processional music: bassoons in thirds, in a low tessitura, lend a nasal and macabre quality. (In his orchestration treatise, Berlioz would note the ability of the bassoon to evoke a skeletal *danse macabre*, though more so in the upper register: see, for example, his citation of the bassoon part in the third movement of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5*, and his own use of bassoons in the fourth movement, "Marche au supplice," of his *Symphonie Fantastique*.) Moreover, the rhythmic profile and sequential ascent of this bassoon figure exemplifies the *cheval écrit* topic identified by Monelle as a code for witches: the metaphoric "riding" motion of the noble horse was analogous to the witches' riding on their broomsticks. Monelle, *The Sense of Music: Semiotic Essays*, 62–63. Thus, despite the nuns' diaphanous white garb, their music undermines any semblance of the ethereal or beatific. As we have seen above, Adam uses similar strategies in *Giselle*: the cackling, disjointed gestures in the third section of Myrtha's *entrée* reveal her demonic identity; and the combination of the *ombra* topic with *feux follets* indicate that the Wilis are more of a ghostly coven than a fairy circle.

Both Meyerbeer and Adam’s musical depictions of *feux follets* utilize the nineteenth-century *style féerique*, with its aforementioned vocabulary of insect-like noises. The *style féerique* was particularly effective because of its flexibility: it could convey delicacy, prettiness, and playfulness for benevolent spirits; but it could also portray morally ambiguous fairies as fickle, mercurial, mischievous, and even diabolical. Indeed, Dickensheets has noted that diminished harmonies inflect fairy music with the demonic style, “and in some cases the two are blended, in essence creating ‘evil’ fairies.”<sup>487</sup> If we apply Brittan’s study of the aesthetic intersection between fairy music and insect sounds, then it follows that “evil fairies” derive their demonic characterization from a musical mimesis of swarming, angry wasps. In fact, Adam illustrates the Wilis’ two-faced identity with different “species” of insect music: counterbalancing the Wilis’ delicate, ethereal *wilis-papillons* music (described above) is a menacing “wasp” motive (Example 6.2), a rapid sixteenth-note passage in the ominous key of G minor, featuring alternating minor seconds atop a tense F-sharp fully diminished seventh harmony.

**Example 6.2.** Adam, *Giselle*, Act II, scene 2: the “wasp” motive, first heard when Hilarion warns the hunters about the Wilis. From an unpublished piano reduction by Lars Payne (2010).



<sup>487</sup> Dickensheets, "The Topical Vocabulary of the Nineteenth Century," 122.

The wasp motive first appears when Hilarion warns a carefree troupe of hunters about the dangers of the Wilis. Learning of the hunters' plans to set up an observation post, Hilarion urges them to leave: "It's a cursed spot...it's the circle where the Wilis dance!"<sup>488</sup> His exhortation is paired with the wasp motive, which conveys the fear and menace associated with the Wilis in two ways: first, its minor-second tremolos function as mimetic representation of the physical shaking and racing heart of an anxious, fearful Hilarion; second, this music emulates the environmental sound of angry, buzzing insects, an apt metaphor for the swarm of Wilis who – like wasps, bees, or mosquitos – will descend on their human victims and prey upon them. This motive soon returns when the hunters are surrounded by the *feux follets* and flee the forest in terror, pursued by these mysterious spirit-lights. The same pattern is repeated in Act II, Scene 6: the wasp motive returns when an old man warns a band of drunken peasants about the danger of the Wilis, and then again when the Wilis chase after the peasants, who narrowly escape their clutches.

It is not only Adam's wasp motive that signals the Wilis' status as predatory evil fairies. It is their maniacal bacchanale, in which Hilarion is tortured and killed, that the Wilis' malevolence is fully realized. This number also illustrates their demonic cruelty through diegetic gestures of "satanic laughter" (so labeled in the *répétiteur*).<sup>489</sup> Furthermore, the Wilis' bacchanale reflects the terror and power associated with the Sublime. Indeed, this scene can be read as a metaphor for the ability of the Sublime landscape – as embodied by vengeful women – to inspire fear, wreak destruction, and

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<sup>488</sup> Translated in Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 234. In Justamant's staging manual, Hilarion tells them, "You shouldn't stay here—it's dangerous" (*Il ne faut pas rester ici, il y a danger*).

<sup>489</sup> See Smith's discussion of instrumental laughter in ballet scores: *ibid.*, 111.

even cause death.<sup>490</sup> For, according to Burke, terror is the “ruling principle” of the Sublime in nature;<sup>491</sup> moreover, Burke asserts that there is nothing Sublime “which is not some modification of power.”<sup>492</sup> The terror and power of the Sublime, according to Burke, are not produced solely by visual properties but also by sonic phenomena:

Excessive loudness alone is sufficient to overpower the soul, to suspend its action, and to fill it with terror. The noise of vast cataracts, raging storms, thunder, or artillery, awakes a great and awful sensation in the mind, though we can observe no nicety or artifice in these sorts of music. [...] A sudden beginning, or sudden cessation of sound of any considerable force, has the same power. [...] In everything sudden and unexpected, we are apt to start; that is, we have a perception of danger, and our nature rouses us to guard against it.<sup>493</sup>

These qualities of extreme loudness and suddenness are realized in Adam’s musical portrayal of the Wilis’ bacchanale. The scene (Act II, No. 14, Scène des Wilis) begins with an ominous *pianissimo* passage of rising chromatic gestures and tremolos, indicative of the winged Wilis’ gathering forces and the trapped Hilarion’s mounting panic. The wild bacchanale soon commences with the full orchestra at a *fortissimo* dynamic, colored by piercing high flutes and piccolo and a battery of raucous percussion, including bass drum, cymbals, and triangle. Although the introductory passage of this number establishes an appropriate sense of foreboding and even crescendos, the start of the bacchanale proper still comes as a startling outburst, due in large part to the prominent timbral addition of various percussion instruments. Performed at their

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<sup>490</sup> A present-day example of this same concept of dangerous nature personified as a vengeful woman is found in the mythos surrounding Mount Everest: the Nepalese name for the mountain is “Sagarmatha” or “Goddess of the Sky”; Jon Krakauer’s account of the 1996 Everest disaster, for one, discusses the belief among many Sherpas that storms, illnesses, injuries, and deaths on Everest are caused by climbers’ disrespect and angering of Sagarmatha. Jon Krakauer, *Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Mt. Everest Disaster* (New York: Villard, 1997), 127–29.

<sup>491</sup> Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, 54.

<sup>492</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>493</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

maximum dynamic level, these instrumental sounds have the Sublime effect of “the noise of vast cataracts, raging storms, thunder, or artillery,” as described by Burke.

More insidiously, though, Adam signals the terror of this bacchanale with a familiar ethnic musical stereotype—the *alla turca* style. Features of the *alla turca* style used in the Wilis’ bacchanale include the following: loud playing at full orchestration, featuring “noisy” percussion (particularly triangle and cymbals) that evokes the large percussion sections of Janissary military bands; duple meter, with heavily accented, lower-pitched downbeats and lighter, higher-pitched upbeats (Locke relates this to the *dum–tek* techniques of Middle Eastern drumming); frequent melodic ornaments, including trills and acciaccaturas; and a repeated structural rhythmic pattern of | Long | Long | short short | Long | (Locke traces this to the imitation of Middle Eastern rhythmic modes).<sup>494</sup> Therefore, the Wilis’ transformation from beautiful, spectral nymphs to bloodthirsty vampires is ethnically and religiously coded: as merciless, violent creatures, they are musically emblemized as an army of Middle Eastern (specifically, Turkish Ottoman) Muslim soldiers.

In previous chapters, we have seen how Eastern Otherness is often used to convey seductive feminine sexuality, a familiar characterization that also informed the creation and reception of *Giselle*: for example, Gautier’s open letter to Heine, quoted above, describes the Act II setting as having a “burning sensuous atmosphere” and “dense and humid darkness.” In addition, Myrtha’s two chief attendants are Eastern Wilis – Moyna the odalisque and Zulmé the bayadère – whose featured solos in the Fantastic ball not only appeased nineteenth-century audiences’ appetite for a variety of national or

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<sup>494</sup> See Locke’s table, “Component traits of the *alla turca* style (or “topic”), c. 1750–1830,” Figure 6.3 in Locke, *Musical Exoticism*, 118–21.

“character” dances, but also ethnically exoticized the Wilis, thus compounding their supernatural Otherness and heightening their sensual appeal. Yet the Orientalist thread in *Giselle* takes on a darker ideological twist in the Wilis’ *bacchanale*, where it is used to convey the menace and evil of demonic characters.<sup>495</sup> While the Wilis’ danger is associated with “wasp” music earlier in the act, their murderous intent is only fully revealed with Adam’s use of *alla turca* style in their *bacchanale*. Indeed, this *bacchanale* is also Hilarion’s *danse macabre*, in which he is a mere ragdoll flung among the sadistic Wilis. The appearance of the *alla turca* style in the Wilis’ *bacchanale* has thus far escaped scholarly attention, but as Ralph Locke has argued in regard to other examples of “hidden” or otherwise forgotten musical exoticism (Musorgsky’s *Night on Bald Mountain* and Stravinsky’s *Pulcinella*, for example), we must acknowledge the problematic racial and ethnic stereotypes underlying these longstanding musical stereotypes—most often, an equation of “Middle Eastern” representational music with barbaric, ruthless villains.

The Wilis are not alone in this construction: the ghostly nuns of Meyerbeer’s *Robert le Diable* (1831), the *filles de la nuit* of Schneitzhoeffter’s ballet *La Tempête* (1834), and Calypso’s nymphs in Deldevez’s ballet *Eucharis* (1844) are also characterized as diabolical beings through *bacchanales* in the *alla turca* style.<sup>496</sup> After all,

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<sup>495</sup> Recently, the development of the demonic bacchanal in works such as Berlioz’s *La morte d’Orphée* (1827) and Meyerbeer’s *Robert le diable* (1831) has been examined in Francesca Brittan, “Fantasy, Philology, and the Romantic Inferno” (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society, Pittsburgh, PA, 2013).

<sup>496</sup> While the nuns of *Robert le Diable* are a canonic example of the eroticized demonic in Romantic opera and ballet, the other works mentioned above are less well known; therefore, brief explanations of each are in order. In Act II, scene 3 of *La Tempête*, Caliban summons the *filles de la nuit* in the hope of “exposing [Fernando] to a most dangerous temptation,” just as Bertram summons the ghostly nuns to tempt Robert in *Robert le Diable*. *La Tempête / ou / L’Île des Génies / ballet-féerie en deux actes / précédé d’une introduction / par M. Coraly, / musique de M. Schneitzhoeffter. / Représenté pour la première fois, à Paris, / sur le Théâtre de l’Académie Royale de Musique, / le 15 septembre 1834* (Paris: Barba, 1834), 38. To lull

the Classical bacchanale was originally a celebration honoring the god Bacchus, but its wild revelry was easily transmuted from pagan rite into demonic orgy. And in nineteenth-century ballet, the menace and eroticized wildness of the bacchanale was often musically coded as a Middle Eastern, Islamic Otherness through the *alla turca* style. The *alla turca* style was not so much a direct imitation as a Western “translation of a perception of Turkish music,” a shared perception that centered on the sounds of Janissary military bands.<sup>497</sup> Therefore, the use of *alla turca* style in bacchanalia led by wild supernatural women added another layer of signification: Western anxieties about the Ottoman Empire are projected onto these women, who are musically characterized as a powerful army, capable of violence and destruction.

The final musical feature that marks Myrtha’s forest glade as a demonic, dystopic garden is the Wilis’ fugue (Act II, No. 14a). After the Wilis drown the fatigued and maddened Hilarion, they discover Albrecht hiding nearby; however, at Giselle’s urging, Albrecht clings to her tombstone cross for divine protection. Thus, Albrecht is able to circumvent the spell of Myrtha’s rosemary scepter: when she attempts to touch him with

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the lovers Lea and Fernando to sleep, an offstage *chœur aerien* and harp perform a serene angelic music; the entrance of the *filles de la nuit*, on the other hand, is anything but celestial: instead, Schneitzhoeffler introduces these women with a riotous “Bacchanale et Tempête.” In fact, Schneitzhoeffler’s use of percussion – timpani, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, and thunder machine – is so extensive in this number that percussion parts are notated on a supplemental score in his manuscript (F-Po A.508.II). Here, the use of percussion not only evokes an Eastern exoticism that borrows from *alla turca* style, but also allows Schneitzhoeffler to create the diegetic environmental sounds of a storm scene, replete with upward-sweeping gestures that imitate gusts of wind. (In the violin parts of *La Tempête*, the bacchanale is marked with the heading “*alla Berlioz*,” but Berlioz’s name has since been heavily crossed out. Nevertheless, such an indication suggests the demonic bacchanale was strongly associated with Berlioz. Brittan has argued that the origin of the demonic bacchanale can be attributed outright to Berlioz. Brittan, “Fantasy, Philology, and the Romantic Inferno.”) The bacchanale takes on particularly destructive associations in Deldevez’s *Eucharis*, though of course this bacchanale is not deadly like that of the Wilis: to keep Telemachus stranded on her island, Calypso leads her nymphs in a frenzied bacchanale, during which she takes a torch and sets fire to the ship intended for Telemachus’s departure.

<sup>497</sup> Mary Hunter, “The *Alla Turca* Style in the Late Eighteenth Century: Race and Gender in the Symphony and the Seraglio,” in *The Exotic in Western Music*, ed. Jonathan Bellman (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 48.



it, the branch breaks. Infuriated, the Wilis rush to attack Albrecht but are repeatedly repelled by the supernatural power of the cross. The music of their assault is not the music of swarming wasps or a bacchanale *alla turca*, but rather a disciplined and decorous G-Major fugue.<sup>498</sup> By the nineteenth century, fugue was a compositional process linked to religious music, the historical past, and strict adherence to contrapuntal rules: in much the same way, the Wilis are an ancient sacred order, albeit in a demonic inversion.<sup>499</sup> Within a theatrical context, fugue could also coordinate the staggered

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<sup>498</sup> This fugue is typically cut from present-day productions because its meaning has become puzzling to audiences, most of whom hear the fugue as a strange, out-of-place interpolation.

<sup>499</sup> A more direct example of explicitly religious music appropriated for the effect of horror in a demonic *jardin des femmes* is found in the final tableau of the 1834 Parisian adaptation of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* as the five-act *Don Juan*. This production concluded not with Giovanni's descent into Hell, but rather with a newly invented scene in which the garden of Giovanni's estate is transformed from a place of amorous play and seduction into a site of infernal ritual and death. To summarize the libretto: in this "immense and deep park," cloaked in dark night and "crowned with woods and terraces that extend to the horizon," the Commendatore's statue summons a chorus of the damned. These "dead skeletons" (*morts-squelettes*) approach from all the various paths and alleys of the park—some wielding torches, others carrying a cabalistic book. They form a circle surrounding Giovanni and chant the *Dies irae* from Mozart's Requiem. To this "religious and plaintive music," a long procession of young girls dressed in white extends from the heights of the garden; their cortège descends slowly, passing by the "ironic groups" of the damned, before lowering Donna Anna's coffin to the ground. As the women kneel and pause for prayer, Anna's shroud slips away, allowing Giovanni to see part of her corpse: her shoulders covered in a black veil, her forehead with a white crown. Driven mad and attempting to escape this "terrible vision," Giovanni runs to the steps of his villa, only to be stopped by the Commendatore. The statue pushes Giovanni, who falls backwards into a grave dug for him by the damned. Their mission accomplished, the procession continues its march and the statue takes root on Giovanni's land. *Don Juan / opéra en cinq actes / de Mozart. / Représenté, pour la première fois, / sur le Théâtre de l'Académie Royale de Musique, / le 10 mars 1834* (Paris: Barba, 1834), 118–19. Although the libretto describes the women of Donna Anna's cortège as white-clad virgins ("Les vierges déposent à terre le cercueil de leur compagne [...]"), critic Amédée Pichot interpreted this "procession of young girls in shrouds" as "the victims of Don Giovanni, his seraglio of ghosts": "Puis se forme une procession de jeunes filles en suaire, les victimes de don Juan, son sérail d'ombres, qui figurent un enterrement, avec une bière noire d'où sort à demi doña Anna quand don Juan s'en approche." Amédée Pichot, "Revue Dramatique. Le Don Juan de Mozart, a l'Académie Royale de Musique," *La Revue de Paris* 3(1834): 189. Thus, Giovanni's garden becomes a terrifying cemetery in which the spirits of sexually wronged women take vengeance against the sins of a mortal man—not unlike the Wilis of *Giselle*. Further marking the transformation of this aristocratic park into a ritual garden, the ghostly women enter to an actual piece of Catholic music, appropriated for its dramatic import: the ominous and electrifying *Dies irae* sequence, Proper to the Mass for the Dead. For indeed, Giovanni's terrible judgment day has arrived. The 1834 Parisian production of *Don Giovanni* is examined in Sabine Henze-Döhring, "E.T.A. Hoffmann-'Kult' und 'Don Giovanni'-Rezeption im Paris des 19. Jahrhunderts: Castil-Blazes 'Don Juan' im Théâtre de l'Académie Royale de Musique am 10 März 1834," in *Mozart-Jahrbuch 1984/85 des Zentralinstitutes für Mozartforschung der Internationalen Stiftung Mozarteum Salzburg* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1986), 39–51; Katharine Ellis, "Rewriting *Don Giovanni*, or 'The Thieving Magpies'," *Journal of the Royal Musical*

entrances of various community members, since the exposition of fugal entries had connotations of hierarchical social status.<sup>500</sup> Such was Adam's choreographic conception of fugue, as noted in the Escudiers' *La France Musicale*: "A very original idea of M. Adam's ballet is a fugue where the four entries of the subject are reproduced by the successive entries of the *corps de ballet*."<sup>501</sup> In Act II of *Giselle*, the repetitive entry process of fugue is a metaphor for the persistent onslaught of villainous characters: thwarted by the breaking of her rosemary scepter, Myrtha sends her minions to attack Albrecht in continual waves.<sup>502</sup> If the Wilis' bacchanale invokes a wild frenzy racially stereotyped by the *alla turca* style, their fugue portrays a starkly different facet of the demonic: in connoting scientific precision, learned style, and compositional rigor, the fugue conveys the Wilis' army-like organization, their coldly calculated and logical tactics, and their deep repository of archaic evil knowledge.<sup>503</sup> Here their violence is not

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*Association* 119(1994): 212–50. Versions of this final scene in Parisian *Don Juan* productions from 1834 to 1866, including critical reception, are addressed in Mark Everist, *Mozart's Ghosts: Haunting the Halls of Musical Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 88–91.

<sup>500</sup> For example, the Fugue in F Major from Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* was originally planned as the entrance music for various groups of witches in the Act II opening of *La Sylphide*, with each group assigned to a different subject entry (notated in the manuscript score). Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 103. However, this fugue does not appear in the Paris rehearsal score, which suggests that it was not actually used in the final production. Matilda Ann Butkas Ertz, "Schneitzhoeffler's Music for *La Sylphide*," in *La Sylphide—Paris 1832 and Beyond*, ed. Marian Smith (Hampshire: Dance Books, 2012), 71.

<sup>501</sup> "Une idée très originale du ballet de M. Adam, est celle d'une fugue où les quatre entrées du sujet sont reproduites par les entrées successives du corps de ballet." Escudier, "Académie Royale de Musique. *Giselle* ou Les Willis," 236.

<sup>502</sup> Willa Collins has identified this very function of fugue in *La Sylphide* and *Giselle*, as well as in a later Adam ballet score, *Le Corsaire* (1856), in which a fugue is used as entrance music for Birbanto and his fellow corsairs, along with their captives. As Collins points out, this fugue not only coordinates staggered entrances, but also suggests "nefarious characters." See Willa Collins, "Adolphe Adam's Ballet *Le Corsaire* at the Paris Opéra, 1856–1868: A Source Study" (dissertation, Cornell University, 2008), 198–99.

<sup>503</sup> Numerous scholars have noted the military imagery of the Wilis. In a rather farfetched reading, McCarren interprets the Wilis' army-like precision as a parody of ballet exercises: "The Wilis' drill-line choreography makes direct reference to the ballet's practice rituals, parodying the *corps de ballet* as a fleet of driven, ambitious, deviant, and vengeful women." McCarren, *Dance Pathologies: Performance, Poetics*,

uncontrolled bloodlust, but rather an emotionally detached, well-rehearsed, and ritualized process. And if, as I am suggesting, the Wilis are to be understood as an embodiment of their environment, then the combination of their orgiastic bacchanale with structured fugue reflects the same tension between unbridled nature and imposed order (or “culture”) inherent to the very ideology of garden landscape design.

### **Ephemeral Encounters in the Garden: Albrecht and Giselle’s Act II Duets**

The operatic *jardin des femmes* convention typically encompasses a love or seduction duet between a male visitor and one of the garden’s female inhabitants: in *Les Huguenots*, this duet is between Raoul de Nangis and Marguerite de Valois; in *Le Cheval de Bronze*, between the Prince and Stella (with a second duet for Péki *en travesti* and Stella); in *La Favorite*, between Fernand and Léonor.<sup>504</sup> Particularly in *La Favorite*, the love duet is marked by a sense of impermanence and illusion: only within a distant garden can Fernand and Léonor express erotic desires that are forbidden by society, and the seeming atemporality of the garden allows the two lovers to indulge in a fleeting moment together—a moment that is expanded and suspended in dramatic time.

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*Medicine*, 70. Associations of fugue with the past and sacred music may also speak to the nineteenth-century development of what James Deaville has termed the “evil medieval” *topos*, familiar in twentieth-century American horror films but first cultivated in German operas such as Weber’s *Der Freischütz* and Marschner’s *Der Vampyr*, as well as the final movement of Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique*. See James Deaville, “The topos of ‘evil medieval’ in American horror film music,” in *Music, Meaning and Media*, ed. Erkki Pekkilä, David Neumeyer, and Richard Littlefield (Helsinki: Semiotic Society of Finland; University of Helsinki; International Semiotics Institute at Imatra, 2006), 26–37. Deaville’s study focuses on ritual Latin chant, not instrumental genres, and obviously fugue is associated with the Baroque, not medieval era. Nevertheless, I believe a similar argument could be made for the “demonicization” of fugue within a nineteenth-century theatrical context.

<sup>504</sup> *La Reine de Chypre*, the opera examined in Chapter V, is an exception: there is no love duet or “queen of the garden” figure.

The yearning, often self-consciously transient love duet sung in the operatic *jardin des femmes* has its counterpart in the balletic *pas de deux*.<sup>505</sup> For, to be sure, Albrecht's danced encounters with Giselle in the Wilis' forested garden are the consummation of an otherwise impossible relationship, prevented in Act I by social class and now by death.<sup>506</sup> Furthermore, I have argued that within the *jardin des femmes* convention, the love duet reflects a blurred double-vision of woman and landscape as a conflated object of desire and wonder. Such is the case in Act II of *Giselle*, as well: for Albrecht, Giselle's newly materialized body is frequently confused with or replaced by elements of her garden environment.

Albrecht comes to Giselle's gravesite not so merely to pay respects, but also (and more significantly) to seek her presence in this place. Therefore, he vehemently rejects his squire Wilfrid's urging that he return home: to leave the forested cemetery plot would mean separation from Giselle herself. And, in fact, Albrecht does encounter Giselle here—not as a spiritual force or filmic image reconstructed from his nostalgic memories

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<sup>505</sup> Marian Smith points out how pantomime music in ballet could imitate the sound of the human voice using orchestral instruments, focusing on the link between operatic recitative and instrumental declamations in mime scenes. Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 101. Likewise, Smith points to Albrecht's scene at Giselle's tomb, in which Albrecht's vocality is implied by an opera-like "contemplative aria [...] in the expansive melodic style of Bellini, 'sung' by solo oboe." Ibid., 168. Likewise, the operatic duet also had its parallel in ballet music as the *pas de deux*. The equivalence between the love duet and *pas de deux* is made explicit later in the nineteenth century by Chaikovsky's recycling of the love duet "O happiness, o blessed moment" – previously written for his largely destroyed opera *Undina* (1869) – in the Act II *pas de deux* of *Swan Lake* (1876). A clear parallel exists between these two dramatic situations, both of which are love scenes between a supernatural woman and mortal man: the duet from *Undina* was written for the nymph Undina and the knight Huldbrand; the *pas de deux* from *Swan Lake* is danced by the swan-maiden Odette and the prince Siegfried. The structural parallels between the Classical *pas de deux* of Petipa's ballets and the *solita forma* of Italian opera arias and duets has been argued in: Thérèse Hurley, "Italian Opera in Russian Imperial Ballet: The Relationship Between *Solita Forma* and the *Pas de Deux* and *Pas d'Action* in *Swan Lake* and *The Nutcracker*" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Pacific Northwest Chapter of the American Musicological Society, Tacoma, WA, 2007).

<sup>506</sup> Albrecht and Giselle's encounters are, moreover, forbidden by the taboo of necrophilia, as Joellen Meglin points out: "Dancing with the dead female body broke one of the strongest pollution taboos of French (Catholic) culture; it implied an intimacy with the corpse; figuratively, it was an unwinding of the death shroud to lie beside the dead body." Meglin, "An Intertextual Reading of the *Ballet Fantastique*, Part Three," 138.

of her, but rather “in her new and strange metamorphosis” as an ecomorphic Wili.<sup>507</sup> Albrecht’s initial glimpses of Giselle are paired with gestures of *wilis-papillons* music: string tremolos emulate humming or buzzing, while an upward flute flourish creates the sonic effect of suddenly flying away (Example 6.3). Adam’s score thus reinforces the libretto’s imagery of Giselle the Wili as a sort of supernatural butterfly: upon recognizing his lost beloved, “Albrecht, believing himself in the thrall of a sweet illusion, approaches her with slow steps and cautiously, like a child wishing to capture a butterfly poised on a flower.”<sup>508</sup> As Giselle playfully eludes him, Albrecht perceives her in terms of other natural creatures and phenomena of the air – a dove, a wisp of mist, a cloud – before she eventually “vanishes among roses,” a foreshadowing of her return to the garden terrain at the end of the ballet:

But at the moment when he extends his hand toward Giselle, quicker than lightning, she darts far away from him, to take flight and traverse the air like a frightened dove; to alight elsewhere, when she throws him loving glances. This dance, or rather this flight, is repeated several times, to the great despair of Albrecht, who vainly attempts to join with the Wili, who flees several times above him like a wisp of mist. Sometimes, however, she makes him a loving gesture, throws him a flower, which she plucks from its stem, throwing him a kiss; but, as intangible as a cloud, she disappears just as he thinks she is in his grasp.<sup>509</sup>

When Albrecht finally shares a *pas de deux* with Giselle, it is not in the blissful sanctum of a private garden, shielded by ladies-in-waiting who guard their secret (as is the case, for example, in Tableau 2 of *La Favorite*). Rather, it is a dance compelled by Myrtha in order to seduce Albrecht away from the protective power of Giselle’s

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<sup>507</sup> From the libretto, reproduced and translated in Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 236.

<sup>508</sup> Reproduced and translated in *ibid.*

<sup>509</sup> From the libretto, reproduced and translated in *ibid.*

tombstone cross and into the Wilis' clutches.<sup>510</sup> At Myrtha's touch, Giselle "begins dancing with the strangest, most graceful ardor, as though transported by an involuntary delirium"; complementing this libretto description, Adam's music for Giselle's forced seduction of Albrecht likewise has elements of strange beauty (Example 6.4).<sup>511</sup> To begin with, the solo instrument paired with Giselle's opening Adagio is an unusual one—the viola.<sup>512</sup> The use of solo instruments in ballet music is multivalent: these instrumental "voices" might function as a surrogate for the dancer's own (silent) voice, a sonic tracing of her material body, or at the very least a timbral evocation of mood (either that of a specific character or the scene in general).<sup>513</sup> Adam's particular choice of solo viola for the Act II *pas de deux* did not go unnoticed by the press: as Escudier wrote, "Nothing is sweeter and more melancholy than the sounds of this instrument, so rarely used as a soloist."<sup>514</sup>

With its darkly hued alto timbre, the viola has none of the delicate gossamer tone quality that one might expect of a spectral woman or ethereal fairy. Yet the sweet and melancholic qualities attributed to the viola by Escudier are an apt reflection of Giselle's psyche in this opening Adagio, as well as the dramatic situation of the *pas de deux* as a

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<sup>510</sup> Marian Smith explains how present-day productions have obscured the dramatic significance of this *pas de deux* by eliminating the preceding fugue (during which Albrecht clings to the cross as attacking Wilis are "magically repulsed"), reducing Myrtha's role as "ever-present mistress of ceremonies" who commands the lovers to continue dancing against their will, and adding a variation for Giselle that relieves Albrecht of incessant dancing. See *ibid.*, 197–98.

<sup>511</sup> Libretto reproduced and translated in *ibid.*, 237.

<sup>512</sup> The actual marking in the *Giselle* score is Andante; here I use Adagio as a ballet term, meaning the slow, enfolding movements typical in the opening section of a *pas de deux*.

<sup>513</sup> In the case of the *Giselle* Act II *pas de deux*, a strict correspondence between solo viola and Giselle's voice is problematic because the viola solo begins the number, and the five introductory measures coincide with Myrtha's command that Giselle dance for Albrecht.

<sup>514</sup> "Rien de plus doux et de plus mélancolique que les sons de cet instrument, si rarement employé comme récitant." Escudier, "Académie Royale de Musique. Giselle ou Les Willis," 236.

whole. Still devoted to Albrecht despite his past deception, Giselle is filled with remorse in knowing that her graceful turns, gestures, and poses will lure him into the Wilis' clutches. Her once wished-for union with Albrecht can only be a transient, bittersweet pleasure that leads to his capture and – were it not for the timely arrival of dawn – certain death. For Albrecht, perhaps the very rarity of the solo viola timbre is a sonic emblem of Giselle's strange allure, while its rich earthy color conveys the seductive promise – orchestrated by Myrtha's deceptive magic – of sensual erotic encounter.

**Example 6.3.** Adam, *Giselle*: Act II, scene 9: Albrecht's first brief glimpse of Giselle as a Wili. From an unpublished piano reduction by Lars Payne (2010).



If the solo viola is invested with elements of Giselle's materiality – her human compassion and resurrected physical body – its arpeggiated harp accompaniment is a familiar signifier of enchantment and otherworldliness. Indeed, this harp figure suggests a dream-vision in which Giselle is framed by a luminous aura and the mysterious sounds of celestial music-making.<sup>515</sup> So, too, does the harp accompaniment reinforce the Act II setting and scenic design by evoking the gentle undulations and reflective shimmer of the

<sup>515</sup> Note that this type of harp accompaniment pattern (repetitive sixteenth-note arpeggios in a slow harmonic rhythm, ascending and descending in a metaphoric “wave” shape) is a major characteristic of what I have defined as the “celestial medium” in Chapter III. An important distinction between the celestial medium and the texture described here is that the celestial medium emphasizes high registers and bright timbres (especially violins and flutes), and is often more melodically static, suggesting religious chanting—recall, for example, the block chords sung by the Venusian women in Act III of *Le Cheval de Bronze*.

moon-dappled lake.<sup>516</sup> Moreover, the aquatic connotations of harp arpeggio patterns also suggest fluid metaphors for sexual desire, a developing nineteenth-century conception that Lawrence Kramer has described as the “liquefaction of desire.” According to Kramer, “the fire of classical desire [was] replaced by that endlessly circulating, endlessly rhythmic, medium—water.”<sup>517</sup> Therefore, by mimicking flowing water, the gesture of ostinato harp arpeggios also “bathes” Giselle in the sonic medium of desire.

**Example 6.4.** Adam, *Giselle*: Act II, scene 12: Albrecht is lured away from the cross by Giselle’s dancing (commanded by Myrtha). Adapted from an unpublished piano reduction by Lars Payne (2010).

The image shows a musical score for two instruments: Viola and Harp. The key signature is A-flat Major (three flats) and the time signature is common time (C). The Harp part consists of a continuous, rhythmic arpeggiated pattern. The Viola part features a melodic line with a long note, a trill-like figure, and a final flourish.

Giselle’s Otherness is conveyed in the Act II *pas de deux* not only through the rarely heard timbre of solo viola and a “magical” harp accompaniment, but also through the key of A-flat Major.<sup>518</sup> A-flat Major is first heard in the *Giselle* score during the

<sup>516</sup> This passage has similarities to the nocturne style or moonlight convention, though

<sup>517</sup> Lawrence Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800–1900*, California Studies in Nineteenth-Century Music (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 142.

<sup>518</sup> Matthew Bribitzer-Stull has noted that despite the “theoretical hegemony” of equal temperament in the nineteenth century, well temperament persisted as a means of preserving individual key colorations and their respective extra-musical associations. Therefore, even during the nineteenth century, A-flat Major and E-Major often constituted the extremes of acceptable intonation. Comparing these outposts to the “dragon-infested waters that signaled the edge of *terra incognita* on the maps of early explorers,” Bribitzer-Stull observes that the keys of A-flat Major and E Major were imbued with even greater potency of signification



Harvest Festival *pas de deux*, danced by Giselle and Albrecht (disguised as Loys) in Act I; Adam later uses the melody of this *pas de deux* as a reminiscence motive. The Harvest Festival motive returns in its original key of A-flat Major during Giselle's mad scene at the end of Act I and again when Hilarion shows Giselle's tombstone to the hunters at the beginning of Act II.<sup>519</sup> Elsewhere in Act II, A-flat Major is associated with the Wilis' rituals: the sounding of midnight, Myrtha's private delight in her garden, and her magic invocation of the Wilis. Therefore, A-flat Major – dubbed “the key of the grave” in Christian Schubart's *Ideen zu einer Aesthetik der Tonkunst* (Vienna, 1806) – is associated with destruction, death, and demonic activity in *Giselle*, aside from its initial use in the Harvest Festival *pas de deux* (though one could also argue that Giselle's dance with “Loys” at the Harvest Festival is the catalyst for her induction to the Wili tribe, as well as Albrecht's fate as a near-victim of that same sisterhood). In the Act II *pas de deux*, the distant, eerie sonority of A-flat Major lures Albrecht into a subhuman realm, a ghostly purgatory occupied by Myrtha and the Wilis; likewise, the affective characteristics of this key warn that Albrecht's own life is in danger.<sup>520</sup>

Unable to resist Giselle's dancing, however, Albrecht abandons the cross and joins his beloved, their reunited bodies envoiced by the instrumental duet of viola and

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and reserved for composers' most intense musical utterances: “A-flat Major is linked to slumber, darkness, and death while E Major is associated with transcendence, spirituality, and the sublime.” Matthew Bribitzer-Stull, “The A b–C–E Complex: The Origin and Function of Chromatic Major Third Collections in Nineteenth-Century Music,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 28, no. 2 (2006): 173.

<sup>519</sup> Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 13.

<sup>520</sup> In addition to Bribitzer-Stull's points about the preservation of individual keys' distinctive sonorities and affective characteristics in the nineteenth century, we should consider that A-flat Major elicits a particularly dark, covered sound from the solo viola: since G and C are the only open strings within the key, the instrument does not resonate as fully as in sharp keys. For similar reasons, intonation can be more challenging in this key, thus increasing the potential for a bizarre-sounding tonal environment worthy of the Wilis' domain.

clarinet and bound by the same arpeggiated harp accompaniment associated with celestial visions, moonlit waters, and nocturnal desires. Thus, the Act II *pas de deux* represents not only Giselle's (reluctant) seduction of Albrecht, but also an environmental seduction, wherein the male protagonist is captivated by a woman who embodies the spiritual transcendence, sensory pleasures, and physical dangers of the surrounding landscape. Giselle's inexorable tie to her environment is confirmed with the coming of dawn, which heralds both Albrecht's salvation and the diurnal death of Myrtha's *jardin des femmes*. Giselle and the other Wilis gradually return to the earth, reclaimed by the same plants from which they had first emerged: "one by one they can be seen staggering, expiring, and falling in a tuft of flowers, or on the stem that witnessed their birth, like flowers of the night that die at the approach of dawn."<sup>521</sup> Gautier's open letter to Heine further specifies the Wili queen's collapse into her particular flower: "The beautiful Myrtha falls into the cup of her water lily."<sup>522</sup> Giselle, too, recedes from Albrecht's embrace as she is subsumed within a "verdant tomb" of marsh grasses and flowers.<sup>523</sup> Adam's music illustrates both the advent of daylight and the disappearance of the Wilis with streaming waves of triplets in the harp, a soaring violin melody, and a rapturous harmonic modulation from the dark, nocturnal key of D-flat Major to the calm, pastoral key of F Major.<sup>524</sup> The most delicate texture of the entire score, a solo flute with harp harmonics,

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<sup>521</sup> From the libretto, reproduced and translated in Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 238.

<sup>522</sup> "La belle Myrtha rentre dans la coupe de son nénuphar." Gautier, "A M. Henri Heine, à Caunteretz," 2.

<sup>523</sup> From the libretto, reproduced and translated in Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 238.

<sup>524</sup> This texture is largely identical to the moonlight convention, except that keys with multiple flats are preferred in the moonlight convention. In contrast, Adam's sunlight music moves from the dark, even tortured key of D-flat Major (described by Schubart as "a leering key, degenerating into grief and rapture") to the brighter, "easier" key of F Major.

marks Giselle's final transformation: as her body disintegrates and dematerializes into the landscape, she is musically etherealized.<sup>525</sup>

## Conclusions

Of the works examined in this study, *Giselle* is the most literal depiction of an anthropomorphic "garden of women." For, after all, the genre of ballet-pantomime permits more elements of the imaginative and the supernatural than does grand opera, or even opéra-féerie; as Gautier himself famously (if polemically) insisted, "for a ballet to be at all convincing, it must be entirely unrealistic."<sup>526</sup> It is in Myrtha's garden, then, that we find the most direct example of ecomorphic women who are physically generated from the landscape itself. The Wilis are nymphs local to the various flowers of the garden, born from and dying within the blossoms; thus, the cultural construction of the garden as a feminine space is specifically realized through reproductive metaphors of fertility and maternity.

*Giselle* is also distinctive among works exhibiting the *jardins des femmes* convention because it represents the garden not only as a place of birth and renewal, but also as a place of death and deterioration. Certainly, other works effectively undermine the would-be idyll of the garden with implications of aristocratic naïveté, selfish escapism, and moral corruption. Yet the Sublime landscape in Act II of *Giselle* is an

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<sup>525</sup> Escudier wrote of this passage: "The phrase during which Giselle is lost among the flowers, performed by solo flute and harp harmonics, is full of charm and sadness. This phrase ends the score in a ravishing way." (La phrase sur laquelle Giselle se perd au milieu des fleurs, exécutée par la flûte seule et les sons harmoniques des harpes, est remplie de charme et de douleur. Cette phrase termine d'une façon ravissante cette partition [...].) Escudier, "Académie Royale de Musique. Giselle ou Les Willis," 236.

<sup>526</sup> From *La Presse*, 11 July 1837. Quoted and translated in Meglin, "An Intertextual Reading of the *Ballet Fantastique*, Part Three," 83.

overtly transgressive “garden gone wrong” where physical corruption, demonic rituals, and the threat of mortal harm inspire outright terror. That dangerous and dizzying garden landscape, moreover, takes female form in the Wilis, whose power is ultimately undone only by the changing cycles of nature itself.

## CHAPTER VII

### AFTERWORD

This study began with an admittedly rudimentary question: Where are the groups of women in opera (and ballet)? However, the issues raised in investigating that question are much more complex. Most significantly, the *jardin des femmes* convention demonstrates how the theatrical representation of Otherness in women's spaces draws not only on the imagery of idealized, fantasized Nature, but also on familiar tropes of racial and religious difference. The bathing scene in *Les Huguenots* may not seem particularly exotic, but its repurposing in vaudevilles such as *Une Nuit au Sérail* and *Les Belles Femmes de Paris* reveals Parisian assumptions regarding bathing—namely, that it was as an activity linked to Eastern sensuality. The Venusian women of *Le Cheval de Bronze* are depicted as a celestial seraglio of Muslim houris; and the young Spanish girls of *La Favorite* are geographically situated in Andalusia, a region historically associated with Moorish (Muslim) conquest and North African cultural influence.<sup>527</sup> Too, the Cypriot courtesans of *La Reine de Chypre* were admired for their particular exotic appeal, generated by a Mediterranean setting (the island of Cyprus) associated with both Classical mythology and the mythologized East. Most disturbing of these examples is *Giselle*, in which the *alla turca* style – a Western imitation of the Ottoman Empire's Janissary bands – musically conveys the Wilis' demonic identity and bloodthirsty barbarism. To paraphrase Ralph Locke, we have a moral imperative to call out these

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<sup>527</sup> It is not coincidental that Mérimée's (and later Bizet's) *Carmen* is set here, nor that the female protagonist of Manuel de Falla's *El Amor Brujo* is an Andalusian Roma.

representations for what they are before their meaning is lost, completely embedded in a subliminal level of consciousness.

Overlapping layers of feminine Otherness and racial Otherness – or what Kimberlé Crenshaw has termed intersectionality – persisted as a mode of representation in later nineteenth-century music theater works, as well.<sup>528</sup> In Wagner’s application of the French *jardin des femmes* to Act II of *Parsifal*, for example, the representation of dangerous, hypersexual women is linked not only to a lush garden landscape, but also to stereotypes of racial difference: in Klingsor’s enchanted garden, Parsifal encounters Kundry lying on a couch, veiled “in the Arabian style.” The intersections between the gendering of landscape and the Orientalist gaze within a nineteenth-century pastoral aesthetic, only hinted at in the present study, is a critical angle that will shape my future analysis of this repertoire.

Another future direction of my research will be to more closely examine Classical invocations in the *jardin des femmes* convention, and in particular the seemingly contradictory relationship between a philhellenic Classical pastoral and Orientalism in these female ensemble scenes. For, to be sure, Enlightenment literature had already begun to bridge the pastoral with Orientalism, and works such as Bernardin de Saint-Pierre’s *Paul et Virginie* (1788) and Chateaubriand’s *Atala* (1801) transposed the pastoral to exotic geographic locations such as the island of Mauritius and North America, respectively.

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<sup>528</sup> Crenshaw first coined “intersectionality” in 1989 as a sociological term for the subordination of black women through the interaction of multiple systems of oppression—namely, race and gender. See Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989): 139–67.

Yet another thread to consider for future inquiry is how these scenes set in women's private gardens are stagings of intimate activities as public spectacle. As Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner have provocatively argued with regard to contemporary American political and media culture, "there is nothing more public than privacy"; Berlant and Warner's words might also be profitably applied to the theatrical world of nineteenth-century French opera and ballet.<sup>529</sup> Moreover, through the *jardin des femmes* convention, intimate sentiments and relationships are expressed among women on stage. Thus, this convention scripts a type of intimacy other than simply heterosexual romantic encounter. Berlant and Warner would describe this phenomenon as "queer culture building," wherein "the possibilities of identity, intelligibility, publics, culture, and sex are challenged when the heterosexual couple is no longer the referent or the privileged example of sexual culture."<sup>530</sup> That being said, the *jardin des femmes* convention typically assuages cultural anxieties about female homosocial intimacy and "sapphism" through the "corrective" or "normalizing" introduction of a male protagonist.

At present, though, what is to be gained from this existing study of the *jardin des femmes* convention? First of all, recognition and analysis of the *jardin des femmes* convention challenges traditional scholarship on nineteenth-century French opera and ballet, which has tended to divide along the lines of a Platonic (later, Cartesian) mind-body split. Consider some of the most important and influential monographs on French grand opera: Sarah Hibberd's *French Grand Opera and the Historical Imagination* (2009), Diana Hallman's *Opera, Liberalism, and Anti-Semitism in Nineteenth-Century*

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<sup>529</sup> Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "Sex in Public," *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 2 (1998): 547.

<sup>530</sup> *Ibid.*, 548.

*France: The Politics of Halévy's La Juive* (2002), Anselm Gerhard's *The Urbanization of Opera: Music Theater in Paris in the Nineteenth Century* (1992), Jane Fulcher's *The Nation's Image: French Grand Opera as Politics and Politicized Art* (1987), and William Crosten's *French Grand Opera: An Art and a Business* (1948). Valuable and thought-provoking as these studies are, the sum of their titles perpetuates an image of French grand opera as the theatrical nexus of politics, history and historiography, art, commerce, urban civilization, and contemporary anxieties of public life—in short, the realm of the mind.

In keeping with this trend, Marian Smith characterizes the two major Parisian music theater genres of grand opera and ballet-pantomime in accordance with the mind-body dichotomy:

Because it was body-centered and its actors were silent, ballet-pantomime could more readily be construed as overtly sexual (and therefore less proper a medium for recounting tales of public struggle) than French grand opera. Thus, though ballet-pantomimes and operas depicted the same world—early modern Europe and its colonies—ballet tended to depict the more pastoral, sexual, private, and pleasing side of this world, and French grand opera, the more urban, intellectual, public, and violent. The two genres complemented each other well at the Paris Opéra, remaining grounded in the same basic fictional reality but splitting this reality into two segments, allocating each to what was deemed the appropriate medium.<sup>531</sup>

Important exceptions to the typical dichotomy between French grand opera (as “mind”) and ballet-pantomime (as “body”) are, of course, found in Maribeth Clark's Ph.D. dissertation “Understanding French Grand Opera Through Dance” (1998) and Mary Ann Smart's “bodily” or gestural analyses of *La Muette de Portici* and *Les Huguenots* in her monograph *Mimomania: Music and Gesture in Nineteenth-Century Opera* (2004). In addition, the chapter “Hybrid Works at the Opéra” in Smith's *Ballet*

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<sup>531</sup> Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, 71–72.



*and Opera in the Age of Giselle* (2000) details the heightened interplay between opera and ballet in *La Muette de Portici*, *Le Dieu et la Bayadère*, and *La Tentation*. Still, the significance of the body within French grand opera deserves greater attention, and the *jardin des femmes* convention necessitates the study of bodies, gender, and sexuality in this repertoire. Indeed, the *jardin des femmes* convention was a strategy through which elements of the “pastoral, sexual, private, and pleasing” might indeed be brought into grand opera.

The centrality of bodily motion within the *jardin des femmes* convention is emphasized by its prominent use of the *chœur dansé*, an oft-overlooked subgenre in nineteenth-century opera. In this study, I propose one possible meaning of the *chœur dansé* in the minds of nineteenth-century audience members: namely, that its choreography might evoke the subtle vibrations and undulations of nature, thus giving female embodiment to a pastoral landscape. Moreover, as a subgenre that had roots in French Baroque opera and associations with ancient Greece, the *chœur dansé* could contribute to an archaizing impulse in the *jardin des femmes* scene type. This backward glance gestured to both the *tragédies lyriques* of Lully and an imagined Greek classical past, a topic which merits further consideration.

This study also demonstrates that a theatrical convention such as the *jardin des femmes* scene type is not merely a tired cliché but instead can be a repository rich in musico-dramatic meaning. After all, why would successful producers and experienced creators of opera and ballet repeatedly stage a given convention, if not because it continued to both satisfy audience expectations and serve the drama? The *jardin des femmes* convention is a powerful example of how repetition and reuse of a given

theatrical *topos* could be endlessly varied and transformed based on context: an extraterrestrial seraglio, a sixteenth-century noble estate, a distant island, a glittering arbor, a haunted cemetery, and so forth. Moreover, to help create these various scenographies, composers drew on an equally recognizable vocabulary of *topoi* or musical topics. This study identifies a new topic, the celestial medium, and also examines how familiar topics could be used in unexpected ways: for example, the appearance of *alla turca* style in conjunction with a Sublime garden setting to convey feelings of (racially coded) terror.

Finally, a major contribution that this study makes to opera scholarship is the examination of opéra-comique and vaudeville works alongside grand opera. Nineteenth-century opera studies have largely ignored connections between grand opera and other theatrical genres such as opéra-comique and vaudeville, although Mark Everist has shown the transformation of Meyerbeer's *Robert le diable* from an opéra-comique to grand opera, as well as Halévy's transition from opéra-comique composer to grand opera composer.<sup>532</sup> Still, implicit in Everist's articles on Meyerbeer and Halévy is the narrative of the masterwork: a work or composer must "graduate" from opéra-comique to the more "elevated" artform of grand opera. The persistent prejudice against supposedly "lower" genres of music theater has crippled scholarship on French grand opera, since vaudeville in particular served as a satirical mirror of Parisian theater culture and conventions. Therefore, by accounting for opéra-comique and vaudeville productions, this study offers

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<sup>532</sup> See "The Name of the Rose: Meyerbeer's *opéra comique Robert le Diable*" and "Fromental Halévy: From *opéra comique* to *grand opéra*" in: Everist, *Giacomo Meyerbeer and Music Drama in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, 177–240.

a new and more complete theatrical context for even the most well known grand operas, including Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots* and Donizetti's *La Favorite*.

## APPENDIX

### SELECTED *JARDINS DES FEMMES* IN FRENCH OPERA AND BALLET, 1830–1865

#### **PRIVATE GARDENS OF THE QUEEN (OR OTHER NOBLEWOMAN):**

Scribe/Meyerbeer, *Les Huguenots*, opéra (Opéra, 1836)

Act II. Marguerite de Valois and her ladies at the gardens of Chenonceau luxuriate on the banks of the Cher; some ladies bathe in the river.

Carmouche & de Courcy/Monpou, *La Chaste Suzanne*, opéra (Théâtre de la Renaissance, 1839)

Act II. Palace gardens of Susannah. Susannah's ladies, including her confidante Dinah, prepare her bath, unaware of the two elders lurking in the gardens.

Royer, Vaëz & Scribe/Donizetti, *La Favorite*, opéra (Opéra, 1840)

Act I, Tableau 2. Young Spanish girls and Léonor's confidante Inès welcome Fernand to a *locus amoenus* (*site délicieux*) on the banks of the Isla de León for a tryst with Léonor.

Méry & Hadot/David, *Herculanum*, opéra (Opéra, 1859)

Act III. In the gardens of pagan Queen Olympia, the former Christian Hélios gives in to celebrations of love and pleasure, including a *divertissement* with bacchantes.

Méry/Rossini, *Sémiramis*, grand-opéra (Opéra, 1860)

Act II. The hanging gardens of Babylon. Surrounded by her ladies, Queen Semiramide languorously awaits the arrival of Arsace.

Méry & du Locle/Verdi, *Don Carlos*, opéra (Opéra, 1865)

Act II, Scene 2. A *locus amoenus* (*site riante*) near the convent of Saint-Just. Princess Eboli, her ladies of honor, and the page Thibaut amuse themselves with song.

#### **Some Possible Musical Attributes:**

- mimetic nature sounds, e.g., water, wind, and birdsong effects
- vocal coloratura and bright instrumental timbres, e.g., harps, flutes, violins, triangle
- pastoral topic<sup>533</sup>: compound meters, siciliana rhythm, solo woodwinds, *cantilena* voices, simple melodies, static/stable harmonies (including pedal points and drones)
- “expressive medium,” associated with feelings of “mutual affection or love, untroubled by irony or premonition”: lyrical melody, stable harmony (tonic pedal or tonic-dominant alternation), oscillating string accompaniment, sustained tone, pedal points or melodic doubling in winds (if present)<sup>534</sup>

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<sup>533</sup> Monelle, *The Musical Topic*.

<sup>534</sup> Charlton, "Orchestra and Image in the Late Eighteenth Century," 1–12.

- serenade style: lyrical melody over light accompanimental texture of pizzicato arpeggios
- Middle Eastern exoticism<sup>535</sup>: Aeolian mode, arabesque melodies, “floating” harmonies, lush textures, solo oboe. Note that this is not limited to Middle Eastern settings, but can also be used to project Western stereotypes of the East as a place of excessive luxury and sensuality onto non-Eastern settings and characters.

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**ARISTOCRATIC PLEASURE GARDENS:**

Coralli & Burat de Gurgy/Gide, *Le Diable boiteux*, ballet-pantomime (Opéra, 1836)

Act I, Tableau 3. Park of a Moorish chateau, conjured by the devil Asmodée for Cléophas. Nymphs emerge from the verdure, bearing fruits and flowers, then carry Cléophas on a sedan chair in a magnificent procession.

Saint-Georges & Mazilier/Reber & Benoist, *Le Diable amoureux*, ballet-pantomime (Opéra, 1840)

Act I. Park of the courtesan Phoebée’s villa. Phoebée and other women surround Frédéric in an elegant pavilion. Frédéric loses all of his money at one of the gaming tables.

Scribe/Thomas, *Carmagnola*, opéra (Opéra, 1841)

Act I. The terrace of the gardens of the governor of Brescia. Women play lute and mandolin, men play dice and checkers, lords and ladies consume ices and sorbets, servants fan the women. The governor’s wife Lucrezia leads the chorus in singing of pleasure and love.

Saint-Georges/Halévy, *La Reine de Chypre*, opéra (Opéra, 1841)

Act III. Illuminated gardens of a casino in Nicosia. While Venetian and Cypriot noblemen drink and gamble, a troupe of courtesans appears. The women sing and dance to the accompaniment of the zither, mingling with the men and leading them away to a feast.

Saint-Georges & Albert/Adam, *La Jolie fille de Gand*, ballet-pantomime (Opéra, 1842)

Act III, Tableau 1. Park of the Marquis San Lucar’s villa. After a sumptuous feast, young lords mingle with courtesans in costumes of nymphs and bacchantes; some lie on the grass, intoxicated by wine and the women’s charms.

**Some Possible Musical Attributes:**

- mimetic laughing sounds, bright instrumental timbres, vocal coloratura
- serenade style, pastoral topic, expressive medium
- Middle Eastern exoticism

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<sup>535</sup> Ralph Locke, "Cutthroats and Casbah Dancers, Muezzins and Timeless Sands: Musical Images of the Middle East," *Nineteenth-Century Music* 22, no. 1 (1998): 20–53.

### **SERAGLIO GARDENS:**

Henry & Nourrit/Carlini, Gide, Rossini & Beethoven, *L'île des pirates*, ballet-pantomime (1835)

Act III. The garden of women on the Isle of the Pirates (“a sort of harem”). Newly admitted to the pirate band, Ottavio may choose two women as companions.

Royer & Vaëz/Verdi, *Jérusalem*, opéra (Opéra, 1847)

Act III. Gardens of the seraglio of the Emir of Ramla. Hélène, held hostage in the seraglio, despairs; harem women laugh at her and mock her.

Dumanoir & Mazilier/Adam, *Griseldis, ou Les Cinq Sens*, ballet-pantomime (Opéra, 1848)

Act II, Tableau 3 (Touch). In the gardens of his palace, Hassan the governor of Belgrade is surrounded by his harem. The women play games; slaves bring coffee and sorbet.

Saint-Georges & Mazilier/Adam, *Le Corsaire*, ballet-pantomime (Opéra, 1856)

Act II. The palace of the Pasha, on the Isle of Cos, surrounded by magnificent gardens. Bathing scene of Zulmea and the Pasha's women.

### **Some Possible Musical Attributes:**

- expressive medium
- “scurrying” perpetual-motion sixteenth-note passages, “laughing” trills, bright instrumental timbres (especially harps for bathing scenes)
- *alla turca* style<sup>536</sup>: imitations of Janissary band percussion (plus triangle), long-short-short rhythmic pattern, acciaccaturas and other ornaments, static harmony

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### **MAGIC/FAIRY GARDENS:**

Scribe/Auber, *Le Cheval de Bronze*, opéra-féerie (Comique, 1835), then later opéra-ballet (Opéra, 1857)

Act III. Celestial gardens of the Princess Stella on the planet Venus. Attended by nymph-houris, Stella is held captive on Venus until a man lasts a day in her company without kissing her. Only the heroine Péki (disguised as a man) is able to resist.

Gautier & Coralli/Burgmüller, *La Péri*, ballet fantastique (Opéra, 1843)

Act I, Tableau 2. After smoking opium, Prince Achmet has a vision of a lush fairy oasis populated by peris. He dances with the Queen of the Peris.

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<sup>536</sup> Hunter, "The *Alla Turca* Style in the Late Eighteenth Century," 43–73.

Saint-Georges & Perrot/Adam, *La Filleule des Fées*, ballet-féerie (Opéra, 1849)

Act II. A moonlit park with fountains; the statues come to life as fairies. The fairies initiate their goddaughter Ysaure into the fairy sisterhood.

Gautier & Saint-Léon/Benoist, *Pâquerette*, ballet-pantomime (Opéra, 1851)

Act III, Tableau 2. François has a vision of a magical, shimmering landscape on a lake, with his distant beloved Pâquerette surrounded by a ring of fairies.

Saint-Georges/Halévy, *La Magicienne*, opéra (Opéra, 1858)

Act I, Tableau 2. Along a moonlit pond in a forest, fairies and fantastic beings herald the entrance of the enchantress Mélusine, who performs a sleeping-spell on the smitten viscount René.

M. Taglioni & Saint-Georges/Offenbach, *Le Papillon*, ballet-pantomime (Opéra, 1860)

Act II, Tableau 2: Prince Djalma awakens in the gardens of the fairies. Surrounded by butterflies, he searches for his beloved Farfalla.

### Some Possible Musical Attributes:

- “moonlight convention”<sup>537</sup>: “floating” lyrical melody, repetitive triplet accompaniment in middle range, slow and ponderous bass, preference for “difficult” keys (multiple sharps/flats)
- “celestial medium” (my term): repetitive arpeggiated sixteenth-note patterns, string tremolos, limited harmonic movement (often using pedal points), preference for flat keys, prominent use of harps and other bright instrumental timbres
- “fairy music”<sup>538</sup> or *style féérique*<sup>539</sup>: rapid perpetual-motion passagework, trills and tremolos, extremely soft dynamics, ethereal timbres such as flutes and string harmonics. To Brittan’s illuminating work on the *style féérique* as an evocation of insect-like sound effects, I would add that use of this musical style positions fairy women as ecomorphic beings, connected to the surrounding landscape by hybrid humanoid-insect bodies.

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### DEMONIC/HAUNTED GARDENS:

Scribe & Delavigne/Meyerbeer, *Robert le Diable*, opéra (Opéra, 1831)

Act III. The moonlit cloisters and cemetery garden in the ruined convent of St. Rosalie. Led by their abbess Héléne, the ghosts of debauched nuns appear and seduce Robert.

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<sup>537</sup> Waltz, “In Defense of Moonlight,” 1–43.

<sup>538</sup> Dickensheets, “Nineteenth-Century Topical Analysis: A Lexicon of Romantic *Topoi*,” 5–19.

<sup>539</sup> Brittan, “Fairy Magic, Natural Science, and the *Scherzo fantastique*,” 527–600.

Coralli/Schneitzhoeffter, *La Tempête ou L'Île des Génies*, ballet-féerie (Opéra, 1834)

Act II. An enchanted part of the island: groves of orange and oleander by clear streams. Caliban casts a spell to lull Fernand and Lea sleep, then summons the diabolical *filles de la nuit* and the fairy Alcine to seduce Fernand.

Castil-Blaze/Mozart, *Don Juan*, opéra (Opéra, 1834)

Act V, Scene VI (final tableau). Gardens of Don Juan's chateau, at night. A chorus of the damned, carrying a torch and book with cabalistic symbols, sings the *Dies irae* from Mozart's Requiem and surrounds Don Juan. A long procession of young girls dressed in white emerges from the park; they show the corpse of Donna Anna to Don Juan.

Gautier & Saint-Georges/Adam, *Giselle*, ballet fantastique (Opéra, 1841)

Act II. A moonlit forest, on the banks of a pond. Myrtha, Queen of the Wilis, emerges from the rushes and summons other Wilis (ghosts of spurned women) from flowers and shrubs.

Nuitter/Wagner, *Tannhäuser*, opéra (Opéra, 1861)

Act I, Tableau 1: In a vast subterranean grotto (Venusberg), Venus rests on a couch, surrounded by Graces and Amours, while Tannhäuser sleeps alongside other young men seduced by the nymphs of Venus. Nymphs, Bacchantes, and Faunes dance a delirious bacchanale; a chorus of invisible Sirens sings of the intoxicating pleasures of this place.

### Some Possible Musical Attributes:

- *ombra* topic<sup>540</sup>: minor keys, tremolos, extreme dynamic shifts, rising scales or arpeggios that metaphorically illustrate the rising of spirits from subterranean depths
- “feux follet” effects: bright instrumental timbres, high tessitura, rapid ascending melodic gestures
- expressive medium or moonlight convention/celestial medium/fairy style at the initial appearance of these women, thus giving the illusion that they are angelic beings
- *cheval écrit* (“noble horse”) topic<sup>541</sup>: dotted rhythm figures in compound meter, connoting the riding of witches on their broomsticks
- *alla turca* style for supernatural bacchanals — to borrow from similar arguments put forward by Locke, this musical stereotype of the Islamic Middle East as menacing and barbaric is used to characterize these women as evil, wild, and merciless.

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<sup>540</sup> Ratner, *Classic Music*. See also Ratner's *Romantic Music: Sound and Syntax*.

<sup>541</sup> Monelle, *The Sense of Music: Semiotic Essays*.



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