OPERA AND THE GALANT HOMME: QUINAULT AND LULLY'S
TRAGÉDIE EN MUSIQUE, ATYS, IN THE CONTEXT OF
SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY MODERNISM

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF MUSIC

By

Marilyn K. Browne, B.S., M.A.
Denton, Texas
May, 1994
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Browne, Marilyn K., **Opera and the Galant Homme: Quinault and Lully's *Tragédie en musique, Atys*, in the Context of Seventeenth-Century Modernism.** Master of Music (Musicology), May 1994, 177 pp., 10 figures, 36 examples, bibliography, 94 titles.

The *tragédie en musique* of Quinault and Lully was a highly successful new genre, representative of contemporary Parisian life. However, it is still largely viewed in the negative terms of its detractors, the proponents of classical tragedy. The purpose of this study is to redefine the *tragédie en musique* in terms of seventeenth-century modernism. An examination of the society and poetry of the contemporary gallant world provides the historical framework for an analysis of both the libretto and music of Quinault and Lully's *Atys* (1676). This study attempts to bridge the historical and cultural distances that until now have hindered accessibility to this major new genre in seventeenth-century literature and music.
I gratefully acknowledge the program for foreign graduate students at the École Normale Supérieure in Fontenay/Saint-Cloud, France, under whose auspices the research for this thesis was completed, Dr. Marie-Christine Koop for making possible this research opportunity, my major professor, Dr. Deanna Bush for her insight and guidance, and Dr. Donald Vidrine and Dr. Michael Collins for their input and support.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It is difficult not to view the arts of a previous era through a lens of historical distortion. A misunderstanding of works of art oftentimes results from an ignorance of their meaning within a contemporary context. Such is the case for the beginning of opera in France, in the tragédies en musique of Philippe Quinault and Jean-Baptiste Lully. Their works’ reputation is paradoxically based on seventeenth-century writers’ criticism of this new genre, which points out its numerous deficiencies when compared to the style, language, versification and dramatic structure of French classical tragedy. Boileau, Saint-Evremond, and Bossuet were among the most rigorous detractors of the tragédie en musique, and their complaints are cited in many studies concerned with the birth of opera in France.¹

Consequently, early French opera is often considered deficient, flawed, and not particularly successful. Because its critics were influential writers, who eloquently voiced their concerns, the criticism of this genre has been readily transmitted to us over the intervening centuries; a balanced viewpoint, provided by seventeenth-century opera proponents, has not received equal treatment in most history textbooks. The twentieth-century

reputation of the tragédie en musique is therefore largely based on negative criticism; they are too tender, lacking in substance, devoid of any redeeming social value, and based on frivolous maxims of love. Moreover, according to the critics, Quinault's poetry is substandard in both form and content, devoid of serious literary merit; Lully's music errs not in and of itself, but as a companion to this less than noble dramaturgy. Coupled with this criticism is the assumption that the King, Louis XIV, was solely responsible for the success of the tragédie en musique; as a tool of the monarchy to promote the glory of France, and as an excellent method to immortalize the king, these operas were insured against failure. However, further consideration of the facts surrounding these works reveals that this explanation is an oversimplification of the reasons for their success.

It is true that these works were subjected to a thorough analysis by both the Académie française and the Académie des Inscriptions, Médaillées, et Belles-Lettres. The intent was to insure that Quinault's librettos were in accordance with the image that France wished to portray to the world of the empire's splendor, power, and magnificence. However, the monarchy did not subsidize these elaborate and costly spectacles. As is clearly stated in the lettre patente, which gave Lully a monopoly over the creation and performance of opera in France, the opera-going public was to be charged an entrance fee which would defray the costs of production. Aside from free

2From "PERMISSION POUR TENIR ACADEMIE ROYALE de Musique, en faveur de sieur Lully," published in Recueil des livrets, vol. 1, 66, (Bibliothèque de l'Opéra Liv 17 [R1], "...to compensate for the large expenditures that it will be necessary to make for such productions, because of the Theatres, Stage Machines, Set Designs, Costumes as well as other necessary things: We permit him to perform for the public all of the plays that he composes, even those that will be performed before Us, without however, using for the performance of the said plays the Musicians employed by us: And also to charge such fees as he deems appropriate, & to establish Guards and other persons necessary at the doors where the performances will be held: Making very deliberate interdictions to all persons of"
rent at the Palais Royal, where the works were performed for the paying public, and the occasional piece of stage machinery or costume that the king specifically requested, the life of this genre was dependent on successful private enterprise, not on royal subsidy.

Lully was undoubtedly aware of the need to make the tragédies en musique a financially successful venture. His only predecessor, Pierre Perrin, had required financial backing despite the king's support. Perrin's mismanagement of the monetary aspect of the operas caused his ruin, and he was soon replaced by Lully as the holder of the lettre patente for operatic productions in France. Lully, unlike Perrin, was a shrewd entrepreneur; in 1679, only six years after the first Quinault-Lully tragédie en musique, Cadmus et Hermione, Lully assumed complete financial control of his opera productions. The genre was not only successful, but it flourished. According to Robert Isherwood, "the popularity of Lully's operas made him probably the wealthiest composer in history."4

In order to understand the tragédie en musique of Quinault and Lully, it is therefore imperative not only to consider the negative criticism of

\footnotesize{whatever quality and condition that they may be, even to the Officers of our House, to enter without paying.\textsuperscript{3} ("... pour les dédomager des grands frais qu'il conviendra faire pour lesdites Representations, tant à cause des Théâtres, Machines, Décorations, Habits qu'autre choses nécessaire: Nous luy permettons de donner au public toutes les pièces qu'il aura composées, même celles qui auront esté représentée devant Nous, sans neantmoins qu'il puisse se servir pour l'execution desdites pieces des Musiciens qui sont à nos gages: Comme aussi de prendre telles sommes qu'il jugera à propos, & d'establir des Gardes & autres gens nécessaires aux portes des lieux où se feront lesdites Representations: Faisant tres-expresses inhibitions & défenses à toutes personnes de quelque qualité & condition qu'elles soient, même aux Officiers de nostre Maison d'y entrer sans payer.") All translations are by this author unless otherwise indicated.}

\textsuperscript{3}For an account of Perrin's association with the Académie royale de musique, cf. Isherwood, \textit{op. cit.}, 175ff.

\textsuperscript{4}\textit{Ibid.}, 134.
Boileau and those sharing his support of the French classical tragedy, but to examine the reasons for its enormous popular appeal via the supporters of the new genre. Boileau's criticism defines the tragédie en musique in negative terms; from him, we learn what it is not, in comparison to classical standards. In defining the tragédie en musique in positive terms, however, a comparison to classical tragedy is largely inappropriate, as it was a new, independent, and modern genre, designed to reflect the glories of modern seventeenth-century France, not the life of the Ancients.

From the beginning of the seventeenth century, a dispute was developing in France called the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns (Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes). By 1687, it had become an important literary quarrel with the proponents of the Ancients in direct opposition to the proponents of modernism. The former (including Boileau, La Fontaine, and Saint-Evremond, all critics of the tragédie en musique) believed in the superiority of the Ancients; their works of art had endured the test of time and their philosophy should be used to guide modern writers, giving critics a means by which to measure their worth. By adopting the rules of the Ancients, authors could prevent errors of modern thinking and fashion from entering their works, giving them universal and lasting appeal.

The foremost proponent of the opposing camp was Charles Perrault, a defender of opera and a close friend of Philippe Quinault. The Moderns believed in the law of progress, invalidating the superiority of the Ancients; they reasoned that throughout time, century by century, new rules are established in both the arts and the sciences, making the modern man the best judge of art or interpreter of science. Perrault affirmed the superiority of
the Moderns in all genres. In his *Critique de l'opéra* (1674), he finds the *galant homme*, or modern man of refined taste, an equal or better judge of drama than those educated in ancient theory and writings; the *galant homme* is competently able to judge theatrical works solely by his knowledge of what provides pleasure. Perrault states:

... Masters of the Art [of dramatic criticism] are very rare, & excepting several who are very knowledgeable, I would more readily count on a *galant homme* of good sense, than an alleged *Scavant* who knows a lot, but who has poorly studied this subject. One must consider that works for the theatre are not solely created to please the connoisseurs, but to please all refined people (*honnestes gens*) whom Terence calls the People, & that, following his testimony, a play has succeeded, if it succeeded at pleasing the People. When a *galant homme*, who has never read Aristotle nor Horace, tells me that a Play pleased him, that it held his utmost attention, that he understood completely the dramatic plot; that because of it he experienced agitation; that he then viewed the denouement with joy, & that he left the theatre with a great desire to meet one of his friends to recount the Play; then I will believe that the Play that this *galant homme* saw was good, & his testimony will be stronger in my opinion than all the reasoning of the *demi-Scavants*. Because the difference that exists between an *homme scavant*, & a man who is not, when sound judgment is equal on both sides, will not at all make them experience differently the effect of the Play; they will equally amuse themselves or be bored, with only this difference, that the *Scavant* will be able to say why he was bored, & why he was amused; & that the *galant homme* who has not studied nor reflected upon the Poetic Art, will not be able to say why.6

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6*Textes sur Lully et l'opéra français* (Genève: Editions Minkoff, 1987), 72-75.

"... Maistres de l'Art sont tres-rares, & à la reserve de quelques-uns qui sont fort habiles; je m'en fierois bien plus à un galand homme de bon sens, qu'à un Scavant pretendu qui auroit beaucoup, mais mal estudié cette matiere. Il faut considerer que les Comedies ne sont pas faites pour plaire seulement aux habiles, mais à tous les honnestes gens que Terence appelle le Peuple, & que, suivant son témoignage, elle est parvenue à sa fin, si elle a aeu leur plaire. Quand un galand homme, qui n'aura jamais lu Aristote ny Horace, me dira qu'une Piece luy a plu, qu'elle a attré agréablement toute son attention, qu'il en a tres-bien compris le noeud; qu'il en a eu de l'inquietude; qu'ensmitte il a veu le dénoevement avec joye, & qu'il est sorty de la Comedie avec un grand desir de rencontren quelqu'un de ses amis pour la lui raconter; je croiray que la piece que ce galand homme a venu, est bonne, & ce
By the beginning of the eighteenth century, it was clear that modernism with its emphasis on progress and the ability to appeal to the man of taste had replaced the erudite reverence of the Ancients, opening the way for the triumph of modern reason in the Enlightenment. On stage, the modern genre of the tragédie en musique had triumphed over, and had all but replaced, classical tragedy.

The purpose of this study is to redefine the tragédie en musique of Quinault and Lully in terms of seventeenth-century modernism. Before considering the tragédie en musique, the society in which it was born and flourished must be examined. Because of this society's preoccupation with literary matters, an understanding of the poetry written in this milieu must be achieved in order to comprehend the philosophy, style, and content of Quinault's librettos. The tragédie en musique, as a literary and musical art form, can then be viewed within its appropriate historical context.

A review of the literature reveals studies that address peripheral aspects of this subject. Georgia Cowart, in her articles, "Critical Language and Musical Thought in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," "Lully Enjoué: Galanterie in Seventeenth-Century France" and "Inventing the Arts: Changing Critical Language in the Ancien Régime," provides an excellent discussion of terminology pertaining to society and the arts in the seventeenth century. Buford Norman directly addresses the opposition
between the Ancients and the Moderns, and provides a valuable comparison between Quinault and Racine regarding prosody and language in, "Ancients and Moderns, Tragedy and Opera: The Quarrel over Alceste," and in "The Vocabulary of Quinault's Opera Libretti: Drama without Drama." And Lois Rosow's articles, "French Baroque recitative as an expression of tragic declamation" and "The Metrical Notation of Lully's Recitative" provide insight into Lully's manner of setting French prosody in recitative.

In reference to society and the tragédie en musique of Quinault and Lully, Patricia Howard's two articles, "The Positioning of Woman in Quinault's World Picture," and "The Influence of the Précieuses on Content and Structure in Quinault's and Lully's Tragédies Lyriques," attempt to place Quinault's dramaturgy within the seventeenth-century salon environment. However, as a result of a twentieth-century feminist bias Howard presents the dramaturgy of Quinault in a negative light, distorting the reality of seventeenth-century society and its reflection in these librettos.

Most of the research that has been done focuses primarily on one aspect of Quinault and Lully's tragédie en musique. Several works focus on either the literary or musical aspect of the operas, without attempting to define the genre within the context of seventeenth-century life. Notable among these are Cuthbert Girdlestone's La Tragédie en musique (1673-1750): considérée comme genre littéraire, and James Anthony's French Baroque Music from Beaujoyeux to Rameau. On the other hand, Etienne Gros' exhaustive study of Quinault, in his dissertation, Philippe Quinault: sa vie et son oeuvre, is invaluable in placing the librettist within contemporary society and provides a detailed analysis and discussion of his tragédie en musique.
from a literary viewpoint. And, *Music in the Service of the King, France in the Seventeenth Century*, by Robert Isherwood, and *Jean-Baptiste Lully: musique et dramaturgie au service du prince*, by Manuel Couvreur provide excellent information on Lully's operas, but mainly in relation to the monarchy of Louis XIV. Other works, such as Roger Picard's *Les Salons littéraires et la société françaïse, 1610-1789*, provide general information on the world of Parisian society.

In order to place the work of Quinault and Lully's tragédie en musique in the context of seventeenth-century modernism, their fourth opera, *Atys* (1676), is selected for analysis. Questions to consider include the following: As a thoroughly modern genre, how does *Atys* reflect modern society in terms of literature, language, social conventions and mores? What accounts for its tremendous popular appeal and success at pleasing the Parisian audiences, or more specifically, Perrault's ultimate judge, the *galant homme*? And, how is it similar to or different from classical dramaturgy as favored by the proponents of the Ancients? These questions are significant, as until now, the tragédie en musique has not been placed within a positive and balanced historical context. Consequently, it has been largely underestimated, misunderstood, and inaccessible to present-day audiences and scholars. This study attempts to bridge the historical and cultural distances that until now have hindered accessibility to this major new genre in seventeenth-century literature and music.
CHAPTER II

GALLANT SOCIETY IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE

In France during the seventeenth century, the salons as well as the court were frequented by members of genteel society. The salon tradition was introduced in the early seventeenth century by an aristocrat of Italian parentage, Catherine de Vivonne. Having spent her youth in Italy, she was brought to France in 1600, at twelve years of age, where she married Charles d'Angennes, the future Marquis de Rambouillet. Expecting that the French court would provide the elegance and refinement, to which she was accustomed in the courts of Italy, the Marquise de Rambouillet instead found the court of Henri IV and his military cohorts a crude and base environment. Acceptable social manners and a stimulating intellectual atmosphere lacking, she decided to create such a community in her own home, thus beginning the salon tradition in France.

From 1620 until 1665, her salon exercised an enormous influence on the refinement of society and on the standardization and purification of the French language. She received influential writers into her home, such as François de Malherbe, Claude Favre de Vaugelas, and Guez de Balzac. Discussions centered on literary issues, as anyone admitted into this elite circle was expected to be knowledgeable in language and literature, and skillful at composing verse. The salon also served in the capacity of literary critic, as the unofficial societal counterpart of the Académie française. Here, poets read their poems before publication, and their plays before public
performance; the salon's influence was such that acceptance or rejection of a work could mean success or failure for its author.

In this environment, rules for social discourse were also formalized. By frequent social interaction with women, men became educated in and sensitive to proper decorum, or the *bienséances*, as well as the fine art of conversation. Language, expression, dress, gesture, and behavior were extremely important to the salon-goers. Anyone violating these unspoken rules of acceptable interaction was immediately rejected from this select company. Attention to form, not only in poetry but also in polite company, was essential.

As the century progressed, many women copied Mme de Rambouillet's example and began regularly receiving into their homes. In fact, this trend became so popular that by the 1660s there were four published works that included long lists of salon hostesses.¹ Many of these salons were influential literary circles, but even in less prestigious ones, all participants strictly adhered to the prescribed protocol of proper decorum.

The refined tone set by society hostesses was gradually assimilated into manners at court. The reign of Louis XIII (1610-1643) witnessed an amelioration of the coarse conditions existing a few years earlier under Henri IV. However, when Louis XIV was crowned king in 1643, at five years of age, there was still a distinct separation between court and salon society. It was not until the defeat of the aristocracy's uprising during the Fronde, in 1653,

that the two separate worlds of town and palace began to merge. By 1660, the year of Louis' marriage to Marie-Thérèse, there was an ongoing interaction between these two facets of Parisian life, and etiquette at court faithfully mirrored the bienséances introduced by the socio-literary circles.

After the Fronde, Louis XIV was intent on disempowering the aristocracy; he wished to prevent further threats to his monarchy from aspiring nobility. His projects for military expansion of the empire meant that a docile and passive aristocracy at home was essential in order to preclude internal discontent and rebellion during a time of war on the frontiers. He conceived of building a palace large enough to house the nobility, so as to keep them distracted with lavish entertainments at court. The king's goal was not realized, however, until the installation of the court at the château of Versailles in 1682. Although such an imposing edifice took years to construct, this did not mean that he ignored politics at court. Long before Louis' centralization of power at Versailles, the aristocracy was preoccupied with a variety of ritualized social activities, including balls and festivals, hunting, dancing and promenades.

By 1660, social interaction between refined men and women was the preferred pastime. The numerous and multifarious activities at court, coupled with a thriving romanesque literary tradition, meant that love was omnipresent, as was its ruler, the God Amour. Eros, lifted out of Greek mythology and the pastorale, became incarnate in French society. Jean-Michel Pelous, in Amour précieux, amour galant, (1654-1675), describes the pervasiveness of this deity:
On this dogma of the all powerfulness of love, unanimity was complete. Love must reign as master on earth; it is vain to attempt to resist him and everyone must contribute to the best of his ability to the advent of this charitable god.²

Love, then, was no longer exclusively an interest of the salon, but permeated society in general. Amour was ruler over all earthly inhabitants, and was elevated to reign over the other gods as well; gods and goddesses, kings and nobles, as well as other mortals ranging from high to low birth were all at his mercy. He single-handedly flattened the existing social hierarchy, as all were equal, helpless, and passive before him. Anyone could be a target for his arrows, and those who tried to resist his power were severely smitten. From king to commoner, all were intoxicated by his charms.

Louis XIV, whether he personally believed in this philosophy or not, was the ideal hero of love, while still subjected to its power. Le Laboureur, in La Promenade de Saint-Germain (1669), defines the king's relationship to Amour by describing the cupola above his bed chambers. He states that in the center were painted three cupids who appeared to be holding the chandelier, and revealed by their facial expressions "the joy they have in enlightening the King." Four other cupids in the height of the cupola attested to their omnipotence by mocking the powers of both heaven and earth, including Jupiter, Pluto, Mars, and Hercules. The painting served to remind

²Jean-Michel Pelous, Amour précieux, amour galant (1664-1675) (Paris: Klincksieck, 1980), 227. "Sur ce dogma de la toute-puissance de l'amour, l'unanimité est totale. L'amour doit régner sur la terre; il est vain de chercher à lui résister et chacun doit contribuer dans la mesure de ses forces à l'avènement de ce dieu bienfaisant."
the king, and more importantly the courtiers who frequented his chambers, of the powerful role that love played in his empire.  

The fascination with the machinations of Amour pervaded polite society, simply stated, love was in fashion. Even as early as the 1650s, during the years of the Fronde, its ideology was in vogue. An influential salon hostess and writer, Madeleine de Scudéry, in her ten-novel work *Le Grand Cyrus* (1649-1653), portrays life and people in Paris under fictional names. She likewise defines the influence of love:

... love is not just a simple passion as everywhere else, but a passion of necessity and decorum: it is essential that all men are in love and that all women are loved. There is no one who is unfeeling among us. Hardness of heart is reproached as a crime in those who are capable of it; and their freedom is so shameful that those who are not at all in love at least pretend to be.

The preoccupation with love, out of which developed a rigid and formalized code of behavior, influenced every level of social interaction. The term *galant* came to signify a man who had courtly airs, agreeable manners, and who tried to please the fairer sex by writing notes of love containing gallant verse. A gallant woman developed the art of refined entertaining and received the elite of society into her home. So widespread was the term *galant* that eventually it began to take on a pejorative meaning: a gallant...
man was also clever, dangerous, and someone who had illicit affairs with women; a gallant woman was also a coquette. Although the character of a galant had undergone transformation, the physical demeanor remained unchanged. In this respect, the form and content of galant could be completely separated, so that a gallant person actually referred to someone who meticulously followed the rules of conduct dictated by love, but lacked inner sincerity. A galanterie was a gallant thing or action, but it also could be interpreted as amour sans amour, or love without love. This change in meaning of galant, applied to the entire gallant aesthetic, reinforces the primacy of outer appearance over inner substance, and can be applied to objects, actions, as well as people.

External Appearance

A code of conduct for the galant, or his ritualized outward form, was written by Charles Sorel in Les loix de la galanterie, of 1644. The rules give practical advice on fashion: one must wear silk stockings, own a carriage, and be clean shaven. Clothes are considered an ornament for adorning the body, so they must be changed often and also adapted to frequently changing styles. It is important to wear ribbons on clothes and shoes, as they are a

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5 Pelous, op. cit., 155.


strong indicator of the galanterie of the wearer.\textsuperscript{8} Sorel gives advice on how to wear ribbons; for example, it is better to wear black ribbons near the wrists as they make the skin appear whiter.\textsuperscript{9} The gallant man is expected to be seen in church, know the preferred spots to promenade, and frequent all the balls that take place on one evening (courir le Bal). Only by doing so, can he be seen by the women of the society world, and likewise see who is in attendance.\textsuperscript{10} He is also expected to associate with lowly people, such as musicians, gardeners, and publishers, in order to obtain the required gifts to impress the object of his affections; such presents include books that are out of season or not yet published, flowers, and music.\textsuperscript{11} Sorel states that no one is considered a true gallant who has never given a ball, such elaborate occasions providing an opportunity to spend large sums of money. However, if one is not wealthy, it is important to associate with those who can make great expenditures. He advises the poor but aspiring gallant to "borrow from all possible sources, and lean on their credit by all the artifices imaginable, assuring them that it is a mark of nobility to act as such."\textsuperscript{12} Sorel qualifies a gallant as coming from "a highly elevated race in nobility and honor."\textsuperscript{13}

However, these rules were not for exclusive use by the nobility; by adhering

\textsuperscript{8} Another definition for galant was a knot of ribbons (noeud de rubans), Jean Dubois, René Lagane, and Alain Lerond, "galant," Dictionnaire du français classique (Paris: Larousse, 1989), 283.

\textsuperscript{9} Rules 7, 9, and 11.

\textsuperscript{10} Rule 12.

\textsuperscript{11} Rule 13.

\textsuperscript{12} p. 3, "d'emprunter de tous costez, et d'appuyer leur credit par toutes les artifices imaginables, les asseurant que c'est une des marques de Noblesse d'en faire ainsi. . . ."

\textsuperscript{13} p. 2, "une race fort relevee en noblesse et en honneurs."
to them, anyone could master the appropriate outer appearance essential for success as a galant.

Although the nobility helped to set the trends for galanterie, it was not just at court that this ideology was popular. The fusion of court and society life meant a continual flow of ideas about fashion between these two worlds, and included protocol on dress, behavior, and speech. The salons were frequented primarily by the wealthy aristocracy, such as Mme de Rambouillet and her more illustrious guests. However, the bourgeoisie actively participated in these literary circles. The salon society, like the God Amour, cut across rigid social hierarchies and placed, if only temporarily, the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie on equal terms. From the bourgeoisie, galant ideology and fashions trickled down to the lower classes, resulting in street vendors on the Pont Neuf imitating the behavior, language and dress of the nobility. In short, attention to outward appearance, or to the form of galanterie, was a preoccupation of the higher classes which influenced society as a whole.14

In the social world of the salon and of the court, physical appearance was of utmost importance, and this included not only the presence of the person, but of the social setting as well. The grandeur and magnificence of the châteaux of Louis XIV exemplify the importance of physical surroundings.

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14 *Mercure galant*, (1672) tome 3, 320-323, describes the imitation of court fashion and adds that from the lower classes, "Fashions passed to the Ladies of the Provinces, from the Ladies of the Provinces to the Bourgeoises of the same; & that from there they passed to Foreign Countries; in such a manner that when they were there beginning their course, those that had since been invented at the Court were already becoming outdated." ("les Modes passoient aux Dames de Province, des Dames de Province aux Bourgeoises des mêmes lieux; & que de là elles passoient dans les Pays Etrangers; de manière que lors qu'elles y commençaient leurs cours, celles qu'on avait depuis ce temps-là inventées à la Cour commençoient déjà à devenir vieilles.")
The gardens of Versailles, designed by Le Nôtre, were of primary importance as a setting for the ritualized pastime of the promenade. Likewise in the salons, the physical backdrop was of particular significance. Mme de Rambouillet received her guests in the chambre bleue, or blue bedroom, which was an inner sanctum at the end of a long series of sectioned off rooms; it served to provide a cloistered and personal environment. She received her highly esteemed guests while propped up in bed. The seating arrangement was hierarchical, with her favorites occupying seats in the ruelle, or alley next to the bed. Physical contact was forbidden and any offense was reprimanded; Vincent Voiture, the favored salon poet, was once temporarily banished from this community for having touched the arm of the hostess's daughter, Julie.

Attention to appearance, whether of an individual or of his surroundings, was paramount. However, form was often an illusion which masked inner reality. Remembering Mlle de Scudéry's words, everyone in Paris was "in love," and those who were not pretended to be, so as not to appear unfashionable. Exhibiting the distinguished and elegant physical appearance required for entrance into this society did not always mean that the inner qualities of sincerity and genuine affection were present. For the galant, external appearance and internal substance could have little or nothing in common.

\[15\] The ruelle was of such significance that the term eventually became a synonym for salon.
The Role of Decorum

The highly formalized outer appearance functioned as a mask which could readily serve the *galant* who was inwardly "clever, and dangerous." But even for salon members of sincerity who genuinely loved, overt expression of that love was expressly forbidden. Concealment of inner sentiment, by masking facial expression, gestures and speech, made communication with the beloved, especially in the early stages of the liaison, a complex task. Two verbs, frequent in the salon literature of the late seventeenth century which attest to this behavior, are *dissimuler* (to dissimulate), and *feindre* (to feign).

In 1663, Gabriel Gueret wrote an allegorical story entitled *La Carte de la Cour*. Corresponding to the importance of masking, allegory was a popular method of storytelling by which real events and people were concealed behind fictitious names. The purpose of Gueret's story was to describe the ways of the court, by taking a young man, Hydaspe, on a voyage through it. But instead of surveying the view of Notre Dame from the palace at the Louvre, young Hydaspe is introduced to the allegorical geography of the actions and emotions popular at court, such as "the Mountain of Curiosity," "the River of Desire," and "the Neighborhood of Tenderness."

Along the way, Hydaspe and his guide come upon "the Islands of Disguise," and the guide reveals the valuable lessons taught there. From Gueret's description, we can learn much about the role and the importance of dissimulation in this seventeenth-century aristocratic milieu.

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It is there one learns to present a pleasant face to an unpleasant act; there one is instructed in making grimaces and faces; make-up is in great vogue, men mask themselves as do women, and the heart never agrees with one's speech. . . [there is a] restrained and studied demeanor with most of the inhabitants of Disguise who consecrate everything to appearance, and who strongly commit themselves to hiding what is natural, so that anymore one does not encounter in them the Truth except behind a mask.

Nonetheless, Hydaspe, your eyes must not be constantly occupied with the contemplation of Sincerity; there is no harm in turning them from time to time towards Disguise, with the condition that if you study this refinement that everyone seeks with so much curiosity, and if you there learn to give a double face to all things, this is only for defending yourself from the artifice that everyone practices there.17

The map helps the novice, and more importantly the reader, to understand the unspoken mores of this society. Emotions and proper conduct, lightly veiled in allegory, are directly related. Hydaspe learns the use of facial gesture, make-up, and composed deportment as arms against artifice, and as tools of self-control.

Likewise the King Louis XIV viewed dissimulation as an essential skill for a monarch. In his memoirs, he counsels his heirs to learn the fine art of artifice, in order to protect one's own thoughts and to better discern the thoughts of others. Mastery of facial expression and speech is of particular

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17Gabriel Gueret, La Carte de la Cour (Paris: Trebouillet, 1663), 54-56, "C'est là qu'on apprend à faire bon visage à mauvais jeu; On y enseigne comment il faut faire la grimace, & la figure; le fard y est en fort grand débit, les Hommes s'y masquent comme les Femmes, & le coeur ne s'y accorde jamais avec la parole. . . [il y a un] air contraint & étudié de la plupart des Habitans de Déguisement qui consacrent tout à l'apparence, & qui s'attachent si fort à cacher le naturel, que l'on ne rencontre plus chez eux la Verité que sous la masque.

Il ne faut pas toutefois, Hydaspe, que vos yeux soient occupés sans cesse à considérer Sincérité; il n'y aura point de mal que vous les détournez quelquefois sur celle de Déguisement, à condition que si vous y étudiez ce raffinement qu'on y recherche avec tant de curiosité, & si vous y apprenez à donner un double visage à toutes choses, ce soit seulement pour vous défendre des artifices qu'on y pratique."
importance in defense against being taken by surprise. The clever ruler can also use leisurely activities, such as games, promenades, and hunting, as a pretense for penetrating others' thoughts, as these occasions naturally provide the opportunity for royal subjects to divulge information on a variety of topics. \(^{18}\) Although the purpose of dissimulation may have been different for the king than for the courtiers, the resultant behavior was identical: no one acted spontaneously, and all behavior was accompanied by a sense of controlled mystery. Feigning was as much in vogue as carriages and silk stockings and an essential skill for successful interaction in polite society.

**Personal Expression: The Role of Poetry**

Language and speech are the final elements of the gallant mask. Sorel defines language as "the instrument of the soul," and a tool for use in society. \(^{19}\) He counsels a *galant* to use the language popular at court, consisting of a polite and refined vocabulary. Language, like dress, was subject to constantly changing fashions; in order not to become outdated, Sorel suggests that one must pay attention, readily adopt words in vogue, and change one's vocabulary to correspond to the dictates of current court usage. Attention to form meant awareness of frequently changing styles in dress as well as language. \(^{20}\)

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\(^{19}\)Sorel, *op. cit.*, Rule 15, 24, "l'instrument de l'ame."

\(^{20}\)For example, cf. Chapter IV, p. 83 for the various terminology that could be used to signify "opera" in seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century France.
The salons were active centers where all members were educated in literary matters, and conversation and debate focused on language and literature.\textsuperscript{21} Salon-goers were expected to be able to compose verse in modern styles, and contests were spontaneously held to see who could compose the best poem in a given form, or on a given subject. The quality of the poems reflected the esprit, or the mind of the poet. The poems were physical evidence that language was indeed a tool of the soul.

An equally important reason to compose verse was to be able to provide billets doux and petits vers, or love poetry, to the loved one in question; this was a requirement of gallant interaction. As with dress, behavior, and personal expression in language, written verse needed to follow currently popular conventions, which again attests to the importance of form. Not everyone was a born poet, but if one had the means, one could hire a poet to set down the appropriate emotions in an acceptable form. Such was the case with Louis XIV, who employed the poet Philippe Dangeau to write love poetry for his mistress, Mlle de la Vallière. This refined lady also lacked poetic skill, and likewise called upon Dangeau who in effect, answered his own love poems.\textsuperscript{22}

**The Philosophy of Love and War**

Louis XIV did more for galanterie, however, than simply requisition a few love letters. He was viewed by Parisian society as not only espousing the

\textsuperscript{21}Not all salons were exclusively concerned with literature, other interests included science, music and the arts; cf. Chapter IV, p. 73 in reference to music and the salon of Ninon de Lenclos.

\textsuperscript{22}Pelous, op. cit., 87.
gallant ethic, but as the hero of love and the model of the *galant homme*, he
was the essence of *galanterie* in conduct, dress, and speech. He was also the
hero of war; as his military campaigns were renowned, so were his honor,
 glory and reputation as valiant conqueror. By vanquishing neighboring
lands, he would bring them under his benevolent rule where peace and love
would reign. This philosophy, if not recognized by his enemies, was certainly
widespread within his kingdom and served the king well in his desire to wage
war abroad while keeping his nobles distracted at home, engaged in gallant
pursuits and preoccupied with love.

It was important for the society to identify with the monarch as ideal
hero in love and war. The character of the king became a model for all
society: the gallants as well as the soldiers.\(^\text{23}\) The integration of war and love
in late seventeenth-century France is evidenced in the popular journal of the
day, the *Mercure galant*. In its preface, it prides itself on being able to bring
gallant stories and novels to its readers. However, the early volumes,
especially from the years 1672 to 1674, present gallant poems, conversations,
and stories, interspersed with the latest stories of heroism, victorious
campaigns, and lists of the wounded or dead. Significantly, homage to Louis
as both hero of love and hero of war is also found.\(^\text{24}\)

The synthesis of love and war into one and the same ideology is readily
apparent in the language of the gallant. The battlefield on the frontiers
belonged to men; the battlefield on the homefront in the war between the
sexes belonged to women. There are many similarities between two such

\(^{\text{23}}\)For a discussion of Louis XIV as hero in love and war, cf. Pelous, *op. cit.*, 231.

\(^{\text{24}}\)For example, cf. tome 6, 1674, 33-39, "Sur la prise de Mastric," interspersed with
gallant poetry is a description of the battle of Mastric.
contradictory worlds which are particularly evident in the vocabulary of salon literature. In both realms, the inhabitants live in an empire, in the salons it is the empire amoureux. Everyone is an inhabitant of the empire of love, but each gallant has his own ruler, which is the vanquisher (vainqueur) of his heart. As such he lives under her laws (loix), and he is her conquest (conquête). He can be a slave (esclave) to his sovereign, and can be held by chains (chaînes), or conquered by arrows (traits) which are usually shot by the God Amour. He suffers (souffrir), burns (brûler), and is tormented (tourmenter) by his bondage. He is in danger of perishing (périr), and frequently speaks of dying (mourir). The difference between his anguish and that of the soldier, is that the gallant loves his pain and would wait almost indefinitely for some sign that would ease his suffering. If a sign does not come, death is imminent. Louis XIV, tormented by this very problem, asked to be put out of his misery by saying to Mlle de la Vallière, "Do you want my death? Tell me sincerely, Mademoiselle, you must be satisfied..."25 Death, in this context, is psychological, not physical. By loving, the lover relinquishes his personal identity to the one he loves: he lives for and in his beloved. If she emotionally rejects him, it means spiritual death. If a sign acknowledging the hero's pain does not soon appear, he is faced with psychological annihilation. After experiencing emotional death, he can break the chains of bondage, and be released to liberty (liberté). Only then can he be healed (guérir).

Language, like dress and decorum in this society, functioned as a mask to hide true sentiments. Metaphors for love, adopted from the vocabulary of war, were readily understood but when combined with the art of dissimulation, they created a formal rhetoric that lacked spontaneity or individuality. Mystery was a prime ingredient, which often left the participants in an amorous dialogue wondering what had really been said. To further complicate matters, an unspoken language of love was a constant companion to the spoken language, and it had its own particular rhetoric.

The Unspoken Language of Love

In seventeenth-century France, each feeling or emotion was viewed as a highly individual and discrete entity. In order to understand emotions, or passions, it was of great benefit to try to isolate and classify them. Each passion had a particular quality which stamped the expression of the individual within whose soul it moved. René Descartes, in 1649, defined the various passions and the physiological result they produce in the body, in the *Traité des passions de l’âme.* Later in the century, le Père Lemoine's work, *Les Peintures morales où les passions sont représentées par tableaux, par caractères et par questions nouvelles et curieuses* (1669), and Charles Le Brun's work *Conférence sur l'expression générale et particulière* (1698), documented the standardized facial expressions that corresponded to a particular "movement of the soul." Following the contemporary Parisian
vogue for concise form in other areas such as decorum and speech, the emotions were categorized, codified and understood as isolated entities.26

In gallant society, facial expression followed Descartes' classification system, with a readable language of its own. L'Abbé de Pure in *La Prétieuse ou le mystère des ruelles* (1656-57) gives an account of forty kinds of smiles, including the disdainful smile (*sourire dédaigneux*), the white-toothed smile (*la dent blanche*), and the feigned smile (*le faux semblant*). Twenty kinds of sighs include the sigh of love (*soupir d'amour*), the sigh of friendship (*soupir d'amitié*), and the sigh of ambition (*soupir d'ambition*).27 Each type of expression is then analysed for its meaning and the emotion behind it. Pure's purpose in writing this novel is to decode the mystery of salon behavior, particularly in social mores and concerns relating to women. Much of the novel is in dialogue form, detailing the lives of these women; often, the role of unspoken language plays an important part in their stories, as in their actions. In one such story, Pure describes the movement of the passions and its physical consequence in one such lady, after seeing the man she secretly loves:

Her sudden and remarkable blushing made it known that some disorder was in her soul; but the preoccupation of those who had noticed it prevented them from reflecting enough to pronounce a sound judgement on it, and from drawing conclusions. She, for her part, tried to dissimulate her surprise, and having composed her countenance, as much as her heart would permit her, she tried to be master of herself, and to follow her Lover with her eyes and her thoughts, without

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permitting her speech or her sighs to make any declaration of the secrets of her soul, and the movements of her heart.\textsuperscript{28}

This passage highlights many elements of the unspoken language practiced in the society world. First of all, blushing was a very real indicator of the state of the soul, more specifically, of its disorder. Blushing was exclusively a feminine trait, which revealed secret emotional chaos, as the above passage indicates. Yet at times, it was a necessary element of the bienséances. A woman was considered to violate proper decorum by giving her lover any overt sign, whether in behavior or speech; a woman declaring her love directly to her lover is an example of such impropriety. She therefore was required to blush from modesty as a sign that she was aware of the offense of her actions. Blushing was both an unconscious result of emotional upset which one tried to hide, and a conscious act to excuse improper conduct.

The eyes also spoke their own silent language which was considered the language of the heart. Each eye movement had a special meaning, and was related to the emotion that caused it. This language was so well known that it influenced anatomical nomenclature; Furetière in his \textit{Dictionaire} of 1690 lists one definition of the word \textit{amoureux} as the name for the muscles of the eye that control circular action. Rolling of the eyes in an upward and

\textsuperscript{28}\textit{Ibid.} tome 2, 187, "Sa rougeur subite et extraordinaire fit bien connoistre quelque desordre dedans son ame; mais l'occupation de ceux qui l'anoient remarquee empescha d'y faire assez de reflexion pour en porter un juste jugement, et en tirer quelque consequence. Elle de son costé tascha de dissimuler sa surprise, et ayant compose [sic] son visage, tout autant que son coeur pouvoit luy permettre, elle s'efforça de se surmonter soy-mesme, et de suivre son Amant des yeux et de la pensée, sans permettre à sa langue ny à ses soupirs de faire aucune declaration des secrets de son ame, et des mouuemens de son coeur."

sideways motion was synonymous with being in love. Lovers often searched for confirmation of emotions in the eyes, knowing that any direct gesture or declaration was unlikely. Because of the subtle but revealing nature of these movements, emotions could be conveyed with discretion.

The language of sighs, eyes, smiles, blushes, grimaces, and other facial expressions was so codified that society members schooled in their usage could decipher their hidden meanings. As a result, Pure's blushing lady quickly tries to dissimulate the disorder of her heart, and feign self control. Masking of facial expression for uninvited eyes was as important as disguising true sentiment in spoken language and conduct. The physical presentation of the seventeenth-century gallant is based on speech, behavior, and facial gestures that make up a complex and analyzable language of love. The difficulty of analysis lies in the elusive element of mystery, brought about through dissimulation and disguise.

Theatrical Elements of Court and Salon Life

Social interaction in the time of Louis XIV, whether in the salons or at the court, was highly ritualised and formalized and as a result, life was extremely theatrical. Living life as if on a stage was the fashion at court and

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29Furetière, op. cit., tome 2, under the entry "œuil" (eye), Furetière describes the muscles of the eye. "The first is called uplider and superior, because it indicates pride; the second lowerer and humble, because it indicates modesty; the third lead-in and drinker, because it moves the eye inward toward the nose; the fourth lead-out or scorrer, because it indicated scorn or disdain in looking askance at something. The two obliques are called rotators, circularies, and lovers, because they serve to indicate tenderness and passion." ("Le premier s'appelle releveur & superbe, parce qu'il marque de l'orgueil; le second abbaisseur & humble, parce qu'il marque de la modestie; le troisième adducteur & beveur, qui le fait mouvoir du costé du nes; le quatrième abducteur ou indignateur, qui marque du mespris ou du desdain en regardant de travers. Les deux obliques s'appellent rotateurs, circulaires, & amoureux, parce qu'ils servent à marquer de la teudresse & de la passion.")
in the salons, and acting was the normal form of interaction with emphasis on feigning and dissimulation. Gesture and facial expressions were codified and practiced with great skill. The rhetoric of speech was also highly standardized. Clothes served as costumes, or ornaments of the body, and make-up was an additional tool used by both men and women to mask reality. Formal attention to the decor of rooms in the châteaux, of the parks and gardens, and of the salon reception area incorporated very sophisticated elements of scenic design. In this polite society, ideal life was an imitation of the lives of heros in romanesque novels. As such, all salon members had a special or gallant name taken from the pastoral tradition; Mme de Rambouillet, for example, was Arténice. In social interaction, individuals were referred to by their pseudonyms: Allegorical works and romans à clef, describing real people under false names, provided enormously popular reading entertainment. In short, members of this society viewed themselves as heros and heroines, equal in stature to any noble fictional character.

The salon environment was a combination of life imitating art, and art imitating life. As previously noted, an important role of the salons was literary criticism. When a theatrical genre, such as tragedy or comedy, was the object of discussion, the salon members, all schooled in theatrics, often acted out or improvised the work. For example, in the early 1670s, the

30Cf. André Lagarde and Laurent Michard, XVIIe Siècle, in the series Les Grands Auteurs Français du Programme, Anthologie et histoire littéraire (Paris: Bordes, 1985), 68-70. The pseudonyms are imitations of the names used in the famous pastoral novel l'Astrée by Honoré d'Urfé (1607-1624). This novel is in the same literary tradition and had equal success to its Italian counterpart l'Arcadia by Sannazar (1502). D'Urfé's novel is about the lives of "refined shepherds and shepherdesses, elegantly dressed, who spend their days in loving, in telling gallant stories, in discussing amorous problems, and in writing verse." Each character represents a discrete emotional entity, particularly an aspect of love: tididity, jealousy, vengefulness, deceitfulness, etc.
members of the salon of Mme de la Sablière improvised the final interlude and conclusion for *Le Malade imaginaire* of Molière, before he had completed writing the work.\(^{31}\) Molière, a few years earlier in 1659, imitated the society world in *Les Précieuses ridicules*, satirizing the theatrical mask of *galanterie*. The heroines, being from the provinces and unschooled in the refinement and subtlety of true Parisian artifice, imitated proper decorum as they interpreted it in romantic novels. However, they were unable to separate the world of artifice from that of reality, and became ridiculous as they continued to live life behind a pretentious mask.

The salon environment was also the setting for theatrical entertainments. In the salon of Mme de Rambouillet, her daughter Julie was often connected with these events. For example, when the Bishop of Lisieux and Mme de Rambouillet were strolling in the parks on her estate, they came across a statue of nymphs, scantily clad, who came to life and then instantly fled; the nymphs were Julie and her friends.\(^{32}\) The poet Voiture also participated in these events; once in retaliation for a practical joke concerning his poetry, he had two huge bears, held by their keeper, enter the salon and poke their heads over the folding screens to startle those in attendance.\(^{33}\) The salons were not without an element of the strange or supernatural, very similar to the use of the *merveilleux* in contemporary Italian opera productions.

\(^{31}\)Picard, *op. cit.*, 106.

\(^{32}\)Ibid., 48.

\(^{33}\)Ibid., 49-50.
The mask of *amour*, or the façade of *galanterie*, was a major preoccupation of seventeenth-century French society from the time of the Fronde until approximately 1680. It was so widespread that it became a quasi-religion, everyone worshipped the God Amour. As a major distraction for the nobility, Louis XIV helped to propagate this game of love by becoming the role model for all that was quintessentially gallant. Much attention was given to the form, if not always the essence of *galanterie*. In its strict adherence to a formalized code, life resembled the artifice of theatre.

**Behind the Mask of *Galanterie*: The Role of Arranged Marriages**

But the question remains, why was this society so obsessed with love, or at least its external ritualized form? Love was viewed as an endless, intellectual game. The intensity with which the art of dissimulation was practiced made it extremely difficult to ascertain who was in love with whom and for how long. A declaration of love was ill-advised, especially for women, as that ended the game. Analysis of sentiment and the psychology of love were important literary diversions, but no definitive conclusions were ever reached or were even desirable, with the result that Parisian polite society remained cloaked in a thick veil of illusion and mystery.

In attempting to comprehend this enigma, it is important to realise that love and marriage in seventeenth-century France had nothing in common. In fact, in defining their relationship, Furetière in the *Dictionaire universel* states that, "He married by love, means disadvantageously & in the heat of a blind passion."34 The pretense of love offered many things; above

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34 Furetière, "amour," *op. cit.*, tome 1, "Il s'est marié par amour, c'est à dire, desavantageusement, & par l'emportement d'une aveugle passion."
all, it was a prerequisite to entrance into polite society. Certainly salon members had to be schooled in love’s rhetoric, or they would have been unable to participate in conversation, and developing and promulgating the refined art of conversation was an essential function of the salon environment. Secondly, discussions on love required an extremely analytical mind. There were never any straightforward answers, or even questions. Although the subject itself may appear devoid of intellectual content for those from outside this time and culture, for the seventeenth-century court and society world of Paris, it was predominantly a mental preoccupation. Discussions, salon games, and the writing of poetry, were all masked by dissimulation, disguise, and decorum. Feigned or ambiguous interaction provided an outlet by which to sharpen the intellect, as did the other major function of the salon, literary criticism. Finally, the game of love provided great pleasure and entertainment. Everyone participated, whether married or not, and the pretense probably provided as much pleasure as a passionate love which in this society was considered destructive, or as defined by Furetière, a blind passion.

Conversely, the institution of marriage was in the domain of parents and reflected their business interests. It was not a wise thing to try and put personal pleasure above parental power; it was not beneficial for the family, the community, or the realm.\(^{35}\) Although young people of both sexes were forced into arranged marriages, it was the women who tried to raise public consciousness concerning the inhumanity of this practice.

Pure, in *La Pretieuse ou le mystère des ruelles*, is frequently the mouthpiece for his protagonists' concerns. One story, the *Histoire d'Eulalie*, is particularly forceful in its outrage against the brutality of arranged marriages. A roman à clef, Eulalie's real name was Henriette de Coligny, Madame la Comtesse de La Suze. In actual life, she was very influential in the salons, and along with Paul Pellison, was active in the publication of numerous anthologies of gallant poetry. Her marriage was a disaster, and she was eventually granted a divorce, a very rare occurrence in seventeenth-century France. Through Pure, she voices her complaint:

... in truth I must say that there were not any [torches] of Hymen that illuminated my wedding celebration, nor any of love that burned in my heart. I was an innocent victim sacrificed to unknown motives, and to obscure interests of my family, but sacrificed as a slave bound, pinioned, without having the liberty to utter a cry, to voice my desires, to act by choice. They took advantage of my youth and of my obedience, and they interred me, or rather they buried me alive in the bed of the son of Evandre.

After describing her condition, she continues to say:

... permit me to tell you that notwithstanding the respect that I might have for my husband, that I cannot fail to have an inconceivable horror of marriage; and that as such I separate what I am from what I could be, the condition of wife from that of maiden, and which in fact I believe to be justly distinguishable by the two words of *slavery* and *liberty*.

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36Cf. Pelous, *op. cit.*, 331-32, which gives an analysis of Pure's work in this respect.

37*Pure, op. cit.*, 280-81*. . . en vérité je puis dire que ce ne fut point celuy de l'Hymen qui eclaira à mes nòpces, ny celuy de l'amour qui brûla dans mon coeur. Je fus une innocen[t]e victime sacrificée à des motifs inconnus, et à des obscure interest de maison, mais sacrificée comme une esclaue liée, garrottée, sans avoir la liberté de pousser des soupirs, de dire mes desirs, d'agir par choix. On se pruauoit de ma jeunesse et de mon obeissance, et on m'enterre, ou plutost on m'enseuelit toute viue dans le lict du fils d'Evandre.*.

38*Ibid.*, 281*. . . me permettre de vous dire que nonobstant le respect que je pouuois avoir pour mon mary, que je ne laisse pas d'auoir vne horreur inconceuable pour le mariage;
Once again the terminology of war is used, but this time to describe the
difference between being single or married. Slavery, in this sense of the
word, is a condition imposed on a child by parental powers, whereas slavery
in love, according to gallant ideology, is imposed by the God Amour. Liberty
can be freedom from marriage, or from love. The servitude that Pure is
describing in this passage is more closely related to war than to love; in the
slavery of marriage, one did not voluntarily delight in the torment that it
caused. The violence of abductions, arranged marriages, and duels amounted
to war on the homefront, and was certainly the reality behind the gallant
mask of love. Since love was unattainable in this society, in a practical sense,
it was the fashion to play at it, even if depth of emotion was lacking.
Bringing an end to the eternal game of love, by formal declaration or by
consummation, unmasked the players and heralded a return to the harsh
realities of everyday life. It was therefore extremely desirable to perpetuate
the gallant mask, by turning love into a never-ending, mysterious and
undecipherable game. 39

**Conclusion**

*Galanterie* in late seventeenth-century France was a highly pervasive
phenomenon. Polite interaction between men and women, which was the
foundation of *galanterie*, included a complex and highly formalized set of

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39 Julie, the daughter of Mme de Rambouillet, was not forced into marriage as her
mother was a staunch advocate of a woman’s right to choose. Julie chose M. de Montausier,
but only after fourteen years of making him rigorously play the game of love. She finally
ended the game, and married at thirty-eight years of age.
codes and behaviors. The God Amour ruled supreme, with all subjects (including the king) equal in his eyes. Because of Amour's immense popularity, everyone was in love, or pretended to be. To be socially acceptable or pleasing to the opposite sex, it was necessary to follow the most current fashions, whether in dress, speech, poetry, or behavior. As love was separate from marriage, it had nothing to do with the reality of daily life, but instead was construed as an intellectual game. To keep it never-ending, feigning and dissimulation in speech as well as body language were widely practiced skills. Additionally, an avoidance of any concrete and verbal declaration of love ensured the continuation of the game. Because the game of love was extremely stylized, it resembled life on stage, and indeed, the society members often viewed themselves as the real heros and heroines of life.

As art imitates life, seventeenth-century modern genres such as the novel, salon poetry and gallant drama provided excellent vehicles to reflect the tenets and style of galanterie. As the society life of the court and salons was inherently theatrical, dramatic genres were ideal mediums through which to portray real life. Like gallant dramas, another new genre, opera or the tragédie en musique, made imitation literal in the visual replication of contemporary life by transmitting the conduct, language, rhetoric, and poetry of society life directly onto the stage. The tragédies en musique of Quinault and Lully are founded on the gallant mores of seventeenth-century society; Quinault's characters, dramatic situations, rhetoric, and poetry, are readily accessible to historically distanced observers through an understanding of the philosophy of seventeenth-century galanterie.
CHAPTER III

THE POETRY OF THE LITERARY SALONS

Literary salons in seventeenth-century France served two main functions: they were educational institutions in which the members were schooled in social interaction based on proper decorum, or the bienséances, and they served to standardize and purify the French language. As the unofficial societal counterpart of the Académie française, the royal institution created in 1635 to set literary standards, salon members discussed spelling and word usage, and acted as literary critics. Poets, novelists, and playwrights read their works-in-progress to salon audiences for preliminary approval. Whether serving as the model for proper decorum, refinement in conversation and social interaction, or acting as critic on matters of language and literature, the salon aesthetic was above all concerned with form.

Physical presentation received the utmost attention in human interaction, from dress, speech, facial gesture, to conduct. Literature, as a noble and physical manifestation of the human mind, or esprit, also had to be clothed in an appropriate outer form.

Galanterie was a prime ingredient in the physical make-up and interaction of salon participants. A preoccupation with love and the overwhelming desire to please women combined to create the preferred pastime of gallant interaction during the three decades between 1650 and 1680. An essential element of love, however, was ambiguity or mystery, so that the pastime of love would remain an endless and intellectual pursuit.
Galanterie and Literary Pastimes

It is not surprising that the analysis of love in literary works, by combining galanterie with literary criticism, should become another popular pastime of the salons. Love poetry, in small concise forms, was not only analyzed, but also composed spontaneously by most salon members. Multi-volume novels, such as Mlle de Scudéry’s ten-volume works Le Grand Cyrus (1649-1653) and Clélie (1654-1661) provided ample material for the discussion and analysis of the dilemmas of the human heart. These interminable works, eagerly anticipated and read by the society world, once again attest to the vision of love as an unending intellectual game. Both novels provided a reflection of contemporary society in which the readers could read about themselves masked in the roles of heros and heroines. Additionally, as romans à clef, they piqued the readers’ interest in the search for hidden meanings.

Some salon activities were borrowed from these novels. A popular salon game, derived from Clélie, was the Carte de Tendre. Playing this game involved traveling through imaginary towns on an allegorical map of the land of courtship. All players began at Nouvelle amitié (New friendship) and could pursue several routes toward the final goal of arrival at Tendre (Affection or Tenderness). Many obstacles, delays, and stopovers prolonged the infinite voyage. Emotions, gallant qualities, or token gifts to the beloved were transformed into concrete villages on the map. A player could go, for example, from Nouvelle amitié to Jolis vers (Pretty verses) to Sincerité (Sincerity) to Probité (Integrity) and Respect on his journey toward Tendre.
However, a wrong turn could lead a player to less desirable villages such as Negligence, Inégalité (Inequality), and Oubli (Oblivion) before arriving at the equivocal shores of the Lac d'indifférence (Lake of Indifference). The most treacherous choice by far was to take the water route from Nouvelle amitié on the river Inclination. As an allegory for "love at first sight," this route required no skill or cleverness. But in all probability, one would pass by the only town on this river, Tendre-sur-Inclination (Affection based on Inclination) and arrive directly at the rocky Mer Dangereuse (Dangerous Sea), beyond which lurked the Terres Inconnues (Unexplored Lands). Pursuing purely physical inclination without the intellectual counterpart so essential to gallant love did not promise a long or successful voyage.

The Carte de Tendre became the pretext for other literary inventions. Many obstacles demanded a gallant response in verse for advancement on the map. The game was also the impetus for the creation of the Gazette de Tendre, a journal from various towns on the map which included news of the travelers.¹ In the gazette, as in the romans à clef, real life events were related behind a mask of pseudonyms, and salon members could read about their travels in the allegorical land of love. Attesting to the popularity of this form of entertainment are at least fifteen parodies imitating or mocking the Carte de Tendre which appeared in the decade following the publication of Clélie.²


Other salon games also involved a response in verse by the players; however, writing poetry was so essential to personal expression that it often constituted a game within itself. The goal of the game was to compose the best verse on a selected subject or form. A variety of forms flourished, especially those that were short and concise, such as the madrigal, the epigram, and the epistle. Women were freer to express themselves outside of established conventions, and were less likely to use rigid styles or expressions. The subject matter usually centered on love, and for this reason shorter, more flexible forms corresponded better to the individual movement of the passions within the soul. Additionally, the qualities of lightness and agreeableness were essential elements of galanterie. The use of long, regulated, and overworked forms, suitable for epic or tragic subjects, would have destroyed the inherent lighthearted spirit behind the salon conception of love.

Form and Content of Classical Tragedy

In the classical tragedies of Pierre Corneille and Jean Racine, verse form was strictly regulated. Poetry for the dramas is in the form of alexandrines, or verses composed of twelve syllables. Verses normally have a pause after the sixth syllable, or the caesura, which divides the line into two hemistiches. Displacement of the caesura or alternative groupings of the

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4 Although poetry anthologies during this time are largely comprised of poems about love, this was not an exclusive topic. Satiric poetry and poems on nonsensical topics (see footnote 8) were also in vogue.
twelve syllables are possible to parallel dramatic effect. The last word of a line of verse is always rhymed with the last word of the following verse, creating couplets [aabbcc . . .] with alternating masculine and feminine verse endings. For example, in Racine’s Phèdre (1677) the beginning of Hippolyte’s declaration of love to Aricie, although appropriate subject matter for gallant treatment, is handled in classical form.

Example 1: Jean Racine, Phèdre, II/ 2, lines 525-536, classical alexandrines showing division at the caesura.

Je vois que la raison cède à la violence.  
Puisque j’ai commencé de rompre le silence,  
Madame, il faut poursuivre: il faut vous informer  
D’un secret que mon cœur ne peut plus renfermer.  
Vous voyez devant vous un prince déplorable,  
D’un téméraire orgueil exemple mémorable.  
Moï qui, contre l’amour fièrement révolté,  
Aux fers de ses captifs ai longtemps insulté;  
Qui des faibles mortels déplorant les naufrages,  
Pensais toujours du bord contempler les orages;  
Asservi maintenant sous la commune loi,  
Par quel trouble me vois-je emporté loin de moi?

[I see that reason surrenders to passion. / Because I have begun to break the silence, / Madame, I must continue. I must inform you / Of a secret that my heart can no longer contain. / You see before you a deplorable prince, / Of reckless pride a memorable example. / I, who against love haughtily rebelled, / The irons of his captives longtime insulting, / Who, deploiring the shipwrecks of paltry mortals / Thought he would ever contemplate the storms from the shore; / Enslaved now under the common law, / In what confusion do I see myself carried away!]

Dialogue, in classical tragedy, proceeds at a slow, deliberate pace with each character given an ample number of verses to convey his thoughts, analyze his emotions, or narrate the storyline. Hippolyte’s confession, of which the above example is only an excerpt, contains a total of thirty-seven lines. However, a quickening of dramatic action requires faster dialogue

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exchange. Stichomythia, or interactions consisting of two-verse or one-verse exchanges, creates a heightened dramatic tension. Characters also respond in partial alexandrines for moments of suspense, such as the revelation of a secret. In Example 2, Phèdre reveals her secret love for Hippolyte to her confidante, Ε̂none.

Example 2. Jean Racine, Phèdre, I/3, lines 259-264, stichomythia.

Ε̂none

Aimez-vous?

Phèdre

De l'amour j'ai toutes les fureurs.

Ε̂none

Pour qui?

Phèdre

Tu vas ouir le comble des horreurs.
J'aime... A ce nom fatal, je tremble, je frissonne,
J'aime...

Ε̂none

Qui?

Phèdre

Tu connais ce fils de l'Amazone,
Ce prince si longtemps par moi-même opprimé?

Hippolyte? Grands Dieux!

Phèdre

C'est toi qui l'as nommé.6

[Ε̂none: Do you love? / Phèdre: Of love I show every madness. / Ε̂none: For whom? / Phèdre: You will hear the height of all horrors. I love... At this fatal name, I tremble, I shudder, I love... / Ε̂none: Who? / Phèdre: You know this son of the Amazon, This prince who for such a long time I have oppressed? / Ε̂none: Hippolyte? O powerful Gods! / Phèdre: It is you that have spoken his name.]

6Ibid., 47-48.
The agitation created by short questions, partial answers, and hesitant replies reflects Phèdre's emotional disorder. However, the alexandrine form remains intact, accompanied by regular rhyme. When analyzed as verse, the dialogue constitutes only six alexandrines, or three rhymed couplets:

Aimez-vous? De l'amour j'ai toutes les fureurs.          a
Pour qui? Tu vas ouir le comble des horreurs.          a
J'aime... A ce nom fatal, je tremble, je frissonne,      b
J'aime... Qui? Tu connais ce fils de l'Amazone,          b
Ce prince si longtemps par moi-mème opprimé?         c
Hippolyte? Grands Dieux! C'est toi qui l'as nommé.   c

From the two excerpts above, it is evident that both Hippolyte and Phèdre, despite their ancient Greek origins and expression in classical form, are subjected to Amour, the French God of *galanterie*. Both characters are governed by his laws. Hippolyte sees reason giving way to the violence of his passion; he has hidden this secret and remained silent, but now reveals it while finding this behavior deplorable. Although he previously scorned love, he is now under its dominion. Phèdre, while capable of describing her symptoms, cannot finish the phrase, *J'aime...* to do so would have violated the laws of proper decorum. She provides Œnone with enough clues, however, that the confidante names Hippolyte. Phèdre, eager to emphasize her proper conduct despite her immoral love, responds by reminding Œnone that she never named him, it was the confidante who did.
**Form and Content of Salon Poetry**

**Elegies**

Poetry written in the salons was composed in a classical style, if the subject warranted. Elegies of distraught, hopeless, or dejected lovers were deemed worthy of this style. Because of the mournful, sad, and oftentimes lamenting content, they were considered passionate, not frivolous. As a result, they were often written in alexandrines with rhymed couplets and alternating masculine and feminine verse endings, typical of the format of classical tragedy. One woman known for composing elegies was the Comtesse de La Suze. Along with Paul Pellison, she published popular anthologies of salon poetry during the 1660s and 1670s. One such collection, *Recueil de pièces galantes en prose et en vers*, published in 1674, begins with an elegy. Although the poem is long, one hundred thirty-two lines of verse, the following excerpt is representative of its form, tone, and language.


O trop charmante Iris, unique Objet que j’aime!
Mon coeur, pour estre à vous, cesse d’estre à lui-même:
Heureux, cent fois heureux, si le vostre aujourd’hui,
Le voulait imiter, en aimant comme luy;
Je vivrois sans chagrin, je vivrois sans envie,
Mon ame de plaisir se trouveroit ravie;
Un hélas, un soupir, quand on ait bien aimer,
En expriment bien plus qu’on n’en peut exprimer,
Et par un art secret, ils peuvent faire entendre
Ce mystere d’Amour, si charmant & si tendre.
Si vous les entendez ceder à mes desirs,
Je prendray dans vos fers mille & mille plaisirs,
Je les adoreray, je baiseray mes chaînes
Mais, songez à donner un remède à mes peines...  

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O charming Iris, the only one that I love! / My heart, being yours, ceases to belong to itself: / Happy, a hundred times happy, if your heart today, / Wanted to imitate mine, in loving as it does, / I would live without anguish, I would live without desires, / My soul from pleasure would find itself entranced, / An alas, a sigh, when one knows the art of loving, / Expresses much more than one can ever say, / And by a secret art, they can elucidate / This mystery of Love, so charming and so tender. / If you understand them, surrender to my desires, / Thousands and thousands of pleasures will I take bound in your chains, / I will adore them, I will kiss my chains / But, consider giving remedy to my pain. . .]

Although the form and purpose of the preceding excerpt and Example 1, Hippolyte's monologue, are almost identical, the divergent style, expression, and vocabulary reflect the differences between the classical and modern approaches to love. In both examples the speaker is preparing to declare his love and speaks in a classical form. However, with the elegy, we have entered Mlle de Scudéry's land of Tendre. Hippolyte seems awkward with his new-found passion and the extreme intensity of it. His vocabulary is harsh, speaking of love in terms of captives, shipwrecks, storms, servitude, and violent revolt. The vocabulary of the elegy, although speaking of chains and pains, is tender, loving, and passionate. Hippolyte's character is revealed through his words, and he does not give up his own warrior personality when relating to Aricie. In the elegy however, when the speaker gave away his heart to Iris, he also gave up his individuality; his personality has been completely absorbed into the rhetoric of Tendre. Hippolyte, though terribly distraught at his present predicament is confronting Aricie. The narrator of the elegy is speaking silently to Iris, hoping that she will understand the mystery of love by the unspoken language of his sighs.
Enigmas and Portraits

Poetry was frequently composed in the salons as a means to display the quick-witted mind of the poet, and salon members rivaled each other to create the best verse. The purpose of these competitions was to dazzle, not to create lofty thoughts, so the form and content of this poetry were greatly simplified, compared to that of the elegy. The forms were usually short, concise, yet flexible. One such form, the *bouts-rimez*, was popular throughout the seventeenth century. The salon participants were given the subject, and the terminal rhyming words of each verse. Their order was fixed, fixing also the form of poetry. The great challenge of this game was to integrate the rhymed word into the context of the poem. The poets, depending on their skill, managed the form with varying degrees of success and humor.\(^8\)

Enigmas and portraits comprised another type of poetry game. Enigmas describe an object, person, event or emotion without naming it. If well written, the clues based on allusion and indirect suggestion make guessing the subject of the poem a difficult task; in this respect, the enigma, was not unlike the game of love in this society. Furetière, in the *Dictionaire universel*, defines the enigma as, "A proposition that one gives for guessing that which is hidden under obscure terms, and most often contradictory in appearance. This word comes from the Greek *ainigma*, which signifies an obscure discourse that covers a well-known thing in and of itself."\(^9\)

\(^8\) For example, in Charles de Sercy, *Poesie choisies*, tome III (Paris: Sercy, 1658), 375-410, Sercy reproduces *bouts-rimez* sonnets composed by numerous salon members for the subject, "On the Death of the Parrot of Madame du Plessis Belliere," The authors include such well-known poets as Benserade and Boisroberts.

\(^9\) Antoine Furetière, "Enigme," *Dictionaire universel*, 3 tomes (La Haye et Rotterdam: Arnout & Reiner Leers, 1890), II, "Proposition qu'on donne à deviner, qui est cachée sous des
Portraits are similar to enigmas, but are limited to describing people. If well written, they hide the person behind a gallant façade, creating mystery but lacking individuality. The form was always concise but not standardized. Variety of verse length, rhyming patterns and flexibility in the overall structure created a light, refined, and flowing quality, uncommon in tragic or epic prosody. The following enigma consists of 12 verses, with a free mixture of eight, ten or twelve syllables per verse. The first four verses are in alternate rhyme (croisée), the second four in couplet rhyme (plate), and the last four in embraced rhyme (embrassée)[ababcddeff].

Example 4. Charles Cotin, "Enigma."

8 Je suis une nymphe invisible
8 Qui fait de l'Air mon élément,
8 Et qui ne serais plus sensible
8 Si je n'avois point eu d'Amant;
8 Encor ce bel objet me touche,
8 J'en parle et je n'ai pas de bouche;
10 Cent fois je meurs et revis en un jour,
12 Et ceux qui, comme moi, sont martyrs de l'Amour,
12 Me viennent me consulter au fort de leur martyre.
10 Mais je leur donne un conseil decevant,
8 Autant en emporte le vent,
12 Et je ne leur dis rien que ce qu'ils me font dire.

[I am an invisible nymph / Whose element is the Air, / And who now would not be sensitive / If I had never had a Lover, / Still this beautiful one touches me, / I speak of him yet I have no mouth, / A hundred times I die and am revived in one day, / And those who, like me, are martyrs of Love, / Come to consult me in the depths of their termes obscurs, & le plus souvent contradictoires en apparence. Ce mot vient du Grec ainigma, qui signifie un discours obscur qui couvre une chose fort connue d'elle-même."


11 The English terminology for rhyme schemes will be used in textual analysis.

12 Cited in Backer, ibid., 78. In poetry with verses of varying length, the number of syllables per verse will be indicated in the left-hand margin.
suffering. / But I give them deceiving counsel, / Such as the wind might bring, / And I
tell them nothing but what they would have me say.]

The subject described in this enigma is the nymph who speaks yet has no
mouth, who had a lover but is now a martyr of love, who is an element of the
air but can only give deceiving counsel. In mythology, having irritated the
goddess Juno, this nymph was changed into a rock and could not speak, but
was forced to repeat the last few words of anyone who spoke with her. Her
name is Echo.

**Madrigals**

Similar to the enigma in the freeness of its construction is the
madrigal. Furetière defines it as, "A little love poem comprised of a small
number of free and unequal verses, that has neither the constraint of a
sonnet, nor the subtlety of an epigram, but is simply a tender and agreeable
thought." He further states that, "small geniuses who do not have the
fortitude to write large works take refuge in Madrigals." Madrigals,
because of the flexibility of form and simplicity of content, were written by all
salon patrons, including the "small geniuses" or the not particularly gifted
writers of the group. They reveal the salon society's philosophy of love by the
use of the rhetorical language of *Tendre*, and by frequently focusing on the
frustration of the lover who tries to communicate to his beloved in unspoken
and mysterious ways. The form is free, but always concise. In the following
madrigal, from Charles de Sercy's anthology, *Poesies choisies*, the lover

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13Furetière, "Madrigal," *op. cit.*, tome II, "Petite Poésie amoureuse composée d'un
petit nombre de vers libres & inégaux, qui n'a ni la gésne d'un sonnet, ni la subtilité d'une
Epigramme, mais qui se contente d'une pensée tendre & agréable... Les petits genies qui
n'ont pas la force de faire de grands Ouvrages se retraitent sur les Madrigaux..."
speaks to his lady in a single quatrain of twelve, ten, and eight syllable verses, in an alternating rhyme [abab].

Example 5. *Poesies choisies*, tome 5, "Madrigal."

12 Quand je dis que vos yeux ont des attraits si doux,
10 Vous vous plaignez de mon audace extrême:
8 Hélas! Iris, que feriez-vous,
8 Si je disois que je vous aime?14

[When I say that your eyes have such sweet charms, / You complain of my extreme audacity: / Alas! Iris, what would you do, / If I told you that I love you?]

This madrigal is impersonal; the object of the lover’s affection remains hidden behind the allegorical name, Iris. The poet reveals to us that Iris (like all society ladies) observes the rules of proper conduct and has reproached him for his untoward behavior of commenting on her eyes. The poem also reiterates the impropriety of openly making a declaration of love, leaving the poet no rejoinder but a sigh; with an alas, he marks his lovesick condition. In short, because of its extreme lack of individuality, this madrigal could have been written by any man about any woman in Parisian refined society.

Another madrigal in the Sercy collection demonstrates the same air of impersonality. The beloved this time is Cephise, instead of Iris. The poet again complains about his situation, but this time he is not indignant; he is hopeless, and the madrigal takes on the quality of a lament.

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8 Adieu, trop aimable Cephise,
8 Je vous quitte en quittant l'espoir;
12 Indigne d'être à vous, indigné de vous voir,
12 Je vais des fiers Destins achever l'entreprise,
12 Je vais par mes langueurs précipiter le cours
12 Des plus infortuné & des plus tristes jours
12 Qu'on ait jamais passé sous l'amoureux Empire:
12 Mais j'aimeray le jour qui m'aura consumé,
12 Pourveu qu'en me plaignant un jour vous puissiez dire
8 Il m'aimoit, & je l'eusse aimé. 15

[Adieu, Cephise, too worthy of love, / I leave you in abandoning hope; / Unworthy to be yours, unworthy to see you, / I depend on the cruel Destinies to finish this undertaking, / By my listlessness I precipitate the course / Of the most unfortunate and the saddest of days / That have ever been passed in the Empire of love. / But I will embrace the day that destroys me, / Provided that in pitying me one day you might say / He loved me, & I might have loved him.]

The madrigal opens and closes with octosyllables, and the middle verses are alexandrines. The ten-line poem consists of a mixture of all three types of rhyme schemes: one quatrain with embraced rhyme, one couplet, followed by one quatrain with alternating rhyme [abbaccedee]. The language is once again tender and loving. The poet lives in the Empire of love, as do all *galants*. His love has reached hopelessness, he will languish away, and his only remaining hope is that someday this lady will acknowledge his love, maybe even admitting that she could have loved him.

Because of its flexible form, all salon members, even the less adept poets, could compose madrigals as a part of salon games, providing fabulous entertainment. A madrigal competition at the salon of Mlle de Scudéry became renowned when her close friend, Valentin Conrart, recorded the events. It began with Scudéry, who composed a madrigal to Conrart

thanking him for a little gift. As was the custom, they always referred to each other by their pseudonyms, in this case Sapho and Théodamas. Salon members, with great fervor, imitated this action by writing madrigals to one another. On this day, everyone dazzled by his poetic brilliance and within an hour numerous madrigals had been written. At the end of the day, Conrart reports that

Everyone applauded and arose. This day, the most wonderful day in the world, was called by unanimous consent the DAY OF THE MADRIGALS, and even though all the heros that were present passionately loved glory and honest pleasures, there was not one of them at this hour who was envious of the great adventures of the day of Thybarra nor of the entertainments during the ten days of Boccaccio.

The theatrical element was ever present in salon interactions. Here Conrart's salon members are heros who, having accomplished great feats in gallant impromptu, are neither envious of war victories nor legendary encounters in literature. They finish off their most wonderful of days by applauding themselves before rising to leave. The pretense of the salon world was indeed their stage.

Questions d'amour

Another salon game involving the use of madrigals was the questions d'amour. Started in the 1660s, during Louis XIV's early reign, these

16Paul Pellison-Fontanier, La Journée des Madrigaux suivie de la Gazette de Tendre et du carnaval des préteuses (Genève: Slatkine, 1971), 38, "Chacun battit des mains et se leva. Cette journée, la plus aymable du monde, fut appelée d'un commun consentement la JOURNÉE DES MADRIGAUX, et bien que tous les héros qui estoient présents aimassent passionnément la gloire et les bonnestes plaisirs, il n'y en eut pas un à cette heure-là qui portât envie aux grands exploits de la journée de Thybarra ni au divertissement des dix journées de Boccace." [Thybarra is the Battle of Lens, described in Scudéry's Le Grand Cyrus.]
questions satisfied society's need for the psychological analysis of love. The land of Tendre in the Empire amoureux was a very confusing, elusive, and paradoxical place: everyone was supposed to be in love yet no one could admit it. The gallant presentation of love was highly refined and polished, in physical presentation, conversation, and conduct. Such refinement, however, prohibited direct interaction and served as a mask, hiding individual thoughts and emotions. The practice of posing questions concerned with the internal psychological aspects of love was undoubtedly very enticing for a society focused on outer form. However, on closer examination, the questions of love perpetuated ambiguity and mystery, providing no exit from the emotional stasis in the land of Tendre.

Questions d'amour were posed to a group of people, and everyone replied, using proper poetic form. If it was a large gathering, people would divide into camps taking sides to debate the pros and the cons of the question. The questions are usually built on opposites: whether it was better to respond one way, or in the opposite way concerning matters of love. Since it was the general philosophy of this society for love to remain mysterious and undefined, the answers to these questions likewise followed suit; ambiguity in a response kept everyone guessing and perplexed. The questions d'amour are rhetorical questions, lacking definitive answers.

Typical questions posed for this salon game included: What is the most difficult, to return from Love to friendship or to pass from friendship to Love?; Is it true that Love makes people crazy?; Does extreme jealousy or extreme constancy exhibit the most Love?; Are the greatest pleasures of Love in the

head or in the senses? Often the questions dealt with the battle between the head (raison) and the heart (amour), or love as passive inclination versus love as free will.

A well-known account of a questions d'amour encounter dates from 1666, and took place at the court of Louis XIV before the king. A society lady who frequented the court, the Comtesse de Brégy, posed five questions on love to the king and those in attendance. Various answers were given, all in the form of madrigals. Philippe Quinault, dramatist and future librettist for the tragédiés en musique, was present and was asked by the king to respond. His answers reveal both mastery of form, and artful skill at providing equivocal response. The third question posed, asked "If one must hate the person who greatly pleases, when one cannot in turn please her?" Quinault responded with the following madrigal.

Example 7. Philippe Quinault, madrigal response to a question d'amour.

12 Quand ce qui nous plaist trop, ne sent point nostre peine,
12 Que pour toucher son coeur nostre tendresse est vaine;
  Et qu'on voit que rien ne l'emeut:
  Pour se venger de l'inhumaine,
12 Doutez-vous si l'on doit aller jusqu'à la haine,
13 Ha sans dépit on le doit, & le destin le veut;
  Mais je ne sçay si l'on le peut.19

[When the one who pleases us greatly, does not feel our pain, / And for touching her heart our tenderness is in vain; / And one sees that nothing moves her: / To avenge this cold heart, / You doubt that one must resort to hate, / Ha, without resentment one must, & destiny demands it; / But I don't know if one really can.]


19Charlotte Saumaise de Chazan, Comtesse de Brégy, Lettres et Poésies (Leyde: DuVal, 1666), 103-4, "Si l'on doit hair quelqu'un de ce qu'il nous plaist trop, quand nous ne pouvons luy plaire."
As with all madrigals, the form is concise yet free: alexandrines are mixed with octosyllables, and one uneven line of thirteen syllables adds even further irregularity to this seven-verse madrigal. The rhyme scheme is likewise irregular [aabaabb]. The use of a madrigal to answer a question d'amour changes its inherent content of "a pleasant and agreeable thought on love"; it now takes on a much more philosophical tone.

A frequent topic of debate in the Empire amoureux was whether to declare or not to declare one's love. In the Comtesse de Brégy's collection of questions d'amour, one question addresses this issue. The question and answer are both framed in the form of a madrigal.

Example 8. Question d'amour and response in madrigal form.

**Question:**

8 Pressé d'une amoureuse ardeur,
8 Lors qu'un Amant romp le silence,
12 Et que sans redouter d'offenser son vainqueur,
8 Il lui parle de sa souffrance,
8 Fait-il voir un plus grand amour?
12 Que si reduit au point d'aller perdre le jour
12 Il faisait de ses feux l'extreme violence,
8 Et qu'il n'expliquât ses desirs
12 Que par de doux regards & de tendres soupirs?

**Response:**

12 Il n'est jamais permis dans l'amoureux empire,
10 De reveler les secretes faveurs;
8 Mais pour les secretes douleurs,
6 Je tiens qu'on les peut dire,
10 Malaisement peut-on dissimuler
12 Les maux dont on ressent l'extreme violence;
10 Si le respect nous oblige au silence,
8 L'amour nous oblige a parler. 20

[Question: Pressed by an amorous passion, / When a Lover breaks his silence, / And without dreading to offend his vanquisher, / He speaks to her of his suffering, / Does he give a greater proof of love? / Than if, reduced to the point of dying / He should

20/bid., 112-3, the poet of this response is not identified.
violently snuff out his flame, / And (if) he explained his desires / Only by sweet
glances and tender sighs?

Response: It is never permitted in the empire of love, / To reveal secret favors; / But
for secret pains, / I believe that one can tell them, / Awkwardly one dissimulates / The
anguish that one suffers with extreme passion; / If respect obliges us to silence, / Love
obliges us to speak.]

The form of these two madrigals, question and response, are varied.
The question is comprised of only alexandrines and octosyllables, with an
interconnecting rhyme scheme to create a madrigal of nine lines [ababcbbdd].
The answer is a mixture of twelve-, ten-, eight-, and six-syllable lines, but
with a regular embraced rhyme [abbacddc]. War terminology adapted for use
on the emotional battleground of love is evident in the question: the
vanquisher causes violent suffering, even to the point of death. The answer
provides rules of conduct that contradict the seeming response; "it is never
permitted in the empire of love to reveal secret favors", and "respect obliges
silence" are in direct opposition with "tell secret pains" and "love obliges
confession." Possibly the poet is trying to say that when dissimulation wears
thin, it is better to speak privately than to risk public discomfort and
humiliation, but in true gallant form ambiguity reigns supreme.

Elegies, enigmas, and madrigals of love, despite the seemingly
personal content, remain paradoxically impersonal, lacking individuality of
expression or content. The questions d'amour do not even attempt to be
personal; they are the foundation of an intellectual game. Their purpose was
not to educate, but to show that the poet had sufficiently penetrated the
mysteries of love, could take either or both sides of a rhetorical question
centered on the popular issues, create purposeful ambiguity, wrap it up in a
polished poetical format, and with brilliance and eloquence present it to polite company.

Maxims

The questions d'amour flirted with, but did not actually present, rules on love. That task was relegated to the maxime. The maxim, or sentence, was a rule for physical or moral conduct, or a concise statement of a general truth, written in prose or in verse. Along with other games, such as the game of portraits or the questions d'amour, the maxim became a popular pastime in the salons. It was introduced by the Duc de La Rochefoucauld in the salon of Mme de Sablé. This salon hostess liked to summarize concisely conversations, which led to the composition by salon members of réflexions and maximes.21

La Rochefoucauld was a perceptive observer of the society around him, and recorded it as such. Contrary to contemporary fashion, he was a realist and pessimist and his maxims depart from the usual gallant preoccupation of form with hidden or questionable content. He succeeded at penetrating the mysteries of love, as well as many other aspects of society life, and presented each of his reflections in a few concise sentences. His maxims were read at the salon of Mme de Sablé before publication, and were very well received. Around three hundred of these maxims were first published in 1664 under the title, Réflexions ou Sentences et maximes morales. They were so popular

that further editions were published in 1666, 1671, 1675, and 1678. The final edition contained over five hundred maxims.  

Love, proper decorum and *galanterie* are only a few of the topics covered in La Rochefoucauld's maxims. Compared to the gallant rhetoric and ambiguity of the poetry previously considered, these maxims are disarmingly direct. As he was a keen observer of the salon society, it is worthwhile to consider a few of his many reflections. Example 9 includes some of La Rochefoucauld’s maxims on love, feigning and disguise, the value of the rules of decorum, or the *bienseances*, and *galanterie* and its relationship to love.

**Example 9.** La Rochefoucauld, *Oeuvres complètes*, maxims in sentence form.

*En amour, celui qui est guéri le premier est toujours le mieux guéri.*

([In love, the first to be healed is always healed the best.](#)

*Il n'y a point de déguisement qui puisse longtemps cacher l'amour où il est, ni le feindre où il n'est pas.*

([There is no disguise that can indefinitely conceal love where it exists, nor feign love where it does not.](#)

*L'amour tout agréable qu'il est, plait encore plus par les manières dont il se montre que par lui-même.*

([Love, as agreeable as it is, pleases more by the manner in which it is shown than in and of itself.](#)

*La bienseance est la moindre de toutes les lois, et la plus suivie.*

([Rules of decorum are the least of all laws, but the most observed.](#)

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La galanterie de l'esprit est un tour de l'esprit par lequel il pénètre et conçoit les choses les plus flatteuses, c'est-à-dire celles qui sont le plus capables de plaire aux autres.  

[Galanterie is a turn of mind that fathoms and devises the most flattering things, that is to say those that are the most likely to please others.]

Ce qui se trouve le moins dans la galanterie, c'est de l'amour.  
[What is least found in galanterie is love.]

As opposed to La Rochefoucauld's simple sentences, maxims giving advice or rules on how to love were often written in verse form. These are termed maximes, reigles, or édits of love. They appeared in poetry anthologies, as well as in the popular journal of the day, the Mercure galant. They were written by various authors, but were often presented as the commandments of the God Amour. In the Pellison-La Suze Recueil de pièces galantes en prose et en vers of 1675, Amour presents only one maxim to women, while providing fifty for men.  

This great disproportion can only be indicative of what was considered to be women's natural proclivity toward matters concerning love, and men's need of education and assistance. For the feminine sex, Amour counsels only mystery:


8 Aimez, mais d'un amour couvert,
8 Qui ne soit jamais sans mystere;
8 Ce n'est pas l'amour qui vous perd,
8 C'est la maniere de la faire.  

27 Ibid., 346, # 69.
28 Ibid., 460, #402.
29 These maxims are taken from Comte Roger de Bussy-Rabutin,"Maximes d'amour," in Histoire amoureuses des Gaules, microfiche Bibliothèque Nationale 8° Lb 37 3523B.
30 Ibid., 237.
The maxims are presented as a series of individual stanzas, with each stanza containing a single thought. The example above is written in a regular form: a quatrain in octosyllables with alternate rhyme [abab]. However, each stanza has its own individual form, varying in rhyme scheme, length of line, and length of stanza. In this respect, they resemble a chain of independent madrigals, but are called *stances irrégulières*. In August 1677, the following maxim appeared in a series of maxims in the *Mercure galant*. It also addresses the importance of keeping mystery in love, but is composed in an irregular form: six lines of verse, combining alexandrines and seven-syllable lines, with an aabccb rhyme scheme. The use of *vers impairs*, or an uneven number of syllables in a line of poetry, was not uncommon in salon poetry. This rhythmic irregularity creates lightness and gaiety, the desired effects of *galanterie* absent from the more formal alexandrine.


12 La déclaration une fois estât faite,
12 Chacun de son costé la doit tenir secrete;
12 Plus l'Amour est caché, plus il a de douceur.
7 Il faut aimer & se taire,
7 Une flame sans mystere
7 Ne chatotiile point un Coeur 31

[Having made the declaration of love, / Each person must hold it secret; / The more Love is concealed, the sweeter it is. / Love and keep quiet, / A love without mystery never pleases the Heart.]

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31 *Mercure galant*, tome 6, August 1677, 220.
Stances are organized in a logical progression of ideas, so that although they each comprise an individual thought, followed by a pause, they link together to form a coherent set of rules. For example in one series of gallant rules, "Reigles de l'amour" by Mme de Villedieu (1660), seven stanzas prescribe rules of love and conduct from first infatuation and first encounter, to the declaration of love and its after effects. In this respect, the stances irrégulières resemble their counterparts, the regular stanzas of epic poetry which serve to link storyline.

Conclusion

Many other small forms of poetry came in and out of vogue during the second half of the seventeenth century. The metamorphosis, usually in sonnet form, described the qualities of the beloved by changing her into a valued object, such as a rose, a diamond, or a lion. The épître en vers, often in octosyllables, was the usual form for exchanging news, giving a little gallant poem, or for requesting favors. The épigramme always conveyed a moral or satiric aim, and the rondeau had a happy, light tone, recalling all or part of the first line of the poem. As tastes changed, poetry began to incorporate prose with mélanges de prose et de vers, making poetic form even

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32Cited in Edouard Fournier, Variétés historiques et littéraires, 10 vols. (Paris: P. Jannet, 1855-1863), IV, 296-298. These rules were part of a farce satirizing the précieuses which appeared shortly after Molière's Les Précieuses ridicules.

33Picard, op. cit., 51.

34Fukui, op. cit., 215.

more open and flexible. Poetry in this society, like dress and manners, exhibited changes in fashion depending on taste and popular trends.

Characteristic of all salon poetry, regardless of the form, is a graceful and pleasing quality; as a reflection of the gallant aesthetic, elegance and conciseness were paramount. Compared to the classical tragedy, whose extended form is ponderous and regulated, salon poetry largely consists of a variety of small poetic forms. Few genres are fixed; touching (toucher) and pleasing (plaire) the reader was the primary goal, and pleasing was largely derived through variety.

In late seventeenth-century France, all refined men and women were expected to write poetry. It served practical purposes, such as a note of thanks, a bit of gossip, or a gallant missive to one's beloved. But it was also a standard means of social interaction in the salon setting. If the poet could not adequately communicate gallant thoughts in a gallant form, he would have little success with pleasing the ladies, and moreover, he would be considered unrefined and uneducated. Writing verse was a prerequisite for entrance into the society world; without this capability, one could not participate in the many salon activities and games that depended on verse composition.

Poetry, as a manifestation of thought, was simply another avenue for presentation in polite company, and like behavior, speech, or dress, it was subjected to rules for appropriate form. A highly polished outer appearance, or form, served as a gallant mask behind which one could hide real emotion. Mystery, vagueness and ambiguity were essential components of the mask of galanterie, so it is not surprising that these qualities would likewise infuse
poetry. The enigma, portraits, and rhetorical questions on love were intentionally written with ambiguity in mind.

Although largely concerned with the external mask of love, poetry written in and for the salon environment was highly intellectual. Through poetry, one demonstrated above all the qualities of the mind, or esprit. Composing verse spontaneously was not uncommon, and many of the activities involving poetry concerned the intellectual analysis of love and its outer shell. However, this poetry lacks individuality, as it was essential to imitate with exactitude the current fashions in self-expression. As a result, the vocabulary, the content, and the style are homogeneous, serving to create a generic mask for the presentation of love.

Because of the lack of individuality, an impersonal air pervades these poems. They are so stylized and so endemic to the salon environment that it can be extremely difficult for readers outside of this cultural milieu to appreciate their purpose and value. In this respect gallant poetry is the antithesis of classical tragedy, which in its universality appeals to all times.

In this social setting, opera was born in France. In a society focused on literature and language usage, the librettos were of prime importance. In the tragédies en musique, poetry provides the foundation of each opera, while music serves to enhance and highlight the dramatic situation. As tragedies, the librettos were analyzed for form and content, and in comparison with the classical tragedies, critics considered them deficient. However, Louis XIV, the ideal hero and lover of his time, wanted the new genre to represent the splendor of his realm, both at home and abroad. The elegance and refinement of his kingdom had more to do with the cultivated social mores,
introduced by the salons, than with ancient literary standards. The tragédie en musique is a direct reflection of this gallant and modern Parisian society. In terms of literature, the whole world of salon poetry stands between the ancient classical tragedy and the modern opera libretto. Quinault's poetry for the tragédie en musique is placed in proper historical, social and literary perspective only with an appreciation of the purpose, form, and influence of the gallant poetry written by his contemporaries in the Parisian salons.
CHAPTER IV

THE CREATORS AND THEIR CREATION:
A DEFINITION OF A NEW GENRE,
THE TRAGÉDIE EN MUSIQUE

The Creators

Quinault

Philippe Quinault (1635-1688) was the eldest of three children born to Thomas Quinault, a master baker, and his wife, Prime Riquier. At about eight years of age, the young Philippe entered into the service of Tristan l'Hermite, a poet and gentleman of the house of Gaston d'Orléans; Quinault was the poet's valet, but in time, they became friends and confidants. In approximately 1654, Tristan went to serve the Duc de Guise, at the Hôtel de Guise, and it is likely that Quinault followed him there. At eighteen years of age, he followed in his mentor's footsteps and his first play, Les Rivales, was performed at the Hôtel de Bourgogne in 1653.

An active member of the Parisian society world, Tristan frequented the literary salons, in particular, the renowned and exclusive salon of Mme de

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Rambouillet. He excelled in the composition of sonnets and of poems in strophic form, employing a variety of verse and strophe lengths. By composing poetry in a variety of styles, he helped to create the vogue for flexibility of poetic form. Tristan composed a large number of madrigals and was the first poet to define the madrigal as a short, amorous poem.

Y. Fukui, in his book *Raffinement précieux dans la poésie française du XVIIe siècle*, observes that poetry written during Tristan’s time, the decades of the thirties and forties, exhibits a combination of classical and baroque traits; a tendency for purity, clarity, and naturalness is infused with an excessive sensitivity and the desire to dazzle and astound. Strong Italian influences are evident in this poetry because the Italian madrigal as well as Marinist themes were in vogue. The Italian poet, Giambattista Marino (1569-1625), spent the years from 1615 to 1622 in France and was received at court by Marie de Médicis, and in the salons by Mme de Rambouillet. He was especially admired by Malherbe, the influential poet and reformer of the French language and his imitators include Saint-Amant, Malleville, and Tristan. According to Fukui, the *Belle Matineuse*, a poem comparing the beauty of the beloved to the brilliance of the rising sun, was a popular Marinist imitation, with Tristan as one of many poets who composed a sonnet on this theme. Besides poems in the smaller genres, he also composed

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3Ibid., 171.


poetry for the ballet de cour, a tragedy Marianne (1636) and a parody on the famous Carte de Tendre of Mlle de Scudéry, entitled La Carte du Royaume d'Amour.

From the age of eighteen, Quinault began to participate in salon activities, and it was through Tristan that he entered this world. The aspiring young poet was ambitious, and soon realized that praising prestigious ladies was the surest way to advance his career and gain a literary reputation. His biographer, Etienne Gros, states that Quinault probably frequented the salon of the Comtesse de La Suze, and that he recited his verses at the salon of Mme de Vilaine, frequented that of Mme Deshoulières, and read his unpublished works at the salon of Mme de Montglas. He excelled at improvising Valentins and at resolving questions d'amour. Charming certain ladies by the pleasantness of his conversation, impressing others by his handsome stature, he made his way in the world without noise, discrete, witty, shrewd and ingratiating.⁶

Quinault dedicated his plays to high-ranking people in order to secure their protection and by his skill as a poet, as much as by his clever handling of influential supporters, his success and reputation spread. Each new play provided continued success. In 1657, his first gallant tragicomedy Amalazonte, dedicated to the cardinal Mazarin, was awarded a royal prize after being seen by Louis XIV. By the age of twenty-four, Quinault had provided the Parisian stage with three comedies, six tragicomedies, and one

⁶Gros, op. cit., 36, "récitait des vers chez Mme de Vilaine, hantait chez Mme Deshoulières, lisait chez Mme de Montglas ses œuvres inédites. Il excellait à improviser des Valentins et à résoudre des questions d'amour. Charmant les unes par l'agrément de sa conversation, forçant les autres par sa belle stature, il faisait sans bruit son chemin dans le monde, discret, spirituel, adroit, insinuant."
tragedy. For the marriage of the king to Marie-Thérèse, Mazarin commissioned Quinault to write a pastorale, *Lysis et Hespérie*: an allegory of the union of France and Spain, performed at the Hôtel de Bourgogne on 26 November, 1660.  

Quinault gave to the theatre what the society world wanted: spoken tragedy based on *galanterie*. The literary world was inundated with gallant novels and poetry, but *galanterie* had not yet appeared in the theatre. With the transmission of this aesthetic to the stage in the tragedies and tragicomedies by Quinault, and by the poet Thomas Corneille, the Parisian elite could see their very lives enacted before them. These plays were enormously popular; Corneille’s *Timocrate* of 1656 was considered the success of the century and the model of *galanterie* on stage. These tragedies (as opposed to classical tragedies) provided a mirror of contemporary life, and it was extremely flattering for the heroes and heroines of polite salon society to see themselves immortalized on stage.

Overwhelming success also brought complications as die-hard classicists did not take kindly to the corruption of the sacrosanct rules of the Ancients concerning tragedy. The new element of *galanterie* was obviously

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7 According to Gros, *ibid*, 62, this work was never printed and is now lost.

8 Pierre Corneille was the famous tragedian who also wrote machine plays, his younger brother was Thomas Corneille. During Quinault’s temporary dismissal as official opera librettist, Thomas worked with Lully on two librettos: *Bellérophon* and *Psyché* (an adaptation of the earlier tragedie-ballet).


10 Buford Norman in “The Vocabulary of Quinault’s Opera Libretti: Drama without Drama,” *L’Age du Théâtre en France*, ed. by David Trott and Nicole Boursier (Edmonton: Academic Printing & Publishing, 1988), 293, clarifies the role of the classicists as critics, “... there really weren’t any critics during the time of opera’s great popularity, except those like Saint-Evremond (who never saw a Lully opera), Boileau, Racine and La Fontaine who
a modern predilection and belonged in its proper place, in the salons. Madrigals and maxims were never criticized by Quinault's detractors; no one denied their use or the pleasure they brought to the society world. However, the success of gallant tragedies and tragicomedies threatened the revered classical tradition. Proponents and detractors immediately took sides, in the developing literary quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns. This dispute would plague Quinault throughout his career as playwright and opera librettist.

One of his detractors was Antoine Bandeau de Somaize, who in 1661 published *Le Grand Dictionnaire historique des pretieuses*. In this work, Somaize provides portraits of influential salon members; he is not kind to Quinault, but his caustic remarks document Quinault's skill and success at copying the gallant aesthetic. Under the pseudonym *Quirinus*, Somaize states that Quinault so shrewdly steals verses and incidents of those that preceded him, that he was often believed to be the author of that which he had adopted; it is not that he does not have talent, that he himself does not invent at times; but one must pardon him: that does not happen often. (. . .) his conversation is gentle, and he never offends anyone, because he hardly speaks without reciting a few verses; his eyes are dark and penetrating, sparkling and relentless. Moreover, he is of a pleasing broad build, and in his dressing gown one would almost take him for Adonis the elder.

despised the *tragédie-lyrique* and insisted that it had to be tragedy or nothing at all. That is, there were conservative literary critics, but basically no music critics.”

11Fukui, op. cit., 286.


In his exuberance to portray the world as he saw it, Quinault at times crossed the fine line between imitation and plagiarism. Unlike the accepted practice of copying deceased or exiled poets' work, Quinault copied ideas and verses from his own contemporaries. In one instance he gave a portrait, written by his friend and supporter Charles Perrault, to a lady he was courting. The poem became known in Paris as Quinault's; confronted by Perrault he admitted to the forgery. Several times serious accusations of plagiarism were leveled at Quinault which only added fuel to the fire of his opponents' discontent.14

The content and style of Quinault's work was influenced in his formative years by Tristan, and later shaped by his interaction with the salon environment. When Tristan died in 1655, Quinault, the arriviste, courted Tristan's protectors, and took his place as gentleman at the Hôtel de Guise.

A noted protector of writers was Nicolas Fouquet, the king's minister of state and superintendent of finances. In 1658, Quinault dedicated the tragicomedy *Le Feint Alcibiade* to Fouquet, and *La Mort de Cyrus* to Mme Fouquet. The latter work is a tragedy closely modeled after Mlle de Scudéry's success, the ten-volume roman à clef novel *Le Grand Cyrus*. In 1659, the tragicomedy *Le Mariage de Cambyse* was dedicated to the king's brother, the Duc d'Anjou.

By the late 1650s, the salon world had served its purpose for Quinault, and

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14Cf. Gros, op. cit., 77 ff. for a summary of accusations against Quinault.
he abandoned the salon environment in favor of the royal world of the court. In 1662, the tragedy *Agrippa* was dedicated to the king himself.

During the decade of the fifties, Quinault refined his skills as gallant poet in the salons and during the following decade, he focused on attaining royal recognition. In 1661 in his daughter's papers of baptism, he is recognized as *escuyer, valet de chambre du Roy.* This privilege, although probably purchased, conferred nobility on Quinault; it was an honorific charge which gave him the position at the head of the bed in the daily ritual of the making of the king's bed. By 1664, he was a royal pensioner, and in 1668 with the composition of a pastorale en musique, *La Grotte de Versailles*, he officially entered the circle of poets and artists charged with celebrating the glory of Louis XIV. Within a few years, he was appointed to the Petite Académie des Inscriptions et Médailles whose mission was to officially promote the king's image in public works and in 1674, he became a member of the prestigious literary group, the Académie française.

Quinault's final work for the spoken theatre, the tragedy *Bellérophon*, was performed in 1671. During the same year, he collaborated with Molière, Pierre Corneille, and Lully on a divertissement for the king, *Psyché*. In 1673, the first tragédie en musique by Quinault and Lully, *Cadmus et Hermione*, was presented to the king and to the public. Between 1673 and 1686, Lully

\[15\] *escuyer* could be a simple or ennobled gentleman.

\[16\] Gros, *op. cit.*, 63.

\[17\] *Ibid.*, 86.
and Quinault produced eleven operas, all based on the galant and tendre rhetoric born of refined social interaction in the salon environment.\(^{18}\)

Despite Quinault’s fast rise to fame, he never forgot what was pleasing to Parisian society and to the court. Quinault’s success is the best evidence that by the 1660s, the gallant mores of the salon world had completely infused life at court. He was often criticized for lack of originality or depth, but his desire to succeed was stronger than his need for artistic originality and he was exceptionally skillful in recreating the gallant mask of society for portrayal on the stage. Opera, because of its lyric essence, was an ideal genre for the further development of galanterie in the theatre. Italian opera had largely failed in Paris because of the weak librettos; they were not only in Italian but they lacked significant literary content. In Quinault’s librettos, the use of the French language to relate an ancient plot retold in modern galanterie corrected the deficits of the Italian counterpart. Parisians could see themselves and their gallant world set to music, and nothing could have pleased them more. Quinault was well rewarded for his efforts; Robert Isherwood notes that "few artistic or literary figures were paid more."\(^{19}\)

**Lully**

Although of Italian origin, Lully’s life closely parallels the life of Quinault. He was born in Florence in 1632 to Lorenzo di Maldo Lulli, a

\(^{18}\)Galanterie was by no means a static element in society. Between 1673 and 1686 the attitude of society toward love changed. This was at least in part because of the morganatic marriage in 1683 of Louis XIV to Mme de Maintenon; the king’s new bride was very devout and exercised an immense influence on life at court. The last three librettos of Quinault, Amadis, Roland, and Armide, reveal the changing aesthetic of galanterie. This change in attitude, as evidenced in Quinault’s later works, warrants further study.

miller, and his wife Caterina del Sera. The Chevalier de Guise brought him to France in 1646 for his niece, Mlle de Montpensier, who wished to improve her Italian. Lully was employed as garçon de chambre for Montpensier, and while in her service became an accomplished dancer and violinist. This lady, also known as la Grande Mademoiselle, was the daughter of Gaston d'Orléans, in whose service were the poet Tristan and his young valet, Quinault. She was also the niece of Louis XIV and, as was customary for the nobility, she held lavish entertainments. James Anthony states that while in the service of la Grande Mademoiselle, Lully was exposed to the best of contemporary French music.

The grande bande (the '24 violons du Roi') often performed for divertissements and festivities, and at balls he heard the most popular French dances of the time, which became models for his own early compositions in this genre. He was also exposed to the court airs and dialogues composed by his future father-in-law, Michel Lambert. . . .

Montpensier was a member of Parisian salon society, and in 1659, with the help of the poet Segrais, she compiled a famous and influential book of portraits, La Galerie des portraits. This however was long after Lully's service in her court had ended. In 1652, after actively participating in the Fronde, Montpensier was exiled to the provinces and at this time, Lully asked to be released from her service and his request was granted.

Lully achieved success at court sooner than his literary contemporary, Quinault. In 1653, Lully danced with the king in the Ballet de la nuit and was appointed compositeur de la musique instrumentale du Roi. During the

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fifties and sixties, Lully collaborated with the poet Issac Benserade in the composition of ballets de cour. Benserade was known as the father of galanterie and his poetry helped transform ballet into a literary medium. His verses, gallant in content and form, were printed and distributed to the audience. He was also known to write flattering verse for the king, and included allusions to people at court in his ballet verse. His preferred poetic form was épitres in octosyllables, or strophes in free verse mixing octosyllables with alexandrines.

In his marriage contract of 1661, Lully's name was changed from Lulli to Lully, and like Quinault, his signature was followed with the title of escuyer. The same year, Lully also became surintendant de la musique et compositeur de la musique de la chambre du Roi. The following year, he was appointed to the post of maître de la musique de la famille royale.

During the sixties, Lully worked with dramatists providing them with ballet entries and incidental music for their plays. His collaboration with Molière resulted in many comédies-ballets, such as Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, and Georges Dandin. In 1668, he provided music for Quinault's pastorale for the king, La Grotte de Versailles, and in 1671 collaborated with Quinault, Pierre Corneille, and Molière on the tragédie-ballet, Psyché.

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21 Isherwood, op. cit., 135.


23 This is of necessity a very abbreviated account of Lully's achievements. For an in depth biographical account cf. Philippe Beaussant, Lully: ou le musicien du Soleil (Paris: Gallimard, 1992); for Lully’s manner of working in the dramatic genres cf. Manuel Couveur, Jean-Baptiste Lully: musique et dramaturgie au service du prince (Marc Vokar Editeur, 1992).
During these years, Lully was opposed to the idea of setting the French language in recitative because, unlike Italian, it is not inherently accented and rhythmic. The ballets de cour, pastorales, and comédies-ballets all contained elements of opera, but were not sung throughout. However, when Pierre Perrin and Robert Cambert obtained the right under Louis XIV to compose and produce opera, they created a French recitative. Their opera-pastorale Pomone (1671) was very successful, but their financial dealings were not. With increasing pecuniary difficulties, Lully managed to obtain Perrin's lettre patente, which gave him sole rights to compose and stage opera in France. He chose Quinault as opera librettist. According to the Mercure galant (1695), he made this decision because Quinault was the "only poet with whom he could work and who knew as much about varying metres and rhymes in poetry as he himself knew about varying melody and cadence in music."²⁴

Quinault, as noted above, was an imitator of life. He copied the behavior, language, and gestures of people in society when creating his stage characters. It follows that the audience identified with his operatic characters. In Atys (1676), the king himself saw in the character of Atys his own image (seeing his wife as the powerful goddess Cybèle). Mme de Sévigné, the famous epistler who doted over her daughter, was seen by society as Cérès, the mother of Proserpine, in Proserpine (1680).²⁵ But the most celebrated instance of a mirroring of court life was Mme de Montespan's

²⁴Cited in Anthony, op. cit., 315.

resemblance to the character Juno in *Isis* (1677). In this tragédie en
musique, the powerful and jealous goddess Juno torments the nymph Io
because Jupiter has strayed and is pursuing her. At court, the king was
pursuing Mme de Ludres, and his favorite mistress, Mme de Montespan was
visibly jealous. Mme de Montespan herself thought that Quinault was
referring to her, and she ensured his dismissal as official librettist. Two
years later, he was reinstated. Although Lully collaborated with Thomas
Corneille, Racine, and Boileau in the interim, he preferred Quinault who
composed all of his remaining opera librettos.

Lully, like Quinault, was known to have frequented the salon society of
Paris: in particular, the salon of the libertine Ninon de Lenclos. Ninon was
not preoccupied with the game of love, as was the majority of Parisian high
society, but rather called the adherents of the *Carte de Tendre* the
"Jansenists of love." She invited artists and intellectuals to her salon where
they could discuss art and engage in passionate debates. Ninon was a
musician and widely recognized as an excellent singer and lute player. Her
philosophy of singing valued sensitivity over virtuosity. She wrote,

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26Patricia Howard in "The Positioning of Woman in Quinault's World Picture," *Jean-
Schneider (Heidelberg: Laaber, 1990), 198, sees Quinault's heroines as modeled after the
royal mistresses. At least in *Isis*, Mme de Montespan also believed this to be true. It must
be emphasized, however, that the rules for decorum and courtship were so stylized and
formalized in this society that it is doubtful that only the nobility saw themselves
represented on stage. For example, any woman forced into an undesirable arranged
marriage (as were the majority of women) would have undoubtedly identified with the plight
of Sangaride, in *Atys*. Quinault's plots could have implied a specific incident at court, but as
a representation of society in general, they created a much broader appeal.

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28In this regard, cf. the account of the death of M. Gaultier and reference to the lute
playing of Mademoiselle de Lenclos in the *Mercure galant*, tome 1, 1672, 166-8.
Sensitivity is the soul of song and, even those with minimal taste, will always prefer the sensitive to the most learned performance, because the latter only flatters the ear and the former goes straight to the heart. One can please and create admiration with a gifted genius, with a pretty voice and with an excellent hand, but one only touches as much as one is touched, and by feeling oneself what one expresses.²⁹

The goal of seventeenth-century dramaturgy, to touch and to please, is applied by Ninon to vocal music. Although unstated, she is referring to sensitivity to and expressiveness of the vocal text: if one is touched by the text, one can touch others. According to this philosophy, musical virtuosity alone cannot touch and please the listener. Lully was likewise adamant about the primacy of text declamation over musical virtuosity; in his tragédies en musique, he greatly limited musical ornamentation, saying "no embellishments; my recitative is made only for speaking."³⁰

The purpose of Lully's dramatic music is to color the poetry, not to compete or to interfere with it. With the addition of music, it was felt that the heart could be touched directly by the words, bypassing intellectual analysis. With the advent of the tragédie en musique love, the favorite intellectual pastime of the aristocracy, became a sensuous and emotional experience. As such, it provided the audience with a valuable outlet for experiencing emotions of love (which were normally restrained and dissimulated in polite society) rather than thinking about them. In a letter of

²⁹Cited in Roger Picard, Les Salons littéraires et la société française, 1610-1789, 2nd ed. (New York: Brentano's, Inc., 1943), 131, "La sensibilité est l'âme du chant et, pour peu que l'on ait du goût, on la préférera toujours à la plus savante exécution, puisque celle-ci ne flatte que l'oreille et que l'autre va droit au cœur. On peut plaire et se faire admirer avec un beau génie, avec une belle voix et avec une main excellente, mais on ne touche qu'autant que l'on est touché et que l'on sent soi-même ce que l'on exprime."

³⁰Anthony, op. cit., 322.
8 January 1674, Mme de Sévigné attests to the deep emotions experienced by members of the audience during a performance of *Alceste*, "[the opera] is a marvelous work of beauty: there are already places in the music that have merited my tears; I am not alone at being unable to hold them back; the soul of Mme de La Fayette is greatly disturbed."\(^\text{31}\)

**The Tragédie en musique: A Definition of a New Genre**

**A Comparison to Classical Tragedy**

The overall structure of the tragédie en musique was standardized by Quinault and Lully. Following the guidelines of tragedy, the drama always contains five acts. After criticism of comic elements in the first few operas, the remaining works focus on the main storyline without comic relief, so that unity of action, so vital to classical tragedy, is respected. Because fantastic events play an important role in the make-up of the plots, the unities of time and place, however, are overlooked. The *merveilleux*, or supernatural elements, not represented in spoken tragedy, created a wonderful pretext for the use of elaborate stage machinery; they could instantly transport gods and goddesses to a variety of imaginary realms unaffected by the constraints of real time. The *merveilleux* lacks verisimilitude, or the appearance of being true to life, which was another element essential to spoken tragedy. But the *bienséances* of courtly life are respected, so that the characters on stage interacted in much the same manner as society people in the salons; in this

\(^{31}\) Hibberd, *op. cit.*, 155, "l'opéra), qui est un prodige de beauté: il y a déjà des endroits de la musique qui ont mérité mes larmes; je ne suis pas seule à ne les pouvoir soutenir; l'âme de Mme de La Fayette en est alarmée."
respect Quinault's librettos adhere to the rules of tragedy concerning verisimilitude. Violence was not tolerated on stage, and language was expected to be as refined as that spoken in real life. Unlike classical tragedy, a prologue which extols the glory of Louis' reign was added. Each act also contains a divertissement: an occasion such as a festival, a wedding celebration, or a funeral which is tied to the storyline and calls for chorus, dance or pantomime, and instrumental music.

Despite some obvious similarities to classical tragedy, it is essential to recognize that classical tragedy and the tragédie en musique have very little in common. The name of the genre, tragédie en musique, is a misnomer, as this designation leads one to believe that a tragédie en musique is nothing more than a tragedy set to music. Complicating matters is the criticism of the classicists, who compared the two genres because, bearing the same name, the texts purported to be the same thing; that is, the tragédie en musique differed only by the addition of music. But the librettos of Quinault have very little in common with classical tragedy. The only similarities between the two genres are superficial at best: the genre designation of tragédie, the mythological or legendary subject matter, the five-act structure, and in later tragédies en musique --- unity of action without the addition of comic elements.

The designation of tragicomédie en musique might have been a more appropriate label for the operas of Quinault and Lully. In the seventeenth century the tragicomedy, like the majority of Quinault's librettos, contain noble characters, serious or fatal incidents, but conclude with a happy ending. The tragicomedy, like all of Quinault's librettos after Thésée (1675), does not
mix comic and tragic elements. *Comédie* instead refers to the happy ending, or in general, the uniting of the lovers. A famous example of tragicomedy is Pierre Corneille's *Le Cid*. In all of Quinault's operas, with the exception of *Atys*, the endings are not fatal for the heros and heroines. But even the term tragicomedy is problematic. The tragédie en musique differs from classical theatre, whether it ends happily or not, in many ways; it lacks unity of time and place, contains a grand divertissement in every act (often with dance and chorus), includes elements of the supernatural highlighted by extravagant stage machinery, features elaborate set designs, begins with a prologue, and is entirely set to music.

Moreover, the most fundamental difference between spoken and sung *tragédie* is the structure of the text. Classical plays, whether tragedy, tragicomedy, or comedy, feature alexandrines with rhyming couplets. Jacques Scherer in *La Dramaturgie classique en France* notes that the first tragedy in *vers libre*, or free verse, by an important playwright is Pierre Corneille's *Agésilas* (1666). The majority of verses are still alexandrines, but they are mixed with octosyllables, as are Benserade's verses for the ballet de cour. The standard use of rhyming couplets is varied by the addition of alternate and embraced rhyme. Only two important works follow this change in poetic form: Molière's comedy *Amphitryon* (1668) and *Psyché* (1671), a tragédie-ballet with text by Molière, Corneille, and Quinault. Scherer attributes the change from the classical mold to free verse, to the addition of gods and goddesses on stage. He states:

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In general it seems that one escapes the tyranny of the alexandrine in couplet rhyme only by placing oneself under the protection of the Gods. It is possibly for this reason that freedom of versification is so rare in the spoken theatre of the seventeenth century: the Gods hardly play an important role, except in the pièce à machines, and in its successor, the opera.33

Gods and goddesses (or the supernatural element of the merveilleux) were prohibited in classical tragedy as their presence would have violated verisimilitude.

The difference in language usage between the tragédie and tragédie en musique is likewise remarkable. Buford Norman, in comparing the tragedy of Jean Racine with the librettos of Quinault, has shown that Quinault used clear syntax and direct vocabulary, as his words were intended to be set to music. Racine, on the other hand, was more interested in psychological depth, and relied on a strong and frequent use of metaphor.34 Consequently vocabulary employed by Quinault involves "categories that are not 'indigenous' to Racine." Norman's categories include words that invoke music, heroic military or divine strength, magic or the supernatural, comic, lyric or pastoral, and tender love.35 Norman also notes that Quinault's vocabulary is largely comprised of soft consonants: liquid and nasal sounds as opposed to plosives or sibilants. He views the mild sound of the language

33Ibid., "Il semble qu'on n'échappe en général à la tyrannie de l'alexandrin à rimes plates qu'en se plaçant sous la protection des Dieux. C'est peut-être pour cela que la liberté de la versification est si rare dans le théâtre parlé du XVIIe siècle: les Dieux ne jouent guère de rôle important que dans la pièce à machines, et dans son successeur, l'opéra."

34Cf. Chapter V, p. 87-9 for a discussion of Quinault's use of metaphor, which unlike Racine's, was in everyday usage in contemporary society.

and the flexibility in Quinault's poetic form as another sensuous means to touch the listener, along with music, dance, and elaborate set design. In this regard, Norman also notes that Quinault's texts are only one-third to one-half as long as Racine's, to allow time for the development of the sensual component that is essential to the spectacle of opera. The tragédie en musique relies on many divergent elements to transmit the plot, whereas the tragédie uses only acting and the spoken word. Quinault's complete designation for Atys, as Tragédie en musique ornée d'Entrees de Ballet, de Machines, & de Changements de Theatre, best describes the heterogeneous character of the tragédie en musique.36

A Comparison to Italian Opera

The lack of similarities between the tragédie en musique and classical tragedy is not surprising if the new genre is redefined within the appropriate genre designation. In short, this new theatrical genre created in seventeenth-century Paris is not tragedy, it is opera. It therefore can be more productively compared to Italian opera which served as its model and predecessor, than to contemporary French classical tragedy.

With the importation of Italian opera to Paris in the decades before the advent of the tragédie en musique, the French received a model of sung drama. For this new and modern genre, the borrowing, adapting and inclusion of the best Italian devices was essential to create a superior and

36"Tragedy set to music and embellished with interludes of dance, stage machines, and scene changes." Although this study is primarily concerned with the literary and musical aspects of the tragédie en musique, the visual elements of dance, gesture, set design, and special effects are of vital importance and cannot be underestimated when considering the genre in its entirety. The importance of these elements in the salons and at court is briefly discussed in Chapter II.
progressive art form. Foreign influence, especially that of Italian opera, was of significance even to the king, as documented in the lettre patente that Lully received, in 1672, giving him the right to create French opera.

First of all, the patent refers to the original patent granted in 1669 to Perrin, which acknowledges the importance of honoring the best craftsmen in the arts, whether native or foreign, to create a sung theatre in France, as already practiced in foreign countries. The goal, modern and progressive in nature, is to elevate music to its highest level by calling on the assistance of the other arts. The king conveys the desire to revive the most pleasing of divertissements by calling

all those who have acquired the reputation of excelling in the arts, not only within the frontiers of our Kingdom; but also in Foreign Counties, & to hasten them to further perfection their art, We have honored them with the mark of our esteem, & and of our devotion: And because Music, within the Liberal Arts, holds one of the highest ranks: We would have, within this design, to have it succeed with all of these advantages, by our Lettres Patentes dated 28 June 1669 granted to M. Perrin a Permission to establish in our good City of Paris, & others in our Kingdom, Academies of Music for the purpose of singing in public, plays of the Theatre, as is practiced in Italy, in Germany, & in England. . . .

The patent specifically acknowledges the desire to imitate the Italian model by following in the footsteps of the Italian Academies of Music. It grants the

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37From "PERMISSION POUR TENIR ACADEMIE ROYALE de Musique, en faveur de sieur Lully," published in Recueil des livrets, vol. 1, 64, (Bibliothèque de l'Opéra Liv 17 [R1]), "...tous ceux qui se sont acquis la réputation d'y exceller, non seulement dans l'étendue de nostre Royaume, mais aussi dans les Pays Estrangers, & pour les obliger d'avantage de s'y perfectionner, Nous les avons honorés des marques de nostre estime, & de nostre bien-veillance: Et comme entre les Arte-Liberaux la Musique y tient un des premiers rangs: Nous aurions dans le dessein de la faire réussir avec tous ces avantages, par nos Lettres Patentes du vingt-huitième Juin 1669 accordé au sieur Perrin une Permission d'établir à nostre bonne Ville de Paris & autres de nostre Royaume des Academies de Musique pour chanter en public, des pieces de Theatre, comme il se pratique en Italie, en Allemagne, & en Angleterre."
right to create "plays in music which will be composed, as much in French
verse as in other foreign languages, alike or similar to the Academies of Italy.
..." and states that, "...We erect [the Académie royale de musique] on the
basis of those Academies in Italy where Gentlemen sing publicly, without
humbling themselves."^38

The tragédie en musique shows many more similarities with Italian
opera than it does with classical tragedy. Like Italian opera, it includes the
involvement of many arts besides literature, such as set design, costume
design, dance and music. The literary text is sung throughout, and is divided
into tuneful airs, and narrated recitative. It borrows the Italian tradition of
admitting gods and goddesses as characters that appear on stage,
accompanied by stage machinery to create elaborate special effects. A
prologue to introduce the opera imitates the Italian model, although it is
transformed into a political homage to Louis XIV. And the first three
librettos that Quinault wrote for Lully (before criticism forced the librettist to
comply with the principle of unity of action), like Italian librettos, mix comic
and serious elements. All of these elements are examples of the newly-
formed Académie royale attempting to imitate the Academies of Italy to
create plays set to music. However, the Italian elements were modified and
adapted to appeal to gallant French taste.^39

^38 Ibid., 65, "...des pieces de Musiques qui seront composees, tant en vers Francois
qu'autres Langues estrangeres, pareilles & semblables aux Academies d'Italie...., 66-67,...
Nous errigeons sur le pied de celles des Academies d'Italie oü les Gentilshommes chantent
publiquement en Musique, sans deroger."

^39 For specific examples, cf. Chapters V and VI to the literary and musical analyses of
Atys.
On a less obvious level, the tragédie en musique is greatly indebted to Italian influences. As noted in Chapter II, French rules of decorum in the seventeenth century were largely established by Mme de Rambouillet; having spent her childhood in Italy, she started the Parisian salon tradition in order to escape the crude environment of the French court. Marino, during his sojourn in Paris, was received into her home, and his works greatly influenced Quinault’s mentor, Tristan l’Hermite. Marinisme, or the Italian style of préciosité in literature, was a factor in the evolution of this literary style in France. Quinault’s works for both the spoken theatre and for the opera are representative of this style: a willingness to please, studied elegance, pastoral themes, strict adherence to the rules of decorum in language and behavior, and a concise and refined poetic form. These qualities were greatly criticized by Quinault’s detractors as contributing to too much tender sentimentality. However, the same qualities were also accepted by polite society as paramount not only to good form in salon poetry, but to good form in social interactions in refined society.

A Definition of Terms

Accepting the criticism of contemporary opera detractors, present-day music historians have overlooked the powerful positive influence of contemporary society on the tragédie en musique. Although royal influence and the connection of Louis XIV to the creation of French opera are well documented, the language and conventions of polite society which are evident in Quinault’s librettos have been largely ignored or misinterpreted. For example, the stylistic term of préciosité, as discussed in connection with marinisme, does not belong in a discussion of social convention and early
French opera. The term was originally used to refer to a small group of highly-affected women and was considered derogatory and outdated after the early 1660s, at least a decade before the advent of Quinault and Lully's highly-successful tragédies en musique (1673). It is important to note that the correct adjective to describe the society world of the 1670s is *galant*, not * précieux*. The term * préciosité* in its broader application as a stylistic term, refers to affectation as in studied elegance and the quality of pleasing that remained an inherent part of *galanterie*. If the term is correctly applied to historical studies of the operas of Quinault and Lully, it should be limited to a discussion of style, which lacks the contemporary pejorative and social connotations.

According to Cuthbert Girdlestone, the designation *tragédie en musique* was at some point reduced by contemporary society to *tragédie*. This may reflect the decline in the popularity of the spoken tragedy and the emergence of sung drama as its successor. In this respect the term *tragédie*, as the designation for French Baroque opera, needs to be completely redefined. As has been noted, a comparison of seventeenth-century French opera with contemporary classical tragedy presents more dissimilarities than similarities. The *tragédie en musique* was not a *tragédie* set to music; it was a new and independent genre, French opera. It can be best defined in the context of the modern and gallant aesthetic which was at the heart of its creation.

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41 Cf. Fukui, *op. cit.*, 12-42, for a definition of the mid-seventeenth-century *précieuses*. 
Like tragédie, galant is an elusive term whose meaning changed during the course of the seventeenth century.\(^\text{42}\) Originally it signified elegance, refinement, courtesy and attentiveness to women. The word evolved to mean clever, crafty, deceitful, and signified someone who had illicit affairs with women. The outer polished appearance of the galant homme remained unchanged, while his inner character underwent a complete transformation. The signifier, or term galant, remained in common usage, but what it signified had radically changed. The term tragédie developed along similar lines; it originally signified spoken tragedy based upon ancient principles of art and imitation, or French classical tragedy. The addition of the qualifier en musique signaled the beginning of a change in meaning; no longer was the signified a spoken tragedy, but instead a sung drama that could end happily, that admitted gods and goddesses to its cast of characters, that had poetry in free verse, that featured dance, chorus, and special effects. As the popularity of the new and modern genre of French opera brought about the decline of classical tragedy, the qualifier, en musique, could be dropped as tragédie no longer signified a play but an opera. The present-day terminology of tragédie lyrique was not adopted until the middle of the eighteenth century. By this time the two terms, tragédie en musique and tragédie lyrique, were used interchangeably.\(^\text{43}\)

The classicists were greatly disturbed by the immense popularity of the new and modern genre of opera. As the two distinctly different genres of


classical tragedy and opera went by the common designation of *tragédie*, the critics (who were all proponents of the Ancients in the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns) took every opportunity to point out the many deficiencies of the works of Quinault and Lully in comparison to classical standards. Because of these comparisons, it may be tempting to believe that Quinault and Lully were striving to create a sung classical tragedy. In reality what they created was a new and independent genre, that of French opera, which can only be defined on its own terms.

To view these operas by way of comparison with classical tragedy, as did their detractors, is misleading. Such a misunderstanding of the *tragédie en musique* would be analogous to a misinterpretation of a *galant*: or confusing a clever and deceitful man who uses polished manners and looks to seduce women, for the epitome of refinement, courtesy, and love. The *tragédie en musique* is not classical tragedy, it is opera. In seventeenth-century France, the term *opéra* signified a masterpiece (*chef-d’œuvre*), a difficult undertaking (*entreprise difficile*), or a dramatic work set to music (*ouvrage dramatique mis en musique*). The *tragédie en musique* of Quinault and Lully fits perfectly all three definitions.

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CHAPTER V

ATYS: THE LIBRETTO

Quinault's fourth libretto, *Atys*, corresponds the closest to the form of classical tragedy: a drama in five acts with a tragic ending. However, the style, form and content of the libretto have more to do with the gallant tradition of salon poetry than with French classicism. Quinault's education in the art of pleasing by portraying the tender aspects of love served him well. *Atys* is a reflection of the mores of contemporary society, not a faithful imitation of ancient tragedy. Rather than being concerned with rationality and universality, it focuses on tender love victimized by violent and jealous love. As with all of Quinault's tragédies en musique, *Atys* was written for and about contemporary Parisian society, lacking widespread universal appeal.

Although all of Quinault's librettos are termed *tragédie en musique*, most of them do not end tragically: the hero and heroine are usually united, or at least do not meet a tragic fate. Only the libretto of *Atys* is truly tragic, ending with the death of both the hero and heroine. This opera was premiered before the king on 10 January 1676, at Saint Germain-en-Laye. Public performances followed at the Palais Royal. It was revived at court in both 1678 and 1682 and became the king's favorite tragédie en musique, acquiring the nickname "the king's opera." *Atys* continued to be performed in the eighteenth century, and Voltaire considered it, along with Quinault's last
libretto, Armide, to be his greatest masterpiece.¹

All of Quinault's librettos are based on either ancient mythology or medieval legends; the libretto of Atys, for example, is taken from Ovid's Metamorphoses. For Quinault, myth or legend was simply the pretext for presenting contemporary life on stage. The libretto of Atys, in this regard, is of particular interest as its intrigue is based on society's fascination with disguise and dissimulation. In this respect, Atys adheres to the rules of tragedy concerning verisimilitude, as it is an accurate representation of the mask of galanterie.²

The Rhetoric of Atys

The language of Atys comes directly from the language of the land of Tendre: Mlle de Scudéry's imaginary land of respectful and tender love as portrayed in the novel Clélie.³ The characters are in the Empire of love (Amoureux empire, I/2, III/2).⁴ Amour is all-pervasive and the major characters are submitted to his powers (Tost ou tard l'Amour est vainqueur, I/2; L'amour trouble tout le Monde IV/5). In love's empire, Atys is under Sangaride's authority and law (C'est mon amour qui vous en fait la loy, I/6). Sangaride and Atys share a tender love (tendres amours, VI/4). And Cybèle

¹Gros, op. cit., 117.
²Cf. Chapter IV, p. 74-5, on verisimilitude in Quinault's librettos.
⁴When referring to acts and scenes in the libretto, a roman numeral indicates the act: the following arabic numeral, the scene. All citations from the libretto will be taken from Philippe Quinault, Atys (Paris: Christophe Ballard, 1676).
had believed her heart exempt from trouble and tenderness (*Un coeur toujours exempt de trouble & de tendresse*, II/3).

The unspoken language of love is revealed by sighs, indicated by references to the heart sighing in secret, or by sighing as an indication of inner turmoil (*le coeur en secret soupir*, I/2; *vous soupirerez?*, I/6; *votre coeur se trouble, il soupir*, IV/2). Metaphorically the verb to sigh (*soupir*) means to love. Audible sighs also indicate the workings of a tender heart, especially by a repeated verbal "alas" (*Helas!, I/4, I/6, III/8, IV/1).

The vocabulary of war, appropriated into the domain of love is also present. Word usage reflects the battle in the empire of love. Cybèle is Atys' conquest (*conqueste*, II/3). Sangaride calls her engagement to King Célénus, a victory (*je triomphe, et j'aime ma victoire*, I/3). Chains are an emotional bond of the person in love (*une plus forte chaîne*, II/3; *Deux coeurs... ont beau cacher leur chaîne*, III/7; *une chaîne si belle*, IV/4). And, the love of Sangaride and Atys is one of intense emotion which is synonymous with the word violence (*jamais amour n'eût tant de violence*, V/1).

The torments of love (*tourments rigoureux*, I/2) are violent and are portrayed with vivid imagery. Because of his unrequited love for Sangaride, Atys speaks of his torture (*un cruel supplice*, I/6); his punishment (*J'ay merité qu'on me punisse*, I/6); and his judgment to be pronounced by Sangaride (*Prononcez mon arrest*, I/6). He will perish (*perir*, I/6) and die of this love (*mourir d'amour; expirer*, I/2). Atys feels that Sangaride is condemning and leaving him to die (*Vous me condamnerez vous même, / Et vous me laisserez...* [5]

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[5] Orthography in France during the seventeenth century was not completely standardized as attested to by the inconsistent spelling in Quinault's published librettos, for example *chaîne* as opposed to *chaisme.*
mourir, I/6). He can never be healed (guérir, I/6). In Atys, love is accompanied by cruelty (cruauté, IV/4) and suffering (souffrir, III/4). The love of the protagonists is a crime (un crime, I/4) against the higher powers of family, king, and deity.

The metaphoric and poetic language used in Atys to convey the pain and torment of love was in common usage by contemporary Parisian society. In this society, being in love was in fashion. The attainment or consummation of love, however, was prohibited by the practice of arranged marriages; love was not in the best interest of family and state. As a result, being in love was synonymous with being in pain. Moreover, by loving, one always ran the risk of emotional death. The lover completely yielded his identity to the beloved; if he was not loved in return, it meant psychological annihilation. In this society many hearts suffered from impending death because of love. An influential writer and salon hostess, Mme de La Fayette, notes that her friend, Mme de Sévigné, caused the death of many admirers. During an illness at home, Mme de La Fayette wrote,

Madame de Sévigné, who paid me the honor of visiting me today, told me that she was going to undertake the task of healing me; but I do not know what to believe. Because, on one hand I do not at all doubt that she is capable of reviving someone from the dead; but on the other hand, I know that she does cause the deaths of those who are well.  

6This is in direct opposition to Racine's use of metaphor, which was not assimilated into daily language. The metaphors of love, as evidenced by the examples of salon poetry in Chapter III, were part of a common and familiar language of love in polite society.

7Mme de LaFayette, Correspondance (Paris: Gallimard, 1942), tome 1, 61, cited in Jean-Michel Pelous, Amour précieux, amour galant (1654-1675) (Paris: Klincksieck, 1980), 168, "Madame de Sévigné, qui m'a fait aujourd'hui l'honneur de me visiter, me dit qu'elle entreprenoit de me guérir; mais je ne sais ce que j'en dois croire. Car, d'un costé je ne doute point qu'elle est capable de ressusciter un mort; mais d'un autre costé, je scay qu'elle fait mourir ceux qui se portent bien."
At issue was whether, before the psychological death of the unrequited lover, it was his duty to confess his torment and impending death, or if it was more noble to suffer and die in silence. In Act 1/2 of Atys, Atys is overheard saying, "What a harsh torment to die of love without lamenting one's fate" (Que c'est un tourment rigoureux / De mourir d'amour sans se plaindre).

The metaphorical use of condemnation and death are readily apparent in Atys. Before their mutual declaration of love (I/6), Atys confesses to Sangaride that he feels condemned and on the point of death. Condemnation and death in this scene serve to presage the tragic events of Act V; in the final act, judgment and death become literal; the lovers perish because of their tragic love. By using the same vocabulary but altering its usage from metaphoric to literal, Quinault creates dramatic coherence. The scenes of greatest dramatic tension (the declaration of love in Act I, and the condemnation and death of the lovers in Act V) are based on this vocabulary. For the audience to comprehend the realization of the tragic consequences based on the metaphors of love, music had to match closely textual inflection, rhythm, and dramatic expression. As discussed in Chapter VI, unity of tone is achieved by Lully in setting scenes of greatest dramatic interest in musical recitative.

The vocabulary of condemnation and death, for both metaphorical and literal usage, is the same. Atys metaphorically asks Sangaride to pronounce his judgment during their declaration of love (Prononcez mon arrest, I/6). Cybèle calls Atys' death an irrevocable judgment (l'arrest irrevocable, V/6). During the declaration of love, Atys uses the metaphorical meaning of the

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8Cf. Questions d'amour, Chapter III, p. 49 ff.
words condemn, punish, and torture (I/6). The same words are used at the end of the drama in their literal meaning, as Cybèle and Célénéus pronounce a death sentence on the two ill-fated lovers (*Pouvez-vous condamner / L'Amour qui nous anime?; Venez vous livrer au supplice; Souffrirez-vous qu'on nous punisse?, V/2*).

Death has many images that share both metaphorical and literal meanings. When Sangaride believes that Atys has forsaken her, she tells him that he has sacrificed her for the love of Cybèle (*Vous m'avez immolée à l'amour de Cybele, IV/4*). These words foreshadow Act V/4; after Atys mistakenly and unknowingly murders Sangaride, he declares that he sacrificed a great victim (*Que je viens d'immoler une grande Victime!*). Atys confesses to Sangaride that he is dying of love for her and can never be healed (*Je meurs d'amour pour vous, je n'en saurois guerir, I/6*). The union of love and death becomes literal in Act V/6 when Atys tells Cybèle that in death Love guides him to Sangaride (*Je meurs, l'Amour me guide*). Cybèle asks if Love made her heart so tender, in order to strike her with the most fatal of blows (*C'est donc pour me fraper des plus funestes coups, / Que le cruel Amour m'a fait un coeur si tendre?, III/8*). She later tells Atys that the fatal blows that killed Sangaride came from his own hand (*Les coups dont elle meurt sont de ta propre main., V/4*). Atys, who was in danger of perishing (perir) from love in Act I/6, causes his beloved Sangaride to perish in Act V/4 (*Atys, luy-mesme / Fait perir ce qu'il aime*). Love and death were related topics in seventeenth-century France, as can be seen by the fusion of *galanterie* and battle stories in the popular journal the *Mercure galant.*

9Cf. Ch. II, p. 22.
However, the dark side of galanterie, including death by dueling, seems to have been inappropriate for polite conversation. Death on the battlefield was heroic, but literal death provoked by love was not heroic, especially if the indecorous emotion of jealousy was involved. Through allegory, Quinault is able to portray the real tragedy inherent in the rhetoric of Tendre.

Poetic Forms in Atys

Alexandrines

Although Atys can be classified as a tragedy because of its tragic outcome, the libretto does not conform to the rules of classical prosody. French classical tragedy, as was noted earlier, is narrated in alexandrines with rhymed couplets. It is one of many options available to the librettist and Quinault does not hesitate to incorporate this classical form into his librettos when the dramatic situation dictates.

For moments of suspense or heightened dramatic tension, the alexandrines of classical tragedy are subdivided between characters for faster dialogue exchange. An example from Racine, Phèdre's confession to her confidante of her secret love for Hippolyte, is given in Chapter III. Quinault uses the same procedure in Atys, Act IV/1. Sangaride, distressed by Atys' apparent betrayal, cannot speak his name when confronted by her two confidants (Example 12).

\[10\text{Cf. p. 40.}\]

Doris.

Quoy, vous pleurez?

Idas.

D'où vient vostre peine nouvelle?

Doris.

N'osez-vous découvrir vostre amour à Cybele?

Sangaride.

Helas!

Doris, & Idas.

Qui peut encor redoubler vos ennuis?

Sangaride.

Helas! j'aime... helas! j'aime... .

Doris, & Idas.

Achevez.

Sangaride.

Je ne puis.


Sangaride, like Phèdre, is greatly distressed. Her disturbed emotional state of mind is revealed structurally by short, alternating lines of dialogue. Like Phèdre, she admits she loves (j'aime...) but cannot complete her thought. Sangaride's sighing, indicated by three *helas*, further disrupts the flow of dialogue; they are a true indication of the condition of her heart. Words fail her altogether but her hestitant, unfinished exclamations nevertheless indicate her true emotional state. The sigh is an unspoken symbol of the
heart moved by love. As in Racine's example, the dialogue is made up of alexandrines in couplet rhyme [aabb].

Quoy, vous pleurez? D'où vient votre peine nouvelle?
N'osez-vous découvrir votre amour à Cybèle?
Hélas! Qui peut encore redoubler vos ennuis?

**Free Verse**

In *Atys* the use of the alexandrine, however, constitutes only a small segment of a much larger structure comprising rhymed free verse whose lengths and rhyming patterns are irregular and change frequently. Moreover, Quinault's librettos had to be more concise than Racine's plays so that characters are assigned fewer verses resulting in a generally quicker dialogue exchange. In both the irregularity of form, and the brevity of dialogue exchange, Quinault's poetry written for the tragédie en musique resembles the madrigals and stances irrégulières of salon poetry.\(^{12}\)

Hippolyte's declaration of love for Aricie, in Racine's tragedy *Phèdre*, is a thirty-seven line monologue in classical form.\(^{13}\) *Atys'* declaration of love to Sangaride, in Example 13, is in dialogue form in irregular rhymed verse.

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\(^{11}\)Cf. Chapter III, p. 40. The purpose of the comparison between the tragedy of Racine, premiered in 1677, and the tragédie en musique of Quinault, premiered in 1676, is to show structural differences between the two genres. The stylistic similarities and the possible influence that one work may have had on the other is beyond the scope of this study.

\(^{12}\)Patricia Howard, in "The Influence of the Précieuses on Content and Structure in Quinault's and Lully's Tragédies Lyriques," *Acta Musicologica*, 63/1 (1991), 66, acknowledges the similarities between the monologues of Quinault and the stance monologues of Corneille. Corneille's stances were composed of three to ten strophes. Quinault's monologues demand much more brevity. As Howard notes, stances in the theatre were out of fashion by 1660, and according to Jacques Scherer, *op. cit.*, 296, there were no stances in French tragedy between 1665 and 1700. However, stances irrégulières continued to be popular in poetry anthologies of the late seventeenth century.

\(^{13}\)Cf. Chapter III, p. 39 for textual analysis of an excerpt of this monologue.

**Atys**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Vivez tous deux contens, c'est ma plus chère envie;</td>
<td>Vivez tous deux content, c'est ma plus chère envie;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Mais enfin ce grand jour, le plus beau de vos jours,</td>
<td>Mais enfin ce grand jour, le plus beau de vos jours,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sera le dernier de ma vie.</td>
<td>Sera le dernier de ma vie.</td>
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**Sangaride**

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<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>French</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>O dieux!</td>
<td>O dieux!</td>
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**Atys**

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<tr>
<th>Line</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Ce n'est qu'à vous que je veux révéler</td>
<td>Ce n'est qu'à vous que je veux révéler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Le secret desespoir où mon malheur me livre;</td>
<td>Le secret desespoir où mon malheur me livre;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Je n'ay que trop sceu feindre, il est temps de parler;</td>
<td>Je n'ay que trop sceu feindre, il est temps de parler;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Qui n'a plus qu'un moment à vivre,</td>
<td>Qui n'a plus qu'un moment à vivre,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>N'a plus rien à dissimuler.</td>
<td>N'a plus rien à dissimuler.</td>
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**Sangaride**

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<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Je fremis, ma crainte est extrême;</td>
<td>Je fremis, ma crainte est extrême;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Atys, par quel malheur faut-il vous voir périr?</td>
<td>Atys, par quel malheur faut-il vous voir périr?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Atys**

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<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>French</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Vous me condamnerez vous même,</td>
<td>Vous me condamnerez vous même,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Et vous me laisserez mourir.</td>
<td>Et vous me laisserez mourir.</td>
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**Sangaride**

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<tr>
<th>Line</th>
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<th>English</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>J'armeray, s'il le faut, tout le pouvoir suprême. . . .</td>
<td>J'armeray, s'il le faut, tout le pouvoir suprême. . . .</td>
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**Atys**

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<th>Line</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Non, rien ne me peut secourir,</td>
<td>Non, rien ne me peut secourir,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Je meurs d'amour pour vous, je n'en saurai guérir;</td>
<td>Je meurs d'amour pour vous, je n'en saurai guérir;</td>
</tr>
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**Sangaride**

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<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Quoy? vous?</td>
<td>Quoy? vous?</td>
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**Atys**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Il est trop vray.</td>
<td>Il est trop vray.</td>
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**Sangaride**

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<tr>
<th>Line</th>
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<th>English</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vous m'aimez?</td>
<td>Vous m'aimez?</td>
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**Atys**

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<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>French</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Je vous aime.</td>
<td>Je vous aime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Vous me condamnerez vous même,</td>
<td>Vous me condamnerez vous même,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Et vous me laisserez mourir.</td>
<td>Et vous me laisserez mourir.</td>
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Atys begins by congratulating Sangaride on her marriage. It is this impending event that forces him to admit his love. Atys' declaration of love occurs only seventeen lines after he first introduces the subject to Sangaride. As Quinault's operatic hero, he cannot afford to waste words, and as a spokesman for the gallant aesthetic, he is likewise bound to conciseness.

The rhyme scheme of this excerpt is indicated to the right of the verse endings. The first quatrain is a unit in embraced verse [abba]. The next pattern begins with Sangaride's startled exclamation, *O Dieux!*, and includes

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14 Atys' declaration of love given in this example is soon followed by Sangaride's declaration of love to Atys (vous estes aimé). Following the rules of proper decorum, a woman in seventeenth-century France was discouraged from ever making a direct declaration of love. If she did declare her love, it could only be in the passive voice and after a declaration by her lover, not before. As a reflection of society, it is interesting to note that this scene is unique in Quinault's librettos: it is the only instance of a mutual and direct declaration of love by the two protagonists. In *Cadmus et Hermione* (IV/4), and *Isis* (II/2) the hero makes a declaration of love without a direct response from the heroine. In *Isis* (I/3), there is also a mutual declaration but it is surrounded by conflict, suspicion, and jealousy, and is not mutually received or believed.
five verses spoken by Atys [cdccdc], in which he removes the mask of
dissimulation. The final pattern [efefiffeef], the declaration of love, is in an
irregular and overlapped rhyming pattern. There is not a distinct division
between these three sections of changing rhyme, but instead a dramatic
progression. In their conciseness, irregular form, subject matter and
language usage, the three individual units resemble poetry written in the
literary salons, especially the madrigal.\(^{15}\) However, unlike salon poetry, the
sections of verse in Atys are not independent concepts, a characteristic of both
the madrigal and the stance, but constitute part of a much larger literary
framework, the libretto as a whole.

**Questions d'amour and Rhetorical Questions**

A popular game in the literary salons, discussed in Chapter III, was
the question d'amour.\(^{16}\) These are rhetorical questions on love, proposed by
salon members. The responses are in madrigal form and are characterized by
ambiguity; as there could be no definitive answers in the Empire of Love.
The questions were a pretense for interminable discussions on matters of the
heart.

Quinault adapts the fashionable game of posing unanswerable
questions on love for use in his librettos. Such rhetorical questions are posed
in scenes of dialogue as well as monologue. In the dialogue scene, Act I/3 of
Atys, Example 14, Sangaride questions Atys' indifference by asking him three
consecutive questions d'amour.

\(^{15}\)Cf. Chapter III, p. 46 ff.

\(^{16}\)Cf. Chapter III, p. 49 ff.

Quand le peril est agréable,
Le moyen de s'en allarmer?
Est-ce un grand mal de trop aimer
Ce que l'on trouve aimable?
Peut-on estre insensible aux plus charmans appas?

[When the danger is pleasant, / Why take fright? / Is it a great wrong to love too much / That which one finds worthy of love? / Can one be insensitive to the most delightful of charms?]

In true gallant fashion, Atys feigns a response to Sangaride (Example 15). He deeply loves her, but in response, he replies that his heart is too sensitive to love.


Non vous ne me connoissez pas.
Je me defens d'aimer autant qu'il m'est possible;
Si j'aimois, un jour, par malheur,
Je connoy bien mon coeur
Il seroit trop sensible.

[No, you do not know me. / I forbid myself from loving as much as possible; / If I loved, one day, by misfortune, / I know only too well my heart / It would be too sensitive]

Quinault's use of rhetorical questions on love in monologue scenes is illustrated in the monologue of Atys, in Act III/1 (Example 16).


Que servent les faveurs que nous fait la Fortune
Quand l'Amour nous rend malheureux?

[What use are the favors that Fortune may grant us / When we are rendered unhappy by Love?]
Generally these questions provide the foundation of the scene, as they function as a refrain. This particular monologue is based on a question which brings into opposition the two entities of Fortune and Love.

Alone, Atys struggles with his emotions, much like a character in a monologue of classical tragedy. In opera however, the rhetorical question oftentimes is not addressed by the character directly to himself, but to an allegorical figure embodying the character's emotions. These questions reflect the contemporary ideology that emotions were discrete entities, which could be personified. The character confronts his silent emotion, addressing it repeatedly, but the question, like the questions d'amour, remains unanswered. In Example 17, Cybèle's monologue of Act III/8, she implores Hope to speak three times, but receives no response.

Example 17. Philippe Quinault, Atys, III/8, lines 1-2, 8-9, 15-16, rhetorical question refrain.

Espoir si cher, & si doux,
Ah! pourquoi me trompez-vous?

[Hope so dear, and so sweet, / Ah! why do you deceive me?]

Such rhetorical questions are always impersonal, being posed as a question in general, or addressing a specific emotion.

Maxims

Another salon pastime, introduced by La Rochefoucauld, was the composition of maxims. They could be in the form of a sentence, or in a short, irregular rhymed form. Quinault's librettos feature both kinds of maxims, and they form such a prominent part of the dramatic structure that they were
easily singled out for criticism by detractors of opera. Bossuet, in *Maximes et reflexions sur la comédie* (1694), refers to opera as "corruption reduced to maxims". As gallant literature, maxims are necessarily concise in form and content. An analogous structure in classical tragedy does not exist, as conciseness and *galanterie* are antithetical to the principles of ancient drama.

Whereas La Rochefoucauld's maxims touch on a variety of topics, Quinault's maxims are exclusively about love, frequently espousing the God Amour's rules of love. Maxims are always impersonal, and occur most frequently in scenes containing dialogue, or scenes of divertissement. In dialogue scenes, they are short and are often interjected as advice; in divertissements, they are combined in a long series which forms the basis of a celebratory scene on love. Each of Quinault's librettos contains at least one divertissement of this type, portraying a *feste galante*, or a gallant festival or celebration. Maxims in the context of a *feste galante* are sung as tuneful airs by individuals or by the chorus, and are accompanied by dance and instrumental music.

Two line maxims, from Act III/2 of *Atys* (Example 18), illustrate Quinault's usage of line maxims; they are interjected into dialogue as Atys contemplates the virtues of Love and Duty. Act IV/5 illustrates the second usage of maxims in *Atys*; it is the only *feste galante* in this opera. However, it also provides a satirical commentary on marriage in seventeenth-century France. The scene begins with Sangaride's father, the God of the Rivers, announcing his choice of bridegroom (King Célenus); he admits his choice is

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Dans l'Empire amoureux
Le Devoir n'a point de puissance;
L'Amour dispense
Les Rivaux d'estre generieux;
Il faut souvent pour devenir heureux
Qu'il en coûte un peu d'innocence.

[In the Empire of love / Duty has no power; / Love exempts Rivals from being
magnanimous; / To become happy it is often necessary / to sacrifice a little innocence.]

En vain, un coeur, incertain de son choix,
Met en balance mille fois
L'Amour & la Reconnoissance,
L'Amour toujours emporte la balance.

[In vain, a heart, uncertain of its choice, / Balances a thousand times / Love and
Gratitude, / Love always tips the scales.]

sure to please the public. The reluctant bride, Sangaride, has no right to
coment on her father's selection and is silent during the nuptial festivities.
A series of maxims on love follows her father's announcement, each maxim
focusing on one aspect of love: celebration of the moment, perseverance, the
division of love and marriage, constancy, and love's torment. In the following
scene, Atys, as Cybèle's *grand sacrificateur*, (high priest that performs
sacrificial ceremonies) is to give Sangaride to Célenus in marriage. The
satirical message of a wedding performed by a sacrificial priest, and
celebrated by maxims which value love over marriage reflects contemporary
thought concerning the institution of marriage, especially that espoused by
the women in the salons.19. Example 19 is one of the strophe maxims from
Act IV/5: the division of love and marriage.

19Patricia Howard in, "The Influence of the Précieuses on Content and Structure in
Quinault's and Lully's Tragédies Lyriques," *Acta Musicologica*, 63/1 (1991), 62, is critical of
Quinault's portrayal of female characters, stating that he "portrayed them unhappy as the
result of their innate nature." In her article "The Positioning of Woman in Quinault's World
Example 19. Philippe Quinault, Atys, IV/5, lines 37-44, strophe maxim.

L'Hymen seul ne sçauoit plaire,
Il a beau flatter nos voeux;
L'Amour seul a droit de faire
Les plus doux de tous les noeuds.
Il est fier, il est rebelle,
Mais il charme tel qu'il est;
L'Hymen vient quand on l'appelle,
L'Amour vient quand il luy plaist.

[Hymen alone cannot please, / He in vain has flattered our desires; / Only Amour has the right to tie / The sweetest of all knots. / He is proud, he is rebellious, / But he charms as he is, / Hymen comes when we call him, / Amour comes when it pleases him.]

This maxim is one in a series of strophes, each strophe containing an independent complete thought set off in the libretto by a small ornamental symbol. Every strophe has an individual form, and no two contain the same number of lines. The above example has eight lines of verse, is completely set in vers impairs, or uneven verse length of seven syllables. The sequence of irregular independent strophes makes up a stances irregulieres, typical of those written in the Parisian salons.

Picture," Jean-Baptiste Lully. Actes du Colloque Saint Germain-en-Laye, ed. by J. de la Gorce and H. Schneider (Heidelberg: Laaber, 1990), 195, she is again critical of Quinault, stating that he created women characters with negated power, and as pawns and hedonists. In her concluding statements in the first article, p. 71, Howard states, "Curiously enough, his contemporaries seem to have overlooked the novelty of his heroines." The lack of commentary on their "novelty" may in fact be because they were not novel, and that Quinault did not invent them. As his contemporary Somaize noted, Quinault was not known for inventing, but copying (cf. p. 65). Sangaride as pawn and negated power, in the scene under discussion cannot be denied. These traits were not Quinault's invention, they were a fact of society (cf. Chapter II, Behind the Mask of Galanterie: The Role of Arranged Marriages, p. 30 ff.). The satire underscoring this scene is a powerful commentary by Quinault; he is not insensitive to woman's plight in a world controlled by men, but as an imitator of social mores, he truthfully portrays his world.

Quinault, op. cit., 52-54.
The Plot of Atys

Atys begins with an allegorical Prologue that immediately orients the audience to the court of Louis XIV. Atys was premiered on 10 January 1676, during the king's annual winter retreat at court from his military exploits. With the king in residence, the court bustled with social events such as balls, theatre, and opera. Especially at carnival time, these elaborate games, along with the pastime of love, occupied the society world of Paris. In the Prologue, Springtime wants to arrive early to please the king. A zephyr comments that Springtime comes to take away Games and Love, and that it is Winter who brings them together.21

The story of Atys concerns the goddess Cybèle who descends from the heavens because of her love for a mortal, Atys. She cannot marry him, but arranges a ritualistic union with him by honoring him as her high priest, the grand sacrificateur. Another union, the marriage of the King Célénus with the nymph Sangaride is to take place on the same day. Out of respect for authority, Sangaride and Atys feign compliance with the wishes of the higher powers, but in reality do not share the goddess or king's feelings of love. Atys and Sangaride have been concealing their feelings for one another out of respect for the proper rules of decorum, or the bienseances. But when Atys realises that Sangaride is forever lost to him, as she will soon marry the king, he admits his love for her, and she immediately responds in kind. They rejoice in private, but are doomed to silence in public. Cybèle becomes

21Quinault, op. cit., 3, "Il vient pour escarter les Jeux & les Amours, / Et c'est l'Hyver qui les rassemble."
suspicious of their love and plots to find out the truth; on hearing them swear an oath of eternal love, the goddess becomes so jealous and outraged that she calls forth a fury to bewitch Atys. In his delirium, Atys believes Cybèle to be his beloved Sangaride, and Sangaride to be a terrible monster, and mistakenly, he slays Sangaride. Cybèle removes the enchantment, and when Atys realizes the extent of his crime, he commits suicide. Cybèle laments his fate, and to immortalize her love for him, she transforms his dying body into a pine tree. Figure 1 summarizes the relationships of the main characters.

Figure 1: Philippe Quinault, Atys, the cast of characters.

| Cybèle, Goddess and Queen of the Heavens (her confidante, Mélisse) | Célénus, the King | Sangar, the God of the River & Sangaride's father |
| Atys, a mortal who loves and is loved by Sangaride, a nymph (their mutual confidants, Idas and Doris) |

To make the plot more realistic for a seventeenth-century audience, Quinault invented the character of the King, Célénus, and a father figure for Sangaride, Sangar the God of the River (*Dieu du fleuve*). Sangaride's betrothal is arranged by these two characters, king and father, the two undisputed parental-power figures in contemporary France. Atys likewise must submit to the demands of a higher power, the Goddess Cybèle; as Queen of the Heavens, the mortal Atys has no right to reject her claims of love.
The Role of Decorum

Another important similarity between polite society and Quinault’s librettos that is not a function of literary usage or salon pastimes is the role of proper decorum, or the *bienséances*. As a faithful representation of the gallant mask of society, *Atys* is a tragedy based on two essential elements of decorum: feigning and dissimulation. Sangaride and Atys, by secretly admitting their love for one another, violate the *bienséances* and privately remove their gallant masks of dissimulation. With their profession of love, the mystery, façade, and ambiguity so essential to the game of love is destroyed. Privately, their love is no longer a game, but a reality. However, in public they must continue to disguise their true feelings, feign compliance, and follow the rules of decorum, especially in the presence of the higher powers. Their love is a supreme offense against father, monarch, and deity.

Throughout the libretto, Quinault employs the words *feindre* (to feign), *dissimuler* (to dissimulate), and *déguiser* (to disguise) to draw attention to scenes of private confidences. Example 20 lists several notable examples of the gallant vocabulary of concealment.


*Atys, ne feignez plus, je sçais vostre secret.*

[IV 2, Idas to Atys; Atys, feign no more, I know your secret.]

*Peut-on ici parler sans feindre?*

[III/ 2, Idas to Atys; Can we speak here without feigning?]

*Je prétens m'esclaircir leur feinte sera vaine.*

[III/ 7, Cybèle to her confidante, Méliasse; I intend to find out, their feigning will be in vain.]
Qui n'a plus qu'un moment à vivre,
N'a plus rien à dissimuler.

[1/6, Atys to Sangaride; One who has no more than a moment to live,
/ Has nothing left to dissimulate.]

Rien n'est si trompeur que l'estime:
C'est un nom supposé
Qu'on donne quelquefois à l'amour désigné.

[III/7, Cybèle to Mélisse, Nothing is so deceptive as esteem: / It is an
assumed name / One sometimes gives to love in disguise.]

Ne me déguise point ce que tu peux connaître.

[II/1, Céليnus to Atys; Do not in the least disguise from me what you
might know.]

Among other words used in the libretto to indicate concealment are cachet (to
hide), secret (secret), and en apparence (in appearance).

The fate of Atys and Sangaride unfolds on two levels that portray the
two sides of galanterie: the proper outer façade of decorum versus the
incongruent inner reality of true sentiment. Dialogue scenes in Atys thus
vacillate between the external world of public appearances and the private
world of the internal workings of the heart. Private scenes provide glimpses
into a real emotional world, while public scenes involving the lovers are
portrayals of seventeenth-century dissimulation, feigning, and disguise. As
the dialogue scenes unfold, the mutual love of Atys and Sangaride is
progressively unmasked. Figure 2 catagorizes the function of the scenes in
Atys which are based on the dichotomy between private and real emotion and
public feigning and dissimulation.

As Figure 2 illustrates, sixteen scenes in Atys from the beginning of the
drama to Act V/1, are concerned with the duality of public feigning and
private disclosure. The eleven remaining scenes from these acts constitute
five scenes of divertissement, three monologue scenes, and three connecting
scenes. In the first scene of Act V, the gallant game of dissimulation is
Figure 2. Philippe Quinault, *Atys*, the dramatic function of dialogue scenes.

**Private and real**

I/2: Atys reveals to his confidant, Idas, that he is in love.

I/4: Sangaride reveals to her confidante, Doris, that she loves Atys.

I/6: Sangaride and Atys declare their love to one another.

**Public and feigned**

I/3: Sangaride and Atys conceal their love for one another.

II/1: Atys feigns ignorance when questioned by Célénum on Sangaride’s true feelings.

II/3: Cybèle reveals to her confidante, Méllise her love for Atys.

III/2: Atys, in the presence of Idas and Doris decides to act on his love for Sangaride, betraying his friend Célénum.

III/5: Cybèle reveals her love to Atys, he dissimulates by returning her love with gratitude.

III/6: Atys silences Sangaride, as they both must feign in front of Cybèle who openly declares her love for Atys.

III/7: Cybèle reveals her distress concerning Atys’ indifference, to Méllise.

IV/1: Sangaride reveals her distress to Idas and Doris.

IV/2-3: Célénum questions Sangaride concerning her true feelings, she dissimulates her love for Atys and feigns obedience.

IV/4: Sangaride and Atys swear eternal love. Cybèle overhears.

IV/6: Atys publicly announces that Sangaride will not marry Célénum as she is reserved for service to Cybèle, dissimulating the real reason for not allowing the marriage.

V/1: Cybèle reveals the lovers’ betrayal to Célénum.
terminated; when the higher powers become aware of Sangaride and Atys' love, feigning and dissimulation are no longer possible and the unmasking is complete. The remainder of the drama is public confrontation and condemnation, followed by the death of Sangaride and the suicide of Atys.

In *Atys*, there is no emotional complexity of character; each character has the same emotional nature from the beginning to the end of the opera. However, as the truth is gradually revealed, first privately then publicly, the characters' emotions increase in intensity. Atys and Sangaride throughout the opera become more and more in love, eventually sacrificing their lives because of their love for one another. When Célénus and Cybèle learn that they have been deceived, their jealous personalities, apparent from the beginning of the drama, are intensified to the point of furious rage. The characters do not change emotions during the course of the drama; they retain the same feelings which become exposed and greatly intensified as the gradual revelation of the intrigue takes place.

From the beginning of the drama, Atys is deeply in love with Sangaride; however, he feigns indifference. This was a forceful commentary, as *indifference* in seventeenth-century France was considered to be more dangerous than hate. In his first dialogue scene (Example 21), Atys states

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22This is in the same romanesque literary tradition as D'Urfé's *l'Astrée*, and its Italian counterpart, Sannazar's *l'Arcadia* (cf. Chapter II, p. 28). In society, salon members were also characterized by one quality or trait as evidenced in literary portraits which were extremely one-dimensional.

23Antoine Puretière, "indifference," *Dictionaire universel*, tome 2, "L'indifférence est en amour plus dangereuse que la haine."

Mon coeur veut fuir toujours les soins & les misteres;  
J'aime l'heureuse paix des coeurs indifferentes

[My heart always wants to flee cares and mysteries;  
I love the joyful peace of indifferent hearts]

that he wishes to avoid the mysteries connected with the game of love,  
preferring the peace of indifference. He has the reputation of an indifferent,  
and is frequently referred to as l'indifferent Atys by the other characters,  
including Sangaride (I/6). In speaking to Cybèle, Célénus admits that Atys  
should be named the goddess' high priest, because his heart has not been  
claimed by love, but remains free (II/2). The audience, however, knows from  
the onset that Atys is feigning, as Idas immediately reveals to Atys that he  
knows of his secret despair and sensitive heart, by quoting what Atys has  
said in private (Example 22).

Example 22. Philippe Quinault, Atys, I/2, lines 34-37, character of Atys.

"Mon cœur de tous les coeurs est le plus amoureux  
"Et tout près d'expirer je suis réduit à feindre;  
"Que c'est un tourment rigoureux  
"De mourir d'amour sans se plaindre!

[My heart of all hearts is the most in love / And ready to expire I am reduced to  
feigning; / What a harsh torment / To die of love without lamenting one's fate!]

Sangaride is the object of an arranged marriage, and as a daughter in  
seventeenth-century France, she has no option but to graciously obey her  
father's wishes. When forced to feign (I/3), she refers to her impending  
marriage to a king as her victory (je triomphe et j'aime ma victoire). When

\footnote{Cf p. 52, question d'amour, and the popular debate of whether one should or  
should not lament one's fate to the beloved when dying from love.}
confronted by her fiancé concerning her true feelings (Example 23), she dissimulates by speaking of her duty to obey.


Seigneur, j'obeiray, je despens de mon Pere,  
Et mon Pere aujourd'hui veut que je sois à vous.

[Sir, I will obey, I depend on my Father, / And my Father today wants me to be yours.]

As in the case of Atys, the audience learns very early that Sangaride is feigning. In Example 24, Sangaride admits to her confidant, Doris, her love for Atys.


J'aime, Atys, en secret, mon crime, est sans témoins.  
Pour vaincre mon amour, je mets tout en usage,  
J'appelle ma raison, j'anime mon courage;  
Mais à quoy servent tous mes soins?  
Mon coeur en souffre davantage,  
Et n'en aime pas moins.

[I love, Atys, in secret, my crime, is without witness. / To vanquish my love, I employ all means, / I call forth my reason, I animate my courage, / But to what purpose are all my cares? / My heart only suffers more / And does not love less.]

After briefly disguising their true feelings, the two lovers declare their love for each other early in the opera (I/6). However, they must continue to appear indifferent and conceal their love from goddess, king, and father, the important powers that control their destiny.

Cybèle and Célénus, as deity and monarch, have the power to impose their love on anyone they chose. Because their power is absolute, neither one is ever certain that the one they have chosen loves them in return and as a
result, they both suffer from extreme jealousy. Throughout the opera, they continually seek a confirmation that their love is returned, and are ever tormented by suspicions that it is not. As with Atys and Sangaride, their true characters are revealed to the audience during their first appearances on stage. As Cybèle enters (Example 25), she makes public demands.


> Je reçois vos respects; j'aime à voir les honneurs
> Dont vous me présentez un éclatant hommage,
> Mais l'hommage des Coeurs
> Est ce que j'aime davantage.
> Vous devez vous animer
> D'une ardeur nouvelle,
> S'il faut honorer Cybèle,
> Il faut encore plus l'aimer.

[I receive your respect; I like to see the honors / By which you present to me a brilliant homage, / But the homage of Hearts / Is what I prefer. / You must come to life / With a new ardor / To honor Cybèle, / It is necessary to yet love her more.]

Cybèle's descent to earth is not a triumphant entry. Rather, her entrance reveals her plight; she is a powerful goddess who does not feel loved. She uses her power to come to earth to demand and claim her subjects' adoration.

Shortly after his first entrance in Act II/1, Célénus questions Atys about Sangaride's true sentiments. As a distant relative and long-time acquaintance of his fiancée, the king hopes that Atys can calm his jealous fears. On admitting his suspicions, he reveals his true character.


> Le seul nom de rival allume mon courroux.
> J'ay bien peur que le Ciel n'ait pu voir sans envie
> Le bonheur de ma vie,
> Et si j' estois aimé mon sort seroit trop doux.
[The sole name of rival inflames my anger. / I greatly fear that the Heavens have not been able to see without envy / The happiness of my life, / And if I were loved my fate would be too sweet.]

Atys feigns ignorance and the king remains suspicious, not realizing that he is speaking to the man who has just made a declaration of love to his bride-to-be.

The game of love in this tragédie en musique centers around the two lovers who are forced to take off the mask of dissimulation: initially to confidants, and then to one another. By the end of Act I, they are united in purpose and disguise their mutual love from the higher powers. Throughout the opera, scenes of secret truths are juxtaposed against scenes of disguise and dissimulation however, Célénus and Cybèle, cunning and suspicious, eventually unmask the lovers. Act V culminates in the public revelation of truth, in which feigning finally ceases. The condemnation and death of Sangaride and Atys is blunt, forceful, and cruel in both the language of the mutual accusations and the resulting violence. It is the power that lies behind the gallant mask of love.

Conclusion

The libretto of the tragédie en musique, Atys, provides a reflection of life in France in the second half of the seventeenth century. The gallant aesthetic, popular in Paris and in the provinces, is apparent in every aspect of Quinault's libretto. An examination of Quinault's fourth tragédie en musique shows that the language spoken by the actors imitates the language of Mlle de Scudéry and her Carte de Tendre: the same language used in salon interactions, at court, and in anthologies of contemporary gallant poetry. As
with the madrigals, enigmas, and irregular stanzas of salon poetry, the
libretto is largely composed of free verse with varying verse lengths, and a
mixture of rhyme schemes. Popular salon pastimes are also evidenced in the
libretto, such as rhetorical questions, questions d'amour, and maxims. The
behavior of the aristocracy is mirrored on stage with the characters abiding
by the rules of proper decorum, or the bienseances. The important social skill,
common in polite society, of feigning and dissimulation serves as a structural
dramatic device placing scenes of public dissimulation in contrast with scenes
of private truths. The plot of Atys is likewise adapted by Quinault to reflect
contemporary life; the addition of a king and a father figure who plan an
undesirable arranged marriage for the heroine is in every respect a condition
of seventeenth-century life. Finally, the prologue of the opera, paying
homage to Louis XIV, attests to the power, splendor and magnanimity of his
reign. All of these factors, whether literary, social, or political, contribute to
the libretto of Atys, making it a true representation of modern life in late
seventeenth-century France.
CHAPTER VI

ATYS: THE MUSIC

The purpose of the music in a tragédie en musique is to highlight and express the text, or the dramatic situation, in ways that words cannot. Words and ideas appeal directly to the intellect; and as Chapters I and II illustrate, love, the main subject of these dramas, was in this culture predominantly an intellectual experience. Music appeals directly to the senses and emotions, and creates a new dimension for expression of the subject matter when joined to poetry. Through music the text by-passes the intellect and directly touches the heart. Jean-Laurent Lecerf de la Viéville, a proponent of French opera in the early eighteenth century, describes this relationship of poetry and music in relation to the visual element of opera in the *Comparaison de la musique italienne et de la musique française*.

What is the beauty of poetry? To do the same with words that the painter does with colors. *Ut pictura Poesis erit.* And you know that Aristotle in his *Poetics* only speaks of imitation, that is, painting. All the genres of poetry are only, according to him, different imitations, different paintings. . . . Now, what is the beauty of music of the opera? It is to render the poetry of the opera a painting that truly speaks.1

How music renders the gallant poetry of *Atys* "a painting that truly speaks" is the subject of this chapter. The following areas will be considered: large-

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scale structural relationships involving poetry and music, musico-dramatic relationships between scenes and acts, and on the most detailed level, local music-text relationships.

Structural Relationships of Poetry and Music

Large-scale Forms

The tragédie en musique is made up of five acts; each act contains at least one divertissement, often placed at the end of the act, and a variable number of scenes. The divertissements contain various elements of spectacle, such as dance, orchestral interludes, chorus, and elaborate scenic effects. In Atys, these scenes contain dramatically justified events central to the plot of the opera, such as a wedding celebration, or an ordination. The drama is sectionalized to accommodate this form. Figure 3 shows the division of the action into acts and the dramatic integration of the divertissements in Atys.

Figure 3. Philippe Quinault, Atys, dramatic structural divisions.

Prologue: Hommage to Louis XIV

Act I: Introduction of Atys and Sangaride, their declaration of love. 
Divertissement: the arrival of the goddess Cybèle.

Act II: Introduction of Célénus and Cybèle and their love for Sangaride and Atys.
Divertissement: the ordination of Atys as Cybèle's high priest.

Act III: Cybèle declares her love to Atys and realizes that he does not share her love. 
Divertissement: Sommeil scene in which Cybèle warns Atys that he must not betray her love.

Act IV: Atys and Sangaride swear eternal love, and Atys rescues her from a marriage with Célénus.
Divertissement: the wedding celebration.

Act V: Atys and Sangaride are condemned and die for betraying Célénus and Cybèle. 
Divertissement: the metamorphosis and immortalization of Atys into a pine tree.
Independent musical numbers are used by Lully to articulate the overall structure of the drama, creating a highly sectionalized form. Musical elements unaccompanied by text include: the ouverture, ritournelles, préludes, instrumental airs, entrées, and dances within the divertissements. A two-part French ouverture, in full five-part orchestral texture, is used to frame the prologue, while brief introductions termed ritournelles and préludes initiate acts or scenes and are in a trio texture. Figure 4 shows the division of Atys based on the presence of these purely musical elements that frame acts and scenes.

Figure 4. Jean-Baptiste Lully, Atys, the framing of acts and scenes based on independent musical elements.

Ouverture, prologue, ouverture

Act I: Ritournelle-scene 1, scenes 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, divertissement-scenes 7-8.

Act II: Ritournelle-scene 1, prélude-scene 2, scene 3, divertissement-scene 4, entrée entr'acte.

Act III: Ritournelle-scene 1, scene 2, ritournelle-scene 3, divertissement-scene 4, scenes 5, 6, 7, ritournelle-scene 8.

Act IV: Scene 1, prélude-scene 2, scene 3, ritournelle-scene 4, divertissement-scenes 5-6, gavotte entr'acte.

Act V: Ritournelle-scene 1, scene 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, divertissement-scene 7.

Each divertissement in Atys has its own unique form based on the arrangement of the musical structures used. Préludes like ritournelles can introduce a divertissement, but préludes can also recur within a scene (III/ 4). Instrumental airs and entrées prepare for the entrance of the chorus in crowd scenes, or accompany a pantomime of the action (V/7). Conventional dances, such as the gavotte and menuet, are used for general celebrations (Prologue, Act IV/ 5). Two reprises from the divertissements, one entrée (Act II) and one
gavotte (Act IV), function as musical entr’actes. Besides independent instrumental forms, divertissements also include various vocal forms: recitative, solo or duo airs, and chorus.

The divertissements are highly sectionalized with the above-named instrumental and vocal elements serving as building blocks to create individual forms. The different sections are distinguished from one another by function, for example, dance, chorus, or air, and moreover by differing textures for orchestra and voice. Each divertissement is a unique combination of the various elements, and not all divertissements contain all elements; the form varies depending on the dramatic function of the individual divertissement. The wedding celebration in Atys, for example, includes conventional dances and choral songs, whereas the funeral divertissement favors entrées for pantomine and choral exclamations to comment on the tragic fate of Atys. The wedding celebration is complex and highly sectionalized, alternating dances with choral airs. In comparison, two sections of rapid solo and choral alternation frame three entrées in the funeral scene. Figure 5 compares the overall forms of these two divertissements.

The prologue is likewise made up of a prélude, a ritournelle, instrumental airs, conventional dances, recitative, vocal solo and duo airs, and chorus. In this respect it is a formal divertissement that serves to precede the opera. Besides honoring the king, it introduces the subject of the drama\(^2\) and anticipates the musical structures used within the opera.

\(^2\)In the Prologue, Melpomène announces, "The powerful Cybèle / To honor Atys whom she has deprived of life, / Wants me to revive / In an illustrious Court / The memory of her love." ("La puissante Cybèle / Pour honorer Atys qu’elle a privé du jour, / Veut que je renouvelle / Dans une illustre Cour / Le souvenir de son amour.")
Because of its formal design and introductory function, the prologue provides both structural and dramatic coherence with the opera that follows.

Figure 5. Jean-Baptiste Lully, *Atys*, Acts IV/5 and V/7 divertissement structure.

Act IV/5: the wedding celebration

Prélude in 5-part orchestral texture

Simple recitative and 4-part choral affirmations

Solo air with trio-texture orchestral accompaniment
  Repetition of air with 4-part chorus and basse continue

Instrumental air in trio texture with recorders
  Repetition of air by 3-part chorus and basse continue

Instrumental air in trio texture with recorders
  Repetition of air by 3-part chorus and basse continue

Menuet in 5-part orchestral texture
  Repetition of menuet as duo air and basse continue

Gavotte in 5-part orchestral texture
  Repetition of gavotte as 4-part choral air with 5-part orchestral texture, and basse continue.

Act V/7: the funeral divertissement

Ritournelle in trio texture

Simple recitative and choral exclamation

Short solo airs accompanied by basse continue; alternating with 4-part choral exclamations, by two different choruses, and accompanied by basse continue or by 5-part orchestral texture

Entrée of the Nymphes, 2-part texture and basse continue

Entrée of the Corybantes, 5-part orchestral texture

SecondEntrée of the Corybantes, 5-part orchestral texture

Short solo exclamations alternating with choral exclamations accompanied by basse continue or by 5-part orchestral texture.
The Role of the Orchestra

The use of the orchestra in Atys is limited to the ouverture, the préludes and ritournelles that introduce scenes, and the divertissements. The texture is either a full five-part texture, termed the grand choeur, or a three-part texture, the petit choeur. The grand choeur is made up strings, doubled at times by oboes and bassoons, and the basse continue. The petit choeur is comprised of a thinner trio texture for strings or winds (oboes or recorders) and the basse continue. The texture of the ritournelles and the préludes serve to introduce characters by their rank. For example, the three higher powers, Cybèle, Célénus, and Sangar (one goddess and two kings), are introduced by a full five-part texture when their rank in the drama is being emphasized. When struggling with human emotions, Cybèle and Célénus, as well as Atys, are introduced with the thinner three-part texture.

In the musical numbers of Atys, Lully's music provides a melodic, sensuous, and powerful means to touch the listener. In scenes of recitative dialogue and monologue, Quinault's verse generates the drama. In these scenes the singers are accompanied solely by basse continue. As a result, there is a clear delineation between the presentation of the dramatic poetry of the opera and the orchestral music which frames scenes and provides the foundation of the divertissements. This separation of literary and musical interests serves to clearly isolate the psychological storyline (the private, inner world of the characters) from moments of public celebration or supernatural events that occur in the divertissements. The use of orchestral music and song in the divertissements is justified as a realistic part of such a
celebration or event. To emphasize this point, three out of five divertissements in *Atys* use musicians playing on stage (II/4, III/4, IV/5).

It is important to note that the delineation of recitative and air in the body of the drama does not depend on orchestral accompaniment, as it does in contemporary Italian opera. In *Atys*, the basse continue alone provides the musical support for the entire unfolding of the drama. The only exception to this clear-cut demarcation in the function of accompanimental textures occurs in a short air near the beginning of Act I/2 sung by Atys' confidant, Idas. This air, accompanied by a trio texture of strings and basse continue, serves to introduce the character of Atys and enhances the pastoral setting described in the narrative of this scene. Except for this air, the distinction between recitative and air depends entirely upon textual (not textural) considerations.³ In maintaining this two-fold method of accompaniment, text and music are never in direct competition with one another.

**The Role of the Chorus**

The choruses in *Atys* are defined by Quinault according to their dramatic link with the storyline. Like the orchestra, they appear in the prologue and divertissements. Their presence, like that of the orchestra, is justified in scenes of public celebration or mourning, and in connection with supernatural events. Their primary purpose is to reiterate lines spoken by major characters through choral repetition, or to convey a general message relevant to the divertissement. One exception to the usual function of the chorus occurs in Act V/3-4; this is the only use of the chorus outside of a scene

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of divertissement. In these two scenes, the enchantment of Atys and the murder of Sangaride, the chorus pleads for Atys to stop his assault on Sangaride (Arreste, arreste malheureux.), and laments his fate (Atys, Atys luy-mesme, Fait perir ce qu'il aime¹). The pleading and lamenting function of the chorus in these two scenes of tense dramatic action is derived from the usage of the chorus in ancient classical tragedy. Figure 6 details the name and function of each chorus in Atys.

Figure 6. Philippe Quinault, Atys, name and function of the choruses.

Prologue: Choeur des Heures—sings with and reinforces the message of Le Temps.

Act I: Choeur de Phrygiens et de Phrygiennes—sings with and reinforces the message of the main characters, Atys, Sangaride, and Cybèle.

Act II: Choeur des Peuples et des Zephirs—reinforces the message of Cybèle, and pays hommage to Atys as high priest.

Act III: Choeur des Songes Funestes—reinforces the message of the Songe Funeste as a warning to Atys to not betray Cybèle.

Act IV: Choeur de Dieux de Fleuves, Choeur de Divinités de Fontaines et de Ruisseaux—reinforce the message of Sangaride's father, the God of the Rivers, and sing maxims on love.


The musical participation of the chorus in Atys varies from single phrase exclamations to complete airs in binary form. Choral entries are homophonic and are either accompanied by basse continue alone, or by full orchestral texture. The chorus, like the orchestra, is subdivided into two types depending on texture; the grand choeur is a four part chorus consisting

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¹"Atys, Atys himself has caused his loved one to perish."
of dessus, haute-contre, taille, and basse whereas the petit chœur is a three-part texture made up of the upper voices. The four-part choral texture predominates in Atys, the thinner texture occurring only in two choral airs in the feste galante divertissement of Act IV/5.

Musico-Dramatic Relationships

Key centers

Overall Organization. In Atys, Lully uses key centers as a means of creating musical and dramatic coherence. He uses a range of keys, from three flats (C minor) to two sharps (D major) and all of the major and minor keys that lie within this spectrum. The ouverture as well as Act I/1 begin in G minor but the divertissement that ends the opera is in C major, so the opera in its totality is open with respect to key centers. However, the beginning (I/1), mid-point (III/1-2), and end of the drama (Atys' suicide, V/6), are in G minor, which creates a formal structural unity.

At the Level of Acts and Scenes. Although none of the individual acts in Atys opens and closes in the same key, Lully reinforces Quinault's division of the drama by frequently beginning and ending scenes in the same key center. If two or more scenes form a coherent whole, divided only by the entrance of a new character, Lully unifies the two scenes by avoiding closure at the end of the first scene, retaining its key center, and arriving at a final perfect cadence at the end of the second scene. Such is the case in Act IV/2-3; Célénus's questioning of Sangaride is unaffected by Atys' entrance signaling the beginning of scene 3. This method of linking scenes tonally is also used in Act V/5-6, Atys' suicide.
Lully further reinforces tonal coherence with dramatic intent by the use of a refrain to link the first three scenes of the opera (Figure 7). Act I/1 begins in G minor with the introduction of the character of Atys with his solo air "Allons, allons, accourez tous / Cybèle va descendre." Act I/2 introduces the character of Idas, Atys' confidant, with the same air in the same key now set as a duo for these two characters. Act I/3 begins with the air in the parallel major (G major), also set as a duo, but introducing the heroine, Sangaride, and her confidante, Doris. In this scene, the air is repeated in G major and set as a quartet for these four characters. The scene ends with a reprise of the air set as a duo for Atys and Idas in the key of G minor from Act 1/2. By the recurrent use of this air and by returning to the original key of G minor, Lully musically unifies the first three scenes of the opera.

Dramatically, the air serves to introduce and link the two protagonists, Atys and Sangaride, with their two confidants, Doris and Idas. Moreover, it underscores the close relationship these four characters will have in the drama by uniting them in a homophonic quartet. The text of the air likewise serves a dramatic purpose; it orients these four characters toward the Goddess Cybèle, who will control the lovers' fate.

Figure 7. The air, "Allons, allons, accourez tous, Cybèle va descendre" as a musico-dramatic structural device.

Act I/1: the introduction of Atys, solo air in G minor.
Act I/2: the introduction of Idas, duo air with Atys in G minor.
Act I/3: the introduction of Sangaride and Doris, duo air in G major.
Atys, Idas, Sangaride, and Doris, quartet in G major.
Atys and Idas, repetition of duo air in G minor.

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5 "Let us go, let us go, everyone hurry, / Cybèle is descending to earth."
Adjacent Scenes and Divertissements. Lully likewise uses key centers to reinforce dramatic coherence by musically linking the divertissements to the action of the drama. Toward the end of the scenes preceding the divertissements in Acts II, III, and IV, Quinault shifts the focus of the dialogue from the main topic of the scene to that of the divertissement which follows. Lully reinforces this connection by a corresponding shift in key centers. For example, Act III/3 is a monologue by Atys in B-flat major in which he questions himself on his betrayal of Cybèle and Célénus. Before the end of the scene, he comments on how sleep is overtaking him and at this point the key shifts from B-flat major to G minor. The following divertissement (III/4), the sommeil scene in which Atys is visited by pleasant dreams lulling him to sleep, remains in G minor. However, later in the divertissement when Cybèle's supernatural messengers arrive disguised as bad dreams to warn Atys of the dangers involved if he betrays Cybèle, the key shifts back to B-flat major. The return to B-flat major, the key center of the preceding scene, and a corresponding return to the same subject matter, the betrayal of higher powers, musically and dramatically unifies the two scenes.

Similarly, in Act IV/2, after the oath of love by Atys and Sangaride, Sangaride shifts the focus of their dialogue by warning of her father's impending arrival. At the mention of her father, the key shifts from the key of the lovers, C minor, to C major, the key of the following wedding celebration (IV/5-6) in which her father plays a major role. A similar shift of key occurs in Act II/3, in which Cybèle speaks of her love for Atys in E minor, when she shifts topics, foreshadowing the ensuing divertissement when Atys is to be ordained as her high priest (II/4), the key changes to G major. The
divertissement scene remains in G major until the end when the key once again shifts, this time from G major to G minor for an entrée, a chorus, and the acceptance by Atys of his role as high priest. Although this action concludes Act II, the following entr'acte and Act III/1-2 are also in the key of G minor. In this manner, Lully links the divertissement of Act II with the first two scenes of Act III: Atys' acceptance as high priest and his resultant despair at the loss of Sangaride.

A similar procedure is employed in Act V, linking scenes 2, 3, and 4. In Act V/2, Atys and Sangaride are condemned by Cybèle and Célenus. At the end of the scene, Cybèle invokes the fury, Alecton, to come and bewitch Atys, the focus of Act V/3. At the invocation of Alecton, the key changes from D minor (the key center of V/2) to F major (the key center of V/3). In Act V/3, the key remains in F major until Atys slays Sangaride. At this point, the chorus laments on the tragedy in C minor (Atys, Atys luy-mesme, Fait perir ce qu'il aime). The key shifts from C minor to C major at the conclusion of the scene as Cybèle delights in the death of her rival. The premature change in key (to C major) and the corresponding shift in dialogue function to link this scene with the following scene. In Act V/4, Cybèle (in C major) takes further delight in her victory by revealing to Atys that it was he who killed Sangaride. In the middle of this scene, the chorus repeats its lament, a refrain from the previous scene, and the key of C minor is restored. With the introduction of C minor, the scene shifts dramatic focus to Atys' despair and his realization of the tragedy of Sangaride's death. The scene remains and concludes in C minor. Just as Act I/1-3 are structurally unified around a
short air serving as a refrain (Figure 7), these last two scenes (V/3-4) are linked by the repetition of the choral lament in the key of C minor.

Moreover, the three scenes, Act V/2-4, are unified by shifts in dramatic action, accompanied by corresponding shifts in key centers, which overlap the structural boundaries of the individual scenes. Dramatically, these scenes unite the condemnation of the two lovers and Sangaride's death at the hand of Atys. Musically, the key centers shift from D minor to F major, to C minor, to C major, back to C minor. The dramatic climax of the suspicions and anxieties played out in the previous four Acts of Atys is turbulent and tragic; it is conveyed in a rapid chain of events that are illustrated musically by a succession of changing keys. Dramatically this complex of scenes remains open-ended. The resolution is delayed until the following two scenes (Act V/5-6) when Atys commits suicide, and the main key center of the opera, G minor, is restored.

The Dramatic Function of Key Centers. As the examples above illustrate, Lully associates individual key centers with specific dramatic actions in Atys. Jean Duron, in his analysis of this tragédie en musique, relates Lully's use of key centers to Marc Antoine Charpentier's *Energie des modes* (1692) in an attempt to understand Lully's choice of key centers.\(^6\) The *Energie des modes* documents the various affects associated with individual keys and constitutes a section of Charpentier's work, *Règles de composition.* Duron concludes that,

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The choice of a tonality represents for the man from the end of the seventeenth century a particular sign. We do not possess any word by Lully on this subject, but we can affirm that the Energies des modes set forth by Charpentier, his contemporary, holds true, at least in part, for the Florentin.\(^7\)

Figure 8 summaries Charpentier's guidelines for key and affect for the ten key centers utilized by Lully in Atys.

Figure 8. *Energie des modes*: Charpentier's correlation of key and affect for the key centers used in *Atys*.

- **C major**: Gay and warriorlike
- **C minor**: Obscure and sad
- **D major**: Joyous and warriorlike
- **D minor**: Solemn and devout
- **E minor**: Feminine, loving and plaintive
- **F major**: Furious and carried away
- **G major**: Gently joyous
- **G minor**: Serious and magnificent
- **A minor**: Tender and plaintive
- **B-flat major**: Magnificent and joyous

The affects listed above correspond in a general way with the key centers used by Lully in *Atys*. The tragic figure of Atys is portrayed in the key of **G minor**: his character is introduced in **G minor** (I/1-3); he accepts the role of high priest in **G minor** (II/4); he dreams in **G minor** (III/4); and he commits suicide in **G minor** (V/6). As a character of heroic and noble stature, his role can be termed "serious and magnificent." The fury, Alecton, bewitches Atys in the key of **F major** (V/3), Charpentier's key of fury, and Cybèle's lament in **E minor** (III/8) likewise conforms to Charpentier's description of the key as feminine, loving, and plaintive. While Lully's choice

\(^7\)Ibid., 33, "Le choix d'une tonalite représente pour l'homme de la fin du XVII\(^e\) siècle un signe particulier. Nous ne possédons aucune note de Lully sur ce sujet, mais nous pouvons affirmer que les *Energies des modes* proposées par Charpentier, son contemporain, dans ses *Règles de composition*, valent, au moins, en partie, pour le Florentin."
of keys seems to conform to Charpentier's classification of affect, as Duron demonstrates in his analysis, it is essential to consider the network of key centers in Atys and their relationships to specific dramatic events, in order to achieve a better understanding of Lully's personal method of key selection.

As previously stated, Lully uses a range of keys in Atys from C minor, on the flat side, to D major, on the sharp side. The opera is structured around discrete key centers: sixteen individual scenes open and close in the same key, while seven groups of scenes linked together (as discussed above) are comprised of a series of distinct key centers. Each key is associated with a dramatic function. Figure 9 defines the function each key serves, and categorizes the dramatic action of each scene by key area.

Figure 9. Jean-Baptiste Lully, Atys, key centers and their dramatic function.

**The sharp keys**

D major: The vengeance of the higher powers
V/1, the vengeance of Cybèle and Céleste

G major: The manipulation of Atys by Cybèle
III/2, Atys being selected as high priest
III/4, The chorus welcomes Atys as high priest

E minor: Cybèle's love for Atys
II/3, Cybèle reveals that she has come to earth for the love of Atys
III/8, Cybèle's despair on not being loved by Atys
The neutral keys

C major: The higher powers: goddess, king, and father
  I/7, Preparation for the arrival of Cybèle
  IV/2-3, Célénus questions Sangaride
  IV/5-6, Sangar's wedding festivities for Célénus and Sangaride
  V/3-4, Cybèle's delight at the death of her rival
  V/7, Cybèle's immortalization of Atys

A minor: Love
  I/5-6, Atys and Sangaride's declaration of love
  I/8, Cybèle's complaint of lack of love
  III/7, Cybèle suspects the love of Atys and Sangaride
  IV/5, Maxims on love: constancy and torment

The flat keys

F major: Cybèle's fury
  III/5, Cybèle reveals to Atys that his dreams were a warning sent by her.
  V/3, The fury Alecton sent by Cybèle to bewitch Atys

D minor: The love of Sangaride
  I/4, Sangaride laments that Atys does not love her
  II/1, Célénus doubts Sangaride's love
  III/6, Atys silences Sangaride to conceal their love in front of Cybèle
  V/2, The condemnation of Atys and Sangaride

B flat major: Atys' betrayal
  III/3, Atys' betrayal of Célénus
  III/4, The evil dreams warn Atys not to betray Cybèle

G minor: The character of Atys
  I/1, Atys' entrance
  I/2, Atys' tender character
  II/4, Atys accepts the role of high priest
  III/1, Atys' monologue on losing Sangaride
  III/2, Atys struggles with whether or not to love Sangaride
  III/4, Atys' pleasant dreams
  V/5-6, Atys' suicide

C minor: Tragic downfall
  IV/4, Atys and Sangaride swear eternal love and are overheard by Cybèle
  V/3-4, Choral lament on Sangaride's death, Atys' grief
  V/7, Atys' tragic fate, choral laments

Figure 9 illustrates a coherent method of key usage in Atys. Each key center serves a dramatic function, which links scenes that initially may not appear to be similar; often it is the dramatic action of the scene, rather than
the characters involved, that are highlighted by the key selection. Moreover, the dramatic function of the major and minor modes of the same key center are closely related: G major and E minor (Cybèle's manipulation and love of Atys); C major and A minor (the higher powers and love); F major and D minor (Cybèle's jealousy and its source, Sangaride's love); B-flat major and G minor (Atys' betrayal and the character of Atys).

The correlation of C major (the higher powers) and A minor (love) is of particular interest. The higher powers, the Goddess Cybèle and the King Célénus, are both in love in the story of Atys. As monarchs they are a reflection of Louis XIV, whose character symbolized the embodiment of both a hero of war and of love. In Charpentier's system, the affect of C major is "gay and warriorlike" and that of A minor is "tender and plaintive." In gallant poetry anthologies of the day, the terminology of war is synonymous with that of love, linking the battlefield of war with the battlefield of love, otherwise known as the war between the sexes. Quinault incorporates the metaphors of war, commonly used in society, for the pain and torments of love in the libretto of Atys. By selecting a single key and changing its mode, Lully is able to metaphorically link the rhetoric of war and love. It is the higher powers that wage war and cause the death of the two lovers. In Act V, the condemnation and death of the lovers, Quinault's metaphoric vocabulary of war becomes reality. As a symbol of the higher powers' victory on the battlefield of love, the final divertissement ends the opera in C major.


9The closing text of the opera is Cybèle's exhortation to learn from the example of Atys' misfortune, "Que le malheur d'Atys afflige tout le monde./ Que tout sente, ici bas,/ L'horreur d'un si cruel trépas " ("May the misfortune of Atys afflict all the world./ May all here below feel the horror of such a cruel death."). For a different interpretation of the opera's ending cf. Patricia Howard, "The Positioning of Woman in Quinault's World Picture,"
Recurrent Motif: The Minor Descending Tetrachord

Another means of creating musico-dramatic unity in Atys is through the use of a recurrent motif. Ellen Rosand in her article "The Descending Tetrachord: An Emblem of Lament," states that by the 1640s in Italian opera the minor descending tetrachord, used as an ostinato bass, had become a well-known symbol for a lament. In the works of Cavalli, Rosand notes that twenty-seven extant operas all have at least one such lament, often being introduced by a solo statement of the descending tetrachord. She also notes that Cavalli frequently modulates or abandons the recurring pattern during the course of the lament by such techniques as inversion, chromaticism, arpeggiation, or using the descending tetrachord only as a ritornello. One of the advantages of using the descending tetrachord is that it can be modified and adapted avoiding definitive closure.10

In Atys, Lully uses the minor descending tetrachord not only as an ostinato bass for an individual lament, but as a recurrent motif which acts to unify and foreshadow the tragedy of the opera. The first appearance of the tetrachord is in Act I/3, a dialogue between Atys and Sangaride. In the dialogue (Example 27), Sangaride poses three questions on love to Atys concerning his indifference, he responds by saying that he protects his heart as it would be too tender for love. Her last question is linked to his response

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Example 27. Jean-Baptiste Lully, Atys, Act I/3, measures 118-186, 3 questions d'amour connected in dialogue by an ostinato G major descending tetrachord.
(an ostinato bass air) by the ostinato bass on a descending tetrachord in G major.\footnote{The musical examples are taken from Jean-Baptiste Lully, \textit{Atys, tragédie mise en musique}, 2\textsuperscript{e} ed. (Paris: H. de Baussen, 1709; reprint Béziers: Société de musicologie de Languedoc, 1987). For purposes of this analysis, the 1709 edition does not differ from the 1689 Ballard print, nor the 1675 manuscript as noted in the bibliography.}

The following scene (\textit{I/4}) is introduced by a solo statement of a descending tetrachord in D minor by the basse continue. Sangaride then sings the opening phrase of her lament on a repetition of the descending tetrachord. The text once again concerns Atys' indifference (\textit{Atys est trop heureux}). The ostinato pattern is interrupted by Doris, her confidante, who comments in recitative. Sangaride then completes her lament on seven repetitions of the ostinato pattern (Example 28), and the scene continues in recitative.
The only other dialogue scene based on the descending tetrachord pattern is Act II/ I (Example 29). This scene between Célénus and Atys terminates with six non-contiguous, rhythmically varied repetitions of the D minor descending tetrachord. The first three repetitions occur consecutively and unite Célénus and Atys in dialogue. The subject, as in the previous scenes under consideration, is Atys' character: indifference as a mask for sensitivity. At the end of the scene, an air by Célénus begins with a single repetition of the descending tetrachord in whole notes and concludes on two extended repetitions of this pattern. The text of the air no longer concerns Atys' indifference, but is a statement on the right of sensitive hearts to lament, indicative of the true emotional state of both characters. The final statement of the tetrachord includes a chromatic alteration (D C-sharp D C B-flat A) on the word hymen, foreshadowing the fate of the marriage between Célénus and Sangaride. In this scene, as in Example 1, the descending tetrachord musically unites the two sides of Atys' character: his mask of indifference and his overly sensitive heart.
The solo statement of the minor descending tetrachord to introduce Sangaride's lament is further used by Lully as a musico-dramatic unifying device; four other scenes in the opera are introduced with this solo motif. The scenes and key centers are shown in Figure 10.
Figure 10. Jean-Baptiste Lully, *Atys*, the solo minor descending tetrachord employed for scene introduction.

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{V/ 4: D C B-flat, A, Sangaride's lament} \\
&\text{V/ 6: A G F E, Sangaride's and Atys' declaration of love} \\
&\text{II/ 3: E D C B (A B), Cybèle reveals her love for Atys} \\
&\text{III/ 7 A G F E, Cybèle suspects the love of Atys and Sangaride} \\
&\text{V/ 2: D C B-flat, A, Cybèle's condemnation of the two lovers}
\end{align*}
\]

Lully links Sangaride's lament with the condemnation of the lovers by key center and also by the use of the descending minor tetrachord which introduces both scenes in D minor. Likewise, he links the lovers' declaration of love to Cybèle's suspicions of that love by using the same key center (A minor) and by introducing both scenes with the minor descending tetrachord. Act II/ 3 concerning Cybèle's love for Atys, is similarly introduced by an extended solo minor descending tetrachord in E minor.

It is significant to note that in the introductions to these five scenes, the solo minor descending tetrachord is disassociated with words, and is used by Lully as an independent musical symbol. The tragedy of *Atys* is contained within these five central scenes, and their dramatic importance is underscored by uniting them musically with the same brief but powerful motivic introduction. In this manner, the recurring solo minor descending tetrachord serves as a musico-dramatic unifying device which foreshadows the tragic downfall of the protagonists at the end of the opera. These tragic consequences are accompanied by further alterations of the tetrachord in Acts IV and V. The final modifications to the tetrachord occur in C and G minor and are no longer associated with indifference or the lament of lovers, but
with the lament of the deaths of Atys and Sangaride. The purpose of lament, in *Atys*, has shifted from its original meaning, that of unrequited love in Acts I-III, to a lament of mourning in the two final Acts.\textsuperscript{12}

The ritournelle introducing Act IV/4, Sangaride and Atys' eternal oath of love, is based on a C minor descending tetrachord (C B-flat A-flat G) which extends to E-natural before returning to G, and cadencing in C minor. This foreboding introduction is dramatically appropriate, as Cybèle secretly witnesses their oath and immediately plans her revenge. The lovers are unaware that this oath precipitates their tragic fate, and as a result, the minor descending tetrachord does not reappear in this scene of dialogue.

In Act V/3-4, Atys is bewitched by Cybèle. In his delirious state, he believes Sangaride to be a monster and slays her. These two scenes are musically linked by a one-line choral lament on the death of Sangaride that is repeated three times: *Atys, Atys luy-mesme / Fait perir ce qu'il aime.*\textsuperscript{13} The baseline of the lament is a variation of that of the ritournelle introducing Act IV/4, the oath of love; it is based on a C minor descending tetrachord extending down to E-flat before returning to G and cadencing in C minor. To heighten the dramatic impact of the lament, the tetrachord is altered to include an augmented second: C B-natural (C) A-flat G (Example 30).

\textsuperscript{12}The tragic death of the protagonists in *Atys* is unique in the libretti of the tragédies en musique scored by Lully. This tragic ending may account for the highly original and extensive use of the descending tetrachord. Its use in Lully's other dramatic works warrants further examination.

\textsuperscript{13}"Atys, Atys himself has caused his loved one to perish."

In Act V/6 Atys, out of grief for having slain Sangaride, commits suicide. Two variations of the G minor descending tetrachord accompany his words at the moment of death (Example 31). In recitative, he sings to Cybèle:

\[ \text{Je meurs, l'amour me guide / Dans la nuit du Trépas; / Je vais où sera Sangaride, / Inhumaine, je vais, où vous ne serez pas.} \]

As Atys speaks of death and Sangaride, his words are reinforced by a chromatic descending tetrachord, cadencing on G minor. His final phrase to Cybèle, beginning with *Inhumaine*, is set to a G minor descending tetrachord, extending to C, before cadencing once again in G minor. These two statements of the tetrachord illustrate Atys' hope in death: reunification with Sangaride and welcome separation from Cybèle.

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\(^{14}\) "I am dying, love guides me / Into the night of Death, / I go where Sangaride will be, / Inhuman one, I go where you will never be."
Example 31. Jean-Baptiste Lully, Atys, Act V/6, measures 6-12, chromatic descending tetrachord.

This final use of the tetrachord by the character of Atys, when compared to its first appearance in Act I, is striking. In Act I/3, Atys sings an air on a regular G major ostinato descending tetrachord, comprised of eight repetitions. The text concerns his avoidance of love because of his sensitive heart. As the tragedy proceeds, the structure of the ostinato tetrachord gradually unravels. By Act V/6, Atys sings about love guiding him in death on a G minor descending tetrachord featuring a chromatic descent. These two versions of the tetrachord, from Act I and Act V, musically portray the hero's tragic fall within the course of the drama.

In the final scene of the opera, Act V/7, Cybèle and the chorus mourn the tragic fate of Atys. The final statements of the tetrachord are once again chromatically altered. In lamenting Atys, Cybèle's words, *Atys au printemps*
de son age, are accompanied by one statement of a chromatic descending tetrachord from C to G. In the following pantomime of the nymphs (entrée des nymphes) the tetrachord makes its final appearance as a tortuous chromatic baseline (Example 32). In this binary dance, the first section is based on two statements of the chromatic descending tetrachord from C to G. In the second section, a statement of the C minor descending tetrachord, with extension down to F, is followed by an ascending chromatic line from F back to C. At the end of the entrée, the key shifts to C major and the text changes focus from the personal tragedy of Atys to Cybèle's triumph and general exhortation for all to learn from his fate (cf. footnote 9).

Example 32. Jean-Baptiste Lully, Atys, Act V/7, Entrée des Nymphes.

\[15^{\text"Atys in the springtime of his life"}\]
The descending tetrachord and its variants permeate the musical fabric of *Atys*. It is used not only in the context of an isolated lament-air, but it is employed to connect two characters' speech in dialogue scenes, to introduce and connect selected scenes which contain tragic implications, as the basis of a ritournelle and a choral lament, and finally it is modified into a chromatic baseline for *Atys'* dying words and for an entrée in which the nymphs mourn the death of *Atys*. It is initially introduced in G major by *Atys*, is changed to a minor mode and used repeatedly in various key centers, is extended, modified, and chromatically altered at the end of the opera. The use and development of this musical device mirrors the tragic events of the drama as they unfold.

**Text-Music Relationships**

Lully was well aware that the paying public who frequented his operas was primarily concerned with the quality of Quinault's librettos; they read and discussed these works for their literary value, independent of their musical setting. Because the intelligibility of the dramatic content of the sung tragedy was paramount, Lully set the dramatic unfolding of the plot with recitative that imitated declamation on the contemporary stage.\(^\text{16}\) These recitatives are characterized by frequent changes of meter. Lois Rosow, in "The Metrical Notation of Lully's Recitative," notes that these changing meters

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serve not only to facilitate shifting accentuation of the text...they also apparently indicate moments of musical or dramatic disjunction (such as shifts of mood), hemiola patterns, and slight changes of tempo; furthermore, they figure somehow in the occasionally enigmatic relationship between recitative and dialogue airs.17

Lully did not want the music to compete with the poetry in recitative passages, and in striving for a declamatory style, he eschewed excessive musical intervention and ornamentation. In Atys, all recitative is accompanied solely by the basse continue which allows for increased flexibility in delivery of the poetry by the performers. Furthermore, the scenes of recitative (all scenes outside of the sections of divertissement) are never interrupted by instrumental interludes. In comparison, the divertissements have frequent instrumental interludes for stage action or dances, and the melodic airs are in closed regular musical forms.18

The separation between recitative and air, however, cannot be discerned from their respective location in scenes of recitative and scenes of divertissement; divertissements normally contain passages of recitative, and short airs abound in scenes of recitative monologue and dialogue. In order to understand this "occasionally enigmatic relationship" between declaimed recitative and sung air, it is absolutely essential to consider the meaning of the verse. Moreover, an analysis of verse content must be from the

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18Cf. Duron, op. cit., 35. Duron lists the forms of the airs in Atys as: "l'air de cour (free but in regular phrases), la brunelette (aa/bb) or la brunelette libre (aa/bcc), l'air à l'italienne (ab/b) or (ab/ab), or the little da capo (a/bc/a), the rondo (abaca), l'air sur basse contrainte, l'air sur basse de chaconne. . . ." He further distinguishes the airs by dividing them into those that are made up of regular musical phrases (7.7.7) or (6.6.6), and those that are comprised of mixed phrase lengths (9.9 / 5.6).
perspective of a seventeenth-century audience. Without a knowledge of the rules of proper decorum, the metaphorical language of love, the use of maxims and rhetorical questions, and the role of galanterie, the subtle meaning of these verses easily eludes the historically distanced scholar or audience. Without an appreciation of Quinault's verse, it is impossible to penetrate Lully's subtle découpage of recitative and air. Just as the composer's use of key centers in Atys is closely tied to the dramatic action of the libretto, the distinction between recitative and air depends upon the dramatic function of the verse. 19 With such an understanding, the enigmatic relationship noted by Rosow, between recitative and dialogue airs, can be clarified.

The broadest differentiation between recitative and air lies within their primary functions; the recounting of events occurs in recitative, whereas personal reflection and musically justified celebration occur in the airs. In practice however, the differentiation of recitative and air within scenes of dialogue and monologue is much more subtle. In Atys, there is also a dramatic juxtaposition of scenes; those based on personal dialogue as opposed to those based on formal or public interaction of the characters. 20 The personal dialogues reveal truths, as in the admission of secrets to confidants or the declaration of love between Atys and Sangaride. Formal interactions

19 In the late seventeenth century, there did not exist a terminology to distinguish between different levels of recitative and air. This, however, is the focal point of several eighteenth-century treatises. In this regard, cf. Claude V. Palisca, "The Recitative of Lully's Alceste: French Declaration or Italian Melody?", Actes de Baton Rouge, ed. by Selma A Zebouni (Paris-Seattle-Tuebingen: Biblio 17-25, Papers on French Seventeenth-Century Literature, 1986), 19-34; and Charles Dill, "Rousseau's Recitative Types: The Significance of French and Italian Models" unpublished paper presented at the national conference of the AMS, 1990. In the present work, the term "recitative" is distinguished from "air", or "song."

20 Cf. Chapter V, Figure 2, p. 106.
are impersonal and often public; they include commands, oaths, hommage to the higher powers, and celebrations. Gallant rhetoric also forms an integral part of formal or impersonal interaction by the use of maxims, rhetorical questions or metaphors on love, and the characterization of emotions as discrete entities. As all characters abide by the contemporary rules of galanterie, these formal elements frequently appear within scenes of personal dialogue or monologue. For example, maxims can occur in the middle of a discussion with a confidant, or a rhetorical question can form the basis of a monologue. In Atys there is a continual shift in scenes of monologue and dialogue between the personal or true, and the impersonal or gallant. The use of recitative or air is determined by this distinction in dramatic function: verses conveying personal and true communication are declaimed in recitative, while verses conveying the impersonal and/or gallant ideology are sung as a melodic line or as an air. At times airs underscore feigning and dissimulation, the essential gallant behavior that forms the basis of the tragedy in Atys.

Maxims

As a formal element of gallant rhetoric, maxims are found in both scenes of dialogue and the more formal scenes of divertissement. They are always isolated from the verses set in recitative as short melodic lines or as short closed-form airs. In scenes of dialogue, they are often sung by the confidant and serve as advice to the main character. However, at times they are also sung by a main character in either a solo or duo texture.

An example of a one-line maxim sung as a duo by two of the main characters in Atys, is found in Act V/6 (Example 33). Atys, having just
realized that he murdered Sangaride, has stabbed himself and is dying. Cybèle, as a goddess and immortal cannot follow Atys in death. In recitative, she laments her immortality. A one-line maxim follows as Atys and Cybèle sing together, "Il est doux de mourir / Avec ce que l'on aime." Cybèle then continues her complaint, in recitative. In shifting from recitative to air and back to recitative, the declamatory pattern of the vocal line shifts from short note values (eighth and sixteenth notes) to longer note values (largely quarter and half notes). The interval leaps in the declamatory section give way to a conjunct melodic line in the air and the slower harmonic motion of the basse continue also changes to a regular and faster moving line characteristic of airs. After one statement of the maxim, the vocal line and basse continue shift back to recitative.

Example 33. Jean-Baptiste Lully, Atys, Act V/6, measures 17-22, line maxim.

21 "It is sweet to die with the one that one loves."
An example of a strophe maxim, sung as a solo by Atys, occurs in Act I/6 (Example 34). Atys and Sangaride have just declared their love for one another. At the end of this scene, Sangaride hears other people arriving and says to Atys, in recitative, *On vient, feignez encor, craignez d'être écouté.* At this point, Atys feigns indifference by singing a strophe maxim, *Aymons un bien plus durable / Que l'éclat de la beauté: / Rien n'est plus aymable / Que la liberté.* Atys shifts from personal dialogue with Sangaride, to impersonal gallant behavior and shows his emotional indifference to anyone who might overhear by stating a maxim on the importance of liberty, or freedom of the heart. In this example, the recitative is differentiated from the following air by a shift in meter from C to 3. As in the previous example, the note values in the vocal line are lengthened from eighth and sixteenth notes to a predominance of quarter and half-notes; the harmonic motion is also accelerated. The syllabic text setting of the recitative is altered in the maxim-air to include a melisma that is repeated three times. The melisma, on the words *que la* (than the) serves to reinforce an agogic accent on the following word *liberté*, the most important word of the maxim. This strophe maxim ends the scene.

In every tragédie en musique of Quinault and Lully, at least one divertissement is a *feste galante* or a public celebration of gallant love. In these scenes, maxims on love form the foundation of Quinault's text. These strophe maxims celebrating love are set as airs and are not sung by main

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22 "Someone is coming, feign once more, fear lest we be overheard."

23 "Love a quality more enduring / Than the brilliance of Beauty: / Nothing is more worthy of love / Than liberty."

characters but by the chorus or by secondary characters, such as individual
gods or nymphs. In Act IV/5 of Atys, there are five such strophe maxim-airs.
They are set in closed forms and are separated from one another by
orchestral interludes which serve as dances. As in the maxims previously
discussed, the text is impersonal and states a gallant philosophy on love.
These maxims are not differentiated from surrounding recitativo, as in the
dialogues, but by independent orchestral music. One such maxim (Example
35) emphasizes the separation of love and marriage according to the tenets of
the gallant aesthetic, by comparing the god of marriage (Hymen) and the god of love (Amour). The air is introduced by a trio for recorders and basse continue, the air is then sung by a three-part chorus with the text of the maxim. A menuet follows. The final maxim in this series, concerning love's torment, is the most musically elaborate of all of the maxims in Atys. It is for four-part chorus, and full five-part orchestral accompaniment.

All maxims in Atys are impersonal and a reflection of the gallant aesthetic. They can be in the form of a line or a strophe maxim, can appear in scenes of dialogue or scenes of divertissement, can be sung by major characters, confidants, minor secondary characters, or the chorus. Lully set all maxims in Atys as airs, whether they are short melodic airs of one line of verse, or longer strophic airs. Maxim-airis are always differentiated from the surrounding text. In dialogue scenes they are distinguished from recitative by a shift to longer note values, by a faster rate of harmonic motion, and at times by a change of meter, text repetition, and the inclusion of melismas in the text setting. In the divertissement, they are set off from one another by orchestral dances. Whatever form maxims may take, they are always an impersonal statement of the gallant aesthetic and they are always set as airs.

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25For a translation of the text see Chapter V, p.102.
Example 35. Jean-Baptiste Lully, Armide, Act IV/5, choral strophe maxim.
Rhetorical Questions and Questions d'amour

Questions d'amour are rhetorical questions in which the pros and cons of gallant emotion and behavior were discussed by polite society, whether at court or in the literary salons. They fulfilled an important need for the psychological analysis of love, which was an ever popular pastime in this society. The answers are built on ambiguity, avoiding any definitive response. The questions d'amour were one of many gallant pastimes which preoccupied the lives and minds of the aristocracy during the reign of Louis XIV.²⁶

Quinault adapted the question d'amour for use in the opera libretto. An example of three consecutive questions d'amour occurs in Act I/3. In this

²⁶Cf. Chapter III, p. 49.
example, Sangaride questions Atys on his apparent indifference (Example 27, p. 132-3). Like maxims, these questions are a formal representation of the gallant aesthetic and as such, they are set musically as an air. This air has the same characteristics of the maxim airs previously examined: it has a regular rate of harmonic progression in the bassline, is largely composed of quarter and half-note values, and has a conjunct melodic line. It also features sequencing and exact repetition of the second question. As mentioned earlier, the last question is based on an ostinato bass which connects Sangaride's series of questions to Atys' response, on the ostinato pattern. In his answer, he dissimulates his love for her by answering that he avoids love as his heart is too sensitive and tender.

Unlike the maxim-airs that are differentiated from the surrounding recitative dialogue, Sangaride's questions d'amour cannot be distinguished as such. This scene, the third scene of the opera, is almost entirely made up of airs. Besides Atys' feigned response which follows these questions, the scene is comprised of commands, maxims, hommage to Cybèle, metaphors on love and a short pastoral text, all of which are set in a continuous series of airs.

Another type of rhetorical question is inherent to the monologue scenes in Atys. The question is posed to, or concerns, an emotion or a personal characteristic which in the gallant aesthetic had been individualized and named. In Atys, the questions are about the relationship of Fortune to Love (Que servent les faveurs que nous fait la Fortune / Quand l'Amour nous rend malheureux? Act III/ 1); and an appeal to Hope (Espoir si cher, & si doux, / Ah! pourquoi me trompez-vous? Act III/ 8). An appeal to Virtue forms the

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27 Cf. Chapter V, p. 97 ff. for textual discussion.
basis of the monologue in Act III/ 3. This time, however, the appeal is in the form of a command, addressed to Powerless Virtue (Impuissante Vertu, laisse mon coeur en paix.).

These questions are set aside from the recitative of the monologue. They differ from recitative in that they are set in a repeatable musical form that ends in a perfect cadence. The text also changes emphasis from a formal question centering on an invisible entity, to the character speaking to himself on his personal predicament. The division between formal question and personal reflection is musically less distinct than that between maxim-air and recitative in scenes of dialogue; the character's personal reflection is not action oriented, he is speaking to himself instead of another character, and as a result the recitative can take on a more lyrical, less declamatory, quality. Nevertheless, it is the textual and musical repetition of the question-air that forms the structural basis of these monologues.

In Act III/ 8 (Example 36), Cybèle's question-air to Hope is set to a conjunct ascending and descending melodic line, interrupted by a sigh. The first statement of the question is followed by text set to the same melodic shape filling in the intervals of the sigh. Musically, it serves to provide a smooth connection between the question and the ensuing personal reflection. It moreover musically illustrates the text; a conjunct melodic ascent to the words Des suprêmes grandeurs ("From the supreme heights") is followed by a stepwise descent on vous m'avez fait descendre ("you made me descend"). A second varied ascent and descent mirrors the text Mille coeurs m'adoroient, / Je les negligeois tous ("A thousand hearts adored me / I neglected them all"). The musical setting then gradually shifts into a more metrically irregular

*Scene VIII.*

Cybele, senile

Cybele
grinc et que soupçonne ta loue, etc le sort charmant que je de.

vois... tendre? Oh! pour si cher et si doux, Ah!

al pourquoi me trompez-vous. Bélas! par tant d'héritiers fallait...

il me surprend, heureux que si toujours j'avois pu me déf.

fendre, L'amour qui me flattaie me cachait son cou... roux eut

dont par me frapper des plus funestes coups, que le cruel a...

m'aur ma fait un cœur si tendre, l'espoir si cher et si

duo, Ah! ah! pourquoi me trompez-vous.

Fin du IIIe Acte
recitative before restatement of the question. Three exact repetitions of the question-air provide the structural support for the monologue.

**The Role of Decorum**

Feigning and dissimulation were an integral part of gallant behavior in seventeenth-century France. The *bienséances*, or rules of proper decorum, prohibited overt gestures, whether verbally or physically, especially in matters of love. It was of utmost importance to create mystery in a liaison by never admitting whom one loved. Formal rules for declaring one's love focused not only on how and when, but more importantly on the appropriateness of declaring one's love at all. Dissimulating one's true emotions constituted a formal element in the behavior of the gallant.

The tragedy of *Atys* is based on the dissimulation and unmasking of the true feelings of the lovers, Sangaride and Atys. Quinault's libretto is built on scenes of personal and true communication as opposed to scenes of public or feigned emotion. As part of the formal gallant rhetoric, verses of poetry in the libretto of *Atys* that are based on feigning and dissimulation are set by Lully as airs. They form a part of the impersonal, public façade of *galanterie*.

Four examples previously considered in this chapter illustrate this principle. In Example 27 (p. 132-3), Atys dissimulates the fact that he is already deeply in love with Sangaride, by stating that his heart is too sensitive to love. He musically responds to the three questions d'amour that she poses on an ostinato-bass air. The second example, Example 28 from Act

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I/ 4 (p. 134-5), is Sangaride's lament on an ostinato bass. Although Sangaride is not feigning, she is lamenting Atys' feigned indifference. The third example, Example 29 from Act II/1 (p. 136-7), is a dialogue between Célénus and Atys. Once again the character of Atys is in question as his feigned mask of indifference is the topic of discussion and an ostinato bass forms the accompaniment to a dialogue air. The fourth example, Example 34 from Act I/6 (p. 149), is the most striking example of the use of an air in conjunction with the behavior of feigning. In this example, following the declaration of love of Atys and Sangaride, Sangaride verbally indicates that they need to end their personal encounter, as someone is approaching. When she tells Atys to "feign once more," he immediately sings a maxim-air in which he once again plays the indifferent, and openly admits his love of liberté. The subject of all of these examples is the same: Atys feigns indifference and dissimulates his true feelings. His indifference is portrayed or commented on with an air.

It is significant to note that all of the airs in the monologue and dialogue scenes of Atys are linked to the formal rhetoric of the gallant. Whether they are one-line maxims, repeated rhetorical questions, or a longer air in a closed form they all represent a public and formal gallant statement. The most apparent examples are based on poetic devices widely employed in contemporary gallant society: maxims, questions d'amour, and rhetorical questions. However, dialogues that portray the behavior of feigning and dissimulation are equally appropriate to be set as airs. The remaining portions of text that are set as airs within these scenes can also be included as formal and public rhetoric; they include homage to Cybèle, gallant
metaphors on love, oaths, and short airs in Act I/2-3 that are based on a pastoral text.

The tragedy of Atys is brought about by the unmasking of the lovers. From Act V/1, when Cybèle and Célénus both become aware of the love that Atys and Sangaride share, feigning and dissimulation are no longer possible. Questions d'amour, as well as other rhetorical questions, oaths, hommage, pastorales, and gallant metaphors on love likewise are inappropriate during the condemnation and death of the lovers. Strophe maxims are non-existant, although three line maxims are set as short airs: L'Amour en courroux / Demande vengeance ("Love in anger / Demands revenge," Act V/2, Cybèle and Célénus); Il est aisé d'aimer un criminel aimable, / Après l'avoir puny ("It is easy to love a criminel worthy of love / After having punished him," Act V/5, Cybèle and Mélicse); and Il est doux de mourir / Avec ce que l'on aime ("It is sweet to die / With the one that one loves," Act V/6, Cybèle and Atys). The content of these maxims reveal the change in attitude by the characters toward love at the climax of the drama; love, no longer tender and caring, unleashes its power through anger and vengeance, punishment and death.

Aside from these three line-maxim airs, there are no airs in the scenes of dialogue in Act V. Musical and gallant interests give way to the literary climax of the tragedy, which is musically set to recitative. At the other extreme, the dialogue scenes of Act I, which are full of gallant rhetoric in the form of dissimulation, maxims, questions d'amour, hommage, oaths, and pastorale, are dominated by airs; the set exterior of gallant behavior corresponds musically to the formal design of an air. The gallant love of the characters is musically portrayed, and these short airs take precedence over
purely literary interests. In Act V, the scenes of dialogue shift focus from
gallant love to the harsh reality of condemnation and death and there is a
corresponding shift from a predominance of airs to a predominance of
recitative. Music and poetry are inversely related, yet both serve a distinct
role in the unfolding of the plot in Atys.

Conclusion

In Atys, Lully uses a variety of techniques to create a musically
coherent drama that either parallels or yields to the literary interest of
Quinault's libretto. In overall form, moments of purely instrumental music
frame the drama by providing introductions to specific scenes or characters in
the form of préludes and ritournelles. Moments of public celebration also call
for instrumental music and chorus and are found only in the scenes of
divertissements within each Act. Each key center in the score is associated
with a particular dramatic action or character, and as the focus of the action
shifts, there is a corresponding shift in key center. In this manner, Lully
connects scenes by overlapping key centers in adjacent and related scenes.
Another method of connecting scenes is by the use of a recurrent motif, the
descending tetrachord, which has many related uses: as an ostinato bass for
a lament or a dialogue, as a solo statement to introduce related scenes, as the
basis of a one-line choral lament, and as a chromatic variation in a final
entrée. The variation and usage of the descending tetrachord, like that of
shifting key centers, closely parallels the development of the tragedy of the
opera.
The closest, most intertwined aspect of the libretto and the music is on the level of the individual verse. Galanterie, in its many guises, forms the foundation of Quinault's libretto for Atys. Popular salon pastimes, such as the writing of maxims and the answering of the questions d'amour, are an important part of the poetic structure. The important role of feigning and dissimulation in gallant society also forms an integral part of the drama, as the dramatic intrigue centers on the masking and unmasking of the lovers. The formal public rhetoric of the gallant aesthetic in Quinault's libretto is closely coordinated with the placement of airs by Lully. As all scenes outside of the divertissements are only accompanied with basse continue, the distinction between recitative and air cannot be determined through the type of accompaniment provided. Rather, in Atys, contrast centers on a public and impersonal as opposed to a private and personal text; the former verses are set to airs, the latter to recitative. Gallant verse is always set to airs, as it is a public and impersonal portrayal of a well-known and widespread phenomenon in polite contemporary society. As the gallant storyline develops into a tragedy, the predominance of musical airs gives way to the declamation of the action in recitative.

In summary, it would be very difficult, if not impossible to understand the music written for this tragédie en musique without an intimate knowledge of the libretto for which it was written. An understanding of the events of the drama, however, provides only superficial insight, as the libretto is based on poetic forms and popular gallant pastimes in contemporary Parisian society. Moreover, its metaphoric vocabulary is derived from current gallant language used by the opera-going public, and the characters
of the drama themselves may likewise be understood as portrayals of people in contemporary society and their conduct in real life. Only by placing the libretto of Quinault within a valid historical context, does the music of Lully come to life. Only then, through a deep appreciation of the close relationship of poetry and music, can the music of the tragédie en musique, Atys, render it "a painting that truly speaks."
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Modernism and Opera

The tragédie en musique of Quinault and Lully was singled out by Charles Perrault to defend his stance on modernism; it was the perfect model of progress in the arts because of the utilization of ancient principles with modern elements and inventions to appeal to contemporary taste. The proponents of modernism believed in the superiority of current art forms, as each new generation has the advantage of combining the best from the past with the innovations of the present. The tragédie en musique served as an excellent example of a newly-invented genre, incorporating the best of both worlds. According to the Moderns, it was superior to classical tragedy, which was not progressive in nature, therefore lacking the advantages of advancements made in the arts.

The tragédie en musique borrowed only a few elements from its ancient model, the classical tragedy; the plots are similarly based on legend or myth and the dramatic framework is in five acts. Nonetheless, it is important to note that none of the classical unities of time, place, or action were respected until sharp criticism concerning the mixture of comic and tragic elements in the librettos forced Quinault to eliminate the comic from the plots after Thésée (1675). Moreover the term tragédie in the genre designation of tragédie en musique is misleading because, in the classical
sense, it would indicate a fatal outcome of the plot with the death of the protagonist. Except for *Atys* (1676), none of Quinault's eleven librettos ends tragically. The full title of *Atys, Tragédie en Musique ornée d'Entrées de Ballet, de Machines, & de Changements de Theatre* best illustrates the heterogenous and progressive nature of the new genre.

Progressive elements far outnumber the few classical borrowings that provide the fundamental framework of the tragédie en musique. Social, political, and artistic additions serve to enhance, embellish, and alter the basic tragedy to make it a modern and progressive art form. In the new genre of opera, as opposed to the ancient one of tragedy, the old is modernized to appeal to contemporary taste.

The contemporary adjective which best describes polite French society of the 1670s is gallant. And classical intrigues, which form the basis of the librettos of Quinault, underwent modernization to appeal to gallant taste. Perrault, for example, in his *Critique de l'opéra ou examen de la tragédie intitulée "Alceste, ou le Triomphe d'Alcide,)* defends Quinault's alteration of the original plot, stating that modern audiences would burst out laughing at Alceste, old and married, crying over her nuptial bed and lost virginity. Instead, the action of Quinault's *Alceste* takes place on her wedding day, with an additional love intrigue more suitable for modern sensibilities. In short, Perrault notes that the audience only wanted to see represented in the theatre, *des Amans jeunes, galans, & qui ne sont point mariez.*

Conciseness, another essential element of communication in the society world, is also evident in Quinault's librettos; not only the overall length, but

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1 *Textes sur Lully et l'opéra français* (Genève: Editions Minkoff, 1987), 32-33, "Young lovers, gallants, & those who are not married [yet]."
also individual speeches in scenes of monologue and dialogue are significantly shorter than the texts of classical tragedies. Besides conforming to the form of contemporary social interaction, conciseness creates another advantage for this modern genre; it allows time for the addition of other elements of spectacle, such as dance, elaborate scene changes, and independent musical commentary in the form of an ouverture, préludes, and ritornelles.

Through the imitation of language and behavior in contemporary society and the addition or alteration of characters and plots to suit gallant taste, Quinault's dramaturgy was very believable to seventeenth-century Parisian audiences. In this respect verisimilitude, or the appearance of truth in the librettos was essential to modern opera-goers, which included all classes of people. During the creation of Quinault and Lully's tragédie en musique (1673-1686) fashions in both language and behavior originated from the court and quickly spread to the aristocratic society world, to the bourgeoisie and to the common people. As a result, the characters on stage were representative not only of the royalty, but of the language, social customs, decorum, and beliefs of society at large. Because of this imitation, these operas appealed to a wide array of social classes, which understood their meaning within a current social context.

The librettos, clothed in the contemporary fashions of behavior, language, and poetry, made the characters particularly believable. Louis XIV saw himself in the character of Atys; Madame de Montespan saw herself in the character of Juno, the jealous wife, in Isis; and the society world saw various individuals in certain roles, such as Mme de Sévigné in the role of the possessive mother, Cérès, in Proserpine. Because of these similarities, it is
often speculated that Quinault mirrored events at court in the intrigues of his librettos. However, it must also be reiterated that he wrote these librettos not only to please the king, but to appeal to a broader and paying opera-going public in what was a highly-successful private enterprise. Even though the king saw himself in the role of Atys, it would be a great oversimplification to state that this role was written exclusively as a royal allegory.\(^2\)

The imitation of gallant language, behavior, and beliefs was widespread throughout the many layers of Parisian society. Quinault capitalized on this uniformity of fashion, producing librettos that had far-reaching appeal; characters and plots were *vraisemblables* not only for the court, but also for the people, who could likewise see themselves and their lives enacted on the stage before them. The paying public went again and again to the same production of each opera. It was through their financial support that the tragédie en musique developed into an established genre that remained essentially unchanged for one hundred years. The public saw more in Quinault’s librettos than a fleeting allegory of court intrigue; they saw themselves: their language, their rules of conduct, their poetry, and their pastimes.

Quinault’s librettos were designed to flatter and imitate seventeenth-century Parisian society and, as a political tool, to demonstrate to neighboring kingdoms the splendor of Louis’ empire. Because the *modern* style of French court fashions, in language and decorum as well as in dress, spread from Paris to the provinces, contemporary French opera-going

audiences, outside of Paris, were undoubtedly familiar with the gallant intrigues, vocabulary, and behavior in Quinault's librettos. As gallant fashions were disseminated from Paris to the provinces, so was opera, with the creation of the first opera house outside of Paris in Marseille in 1685. Although foreign aristocracies were likewise familiar with the French language and social conventions represented in Quinault's librettos, these works were not completely accessible to contemporary foreign audiences that were composed of all social classes, as much for linguistic as for cultural reasons. In Amsterdam, for example, *Roland* was performed in 1686 (one year after its debut at Versailles) translated into Dutch, with textual changes. Contemporary adaptations for foreign productions undoubtedly altered the form and content of Quinault and Lully's gallant operatic style.

Unfortunately, these works represent a society that was based on a subtle and nuanced means of communication, both verbal and physical, and are largely inaccessible to anyone unfamiliar with contemporary social conventions. In short, they are very much like the seventeenth-century Parisian concept of love: intellectual, mysterious, and a highly-complex game. Unlike classical tragedy, they lack universal appeal. Foreigners, at times, reported difficulty in understanding not only the plots, but their means of musical accompaniment, most particularly in the distribution of recitatives.

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and airs. But as has been demonstrated by an analysis of Atys, the musical accompaniment is integrally tied to text form and content, so that Lully's subtle musical language would be difficult to comprehend without a knowledge of the libretto within its contemporary context.

Atys is an excellent example of the ideology of seventeenth-century modernism; Quinault and Lully do not merely appropriate accepted conventions in poetry and music, whether new or old, but they adapt and alter such conventions to meet the dramatic requirements of modern French taste. For example, Lully's idiosyncratic use of a familiar Italian musical gesture, the descending tetrachord, adapted for a specific dramatic function (the tragic downfall of the protagonists), is perhaps one of the most overtly progressive musical features of Atys. Quinault's use of the vocabulary of war to portray a love intrigue was derived from common language usage in contemporary polite society. However, like Lully's adaptation of the descending tetrachord, Quinault's vocabulary undergoes transformation from the accepted metaphorical sense to a literal sense, as the suffering and death of the protagonists takes place in the last act of the opera. In Atys, Lully's music renders Quinault's poetry "a painting that truly speaks," only if the poetical and musical languages, with their modern innovations, are understood by the observer.

Further Considerations

Atys is unique in Quinault and Lully's tragédies en musique as it is the only opera that ends tragically with the deaths of the protagonists and in this respect, it most resembles classical tragedy. Because of this distinction, many questions are left unanswered concerning Atys in comparison to the creators' other operas. Further questions to be considered are: Does the tragic outcome of Atys make the libretto unique in terms of language usage and dramatic conventions employed by Quinault?; What social conventions are portrayed in the other librettos?; How is the changing role of love in Parisian society, especially after 1680, specifically reflected in the later works of Quinault?; How does Lully use the recurring descending tetrachord in the other operas?; Does he use a consistent method of employing key centers to illustrate dramatic action in the other operas, and if so, does it vary with each opera or is it uniform throughout?; How does he use other musical conventions to create dramatic coherency in the other operas, and do they constitute a recognizable musical language that would have been intelligible to contemporary audiences?; And how does the galant style of Quinault and Lully's tragédie en musique influence the composition of vocal music and opera in the eighteenth century, especially the operas of Lully's most important successor, Jean-Philippe Rameau?

Finally, analysis and criticism of this art form must take into account that the librettos and resulting musical accompaniment are absolutely endemic to Parisian seventeenth-century polite society. Without an understanding of the spoken and unspoken languages inherent in the
librettos, these operas will continue to be judged as devoid of literary merit, too tender, and superficial. Such criticism resembles that of the small group of contemporary opera detractors, the proponents of the Ancients, whose favorite genre, the classical tragedy, declined in popularity with the continued and increasing success of the tragédie en musique in the eighteenth century. Such criticism fails to place the new genre in a balanced historical context, ignores its impact and significance in the seventeenth century, and serves to create further historical distance and misunderstanding. It strains the limits of credulity to accept that a very successful and inherently literary genre, created in a society focused on and preoccupied with matters concerning language and literature, would be lacking in literary stature. Moreover, it is difficult to believe that the King, Louis XIV, would want such an art form to serve as a testimony to the magnificence of his reign, at home and abroad. These seeming enigmas are solved by placing the tragédie en musique within a contemporary seventeenth-century context, and by defining it in positive terms as a progressive, gallant, and highly-successful modern genre of seventeenth-century France.
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