UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

Magnetism, Muteness, Magic: *Spectacle* and the Parisian Lyric Stage *c*1830

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PhD

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December 1998

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF ARTS
MUSIC

Doctor of Philosophy

MAGNETISM, MUTENESS, MAGIC: *SPECTACLE* AND THE PARISIAN LYRIC STAGE *C*1830

by Sarah Hibberd

This study explores four works staged at the Paris Opéra between 1827 and 1831 in a theatrical context. After an introductory chapter, in which the importance of spectacle to the Parisian public is considered, and the theatrical and critical context for my study is set out, there is a short chapter that considers a conspicuous failure at the Opéra: Chelard's Macbeth (1827), which attempted to break new ground, but was criticised for the mishandling of its melodramatic subject. In the second chapter the ballet-pantomime La Somnambule (1827) is examined, together with the general representation of sleepwalking in a number of works at the secondary theatres, against the background of the growing interest in the phenomenon of magnetism. Chapter Three deals with the interest in mute heroines surrounding the premiere of Auber's opera La Muette de Portici (1828). A consideration of works staged at the secondary theatres reveals both the difficulties and the potential in the representation of communication through mime and music and provides a context in which to assess the opera. The final chapter traces the fortunes of Faust in Paris from 1823, the year that saw the first translations of Goethe's work into French, to 1831, when the Opéra staged its phenomenally successful Faustian opera Robert le diable. The intervening years saw a number of adaptations of the legend as operas and mélodrames, and this chapter suggests how the Opéra absorbed elements of these versions of Goethe and transformed them. In short, these works illustrate the relation between high and low culture, music and mise en scène, creation and reception. The dissertation as a whole both helps to explain the emergence of grand opéra and its impact on later European music theatre, and provides an insight into the expectations of audiences and critics at the end of the Bourbon Restoration in Paris.

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Acknowledgements

There are several organisations without whose financial help I would not have been able to pursue my research. Firstly, the Ian Karten Charitable Trust supported me through my Master's Degree and for the first years of my PhD, and I would particularly like to thank Ian and Mildred for their personal as well as financial generosity. The British Academy provided me with a two-year scholarship (1995-7) and travel bursary (1997), the University of Southampton School of Research and Graduate Studies awarded me a scholarship (1996-7), and the British Institute in Paris provided me with a scholarship for research and attendance of musicology seminars at the École Normale Supérieure, Paris (1995). I am very grateful to all these organisations.

Among many friends and colleagues who have read or heard parts of this dissertation at various stages, I would particularly like to thank Roger Parker and David Charlton who have both given invaluable comments on individual chapters and provided more general encouragement and advice. I am also grateful to Anna McCready and Ben Walton, fellow enthusiasts of 1820s Paris, who have kept their eyes open in the Paris archives for information on devils, spirits and variously afflicted types at large in the 1820s. I would especially like to thank Anna for her comments on each chapter, and Emma Wakelin for reading the entire manuscript in its final stages. Finally, I would like to thank my supervisor Mark Everist for his encouragement, support and confidence in me over the past few years, and for introducing me to opera in nineteenth-century Paris.

Abbreviations

F-Pan	Archives Nationales, Paris (C.A.R.A.N.)
F-Pn	Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris
F-Po	Bibliothèque-Musée de l'Opéra, Paris
GB-Lbl	British Library, London

INTRODUCTION

Théophile Gautier justified the publication of *Les Beautés de l'Opéra* (1845) by declaring 'so much splendid scenery, so many charming costumes, so many magnificent processions disappear without trace'.[1] This collection of lavishly illustrated and descriptive *notices* provides a fitting testament to the visual splendour and dramatic impact of the most successful works in the Opéra's repertoire in the 1830s and 40s.[2] Presented as literary essays (by Gautier, Jules Janin and Philarète Chasles), the *notices* evoke the atmosphere of these works by describing the lighting effects and the costumes, the emotions generated in crowd scenes, the expressions on the performers' faces, and the reactions of the audience. They consider the myths that have been attached to some works, and the innovations ascribed to others, but above all they communicate the excitement that these works generated.

In the twentieth century, the visual aspect of French *grand opéra* has until recently been generally disregarded. Even now, although costume and scenery sketches have been reproduced, and *mises en scènes* published in facsimile,[3] the importance of the visual dimension to the dramatic structure of individual operas – so eloquently conveyed in *Les Beautés* – has on the whole been neglected. Instead, the integration of music, text and *mise en scène* that characterised *grand opéra* has more

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[1] 'Tant de splendide décorations, tant de charmants costumes, tant de cortèges magnifiques disparaissent sans laisser de trace', in 'Prospectus de l'ouvrage' accompanying the reprint of a selection of *notices* from *Les Beautés* in Théophile Gautier, *Souvenirs de théâtre: D'art et de critique* (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1883). Most of the *notices* in *Les Beautés* are about operas, but two ballets, *La Sylphide* and *Giselle*, are also included. Translations in this dissertation are my own, unless otherwise stated.

[2] Another book with similar aims is A. Challamel's *Album de l'Opéra* (Paris: Challamel, 1844), significantly subtitled 'principales scènes et décorations les plus remarquables des meilleurs ouvrages représentés sur la scène de l'Académie Royale de Musique'.

[3] See, for example, Nicole Wild, 'Un Demi-siècle de décors à l'Opéra de Paris: Salle le Peletier (1822–1873)', *Regards sur l'Opéra: Du 'Ballet comique de la Reine' à l'Opéra de Pékin* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1976), 11–22; H. Robert Cohen, ed., *The Original Staging Manuals for Twelve Parisian Operatic Premières* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1991).

frequently been studied in terms of its impact on the music dramas of Wagner and Verdi.[4]

Anselm Gerhard in his study on the urbanisation of opera, however, has chosen to read French *grand opéra* of the 1820s and 30s against the sphere of experience and the horizon of expectation (drawing on the methodology of Reinhart Koselleck and Walter Benjamin), rather than against narrow, linear models of growth and decline.[5] Thus he finds a means of understanding the genre on its own terms, rather than for its influence on subsequent European opera. Broadly, he sets *grand opéra*'s often disparaged sensationalism in the context of contemporary reality, at various levels. He reads the pacing and structure of librettos and scores against both political upheaval and the day-to-day life of 'ordinary' citizens. For example, he suggests that 'the rapid succession of contrasting dramatic events' in what is generally recognised as the first *grand opéra*, Auber's *La Muette de Portici* (1828), 'encapsulates something of the breathless excitement of life in a large city'.[6] *Grand opéra* thus emerges as an embodiment and a symptom of its social context, both symbolising and defining aspects of the period's *mentalité*. Gerhard demonstrates how by passing back and forth between text and context we can illuminate both.

By the term *mentalité* I mean that which is revealed by cultural history in its broadest social sense. Robert Darnton, in his study of eighteenth-century *mentalité*, *The Great Cat Massacre*, suggests that our attempts to understand the 'otherness' of previous eras should involve an anthropological approach, in which we try to find out not simply what people thought, but how and why.[7] Fundamental to this stance is a

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[4] See, for example, Francis Claudon, 'Une Genèse à plusieurs temps', *Avant-scène opéra*, no. 76 (1985) [*Robert le diable* issue], 23–7; John Warrack, 'The Influence of French Grand Opera on Wagner', ibid., 575–87.

[5] Anselm Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera: Music Theater in Paris in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, trans. Mary Whittall; originally published as *Die Verstädterung der Oper: Paris und das Musiktheater des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1992).

[6] Ibid., 134.

[7] Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Basic Books, 1984; repr. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1991).

consideration of various sociological levels – not simply those of the educated or rich. He suggests that we search out opacity in texts, and, to shake us out of our false sense of security with the past, that we concentrate on instances which jar with our late twentieth-century sensibility, and 'unpick' them; that we try to find a means of 'getting' the culture. Rather than reflecting their social surroundings, cultural documents are 'imbedded in a symbolic world that was social and cultural at the same time'.[8] It is this definition of *mentalité* that seems to be at the heart of Gerhard's approach: the enormous popularity and influence of *grand opéra* in the nineteenth century demands 'unpicking'.

Yet while Gerhard's contemporary sociological focus is welcome in this light, he neglects the still more immediate cultural context which is a crucial element in understanding the nature of *grand opéra*, in terms of both experience and expectation. Theatre-going in Paris was an activity that virtually all the population enjoyed, whether it was attending fairground *spectacles*, popular theatre, Classical drama or opera, and is thus an excellent way into the *mentalité* of the period. Furthermore, this broader theatrical context helps us to understand in greater detail the contemporary ideas about dramatic representation that influenced opera.

The commercially-run boulevard theatres were the stages on which ideas about scientific and medical practice, political comments and the 'new' literary ideas of Romanticism – all of which were ultimately to shape opera – were most popularly seen and heard for the first time by a cross-section of Parisians. Although the publication of Victor Hugo's *Préface de Cromwell* (1827) caused a stir among literary Romantics, much of what he had to say, in concise and vigorous form, confirmed the changes that had begun at the boulevard theatres; rather than espousing new ideas it prompted their transference to the Théâtre Français. Two basic principles of the *Préface* were the recognition of the duality of man – the presence of both the sublime and the grotesque in one person, reflected in a sophistication of characterisation and a mixing of genres – and historical realism, represented in local colour in surface detail and at the heart of the work. These principles, present on the secondary stages throughout the 1820s, were embraced at the Opéra only in 1828 with Auber's *La Muette de Portici*, and at the Théâtre Français in 1829 with Dumas's prose play *Henri*

[8] Ibid., 253.

III et sa cour, and Hugo's verse-drama *Hernani* the following year. The undoubted technical and technological influences of the boulevard theatres on opera are considered by Gerhard, and he also acknowledges the ambivalent reputation of *mélodrame*, dismissed as 'popular' yet frequently adapted as opera, and admired on occasion by Rossini and Meyerbeer. However, in common with other twentieth-century opera historians, he largely ignores other boulevard genres, despite their potential to add another layer to our understanding of opera.[9]

A general reluctance to consider such genres alongside opera stems partly from a misconception of the function of music in nineteenth-century French theatre. Our tendency is to view the music of these genres (and indeed French opera) in a context of the nineteenth-century orchestral and operatic canon. Consequently, *ballets-pantomimes* at the Opéra and French adaptations of German and Italian operas at the Odéon, together with the genres staged at the *théâtres secondaires*, such as *mélodrame*, pantomime, *vaudeville* and tableau, are all perceived as being unremarkable, as their scores tend to consist of arrangements of known music and atmospheric passages to support the action.[10] But disregarding such works because of their undistinguished music means that we risk missing the point of them altogether. In fact, the visual dimension was often central to a work's dramatic – and musical – structure, and a principal attraction for audiences – as evidenced in contemporary novels, memoirs, correspondence and newspaper articles. By extension, our misunderstanding of the relationship between text, music and *mise en scène* also lies at the heart of our ambivalent attitude towards

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[9] Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera*, 141–2. Technical and technological influence – notably the use of mime borrowed from *mélodrame* and the realistic sets and positioning of characters on the stage – is generally the only influence from the secondary theatres that is acknowledged by opera historians. See also Karin Pendle, *Eugène Scribe and French Opera of the Nineteenth Century* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1979); Jane Fulcher, *The Nation's Image: French Grand Opera as Politics and Politicized Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[10] Notable exceptions to this attitude include Marian Smith, *Music for the Ballet-Pantomime at the Paris Opéra 1825–1850* (diss., Yale University, 1988); Mark Everist, 'Giacomo Meyerbeer, the Théâtre Royal de l'Odéon, and Music Drama in Restoration Paris', *19th-Century Music*, xvii (1993), 124–47; Nicole Wild, 'La Musique dans le mélodrame des théâtres parisiens', *Music in Paris in the Eighteen-Thirties*, ed. Peter Bloom (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1987), 589–610.

French opera of the period. In his recent book Hervé Lacombe, despite managing convincingly to explain the dramaturgical developments made in French opera during the Second Empire, when operas were judged frequently on their 'popular' appeal, dismisses the achievements of the 1820s and 30s by suggesting 'French opera only rarely seeks sublimity, intensity, and depth of expression or density of writing; it prefers that which is entertaining, pleasant, balanced, light, but also everything that surprises and impresses'.[11] The two approaches are not mutually exclusive, however: the tastes of opera audiences were, to a certain extent, embodied in the mass appeal and relevance of 'popular' theatre and *spectacle*, but they were also shaped by more 'intellectual' currents in genres staged both on the boulevards and at the royal theatres.

The purpose of this dissertation is to situate a number of works which achieved public and critical success at the Opéra during the late 1820s at precisely this intersection between perceived 'high' and 'low' aesthetics. A consideration of the specific theatrical as well as sociological context for each work reveals both the broad topicality of their subjects and the precise musical and visual influences upon them. By structuring my argument through a series of case studies, running roughly chronologically, different perspectives on the development of opera are emphasised, but also, as the dissertation proceeds, each study gains cumulatively from the insights of the previous one. While seeking to identify what was remarkable about each work at the Opéra and to locate the reasons for its success, I am ultimately trying to understand the appeal of the emerging genre of *grand opéra* to a nineteenth-century audience through precise historical contextualisation.

In the rest of this chapter some general background information is set out. First I conjure up a sense of the visual as experienced by the 1820s Parisian public, and then I describe the theatrical and critical context against which to read my interpretations of the works that follow.

Spectacle

France in the early nineteenth century, and particularly the 1820s, saw a rapid growth of interest in history, and in the realistic recreation of historical events and characters. This involved a new attention to visual detail that permeated all the arts. However,

[11] Hervé Lacombe, *Les Voies de l'opéra français au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 1997), 9.

modern social historians, by giving disproportionate weight to things that remain more nearly intact today, such as written histories, literature and art, tend to misrepresent the *mentalité* of the period by privileging these genres over the more ephemeral works of the theatre. This imbalance is furthered by an attention to the literary novel over popular fiction, the repertoire of the Théâtre Français over the highly visual genres of the boulevard theatres, and Academy art over other more common and transient art forms such as newspaper illustration. In contrast, the historian Stephen Bann, in his study of nineteenth-century historical representation in France and Britain, takes Roy Strong to task over his reliance on the Academy picture when using art to rediscover the past.[12] Bann illustrates the aesthetic and social narrowness of such an approach by comparing the limited impact of Daguerre's oil painting 'Ruines de la chapelle de Holyrood' (1824), which can still be seen in the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool, to the much wider effect of the diorama of the same scene, of which the painting was just a spin-off. Dioramas, which achieved their effect through special paints and lighting, attracted a wide social and cultural mix of people in London and Paris in the 1820s. Although we can only speculate on their actual appearance today, they must have had a privileged place in the rediscovery and recreation of the past.

But despite giving us this excellent example of a phenomenon so popular in its day, yet so little recognised today and misunderstood because of our inability to reconstruct it, Bann suggests that the potential of theatre to tell us something of contemporary attitudes to the historical past is defeated by 'the integration of different factors which remain imponderable or are at least problematic to the historian: vocal technique, gesture, movement and stage-setting being among them'.[13] Musicologists and opera historians are used to facing such problems, however, and the vast amount of extant material associated with both the creation and the reception of nineteenth-century operas allows at the very least an understanding of the effect they had on their audiences. Furthermore, there is growing interest in understanding the visual element of opera, particularly following Robert Cohen's republication of staging manuals of

[12] Stephen Bann, *The Clothing of Clio* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), chap. 3. He discusses Strong's 1978 study of nineteenth-century historical painting *And When did you Last See Your Father?*

[13] Bann, *Clothing of Clio*, 59.

French operas produced in the 1830s and 40s.[14] Although there is a continuing tendency simply to reproduce or transcribe such archival documents, with minimal commentary, Roger Parker devotes a chapter in his recent book on Verdi to *mise en scène*, and proposes that the visual elements of opera should be considered in critical editions, as *livrets de mise en scène* or *disposizioni sceniche* aimed to fix the visual elements of the production much as scores and librettos did the other parameters.[15] And Carolyn Abbate's exhortation to uncover 'unsung voices' has been taken up literally in recent studies of *La Muette de Portici* that focus on the visual: Mary Ann Smart has looked at the way in which music specifically depicting gesture is elaborated as 'abstract' music in *La Muette* and in *Tannhäuser*, and Cormac Newark has considered creative intention by examining the relationship between the score, libretto and *livret de mise en scène* in the interpretation and understanding of the mute's role.[16]

The more general importance of *spectacle* in mid-nineteenth-century opera, rather than the gesture and stage business described and prescribed in the *mise en scène*, is still, however, an under-explored element of the aesthetic whole.[17] The way

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[14] Cohen, *The Original Staging Manuals*. See also Cohen's lavishly illustrated piece 'On the Reconstruction of the Visual Element of French Grand Opera: Unexplored Sources in Parisian Collections', *International Musicological Society: Report of the Twelfth Congress, Berkeley 1977*, ed. Daniel Heartz and Bonnie Wade (Kassel: Barenreiter, 1981), 463–81.

[15] Roger Parker, *Leonora's Last Act: Essays in Verdian Discourse* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), chap. 6. He also discusses the notions of traditional and modern modes of operatic production (focusing on *mise en scène*) in his review of Cohen's *The Original Staging Manuals*, in *Opera Quarterly*, x (1993), 120–25.

[16] Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991); Mary Ann Smart, 'Mimesis and Hysteria in *La Muette de Portici*', paper given at the 16th Congress of the International Musicological Society, London, 14–20 August 1997; and Cormac Newark, '"Mille sentiments confus": Understanding *La Muette de Portici*', paper given at the Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society, Phoenix, 30 October – 2 November 1997.

[17] An exception is Karin Pendle's 'The Boulevard Theaters and Continuity in French Opera of the 19th Century', *Music in Paris in the Eighteen-Thirties*, ed. Peter Bloom (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1987), 509–35. In this overview, Pendle mentions the dioramas and

in which stage pictures, or tableaux, contributed to the drama and related to the music is at the very heart of the structure of opera in the 1820s and 30s. Although Gerhard discusses *spectacle* in broad terms, he tends to neglect it in his detailed discussions of the musico-dramatic structure of, for example, *La Muette* and Meyerbeer's *Robert le diable* (1831) – which may explain his sidelining of these works for not contributing 'anything decisively new' to the conventions of opera.[18] Few materials associated with the creation of works at the *théâtres secondaires* survive, and although *mises en scènes* and scenery and costume sketches associated with the premieres and revivals of many nineteenth-century operas are to be found in the Paris archives, the combined effects of gesture, movement, lighting and tableaux can frequently be more completely understood from contemporary descriptions. A brief consideration of the diorama's effect and influence, derived from nineteenth-century reports, will therefore follow, to illustrate the extent to which *spectacle* defined Parisian theatre in the first decades of the nineteenth century, and the degree to which it can be understood at a distance of more than one hundred and fifty years.

In 1822 the stage designer Daguerre and the architectural painter Charles Marie Bouton opened the Diorama, which displayed enormous paintings, mostly landscapes and cathedrals (usually one of each at any one time), under changing lighting effects of the type Daguerre had developed for the stage at the Ambigu-Comique and Opéra.[19]

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panoramas and genres such as *comédie-vaudeville*, and their relationship to opera of the 1830s. However, she focuses on the *mélodrame* tableau as the primary source for the visual effects created in *grand opéra*, and does not explore its impact on dramatic structure.

[18] Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera*, 16. In a consideration of the duet 'Mieux vaut mourir que rester misérable' in *La Muette*, for example, he ascribes its impact to the combination of music and text, and ignores the equally important effect of the Revolutionary symbolism of the costumes and *mise en scène*.

[19] During the first years of the Bourbon Restoration (1814–30), Louis-Jacques Mandé *dit* Daguerre worked briefly at the Panorama-Dramatique, where an enormous stage and lots of machinery were employed to create remarkable effects of perspective. He also designed the scenery for thirteen *mélodrames* at the Ambigu, including Nodier's *Le Vampire* (1821). In 1819 he was invited to become one of the chief designers at the Opéra, and helped create Isouard's *Aladin, ou la Lampe merveilleuse* (1822), the first opera to use gas stage lighting.

In contrast to Prévost's popular Panorama (itself influential on scene-painting), Alaux's Néorama and the Cosmorama and Diaphonorama, which were all limited to a suspended moment of time and presented effects of perspective and *trompe l'oeil*, the Diorama displayed specific views and perfected lighting effects.[20] It suggested the passing of time, with stunning effects of sunrise and sunset, moonlight and storms, as well as the simulated movement of flames, smoke, water and clouds. The most popular subject at the Diorama in the 1820s was the 'Ruines de la chapelle de Holyrood', mentioned above, and exhibited in Paris (from 1823) and London (1825). It depicted a ruined Gothic chapel by moonlight, into which was introduced the figure of a woman in white, praying. The effect was described by a journalist at the London exhibition as follows:

> The stars actually scintillate in their spheres, occasionally obscured and occasionally emerging from the misty clouds, while the moon gently glides with scarcely perceptible motion, now through the hazy, now through the clearer air, and the light reflected upon the walls and shafts and shattered architrave becomes dim or brilliant in proportion to the clearness or the obscurity of her course, so that, if this be painting, however exquisite, it is still something more; for the elements have their motions, though the objects they illuminate are fixed.[21]

See Helmut and Alison Gernsheim, *L.J.M. Daguerre: The History of the Diorama and the Daguerreotype* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1956); Marie-Antoinette Allévy, *La Mise en scène en France* (Paris: E. Droz, 1938), 41–50; Nicole Wild, 'La Recherche de la précision historique chez les décorateurs de l'Opéra de Paris au XIXème siècle', *International Musicological Society: Report of the Twelfth Congress, Berkeley 1977*, ed. Daniel Heartz and Bonnie Wade (Kassel: Barenreiter, 1981), 453–63.

[20] J.-P. Alaux's representation of the interior of St Peter's in Rome at the Néorama, an adaptation of the Panorama, is discussed in the *Journal des débats* (8 October 1827), and in the *Journal de Delécluze, 1824–1828*, ed. Robert Baschet (Paris: Grasset, 1948), 468.

[21] *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction* (26 March 1825); cited in Gernsheim, *L.J.M. Daguerre*, 25. See also Allévy, *La Mise en scène en France* for plates of various dioramas; the contrast between light and dark, and a certain luminosity, are apparent even in these reproductions.

Such displays clearly combined an interest in the realistic recreation of nature and historical artefacts with a desire for spectacular visual impact. This combination had been an important principle at the boulevard theatres since at least the beginning of the century. For example, Robertson's phantasmagorias, in which the dead heroes, enemies and victims of France's recent history were apparently resurrected with the aid of a magic lantern, demonstrated optical effects rather than plot enactment.[22] Similarly, the visual effects created at the Porte Saint-Martin in the early 1820s were widely celebrated. At the premiere of Nodier's *mélodrame Le Monstre et le magicien* (1826), an extremely simplified adaptation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, one commentator noted:

> Ce qui excita surtout la curiosité, ce fut de voir ce singulier personnage passer au travers des murs et du sol sans qu'on pût y découvrir aucune ouverture.... C'était la première apparition, à Paris, des trappes anglaises. Le mécanisme en était absolument inconnu; elles eurent un succès prodigieux.[23]
>
> [What excited curiosity above all, was to see this strange character [Le Monstre] pass through walls and floor without any opening being visible.... It was the first appearance, in Paris, of the *trappes anglaises*. The mechanism was completely unknown; they had a phenomenal success.]

More mundane means were also used to create spectacular effects. Another commentator described how the turbulent seas in the last act of *Le Monstre* were achieved by a horde of children jumping about under a flat canvas.[24] The spectacular nature of such works at the *théâtres secondaires* meant they were commonly dismissed by contemporary critics as 'popular' and aesthetically inferior, but

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[22] See Beth Segal Wright, *Painting and History During the French Restoration: Abandoned by the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 51–2. Robertson's *spectacles* are considered in more detail in Chapter Two of this dissertation.

[23] M.J. Moynet, *L'Envers du théâtre: Machines et décorations* (Paris: Hachette, 1873, repr. 1990), chap. 4.

[24] See J. Lanin, *Mémoires d'un chef de claque*, 96; cited in Allévy, *La Mise en scène en France*, 65.

Robertson's phantasmagorias and the *mélodrames* of the Porte Saint-Martin (and indeed many other boulevard genres) drew audiences from all social and political backgrounds, and the same ingredients eventually came to define works staged at the royal theatres. Thus the grouping of all theatrical works together with the Diorama under the title 'Spectacles' in the newspaper listings was significant at a fundamental level.

As Daguerre's dioramas were inspired by his work in the theatres, it is not surprising that the effects were themselves absorbed back into theatre and opera of the late 1820s and early 1830s. Thus although *spectacles d'optique* themselves were beginning to lose their prestige, their influence on the development of theatre was simultaneously increasing. The technique of double-painting a canvas so that its image changed when illuminated from different sides was employed in *La Muette*, for example, and an erupting Vesuvius, the subject of a diorama, provided the climax of the same opera. Most obviously, *Robert le diable* shows in two celebrated scenes the influence of two more dioramas: the moonlit cloister in Act III, the backdrop to a ballet of nuns, is reminiscent of Daguerre's 'Ruines de la chapelle de Holyrood'; and the interior of Palermo Cathedral at the end of Act V recalls cathedral dioramas such as Bouton's 'Trinity Chapel, Canterbury Cathedral' (1822). The derivation of such moments were recognised by Chopin, who wrote of this final scene of *Robert le diable*: 'On the stage there's a diorama in which, towards the end, you see the inside of a church and the whole church itself at Christmas or Easter all lit up'; and a critic for the *Gazette musicale*: 'One imagines one of the Diorama's most beautiful displays'.[25]

Ultimately, this desire for *spectacle* in opera threatened to overwhelm rather than merely complement the other elements of music and action. However, in the late 1820s and early 1830s this new emphasis was one of the most significant developments in the dramatic structure of the emerging genre of *grand opéra*.

[25] Letter to Titus Woyciechowski, 12 December 1831: Chopin, *Selected Correspondance*, 100, cited by Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera*, 152; *Gazette musicale*: 'Qu'on se figure une des plus belles expositions du Diorama' (24 November 1831).

Theatres

The numerous theatrical genres form a crucial context in which to consider French opera, not only because of their emphasis on *spectacle*, but also because the same tales, legends and histories were often adapted on several stages, and the same performers, players, writers, composers and artists moved between the theatres. The sheer number of such works in relation to operas is staggering: the nineteenth-century historian Maurice Albert suggested that, between 1815 and 1830, 369 new *comédies*, 280 *mélodrames*, 200 *opéras comiques*, 1,300 *vaudevilles* and 62 *tragédies* (including operas) were staged.[26] But despite this broad theatrical context in which French opera was created and received, the majority of recent scholarship considers opera as an exclusive genre. Jane Fulcher's *The Nation's Image* and Patrick Barbier's *La Vie quotidienne à l'Opéra* (both published in 1987), for example, although providing valuable insights into operatic culture and its social background, both examine opera largely in isolation from the genres that were so crucial to its development in the nineteenth century.[27] Equally, James Johnson's more recent cultural study *Listening*

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[26] Maurice Albert, *Les Théâtres des boulevards (1789–1848)* (Paris: Société Française d'Imprimerie et de Libraire, 1902), 285. In *Guerre au mélodrame* (Paris: Delaunay, 1818) – cited in John McCormick, *Popular Theatres of Nineteenth-Century France* (London: Routledge, 1993), 165 – Pixérécourt suggested that 4,809 tragedies and comedies, 10,261 *opéras comiques*, 1,116 operas and ballets, 5,884 *vaudevilles* and 730 *mélodrames* were performed in France in 1815. This set of figures similarly illustrates that serious opera (as performed at the Académie Royale) represented only a fraction of the theatrical works performed during the Restoration.

[27] Jane Fulcher, *The Nation's Image*; Patrick Barbier, *La Vie quotidienne à l'Opéra au temps de Rossini et de Balzac: Paris, 1800–1850* (Paris: Hachette, 1987; trans. by Robert Luoma as *Opera in Paris, 1800–1850*, Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1995). Despite Fulcher's description of the subject matter of her book as 'interacting theatrical, political, and aesthetic phenomena' (1), her mention of the *théâtres secondaires* is restricted to profiling them as uncontroversially embodying the sentiments of 'the new France' (17), illustrated with the influence of *mélodrame* on *La Muette de Portici*. Although Barbier does devote a small section to 'The Fashion for Parodies', he does not mention the mass of works at the *théâtres secondaires* that parodied opera at levels other than simple plot imitation. Consideration of *ballet-pantomime* at the Opéra is omitted from both books.

in Paris (1995), while presenting a welcome focus on the changing expectations of opera and concert audiences through the nineteenth century, disappointingly ignores the many other genres that might provide further sources of information about how such expectations were formed.[28] The few modern studies of music in non-operatic genres include Marian Smith's examination of the *ballet-pantomime*, Nicole Wild's work on *mélodrame* and Emilio Sala's consideration of the relationship between *mélodrame* and Italian opera.[29] These authors question assumptions made about opera and drama in Paris at this time, suggest modes of listening to music and perhaps more importantly expose the ambiguous relationship between what are generally regarded as separate 'high' and 'low' cultures.

In order to clarify the discussion of a range of works in the chapters that follow, some basic information is set out in the next section about the theatres and genres which are considered, focusing in particular on the Opéra and the *théâtres secondaires.*

Despite the liberty granted to theatres in 1791, their freedom was gradually curtailed under Napoleon, culminating in three decrees in 1806–7; these brought back under state control the opening of new theatres and the repertoires of all companies. The decree of 29 July 1807, signed by Napoleon at Saint-Cloud, restricted the number of theatre companies to just eight: four 'grands théâtres' (the Académie Royale de Musique – known as the Opéra; the Comédie Française – known at this period as the Théâtre Français; the Opéra-Comique and the Odéon – an annexe of the Théâtre Français, which also incorporated the Italian Opera) and four 'théâtres secondaires' (the Vaudeville, Variétés, Gaîté and Ambigu-Comique).[30] Of all these theatres, only the Opéra had the

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[28] James H. Johnson, *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

[29] Smith, *Music for the Ballet-Pantomime*; Nicole Wild, 'La Musique dans le mélodrame des théâtres parisiens'; Emilio Sala, *L'opera senza canto: Il mélo romantico e l'invenzione della colonna sonora* (Venice: Marsilio, 1995).

[30] For a summary of the decrees and details of the repertoire and personnel of the theatres see Nicole Wild, *Dictionnaire des théâtres parisiens au XIXe siècle: Les théâtres et la musique* (Paris: Amateurs des Livres, 1989). The repertoires were constantly being adjusted, and I have listed here the genres authorised for the 1820s. In the rest of this dissertation I tend to refer to the two groups during the Restoration as royal and secondary theatres, to reflect their legal

right to stage new, through-composed operas in French. The Opéra-Comique alternated sung and spoken text in its works, the Théâtre Italien staged only Italian opera, and the Théâtre Français spoken drama. The secondary theatres were permitted to stage music drawn only from the public domain; the Vaudeville, as its name suggests, produced *vaudevilles*, the Variétés presented 'saucy, vulgar or rustic' *vaudevilles* and farces,[31] the Gaîté staged pantomimes, farces and, from July 1825, *mélodrames*, and the Ambigu-Comique primarily *mélodrames* and pantomimes. From 8 August 1807, all the other theatres were given two weeks in which either to close down or to drop the appellation 'théâtre', staging only 'spectacles de curiosités'. These included the Cirque Olympique, under the direction of the Franconi brothers, which had a monopoly on 'tightrope walkers, trampolinists and tumblers'.[32]

By the second half of the Restoration many of these theatres had reopened and expanded their programmes, and new theatres had also appeared, but they were still bound by the strict rules introduced under Napoleon – their repertoires were fixed, the use of music was restricted, and their texts had to be passed by the censor. These theatres included the Théâtre Comte (reopened in 1809), a sort of theatre school for children, with a repertoire of *vaudevilles* and pantomimes in which speech was severely limited; the Porte Saint-Martin (reopened in 1814), which staged *mélodrames* and pantomimes; the Gymnase-Dramatique (opened in 1820), seen as a training ground for the primary theatres, staging fragments of older works, *comédies-vaudevilles* and *opéras comiques*; and the Nouveautés, which opened in 1827 and was initially restricted to *comédies* incorporating airs from the public domain, but also performed newly composed music and *drames lyriques*, and from 1829 *opéras comiques*. In addition, the Odéon, although still an annexe of the Théâtre Français, was allowed to stage French translations of foreign (Italian and German) operas and, between 1824 and 1828, *opéras*

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status; my use of the word 'secondary' is not intended as a derogatory reflection of the quality of the works staged.

[31] 'Grivois, poissard ou villageois', Wild, *Dictionnaire des théâtres parisiens*, 411.

[32] 'Danses de corde, sauts de tremplin, tours de force et d'agilité', Wild, *Dictionnaire des théâtres parisiens*, 84.

comiques in the public domain. Furthermore, the Odéon and Théâtre Italien hosted the performances of the touring English troupe in 1827–8.[33]

As the historian Maurice Albert pointed out, each theatre had its own physiognomy, character and audiences, and authors would write with these in mind. The specific genres performed at each theatre thus became associated with – and reflected – the tastes of its audience.[34] Contemporary and modern commentators alike have tended to suggest that the royal theatres attracted exclusively upper-class spectators and the secondary theatres only artisans and shopkeepers. The reality was rather more complex. Although ticket prices at the royal theatres excluded the lower classes (though not the newly-wealthy bourgeoisie), the secondary theatres catered for a range of tastes and social backgrounds. For example, the Gymnase-Dramatique (known as the Théâtre de Madame between 1824 and 1830 after its patron the Duchess of Berry) typically attracted the *classe privilégiée*, who were interested in the Classics, but did not want anything too highbrow. During the 1820s, it specialised in the new *comédies-vaudevilles* of Eugène Scribe and his collaborators. The *petite bourgeoisie*, who frequented the Vaudeville, were less literary but were faithful to the tradition of the *vaudeville* and the *couplet*, favouring *parodies*, fables and anecdotes. At the Variétés *spectacles* (enjoyed by foreigners), farces, *histoires cocasses* and repertoire from the *anciens forains* satirised everything not protected by the censor (including the bourgeoisie); this theatre was acknowledged, according to Albert, as the *enfant terrible* of the *petits théâtres*, and with its modest ticket prices attracted the lower classes. The Ambigu was frequently in trouble for its political allusions, masked by historical themes, and attracted a range of bourgeois and lower-class spectators. Despite attracting regular audiences, within the specific repertoire and characteristic tone of each theatre there was still a remarkable diversity of style that also appealed to other sections of the public. During the late 1820s, the Porte Saint-Martin, the Gaîté and the Ambigu showed works

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[33] The tours of troupes consisting of actors drawn from various English and Irish companies, mounted by the actor-manager Penley, are discussed in Peter Raby, *'Fair Ophelia': A Life of Harriet Smithson Berlioz* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). Performances of the 1827–8 season are discussed in Chapters One and Two of this dissertation.

[34] Albert, *Les Théâtres des boulevards*, chap. 12: 'Les Théâtres des boulevards sous la Restauration'.

that coincided with the principles of the new Romantic writers – notably, action replaced *récits*, tableaux supplanted descriptions, and specific places were (re)created realistically; but they also staged works that parodied these new views, such as the notorious parodies of Hugo's *Hernani* in 1830. The Porte Saint-Martin in particular was popular with all social classes, including the royal family, and according to Albert this was due to the intelligence of the direction, the talent of the actors (including the renowned Frédérick Lemaître, Bocage and Marie Dorval), the love of novelty, the daring inventions and the general financial risk-taking which usually paid off. It managed to antagonise both the Opéra, with its ballets, and the Théâtre Français, with its pantomime versions of Molière and Beaumarchais, and was a constant rival of the other secondary theatres with its broad range of *comédies*, *mélodrames* and *spectacles*. At the premiere of *Le Monstre et le magicien*, one journalist remarked: 'The make-up of the audience was no less remarkable for its peculiarity than for the number of people from different social positions'.[35] The overlap of audiences attending, for example, the Opéra and the Porte Saint-Martin, suggests that writers were aiming at a broader public than is often assumed.

Although the works staged at the secondary theatres frequently proved more popular than those at the Théâtre Français or the Opéra, financial as well as artistic control was maintained through the Maison du Roi which oversaw their administration, protecting the *privilèges* of the royal theatres. In addition to being denied any state subsidy, the secondary theatres were obliged to pay a tax which went towards supporting the Opéra.[36] This income from the secondary theatres (indeed exacted from all

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[35] 'La composition de l'assemblée n'était pas moins remarquable par la singularité que par le nombre des personnes si différentes de position sociale', *Courrier des théâtres* (11 June 1826).

[36] This subsidising of the Opéra by the other theatres was being contested in the Chamber early in 1828 as an illegal enforcement of a tax that had been revoked, together with the other Napoleonic theatre laws, in the early years of the Restoration. The topic was introduced into *parodies* that year, notably *La Muette du Port Bercy* (discussed in Chapter Three), in which the Masaniello character rants about the unfairness of the tax, 'Ce sont tous les petits théâtres qui refusent de payer un droit à l'audience de musique ... faudra-t-il voir les Funambules soutenir le grand Opéra?' [All the *petits théâtres* refuse to pay a fee to the music audience ... must we see the Funambules [a popular *spectacle*] support the great Opéra?], *F-Pan*: F[18]663A, Act IV scene 2.

entertainments for which an admission fee was charged), inaugurated in 1811, was not finally abolished until 1831, the year that the administration of the Opéra itself passed from the state to an entrepreneur, Louis-Désirée Véron, who still received a state subvention, but ran the Opéra as a business, sustaining profits and losses himself.

Genres

The numerous variations on the basic genres performed during the Restoration – particularly those at the secondary theatres – can be at least partly explained by an attempt to preserve a unique repertoire for each theatre. Precise requirements restricted the numbers of acts, the sort of music used, the choice of verse or prose, the numbers of performers, and the nature and tone of the dialogue. However, royal and public theatres alike constantly tried to expand their repertoires, capitalising on the blurred boundaries between genres, sneaking in a song with newly-composed music into a *vaudeville* for example, or increasing the number of performers in a pantomime. Such initiatives were not usually picked up by the censor, who in any case was concerned with the content rather than the form of a work, but disputes occasionally flared up between rival theatres.[37] During the Restoration it was only after specific complaints that the law would step in and enforce the restrictions on a theatre's repertoire.

Opéra

We tend to look back on the 1820s as a period of artistic crisis at the Opéra, as critics bemoaned the unimaginative works on offer and the quality of the singing. In 1827 the critic François-Joseph Fétis acknowledged, in a response to Jean-Toussaint Merle's attack on French opera, that during the earlier part of the decade:

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[37] The importance of dance at the Porte Saint-Martin, for example, led to problems of competition with the Opéra. On 25 July 1822 the director of the Opéra complained that the *ballets d'action* being staged were not part of the Porte Saint-Martin's authorised repertoire. See Wild, *Dictionnaire des théâtres parisiens*, 370. In 1826 the *corps de ballet* at the Porte Saint-Martin comprised fifty-four dancers, but in April 1830 dance was banned altogether from the theatre.

> L'état de langueur de cet établissement allait toujours empirant ... sans cesser d'être admirables, les compositions de Gluck et de Piccini avaient perdu l'attrait de la nouveauté et ne piquaient plus la curiosité du public; que nous n'avions plus d'acteurs propres à faire ressortir les beautés qui s'y trouvent.[38]
>
> [The languishing state of this establishment [the Opéra] was getting worse ... without ceasing to be admirable, the compositions of Gluck and Piccini had lost the attraction of novelty, and no longer excited the curiosity of the public; we no longer had actors to bring out the beauties which are to be found in the music.]

Indeed, the repertoire consisted largely of *tragédies lyriques* by previous generations of composers. February 1828, for example, saw performances of Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride* (1779), Grétry's *La Caravanne du Caire* (1783) and Spontini's *Fernand Cortez* (1809, revised 1817). The mid-1820s, however, also saw French adaptations of two of Rossini's Italian operas: *Maometto II* as *Le Siège de Corinthe* (1826) and *Mosè* as *Moïse en Egypte* (1827). These met with considerable success and subsequently featured regularly in the Opéra repertoire. Although the librettos still dealt with events from the distant past, Rossini introduced new elements of Italian vocal style and musical dramatisation to the Opéra. Some saw the influx of Italian style and singers as a threat to the national genre – conveniently forgetting that the creators of the national style such as Gluck and Spontini (and indeed Lully) were no more French than Rossini.[39] However, such works were extremely popular with audiences, and other critics recognised this expansion of the repertoire as the beginning of the rejuvenation of the Opéra; indeed, Rossini's commissions were the first of a number of innovations made by the *directeur des Beaux-Arts*, Vicomte Sosthène de La Rochefoucauld.[40] Recognising

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[38] Fétis, *Revue musicale* (June, 1827), i, 485–98, esp. 467.

[39] The most famous detractors were Henri Berton, *De la musique mécanique et de la musique philosophique* (Paris: A. Emery, 1826), and, mentioned above, Jean-Toussaint Merle, *Lettre à un compositeur français sur l'état actuel de l'Opéra* (Paris: Baudouin Frères, 1827).

[40] Later known as 'le Napoléon des arts', La Rochefoucauld streamlined the administration of the Opéra and arts generally, and made many reforms at the Conservatoire. See Peter Bloom, 'A Review of Fétis's *Revue Musicale*', *Music in Paris in the Eighteen-Thirties*, ed. Peter

the importance of visual coherence, and specifically of verisimilitude and grandeur in the *mise en scène*, La Rochefoucauld established in April 1827 a *comité de mise en scène*, which included Rossini and Edmond Duponchel among its eleven members, and from September, Solomé, as *régisseur*.[41] As important to this change in the Opéra's fortunes as Rossini's arrival and La Rochefoucauld's attention to the visual dimension was the role of the writer Eugène Scribe, who collaborated with Delestre-Poirson on Rossini's *Le Comte Ory* (1828), and with Germain Delavigne on Auber's *La Muette de Portici* of the same year. Having gained wide experience writing for the secondary theatres, particularly the Gymnase where he had an exclusive contract from 1820, and at the Opéra-Comique where he had a notable success with the libretto for Boieldieu's *La Dame blanche* in 1825, he continued to shape the development of opera through the 1830s and 40s, providing librettos for Meyerbeer, Donizetti and Verdi.[42] In his so-called *pièces bien faites* for the Opéra, he combined the verse of Classical tragedy with the more colloquial forms of *opéra comique* and *vaudeville* (these included popular song forms such as barcaroles etc). He also explored a wider range of locations to suit the drama – in *La Muette*, for example, as well as palaces and churches he used a market place and a fisherman's cottage. Most significantly, perhaps, he gave the historical a contemporary feel, by combining realistic detail with human motivation.[43]

Bloom (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1991), 55–79, esp. 76. However, La Rochefoucauld was also attacked for his elitism and his hypocrisy when it came to morality; see for example, *Journal de Delécluze*, 284ff.

[41] Although he was stage manager at the Théâtre Français before his arrival at the Opéra, Solomé worked previously at the Panorama-Dramatique (in existence between April 1821 and July 1823). See Wild, *Dictionnaire des théâtres parisiens*. In November 1827 he also appeared on the Opéra-Comique's list of *entrées*, and was engaged by that theatre in 1831; see Wild, 'Un Demi-siècle de décors à l'Opéra', 195.

[42] Scribe's exclusive contract for the Gymnase allowed him to write for the royal theatres, but not for any other secondary theatre. See Wild, *Dictionnaire des théâtres parisiens*, 181–2.

[43] Gerhard decribes Eugène Scribe (1791–1861) as typical of the liberal social order under which *grand opéra* flourished, writing works for the secondary theatres, the opera houses and the Theâtre Français, but valuing their successes essentially in financial terms. He discusses aspects of his 'well-made plays', which include the delayed-action plot, the 'indecisive hero'

Scribe's first project at the Opéra was not an opera, but a *ballet-pantomime*. In the mid-1820s the genre was perhaps more popular than opera, despite the Académie's appellation 'Opéra'. The following definition is drawn from a satirical dictionary published in 1824:

> Académie Royale de Musique: Temple consacré à la danse. Therpsicore y a ses autels, desservis par d'illustres prêtresses. Instituée en l'honneur de la muse lyrique, l'Académie de chant a dégénéré de son ancienne gloire. Les décorations y sont comptées pour quelque chose, la choréographie pour beaucoup, la musique pour très peu, la poésie pour rien.[44]
>
> [Académie Royale de Musique: Temple dedicated to dance. Terpsicore has its altars there, served by illustrious priestesses. Established in honour of the lyric muse, the Academy of song has degenerated from its former glory. Decoration counts for something, choreography for a lot, music for very little, poetry for nothing.]

Ballet had, of course, been generically combined with opera in the eighteenth century, and was separated from spoken/sung language only with the reforms of Jean-Georges Noverre in the 1770s. However, ballets remained crucial to the Opéra repertoire during the Restoration and the July Monarchy, either as full length *divertissements* in five-act operas, or as separate *ballets-pantomimes* performed with shorter operas in an evening's entertainment. They were thus as important to the administrators, creators and audiences of the Opéra as operas themselves, and they frequently brought in more money.[45]

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and the reproduction in condensed form of the whole plot in each act. Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera*, 124–7, 134–7.

[44] Auguste Jal, *Dictionnaire théâtral, ou douze cent trente-trois vérités* (Paris: Barba, 1824). Jal's definitions of the other major institutions are even more caustic, but each is nevertheless telling.

[45] My comments on *ballet-pantomime* in this section owe much to Marian Smith's discussion in '*Poésie lyrique* and *choréographie* at the Opéra in the July Monarchy', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, iv (1992), 1–19.

As one would expect, considering the fact that the same writers, composers and decorators were involved with the production of both genres, the subjects and structures of operas and *ballets-pantomimes* were very similar. But there were some important differences: most obviously *ballet-pantomime* favoured lighter subjects, frequently adapted from eighteenth-century *opéras comiques*, with simpler characterisation and fewer principal roles. Furthermore, while the dramatic potential of historical events came to be favoured in operas, fantastic plots with their opportunity for special effects were more popular in *ballets-pantomimes*.

The music served two basic types of movement in *ballets-pantomimes*: danced *divertissements*, which often lent local colour to the work and celebrated ceremony and ritual; and dramatic pantomime, in which narrative was expressed through gesture. Music for the latter was highly descriptive, either conveying emotion or suggesting specific action by using *airs parlants* (orchestral quotations of known airs). While such borrowings – from opera and *vaudeville* repertoires – make *ballet-pantomime* an anthology of Opéra audiences' enthusiasms, the function of the music, as far as the audience was concerned, was to explain or translate, filling the expressive gap between scenario and gesture. When in the late 1820s composers began to introduce more newly-composed music into their works (notably with Hérold's *La Somnambule* in 1827), critics complained at the violence this did to the audience's comprehension of the plot. A reviewer writing in the *Moniteur universel* grumbled: 'We do not expect music from a *ballet-pantomime* composer, an orchestra is the translation, the commentary on the text that we would not have been able to understand'.[46]

Essentially, both the conventions and the developments in *ballet-pantomime* at this time matched those in opera, and different types of danced scene could be equated with sung airs, recitatives and chorus numbers.[47] Significantly, the scene most talked

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[46] 'Ce n'est pas de la musique qu'on demande à un compositeur de ballet-pantomime, c'est un orchestre qui soit la traduction, le commentaire du texte qu'on aurait pu ne pas saisir', *Moniteur universel* (21 September 1827).

[47] Indeed Marian Smith takes this point further, suggesting that 'ballet composers made use both of the spectators' general knowledge of operatic conventions and their familiarity with particular arias, counting on them to have a built-in "opera sense" that no ballet composer would dare assume today', '*Poésie lyrique*', 12.

about in Meyerbeer's opera *Robert le diable* did not involve singing, but was the nuns' ballet in Act III; this *divertissement* was to influence both opera and ballet during the following decades, and is the scene most often used to illustrate the opera in modern accounts.[48] Thus ballet and opera continued to influence each other, despite their frequent separation in different parts of the evening's programme.

Secondary Theatres

Every theatre, from the Théâtre Français to the Cirque Olympique, had its own orchestra of varying size, and some had their own dance troupe. This importance of music, whether newly-composed scores or pastiches of known airs, establishes an important link at one level between the so-called lyric theatres and the spoken stages, and at another level between the royal and the secondary theatres. Furthermore, as with *ballet-pantomime*, the use of known melodies in *mélodrame* and *vaudeville* suggests a familiarity with the repertoires of the Opéra and Opéra-Comique among the frequenters of the secondary theatres.

Mélodrame was a genre first encountered in the eighteenth century with Rousseau, Benda and others, as a work in which speech alternated with (or was accompanied by) passages of music that reflected the mood of the text and frequently enhanced gesture.[49] This form of *mélodrame* underwent considerable transformation in Paris at the turn of the century, which coincided with its popularisation on the secondary stages: François-René Guilbert de Pixérécourt (1773–1844) is credited with inventing a new type of

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[48] Edgar Degas's 1876 painting of the scene, staged at the (then) new Palais Garnier, is featured in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Opera*, ed. Roger Parker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 148, and reproduced in Chapter Four of this dissertation.

[49] Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *scène lyrique Pygmalion* (1762), with music by Horace Coignet, first performed in Lyon in 1770, is generally regarded as the first *mélodrame*. Georg Benda set Rousseau's text in 1779, but had already written two melodramas by this time: *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Medea* (both 1775). The technique of interspersing or accompanying speech with atmospheric music was taken up by German composers at the end of the century, and in France by composers of *opéra comique*; *mélodrame* scenes have appeared within operas ever since. See, for example, E.C. van Bellen, *Les Origines du mélodrame* (Utrecht: A. Nizet & M. Bastard, 1927).

mélodrame in 1800, with *Coelina, ou l'enfant du mystère* and a string of other works.[50] In this 'new' genre, music still accompanied actions and was interspersed with spoken dialogue, creating and enhancing atmosphere. The defining qualities of such post-Revolutionary *mélodrames* included sensational plots and special effects, in which Good was pitched against Evil, with violence and bloodshed balanced by sentimentality, often with a hint of the supernatural. A strong moral tone pervaded, and virtue was always (eventually) triumphant. The visual dimension was crucial to the overall structure of *mélodrame*: mute scenes were common, in which dumb characters communicated in pantomime, and mimed tableaux frequently concluded acts. Even the location had a dramatic function: a dark and rugged landscape might match the bleak despair of the central character, for example. Novels were frequently adapted – notably English Gothic fiction such as Mrs Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), and Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), which each spawned several *mélodrames* and provided the opportunity for spectacular visual effects. French translations of such novels often featured illustrations which were in turn realised on stage in adaptations.[51]

By the mid-1820s the essentially moral tone of *mélodrame* had given way to more shocking tales, in which violence and villainy were glorified, and although virtue still usually triumphed, the ending was often tragic; a shift from moral to social and economic reasoning frequently justified crime and hypocrisy. Schiller neatly distinguished between the earlier, post-Revolutionary *mélodrame*, which he saw as a

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[50] Confusion in generic terminology at the beginning of the nineteenth century seems to have been a result of the mixture of genres being staged. The terms 'musical' and 'literary' *mélodrame* (to denote the versions of Rousseau and Pixérécourt respectively) are misleading, as both types are dependent on music; however, they seem to have gained currency in many discussions of the genre, largely through the equivalence of 'musical' *mélodrame* with opera (as in the Italian *melodramma*), and of 'literary' *mélodrame* with spoken plays; see Jan van der Veen, *Le Mélodrame musical de Rousseau au Romantisme* (The Hague: Nijoff, 1955). For a discussion of the characteristics of nineteenth-century 'popular' *mélodrame* and its repertoire, see Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976, 2/1995), 1–109.

[51] The first French edition of Lewis's *The Monk* (1797) included an illustration of Milton's hell, a description that appeared in the stage directions of the first theatre adaptation of the novel by Cammaille Saint-Aubin and Ribié (1798).

naive genre, responding to generally perceived artistic, institutional and ideological difficulties in the wake of the Terror; and this later, post-Napoleonic *mélodrame*, which he viewed as a more sentimental genre that evoked the Gothic for more self-conscious reasons, its heroes alienated rebels rather than leaders of popular revolt.[52] Indeed, for the first five years or so of the Restoration there were far fewer of the horrific *mélodrames* that had been so popular at the beginning of the century. Hapdé suggested in 1814 in *Plus de mélodrames!* that there was no longer a demand for the genre born of 'those terrible times when it was necessary to familiarize people with crime, to accustom their eyes to the most hideous scenes', as 'religion, peace and reason' had been restored.[53] This shift away from post-Revolutionary morality was most famously demonstrated in the *mélodrame L'Auberge des adrets* by Antier, Lacoste and Chapponier, staged at the Ambigu in 1823. Although its premiere attracted little attention, in subsequent performances the two main actors – Lemaître and Firmin, who played a pair of bandits – sent up the work, mocking the conventions of *mélodrame* that it embodied by inviting the audience to sympathise with the villains. It was banned after a hundred performances for glorifying immorality, but the ban was lifted in 1828, and its villain-hero appeared in an 1834 sequel, *Robert Macaire*, written by Lemaître with Antier and Lacoste. The character spawned stage imitations, a series of engravings by Daumier, and generated much discussion in the press about the nature of *mélodrame*.[54]

Music was a crucial element in delineating the contrast between Good and Evil in both types of *mélodrame*. Three authors noted its often simplistic significance in their mocking *Traité du mélodrame*:

> If the whole orchestra together produce dismal and lugubrious sounds, we know that the villain is coming and the whole audience trembles. If the music

[52] Discussed by Jeremy Cox, Introduction to *Seven Gothic Dramas, 1789–1825* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), 59.

[53] 'Ces temps affreux, où il fallait familiariser le peuple avec les crimes, où il fallait accoutumer ses yeux aux tableaux les plus hideux'; 'la religion, la paix et la raison', Jean-Baptiste-Augustin Hapdé, *Plus de mélodrames!* (Paris: Dentu, 1814), 30–31; cited in Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera*, 140.

[54] Described in McCormick, *Popular Theatres of Nineteenth-Century France*, 104–7; Robert Baldick, *The Life and Times of Fréderick Lemaître* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1959).

> is soft and melodious, the unfortunate heroine is about to appear and all hearts are moved to pity, but if the measure becomes lively and jolly, it is the simpleton.[55]

The play texts always gave the name of the composer/arranger on the title page, and sometimes indicated in the text where music would be with an (*M*) – although by the 1820s this practice had become rare. The most prolific composer of the genre was Alexandre Piccini, house conductor and composer at the Porte Saint-Martin.[56] The types of music he and other composers employed in *mélodrame* included overtures, entr'actes and preludes, short passages to announce the entrances and exits of characters, motifs to interrupt or follow speech as an exclamation, well-known airs either played by the orchestra to express what a character could not say, or sung by a character with new words, and dance or narrative music to provide local colour or to accompany mime.[57] The critic Castil-Blaze termed the more frequently quoted airs 'proverbes musicaux', and recognised their dramatic power, particularly when played by the orchestra to accompany pantomime:

> La musique unie à la poésie fait une impression si forte sur l'âme, que lors même qu'ils sont dépouillés du charme des paroles, ces airs de chant conservent encore leur signification.... Il faudrait être tout-à-fait étranger à notre scène lyrique pour ne pas comprendre ce que signifient le plus grand partie de ces airs.[58]

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[55] A!, A! and A! [A. Hugo, A. Malitourne, J.-J. Ader], *Traité du mélodrame* (Paris: Delaunay, 1817), 55; translated in McCormick, *Popular Theatres of Nineteenth-Century France*, 167.

[56] Louis Alexandre Piccini [or Piccinni] (1779–1850) was the illegitimate son of the composer Niccolò Piccini's eldest son, Giuseppe. He studied composition with Le Sueur, and as well as being composer and conductor at the Porte Saint-Martin (1814–*c*1837), he was accompanist at the Opéra (1803–22) and then chorus master (1822–6), accompanist at the Gymnase (from 1820), and composer attached to the Gaîté (1818–31). His scores were also performed at other secondary theatres. See Wild, *Dictionnaires des théâtres parisiens*.

[57] Described in Nicole Wild, 'La Musique dans le mélodrame des théâtres parisiens'.

[58] Castil-Blaze, 'Proverbes musicaux', *Dictionnaire de musique moderne* (Paris: Au Magasin de Musique de la Lyre Moderne, 1821).

> [Music combined with poetry makes such a strong impression on the mind that even when stripped of the charm of words, these song tunes still retain their meanings.... One must be a complete stranger to our lyric stage not to understand the meaning of most of these airs.]

However, by the late 1820s music in *mélodrame* had, like that in *ballet-pantomime*, become more autonomous and structured, with known airs increasingly replaced by original music. Despite its continuing popularity with audiences, critics were dismissive of the success of *mélodrame* and of its musical worth. The lexicographer Pierre Lichtenthal mused in 1826, 'It is doubtful whether this genre of music can have aesthetic merit; however it seems to produce an effect in certain situations'.[59]

Vaudeville as a nineteenth-century stage genre has roots in the eighteenth-century *forain* repertoire, where pantomime action was accompanied by airs in an attempt to avoid licensing restrictions of dialogue; *opéra comique* sprang from this fairground genre.[60] The action in such works was minimal, often dealing with the life of the rural and urban poor. The comic tone ranged from farcical to satirical (developing a political edge in the 1790s) and frequently introduced an element of social realism. By the turn of the century *vaudevilles* had virtually disappeared from the repertoire of the Opéra-Comique, and, like *mélodrame*, the genre gained a new popularity on the secondary stages, initially at the Théâtre du Vaudeville, but subsequently at many other theatres.[61] While the focus had initially been on character and speech, by the 1820s plot and structure had become more important – partly through the influence of Scribe. Indeed *vaudevilles* began to rival *mélodrames* in their length and choice of subject – they included adaptations of contemporary novels such as Walter Scott's *Kenilworth* and Arlincourt's *Le Solitaire* (both 1821). Topical issues continued to be raised in passing, and sniping at rival

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[59] 'Il est douteux que ce genre de musique puisse avoir un mérite esthétique; cependant il semble devoir produire de l'effet dans certaines situations', Pierre Lichtenthal, 'Mélodrame', *Dictionnaire de musique* (Paris, 1839; originally published in Italian, Milan, 1826).

[60] The word itself derives from the popular song which developed from the Renaissance *vau de vire* and *voix de ville*.

[61] For more on the development of the *vaudeville* in the nineteenth century, see Albert, *Les Théâtres des boulevards*; McCormick, *Popular Theatres of Nineteenth-Century France*.

theatres was also common, particularly in *parodies-vaudevilles*, in which the singing or acting styles of particular stars were mimicked mercilessly.

As with *mélodrame*, music from the public domain was used, only this time the melodies were almost always sung with new words; the audience was often expected to remember the plot of the original work and/or the words of the air, defined by its refrain or incipit – its *timbre*. This layering of meaning might clarify or add another dimension to the new situation.[62] While the known airs were mostly traditional songs and numbers from *opéras comiques* still (generally) in the repertoire, an air would often become more famous in its new setting, which would then become its reference in later *vaudevilles* (this was known as a *faux timbre*). This basic structure of a spoken play interspersed with sung airs defined not only *vaudevilles*, but many other genres at the secondary theatres at the time, including *comédies mêlées d'ariettes*, *comédies-vaudevilles*, *folies*, *parodies* and *pièces*. The *vaudeville* formula was thus performed at most of the city's secondary theatres, constituting by far the most common genre encountered at this time.

However, as with *mélodrame*, theatre critics were generally dismissive of *vaudeville*, agreeing with Rousseau's statement in his *Dictionnaire de musique* (1768) that *vaudeville* tunes were usually 'without taste or rhythm'. 'Proverbes musicaux' not withstanding, Castil-Blaze memorably stated:

> Les Français se glorifient d'avoir créé le *vaudeville* et se félicitent en même temps d'en être restés uniques possesseurs; je ne crois pas que jamais aucune nation soit tentée de leur emprunter un genre aussi ridicule que mesquin, et dont nos provinces même ne veulent pas.[63]
>
> [The French take great pride in having created the *vaudeville* and congratulate themselves at the same time for having remained its sole owners; I do not think

[62] This recycling of tunes is similar to the modern phenomenon of football chants: certain songs are used again and again, often some of the words are retained in different versions, and occasionally a new version is an ironic comment on an earlier rendering of the same song. Some are used once or twice and quickly forgotten, others become well-known in a particular setting.

[63] Castil-Blaze, 'Vaudeville', *Dictionnaire de musique moderne*.

that any nation would ever be tempted to borrow from them a genre as ridiculous as it is petty, and which our own provinces do not even want.]

In spite of the huge popularity of the genre with Parisian audiences, this dismissive attitude was shared by the majority of theatre critics during the Restoration. The most positive descriptions in contemporary dictionaries are Pierre Lichtenthal's rather half-hearted suggestion that 'there are some *vaudevilles* that do not deserve such a reproach', and Fétis's remark that their tunes have the advantage of not slowing down the action as a *grand air* might do.[64]

Censorship

Pixérécourt famously declared 'I write for those who cannot read', and this potential of live theatre – the only forum for a writer to give his opinions through a text directly to a wide audience – was duly recognised in the censorship laws.[65] During the reign of Charles X (1824–30), censorship was broadly political, protecting the strengthened Church and aristocracy.[66] Suicide and death were banned altogether, and audiences were apparently intolerant of indecent subjects, such as adultery, so the enforcement of moral censorship was rarely needed. The state-funded theatres were treated indulgently in this respect by the censors; the effect of *spectacles* on the morals of the supposedly poor and illiterate audiences of the secondary theatres were more feared by the government. Despite the relative strictness of political censorship during the second half of the Restoration, however, there were more liberal periods. In 1827, and with the ministry of Martignac in 1828, increasing numbers of plays featuring revolutionary

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[64] 'Il y a des *vaudevilles* qui ne méritent pas un tel reproche', Pierre Lichtenthal, 'Vaudeville', *Dictionnaire de musique*; 'Les couplets ... ont l'avantage de ne pas ralentir la marche scénique, comme le ferait un grand air', François-Joseph Fétis, *La Musique à la portée de tout le monde* [1830] (Paris: Paulin, 2/1834), 210.

[65] See Victor Hallays-Dabot, *Histoire de la censure théâtrale en France* (Paris: Dentu, 1862); Odile Krakovitch, *Les Pièces de théâtre soumises à la censure (1800–1830)* (Paris: Archives Nationales, 1982). In spite of the assumption that audiences at the secondary theatres were largely illiterate, virtually every play staged – even the basest farce – was published.

[66] For more detail on subjects and specific plays that were censored at this time, see F.W.J. Hemmings, *Theatre and State in France, 1760–1905* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 210ff.

tableaux and popular heroes were permitted; these depictions of lower-class revolt were regarded more favourably than the betrayal of a man by his class or the social climbing of an individual, but references to Napoleon remained banned.[67]

Despite an avowed concern to protect audiences from religious and moral corruption, and the reported outrage of audiences when plays overstepped the boundaries of decency, censorship was widely viewed by writers as an infringement of liberty, and was perceived as a badly disguised defence of the political order. But active opponents of censorship, particularly in the 1830s, differed widely in their views as to its effectiveness. Victor Hugo believed that the censor had never prevented political allusions from being made; for Alexandre Dumas *père* censorship destroyed intellectual art and freedom; Théophile Gautier claimed that censorship inflated the importance of minor works through scandal; and the actor Bocage suggested that censors were actually incapable of seeing where the dangers lay, and thus suppressed innocent material.[68]

The censors themselves were mainly men of letters (including some playwrights) and journalists, and the occasional academic, who all enjoyed commenting on the literary value of the plays, pointing out weaknesses in the plot structure or motivation of the characters as well as the questionable moral and political implications of a work. Many censors remained in place throughout the political changes of the first decades of the nineteenth century, and were thus complicit in the development of drama during this period.[69]

Two weeks before the first performance, a manuscript of the work would be left at the censors' office by the theatre director. One censor would read it and prepare a report which would be signed by the others. Any changes required had to be made

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[67] In an attempt to diffuse political tensions early in 1828, the liberal Martignac was installed as Minister of the Interior, replacing the unpopular Villèle. But this was more a token appointment than a change of heart by the king, and the consequent balancing of the concerns of liberals and far-right *ultras* resulted in a clamping-down on criticism of the threatened establishment.

[68] See Krakovitch, *Les Pièces de théâtre soumises à la censure*, 12–1, and *Hugo censuré: La Liberté au théâtre au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1985).

[69] Krakovitch names some of the censors, and provides details about their political persuasions and literary tastes; *Les Pièces de théâtre soumises à la censure*, 22–9.

within two days. Given the pressures of time and money, theatre directors were usually careful about what was submitted; few changes were generally required and plays were very rarely banned. Writers became adept at satisfying the censors while occasionally managing to include political allusions, or morally or religiously dubious elements in their work, often achieved by visual elements rather than by the text itself. However, they occasionally misjudged such attempts, and several works experienced difficulties with censors in the mid-1820s. In his 1827 *drame héroique Le Dernier jour de Missolonghi*, Jean-Georges Ozaneaux was understandably unable to keep up with the rapidly changing political events surrounding the Greek War of Independence, and the work was not performed until the following year.[70] Also in 1827, Lafortelle's libretto for Carafa, *Masaniello*, was initially viewed as dangerously revolutionary, and was passed by the censor only after six readings.[71] The majority of texts, however, were passed with only minor adjustments required.

Critics

Our best sources of public reaction to performances of plays and operas in 1820s Paris are reviews in contemporary newspapers. Besides providing critical opinions of specific works and descriptions of their impact, articles can also help to fill gaps in our information, such as the names of performers, the sources of musical quotations, textual derivations of librettos and even explanations of the popularity of specific subjects. Despite the fact that many reviewers remained anonymous or signed their articles with cryptic initials, and despite the notoriously complex political and personal prejudices of journalists, we can still glean valuable information from reviews both about individual works, and more generally about aesthetic tastes in circulation.

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[70] The premiere was at the Odéon on 10 April 1828 (with music by Hérold). Despite European disgust at the Turks' exploitation of their victory at Missolonghi in 1826, Villèle's ministry officially condemned the Greek insurrection (and its popular association with the events of 1789) until July 1827, when the Treaty of London was signed with England and Russia. See Christopher Montague Woodhouse, *The Greek War of Independence: Its Historical Setting* (London: Hutchinson, 1952).

[71] *Masaniello* is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

Daniel Rader, in his study of French newspapers in the early nineteenth century, lists nineteen major newspapers in 1820s Paris encompassing the full political spectrum.[72] All these papers included theatre listings and reviews of operas and dramas. For the liberals, essentially the opposition establishment by the late 1820s, who were anti-clerical and supported a constitutional monarchy, affiliated newspapers included *Le Constitutionnel* and the *petits journaux*;[73] for the doctrinaire-liberals, who had a more tolerant and principled outlook than the old liberals, there were *Le Globe* and *Le Figaro*; for the liberal-monarchists, in favour of middle-class representation in government and civil liberties, the principal paper was the *Journal des débats*; finally, for the *ultra* government supporters, those who favoured Villèle's ministry read the *Moniteur universel* and *Gazette de France*, and those who were anti-Villèle had *La Quotidienne*.

Reviews of all theatre productions, including operas, tended to be covered by literary theatre critics who concentrated on the text and performance and usually had little to say about the music. However, they would occasionally give perceptive comments on the dramatic effect of particular passages, or on the success of a piece of colourful orchestration. There were also two critics who wrote professional music columns in the 1820s: Castil-Blaze and Fétis.

François-Henri-Joseph Blaze (*dit* Castil-Blaze) was music critic for the *Journal des débats* (signing his articles XXX) from 1820 until 1832, when he was succeeded by Berlioz.[74] Until the arrival of the *Revue musicale* in 1827, his 'Chronique musicale' was the only regular music column in the French press of the Restoration, and it appeared in a paper that had the second highest circulation in France.[75] In his inaugural column, on 7 December 1820, Castil-Blaze announced that operas would be 'examined, analysed

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[72] Daniel J. Rader, *The Journalists and the July Revolution in France: The Role of the Political Press in the Overthrow of the Bourbon Restoration 1827–1830* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1973).

[73] For more details on these newspapers see p. 37.

[74] His criticism is considered in Donald G. Gíslason, *Castil-Blaze, 'De l'opéra en France' and the Feuilletons of the Journal des débats (1820–1832)* (diss., University of British Columbia, 1992).

[75] Only *Le Constitutionnel* had a higher distribution, but the *Journal des débats* was acknowledged as the more influential (both were opposition papers).

carefully and according to accepted principles'.[76] In addition to reviewing operas, he discussed other types of music, singers, instrument manufacture and various technical aspects of music production. As distinct from the literary style of music criticism of his predecessor at the *Débats*, Julien-Louis Geoffroy, for whom the libretto took priority over the score, Castil-Blaze maintained that a poor libretto could not be redeemed by music, as the music was a dramatic response to the text.[77] Fundamental to his consideration of an opera was the 'dramatic truth' of the score: rather than analysing the harmony and rhythm in a particularly effective air or orchestral passage, for example, he would remind the reader of a passage that had achieved a similar dramatic effect in another opera. Sometimes allusions would be drawn with a piece of literature or a painting; it was the effect achieved rather than a description of how it was accomplished that was most important. When he did go into technical detail, it was usually to describe the instrumentation – the sort of analysis that could be readily understood by his readership without specialist training in music. Despite this new focus on the music, however, in the mid-1820s most of each review was still dedicated to a detailed retelling of the plot, and little space was given to the performers or to the visual aspects of a work. More broadly, allied to his emphasis on dramatic truth, Castil-Blaze paid growing attention to historical realism. In 1831, when he reviewed the premiere of *Anna Bolena*, Donizetti's first opera to be performed in Paris at the Théâtre Italien, he devoted a long, approving paragraph to the historical accuracy of Henry VIII's costume – apparently copied by the singer Lablache from Henry's clothing, on display at the Tower of

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[76] 'Examinés, analysés avec soin et d'après les principes de la bonne école'; cited in Joseph-Marc Bailbé: 'La Critique musicale au "Journal des débats"', *La Musique en France à l'époque Romantique (1830–1870)*, ed. Joseph-Marc Bailbé et al. (Paris: Flammarion, 1991), 271–94, esp. 276.

[77] His ideas on opera were expounded in *De l'opéra en France* (Paris: Janet et Cotelle, 1820). Katharine Ellis points out how his view of music responding to a text became 'institutionalised' in Berlioz's criticism, where in 1836 it provided cover for his disparagement of Meyerbeer's music in Act II of *Les Huguenots*; see Katherine Ellis, *Music Criticism in Nineteenth-Century France: La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris, 1834–1880* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 28–9.

London.[78] In another long paragraph he considered whether Anna Bolena should really have become insane in the opera, when in life she was such a calm and philosophical queen. Such a liberty was acceptable, he concluded, because it added to the dramatic truth of the opera, emphasising her emotional instability through music. In sum, Castil-Blaze always considered music as an aspect of the dramatic whole in his opera reviews.

François-Joseph Fétis was the founder of the *Revue musicale*, the only specialist music journal during the Restoration, published from 1827 to 1835, when it was absorbed by Schlesinger's *Gazette musicale.*[79] Although traditional in his outlook, Fétis had a more intellectual and didactic style than Castil-Blaze, and absorbed philosophical considerations current in the 1820s into his criticism – notably German idealist aesthetics and Romanticism (through Schelling and Hoffmann in particular), and the French philosophical ideas of Victor Cousin and August Comte.[80] Despite his denunciation of Berlioz, Fétis was a champion of Meyerbeer, and of Renaissance and Baroque music. More a philosopher than a historian of music, he was interested in inner musical 'truth' as opposed to the external realities and wider dramatic impact with which Castil-Blaze concerned himself, and this comes through in the tone of his reviews. He also felt passionately about the lack of opportunity for new composers to have works performed at the Opéra, and tended to take an avuncular tone in his reviews of their works, suggesting how they might improve their approach.[81] Like Castil-Blaze,

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[78] Castil-Blaze delighted in telling his readers that when the opera had been performed in London, the same costume had horrified the English audience, who momentarily believed that Henry VIII had come back to life; *Journal des débats* (3 September 1831). See my article, 'Traditions of Madness: *Anna Bolena* in Paris', *Gaetano Donizetti ed il teatro musicale europeo: Atti del convegno internazionale di studi, Venezia, 22–24 maggio 1997*, ed. Luca Zoppelli (forthcoming).

[79] For more on this paper, see Peter Bloom, 'A Review of Fétis's *Revue musicale*'. Although it was an influential paper among the musicians of the period, Bloom suggests, from the evidence of two documents, that the number of subscribers averaged 200, and in 1828 was only 128. Castil-Blaze's column in the *Journal des débats* clearly reached a much wider readership.

[80] Fétis's style is examined in detail in Ellis, *Music Criticism in Nineteenth-Century France*.

[81] See, for example, his reviews of Chelard's *Macbeth* (discussed in Chapter Two) and Louise Bertin's *Fausto* (Chapter Four). He complained that while writers of *mélodrames* and *vaudevilles* had plenty of opportunity to have their works staged in the vast repertoires of the

in his analyses he compared passages of music with those in other operas rather than dissecting them in isolation; however, he tended to focus more closely on the music (notably on chord progressions and instrumentation) than on its dramatic effect.

Both Castil-Blaze and Fétis revealed an ambivalence about Italian opera that characterised many reviewers of the period: although quick to mock the *dilettanti* and the frequently ridiculous plots of Italian operas, and the repetition of the formulaic devices in Rossini's scores, they generally considered the performances of the principal singers generously, and recognised the particular attraction of Italian opera for audiences. On the rare occasions that they reviewed a work staged at one of the secondary theatres, however, both Castil-Blaze and Fétis tended to confine their comments on the music to a listing of the tunes they recognised in the work, giving no opinion as to the suitability of the choice. Moreover, they denigrated such genres not just for their use of music, but for their subject matter and for their very popularity. These works were reviewed in the *Revue musicale* only occasionally, and another critic, 'C.', usually covered them for the *Débats*, with more sympathetic consideration.

Although there were only two professional music columns in the 1820s, another important source of reviews – particularly for the genres ignored by Castil-Blaze and Fétis – is *Le Globe*, a paper that played a major role in the intellectual life of France, and was read all over Europe. Most famously the *Globistes* defended the cause of Romanticism, and championed the ideas of the new generation.[82] Their reviews of productions at the secondary theatres were generally covered by Hygin-Auguste Cavé and Adolphe Dittmer, those at the Théâtre Français and plays at the Odéon by Charles Magnin and Paul-François Dubois, and operas – particularly those at the Théâtre Italien

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secondary theatres, the composers and librettists of French opera had only the Opéra and Opéra-Comique, and consequently the *privilège* laws actively discouraged the nurturing of talented composers and librettists. *Revue musicale* (July, 1827), i, 520–26.

[82] For a discussion of the philosophies of the editors and numerous contributors to the paper until 1830, the year that it became the official organ of the Saint-Simonians, see Jean-Jacques Goblot, *Le Globe, 1824–1830: Documents pour servir à l'histoire de la presse littéraire* (Paris: Champion, 1993) and *La Jeune France libérale: Le Globe et son groupe littéraire, 1824–1830* (Paris: Plon, 1995). Goblot discusses, among other issues, the attitudes of the *Globistes* to Romanticism, foreign literature, translation, philosophy and the natural sciences.

– were covered by Ludovic Vitet.[83] In spite of the somewhat condescending attitudes of some of the *Globistes* towards the secondary theatres – Duvergier de Hauranne in particular had a horror of *mélodrame* – Cavé and Dittmer in their reviews recognised the attraction of such works, and hoped that it might be possible to 'raise *mélodrame* from the ignominy to which it has been reduced' and encourage the boulevard audiences to 'look for the pleasures of art instead of these frightful emotions of harsh reality'.[84] Growing awareness of the importance of the visual dimension at the royal theatres was recognised with the paper's first use of the phrase 'mise en scène' in Magnin's review of *Emilia, ou la folle* at the Théâtre Français on 6 September 1827; but in *Louis XI à Péronne* this visual aspect was seen as overwhelming the characterisation and plot to the point that 'in such hands the theatre is nothing more than a Diorama', and in general the contribution of visual effects to the drama was ignored.[85] As far as music was concerned, Vitet was enthusiastic about Italian opera, but correspondingly critical of French 'classicisme musical', in which music was so often the servant of dramatic interest. His reviews of German opera, however, are particularly interesting, as although he did not accept without question all the 'novelties' of harmony and subject matter they exhibited, he tended to defend them against other critics. He had an unusually visionary approach, believing that French taste would gradually accept foreign innovation – although interestingly his mention of 'romantisme musical', in an article on 'Musique Française' as early as 1825, did not recur; he perhaps realised he was forcing the idea at this time.[86]

Charles Maurice, critic and editor/owner of perhaps the most influential theatrical daily, the *Courrier des théâtres*, has up till now been perceived as 'the most

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[83] Few of these reviews were signed, but Goblot identifies the authors of some of them in *Le Globe, 1824–1830*. Additionally, translations and articles on foreign literature, and on Romanticism, were written by Prosper Léon Duvergier de Hauranne.

[84] 'Relever le mélodrame de l'abjection où il est réduit'; 'chercher les plaisirs de l'art, au lieu de ces affreuses émotions d'une réalité crue', *Le Globe* (17 June 1826); cited in Goblot, *La Jeune France*, 431.

[85] 'Le théâtre n'est plus, dans de pareilles mains, qu'un Diorama', unsigned article, *Le Globe* (5 May 1827).

[86] Goblot, *La Jeune France*, 464–7.

outrageously corrupt critic of the day', running a virtual protection racket for his reviews.[87] His self-confessed corruption, detailed in his book of collected correspondence, and his virulent attacks on individual composers, singers and theatres in his reviews appear to confirm this view. However, the openness and proof of Maurice's corruption was probably more unusual than its practice. Indeed, his system of 'extorting' money for favourable reviews has much in common with the practices of the *claque* which, by the late 1820s, had become established in virtually every theatre in Paris: *claqueurs* were similarly paid by the theatre director, writer, composer and/or performer(s) to sit among the audience and applaud – or at least not to show disapproval.[88] Maurice's openly hostile reviews against Rossini, the Taglioni family and German opera (as indeed his tediously admiring and nationalistic ones in favour of Boieldieu) with little or no critical discussion, however, are outnumbered by more sober critiques of less high-profile works, which contain compelling views on the nature of drama and the relationship between music and subject.[89] Moreover, Balzac implies in his novels that no critic could remain impartial for long, and that various levels of bribery and favouritism were the norm, as reviews were written to order and personal vendettas carried out.[90] Indeed, the constant sniping at other critics and at theatre directors and performers in the gossip columns of all the newspapers tends to confirm this view. Whether or not theatre reviews were the result of bribes, however, they reflect views in circulation at the time. Thus while criticisms of specific works should be viewed with caution, the broader philosophising of Maurice and other critics is frequently revealing.

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[87] See Kerry Murphy, *Hector Berlioz and the Development of French Music Criticism* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1988), 62.

[88] See, for example, Johnson, *Listening in Paris*, 246–8; Jules Lau, *Mémoires d'un chef de claque: Souvenirs des théâtres* (Paris: Librairie Nouvelle, 1983), 17–23.

[89] The ongoing battle between Maurice and Rossini in the 1820s and 30s is outlined by Janet Johnson in 'Rossini, Artistic Director of the Théâtre Italien, 1830–1836', *Gioacchino Rossini 1792–1992: Il testo e la scena: Convegno internazionale de studi Pesaro, 25–28 giugno 1992*, ed. Paolo Fabbri (Pesaro: Fondazione Rossini, 1994), 599–622.

[90] For example, the experience of the young poet Lucien de Rubempré, who succumbs to the corruption of the Parisian literary world in *Illusions perdues* (1837–43).

Anonymous reviews also appeared in the *petits journaux*, the successors to the *Miroir des spectacles* which was suppressed by the Ministry of the Interior in 1824 for its political allusions. These papers included *La Pandore* (a resurrection of the *Miroir*), *Le Corsaire*, *Le Diable boiteux* and *La Lorgnette*. They were all theatrical opposition papers, and contain reviews of even the most obscure *vaudeville*. They take a combative stance, frequently attacking public figures and the government, using allusion and anecdote, but like those of Maurice their reviews frequently present striking ideas on aspects of theatre production while poking fun at the theatrical 'establishment'.[91]

To a modern reader, newspapers are also extremely useful for revealing the social dimension of theatre. The juxtaposition of reviews with articles on home news, foreign affairs, book reviews, reports from the Academies of Science and Medicine and gossip columns, grounds the dramas in a specific social reality. Thus the relationship between a work set in Ancient Greece and events in 1820s Greece, barely hinted at in the text, are thrown into relief when one sees the news reports of the Greek War of Independence that dominated the foreign affairs pages. Parodies of the ballet *Mars et Vénus* that appeared in 1826, for example, following the fall of Missolonghi, introduced references to the Greek War into the myth, which in turn evoked memories of 1789, and for some provided an analogy with the struggle against an oppressive regime in France. Furthermore, the image of the Monster from *Frankenstein*, a common metaphor for the deformed 'body politic' after the Revolution, was also introduced into these parodies. Such layers of references, so subtle in the written texts of the plays, come to life when read against the contemporary situation. Similarly, the fascination with monsters in the theatre, particularly following the adaptation of *Frankenstein*, fits into a more general scientific interest revealed in reports from the Academy of Sciences, where Etienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire was presenting his ideas on teratology, the emerging science of

[91] In August 1825 the owners of two major liberal papers, *Le Constitutionnel* and the *Courrier français*, were accused by the government of attacking religion and the state; they were tried and acquitted in December; this was seen as a sanctioning of freedom of the press. However, on 7 June 1826 four *petits journaux* – including *Le Corsaire* and *La Pandore* – were fined for having addressed political questions; and after 1828 censorship of the press was more stringent.

monsters. Thus the papers of all political and cultural persuasions provide a unique and immediate context of events that might otherwise remain forgotten.

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By absorbing ideas from other genres, opera of the 1820s revealed an awareness of a need for stylistic change, and partly through the influence of *mélodrame*, *vaudeville*, *ballet-pantomime* and *opéra comique*, *grand opéra* emerged. Yet this emergence also embraced broader cultural and sociological forces – the increasing interest in history and in realism, the contradictory attitudes to foreign literature and legend, the changing public view of women. The main body of my dissertation presents four different perspectives on this aesthetic and sociological evolution. After the examination of a surprising and conspicuous failure, I present a detailed discussion of three works that enjoyed enormous success at the Opéra between 1827 and 1831.

Each chapter revolves around a specific theme that inspired works not only at the Opéra, but at all the city's major theatres, and that related closely to contemporary political, cultural and/or sociological concerns. Equally significant as specific interpretations of these themes was their very popularity and the excitement they generated in a variety of theatres and genres. Although contemporary attitudes to 'high' and 'low' art match our own in many ways – the Opéra was seen as the pinnacle of the artistic establishment, and the secondary theatres inferior by their very popularity – their mutual influence and shared interests at such a fundamental level are both complex and revealing.[92]

Before embarking on a detailed consideration of three of the most successful works staged at the Opéra in the 1820s, in Chapter One I examine an opera that attempted to strike out in a new direction, influenced by the appeal at other theatres

[92] The works discussed in each chapter are listed in the Appendices at the end of the dissertation. Here, and in footnotes, the author(s) of the text are followed by a slash (/) and the composer, if known. As many of the works written for the secondary theatres have at least two or three co-authors, only the first is usually mentioned when these works are discussed in the text (but all will be found in the Appendices). Details of most of the theatre works that were premiered in Paris during the Restoration are listed in Charles Beaumont Wicks, *The Parisian Stage: Alphabetical Indexes of Plays and Authors*, ii: *1816-1830* (Birmingham, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1950).

(above all the secondary stages) of English literature, Scottish subjects and the supernatural. The failure of this work, Chelard's 1827 opera *Macbeth*, tells us much about the traditionalism of audiences as well as the administration at the Opéra. But it also provides a useful work against which to read the innovations and successes of the works discussed in the rest of the dissertation. One of the most important reasons for its failure was the neglect of the visual aspect of its subject, despite the potential of its key dramatic moments; significantly, it was produced just two months before Solomé's arrival at the Opéra as stage director.

Chapter Two considers Hérold's *ballet-pantomime La Somnambule* (1827). Its original subject matter and innovative use of music prompted critics to hail it as unlocking a new era for ballet, and its voguish theme ensured its popularity with audiences. During the course of the chapter the image of this balletic sleepwalker is compared with somnambulists in a number of works at the secondary theatres, and with the phenomenon of magnetism and artificial trance which was attracting scientific and popular interest at the time. Such silent 'leaving of the senses' also resonated with contemporary operatic representations of madness and the supernatural, which were evoked musically, textually and visually in many of these sleepwalking works. Visual and vocal means of dramatic expression are contrasted with contemporary perceptions of the condition, and reasons for the popularity of sleepwalking on the Parisian stages at this time are suggested.

Chapter Three deals with the interest in mute heroines that surrounded the premiere of Auber's opera *La Muette de Portici* (1828): a dozen works, in virtually every genre current in Paris at the time, demonstrated both the difficulties of, and the potential in, representing communication through mime and music. They used gestural techniques dating back to the previous century, as well as combinations of effects that aimed at a new realism of expression. The musical allusion that characterised so many genres in the 1820s provided a new level of articulation for the mutes, who are revealed, perhaps rather surprisingly, as symbols of strength and independence. While the mute Fenella emerges from the opera as the silent spirit of Revolution, so the heroines of the secondary theatres and the Opéra-Comique are defiant figures in the domestic sphere.

Meyerbeer's phenomenally successful Faustian opera *Robert le diable*. The intervening years saw a number of adaptations of the legend as operas and *mélodrames*, and archival sources reveal that four further *Fausts* were also considered (but ultimately rejected) by the Opéra. The status of these adaptations of Goethe in the eyes of the critics and audiences are examined, and it is suggested that with *Robert le diable* rather than merely imitating the German legend, the Opéra finally combined the apparatus of German Romanticism and popular theatre and transformed them.

The developments at the Opéra in this period, in terms of the types of subjects treated and the structuring of works, were in large part the achievement of Eugène Scribe, who with his collaborators wrote the libretto or scenario for each of these three successes. But the relationship between the literary, visual and musical elements of a work was evidently symbiotic, and the texts were written – or altered – to accomodate changing ideas about music and *mise en scène*. Each chapter therefore examines from a different perspective the way in which music and *spectacle* affected the structuring principles of the drama. Above all, despite the overall tendency to vocal silence at the heart of some of these works, the characters find their 'voice' with the orchestra, gesture and special effects – a legacy of the secondary theatres.

CHAPTER ONE

Shakespeare, Scotland and the Supernatural: The Case of *Macbeth*

Hippolyte Chelard's opera *Macbeth* was premiered at the Académie Royale on 29 June 1827. Unusually for a work at the Opéra, the libretto adopted subject matter fashionable in much contemporary literature and theatre. As well as fascination with Shakespeare, it embraced enthusiasm for Scottish subjects and local colour, mania for brooding Gothic landscapes and castles and the appeal of the supernatural. These ingredients were vital to numerous plays at the secondary theatres, many of which, along with Boieldieu's *La Dame blanche* at the Opéra-Comique and Rossini's *La donna del lago* at the Théâtre Italien (and its French adaptation at the Odéon as *La Dame du lac*), were based on novels by Walter Scott.[1]

Despite the topicality of the opera's libretto, and the guarded praise for some elements of the work by the critics, *Macbeth* saw only five performances before being dropped from the repertoire altogether. This failure was unanimously ascribed to the lack of experience of both Chelard and the librettist, Rouget de Lisle, neither of whom had worked at the Opéra before; the libretto was judged to be undramatic and the music difficult.[2] Although Fétis suggested that there had been a lack of supervision on

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[1] Scott's novels were frequently brought out in French translations before they became available in London. According to Réné Bray, young French writers produced their own novels à la Scott, and the members of secret societies took the names of Scott heroes. See Réné Bray, *Chronologie du romantisme, 1804–1830* (Paris: Boivin & Co., 1932), 142. A more general interest in Scottish landscape and colour had influenced French (and European) culture for several decades: James Macpherson's supposed translations of the third-century bard Ossian (translated into French by Letourneur in 1777) were among Napoleon's favourite works, despite the fact that a committee in 1805 found them to be freely edited anonymous Gallic poems intercut with new passages by Macpherson himself.

[2] Hippolyte-André-Jean-Baptiste Chelard (1789–1861) won the Prix de Rome in 1811, but after his return from Italy had been employed as a violinist at the Opéra. *Macbeth* was his first opera to be staged in France; shortly after its Parisian premiere he was invited to become Kapellmeister at Munich, and *Macbeth* was performed there with success, in a revised version. Claude-Joseph Rouget de Lisle (1760–1836) had written a number of plays and collaborated

the part of the administration at the Opéra, and that machinations behind the scenes may have hindered its production, he maintained that these had simply hastened the failure of a work that was anyway incapable of exciting an audience: Chelard had been unable to overcome the problems inherent in the text.[3] To compound matters, Rossini's recent successful adaptations, *Le Siège de Corinthe* (1826) and *Moïse* (1827), were cited by many as examples of what French opera should be striving towards; nationalistic disappointment was expressed that Chelard had not produced a viable alternative.

In this chapter the context for the reception of Chelard's opera is considered, in an attempt to understand the failure of a work that appears on the surface to have gauged the public imagination so accurately. Popular and literary attitudes to Shakespeare, and to *Macbeth* in particular, are examined, and then the opera is investigated in more detail. Ultimately, it seems that the subject of *Macbeth* was in many ways simply too melodramatic to succeed as a *tragédie lyrique*.

Shakespeare in Paris

In the eighteenth century, Shakespeare's dramas were performed regularly at the Théâtre Français in Jean Ducis's highly reduced adaptations, written in alexandrines, with the more shocking elements of their stories eliminated. These dramas included *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *King John* and *Othello* (1769–92).[4] As Ducis did not read English, his dramas were derived largely from P.-A. de Laplace's translations of Shakespeare published in *Le Théâtre anglais* (1745–8), which were little more than scenarios in a mixture of prose and verse with numerous omissions and alterations. The original works, meanwhile, were more usually viewed

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on a few librettos in the 1790s, but was better known for his *chansons*, which included 'La Marseillaise'.

[3] Although Fétis gives no hint of these problems at the Opéra in his review of *Macbeth*, he mentions them in his article on Chelard in his *Biographie universelle des musiciens et bibliographie générale de musique*, iii [1836] (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 2/1883).

[4] Ducis's *Macbeth* was written in 1784. His adaptations are discussed in more detail by Peter Raby, *'Fair Ophelia'*, 43, and in Barry V. Daniels, *Revolution in the Theatre: French Romantic Theories of Drama* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), 13–15.

in France with horror than with acclaim. In 1776, following the publication of the first of Letourneur's twenty volumes of prose translations of Shakespeare, Voltaire wrote in a letter:

> The abomination of desolations has entered the house of the Lord. Lekain ... tells me that almost all the youth of Paris supports Letourneur; that English scaffolds and brothels are winning out against the theatre of Racine and the noble scenes of Corneille; that there is no longer anything majestic or decent in Paris except this Gilles of London, and, finally, that a prose tragedy is going to be staged in which there will be a gathering of butchers, which should create a splendid effect. I have seen the end of the reign of reason and good taste. I am going to die, and leave a barbarous France behind me; but fortunately you are living still, and I flatter myself that the queen will not abandon her new country ... to be the prey of savages and monsters.[5]

Although this aesthetic debate was interrupted by the Revolution, the same arguments resurfaced with equal force in the 1820s, defenders of French Classical tradition lining up against those in favour of modernisation. However, public interest in foreign literature had grown enormously since the fall of the Empire, due in part to the enthusiasms of returning émigrés. Consequently, Letourneur's translations were republished in two new editions in 1821, one of which was revised by François Guizot and provided with a long preface. In addition, new verse translations of Shakespeare's works were written by Briguière de Sorsum (1826) and Alfred de Vigny (1828–30). And while Ducis's adaptations continued to be staged at the Théâtre Français, they were outnumbered by popular adaptations of Shakespeare at the secondary theatres – which accentuated the melodramatic features so abhorred by Voltaire. These writers adapted the original works in as liberal a manner as Ducis, but, freed from Classical restrictions of form and style, they were often closer in spirit to Shakespeare's works.

[5] Voltaire, letter to Comte d'Argental (30 July 1776); cited and translated in Raby, *'Fair Ophelia'*, 44–5.

Romantisme and the Popular Stage

Shakespeare was to prove central to the dramatic theories of French Romanticism published between 1824 and 1827. These years saw the emergence of two groups of writers who, inspired by foreign literature, promoted ideas about Romantic drama as an alternative to the French Classical tradition perceived by many as an excessive observance of the conventions of late-seventeenth-century theatre.[6] Although these two groups shared similar ideas about the need for literary reform, they differed in their political beliefs. The liberals included Stendhal, Merimée and a number of *Globistes*: Vitet, Cavé, Dittmer and Etienne Delécluze, whose Sunday *réunions* attracted prominent writers and thinkers. The royalists comprised Emile Deschamps, Sophie Gay and a number of poets, including Hugo, Lamartine and Vigny; they published the literary review the *Muse Français* (1823–4), and from 1824 met weekly at Nodier's *cénacle* at the Arsenal. It was only in the late 1820s that these two goups became more united, following their political rapprochement in the face of Charles X's repressive regime, and from 1827 Hugo's *cénacle* in the rue Notre-Dame des Champs was attended by Romantics of all political persuasions.[7] For the sake of simplicity, I shall refer to both of these groups of writers as Romantic in the rest of this chapter, despite their diverse views at the beginning of the decade.

For the French Romantics, as well as for the defenders of French Classicism – represented by the Académie Française and its *ultra* director Louis-Simon Auger – Shakespeare was a symbol of the literary reform that was being discussed in pamphlets and newspaper articles and in salons. His dramas were free from the strict Classical conventions of form and language, and more generally they illustrated a freedom of subject matter and of taste. As one modern critic has put it, Shakespeare

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[6] These conventions included strict versification, the unities of time and place, and the importance of taste and balance. This tradition had been strengthened by the Revolution, and by Napoleon who saw cultural innovation as a threat to the continuity he was trying to establish with the past. In the early years of the Restoration defence of the Classical tradition was equated with defence of the national image.

[7] These literary salons are discussed in Réné Bray, *Chronologie du romantisme*; Daniels, *Revolution in the Theatre*, 7–9; see also *Journal de Delécluze*, and Léon Séché, *Le Cénacle de la Muse française, 1823–1827* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1908).

was the meeting point for 'all the admiration and repulsion of French dramatic genius'.[8]

Stendhal, for example, in his two pamphlets entitled *Racine et Shakespeare* (1823 and 1825), saw Shakespeare's plays as structural systems underpinning the notion of Romanticism. It was in the third chapter of the 1823 pamphlet, entitled (with purposely anglicised spelling) 'Ce que c'est que le romanticisme', that he specifically defined Shakespeare as a Romantic:

> Shakespeare fut romantique parce qu'il présenta aux Anglais de l'an 1590, d'abord les catastrophes sanglantes amenées par les guerres civiles, et, pour reposer de ces tristes spectacles, une foule de peintures fines des mouvements du coeur, et des nuances de passions les plus délicates.[9]
>
> [Shakespeare was Romantic because he proffered to the English of 1590 first the bloody calamities of the civil wars, and then, as a respite from those sad sights, a host of subtle portrayals of the stirrings of the heart, the most delicate shades of passion.]

This Shakespearean combination of history and the motivation of the individual was indeed to become one of the fundamental features of Romantic *drame* – and of *grand opéra*.

In contrast, Auger dismissed Shakespearean drama as 'monstrueux' in his condemnation of the 'hérésie romantique' at a public meeting of the Institut Royale de France in 1824.[10] But while for Auger the Classical conventions of form remained

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[8] See Michel Lioure, *Le Drame de Diderot à Ionesco* (Paris: Colin, 1973), 67.

[9] Stendhal, *Racine et Shakespeare* [1823] (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993), i, chap. 3; translated in Lilian R. Furst, *European Romanticism: Self-Definition, an Anthology* (London: Methuen, 1980), 41–2. The pamphlet comprised three chapters; the first was presented as a dialogue between 'L'Académicien' and 'Le Romantique', and the second, entitled 'Le Rire', dealt with comedy; these were first published in the *Paris Monthly Review* in 1823. Stendhal's views were influenced strongly by the Milanese Romantics, including Manzoni.

[10] This address took place a few days after the premiere of Lemercier's adaptation of Nicholas Rowe's Shakespearean tragedy *Jane Shore* at the Théâtre Français (24 April 1824). The work was described by a critic for *Les Annales* as 'la profanation la plus complète de notre scène'

sacrosanct, the subject of a play was another matter. He proposed that the heroes of ancient history and mythology should be abandoned in favour of those of medieval history – a compromise that paradoxically acknowledged an aspect of Shakespearean drama, and which initially drew wide support, from some moderate Romantics as well as from many entrenched Classicists.

In his second pamphlet of 1825 Stendhal went even further in a similarly theoretical – if not rhetorical – rapprochement with the literary opposition: he suggested that all great writers had been Romantic in their day. But what in his opinion made Shakespeare more Romantic than Racine was the fact that, unconstrained by the unities, he could follow the psychological development of his characters and thus the eternal theme of tragedy. It was above all this freedom of form that Stendhal – and indeed all Romantics – yearned to establish in French drama.

While the issue of form remained a constant point of contention between Classicists and Romantics, the search for new subject matter brought further concurrence of opinion. Despite their rhetoric, most Romantics still wanted works that treated honourable, elevated subjects, fit for the royal theatres, and condemned the use of language and topics that were morally shocking. For example, when Ludovic Vitet wrote in an article for *Le Globe* that all French men should have the right to enjoy what pleased them, even when it could be proved that 'he ought not to admire it, nor be moved by it, nor enjoy it', he still had in mind the recognised literary works of the past, not what he saw as the frivolous and immoral works of the boulevard theatres.[11] Indeed, Victor Hugo defended an aesthetically acceptable taste for the 'grotesque' in the famous *Préface* to his *comédie shakespearienne Cromwell* (December 1827); his context was ancient mythology, not modern *mélodrame*. Furthermore he grandly defined Shakespeare's plays as the third and final stage in the evolution of literature, after lyric and epic poetry, and thus as the culmination of the gradual process of civilisation in 'complete poetry'.[12] Despite claims for

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[the most complete defilement of our stage], for its ignoring of the unities and its mixing of genres. Cited in Bray, *Chronologie du romantisme*, 103.

[11] 'Qu'il ne doit ni admirer, ni s'émouvoir, ni s'amuser', *Le Globe* (2 April 1825).

[12] See Victor Hugo, *Cromwell* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1968). This grand scheme seems to have derived from Mme de Staël. Indeed, many of the ideas propounded by Stendhal, Hugo

'modernisation' and 'freedom', then, Romanticism was founded upon an essentially Classical aesthetic of morality and value that goes some way to explaining its acceptance at the Théâtre Français.

In 1827, the year that Hugo's *Préface* was published, the Romantics themselves had produced only novels, poetry and translations, despite their critical focus on drama. Although plays were staged at the Théâtre Français that dealt with what we might term Romantic subject matter (but as approved by Auger) – such as Pierre Lebrun's *Marie Stuart* (1820) – the acting style and visual dimension of production, as well as the verse construction, were still essentially Classical. The failure of Soumet's *Jeanne d'Arc* at the Odéon in 1825 was widely viewed as illustrating the incompatibility of *règles classiques* and grand, national subjects. Indeed a critic writing in *Le Globe* maintained that Racine himself would not have been able to make a good tragedy out of Jeanne d'Arc's story.[13] The first practical success for the Romantic dramatists came only in 1829, with Dumas's prose play *Henri III et sa cour*, which combined a cautious exploration of form with a historical subject. With this work Romanticism was finally recognised as having arrived at the Théâtre Français; Hugo declared: 'the breach is made: we will go through'.[14] His celebrated verse-drama *Hernani* followed in 1830.

These 'new', Romantic ideas had, however, long been practiced – not necessarily consciously, but they were certainly present – on the secondary stages, where the mixture of genres, the combination of the sublime and the grotesque, the importance of local colour, the use of history and freedom from the unities, had featured since at least the beginning of the century in *mélodrame* and other genres. Although such works were not considered by critics as a modern alternative to Classical drama, there was nevertheless a belief that the new Romantic drama might take its inspiration from the tone of such works. Nodier declared 'Tragedy and the

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and others were not new, but adaptations of notions present in the work of Chateaubriand, Guizot, Mme de Staël and others earlier in the century. For a discussion of the relationship of the theories of Stendhal and Hugo to Mme de Staël's *De la littérature* (1801) and *De l'Allemagne* (1814), see Daniels, *Revolution in Theatre*, 19–26.

[13] *Le Globe* (7 April 1825).

[14] 'La brèche est ouverte: nous passerons'; cited in Bray, *Chronologie du romantisme*, 211.

drame of the new school are scarcely more than *mélodrame* elevated from the artificial pomp of lyricism'.[15] Indeed, *mélodrame* was frequently described by the *Globistes* as 'tragédie populaire'.[16] One dramatist appeared to have been particularly aware of the closeness of the relationship: Théaulon announced that he was the first to introduce Romanticism to the French popular theatre, in the preface to his *mélodrame* *Le Paysan perverti* (1827), and in the epilogue he noted the overall importance of Romantic *drame* to the development of popular genres.[17]

Despite the fact that a number of dramatists, like Théaulon, wrote for both the royal and secondary theatres, there was very little cross-over between popular drama and literary Romanticism. Indeed, Nodier was the only prominent Romantic to write for the secondary theatres. Paradoxically, his adaptations of English novels for the French stage in the early 1820s – notably *The Vampyre* (1821) and *Frankenstein* (1826) – were dismissed disparagingly by both traditional and Romantic elements of the literary establishment as 'popular' and 'romantique'. Their perceived 'low' cultural status, as foreign 'Romantic' literature dealing with immoral subjects, adapted for the secondary theatres, perhaps explains the reluctance of other literary Romantics to put their ideas into practice. In any case, it highlights the course French Romantics were trying to steer between the 'popular' associations of foreign Romanticism and the elitism of the French academic establishment.

Yet state theatre was gradually absorbing the ideas of Romanticism in the late 1820s. In July 1825 Baron Taylor, formerly of the Panorama-Dramatique, was

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[15] 'La tragédie et le drame de la nouvelle école ne sont guère autre chose que des mélodrames relevés de la pompe artificielle du lyrisme'; cited in Jean Giraud, *L'Ecole romantique française* (Paris: Colin, 1927), 101.

[16] See, for example, *Le Globe* (17 June 1826).

[17] The Romanticism of *Le Paysan perverti* – namely the flouting of the unities and the mixing of genres – is discussed in James Smith Allen, *Popular French Romanticism: Authors, Readers, and Books in the 19th Century* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1981), 37–9. However, the fact that many popular writers had been doing the same things for many years illustrates Théaulon's self-consciousness rather than his innovation. Allen discusses more broadly the relationship between 'elite ideas' and popular culture in his first chapter: 'French Romanticism and Popular Literature', 21–44.

appointed *commissaire royal* at the Théâtre Français.[18] Taylor's wide circle of friends included the most prominent Romantics, notably Hugo and Vigny, and it was with the help of Nodier, with whom he had collaborated on a translation of Mathurin's *Bertram*, that he acquired the post. Although initially restricted by the deeply conservative administrative committee, with La Rochefoucauld's support he gradually implemented changes that were to revitalise the repertoire. Furthermore, in 1826, following the death of the great tragedian Talma, Ducis's Shakespeare adaptations – including *Macbeth* – were dropped from the repertoire.[19] Instead of imitating Shakespeare, interest was growing in creating a new national genre, inspired by the techniques of foreign dramatists, but based on episodes from French history defined by precise local colour. The resulting emphasis on the visual dimension was to bring criticism in 1828 from the playwright Léon Halévy that the Théâtre Français was becoming a 'Tragediorama', but this inspiration from the boulevards and from foreign literature ultimately lead French drama into a new age.[20]

Macbeth

Despite a movement away from adaptations of Shakespearean drama at the Théâtre Français from about 1826, Rossini's *Otello* (1816) was still drawing enthusiastic audiences at the Théâtre Italien, and versions of *Macbeth*, *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* drew crowds at the secondary theatres throughout the Restoration. Before turning to Chelard's opera, I shall briefly consider the characteristics of some of the versions of *Macbeth* that were circulating in the 1820s, and suggest reasons for their continuing popularity.

Ducis, in the *avertissement* to his 1790 revision of *Macbeth*, explained how he feared that the subject matter of the play might prove problematic to a Parisian audience. Consequently, he had tried to erase the 'always revolting impression of

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[18] As well as writing plays, Isidore-Justin-Séverin Taylor (1789–1879) is remembered for his many volumes of *Voyages pittoresques et romantiques de l'ancienne France* (1820–63), illustrated by contemporary artists.

[19] It was suggested by many that only Talma's realistic acting style and presence had enabled them to remain in the repertoire for so long.

[20] See Allévy, *La Mise en scène en France*, 85.

horror' and instead to create the effect of 'terreur tragique', by focusing on dialogue, in the belief that 'truth in feelings and in characterisation is above all what animates drama'.[21] The main characters are greatly simplified: Lady Macbeth – Frédégonde – becomes purely evil, and Macbeth is contrastingly weak and totally under her control. The witches ('furies ou magiciennes') appear only in an optional scene at the end of Act I.

There were at least six other versions of *Macbeth* circulating during the Restoration, including Chelard's opera, plus the performances of the visiting English theatre troupes in 1822 and 1827–8, and each was effectively a response to Ducis's version of the play. They included Hapdé's *Les Visions de Macbeth, ou les sorcières d'Ecosse* (1817), Dubois's *Les Deux Macbeth, ou l'apothéose de Ducis* (1817), Cuvelier de Trie's *Macbeth, ou les sorcières de la forêt* (1817), Ducange and Anicet Bourgeois's *Macbeth* (1829) and a translation by Léon Halévy, *Macbeth* (1829).[22] Although written for different audiences, and spanning twelve years, these works – in contrast to Ducis's version – shared a focus on the melodramatic and spectacular aspects of Shakespeare's play, in which the witches and the Scottish setting were exploited to the full.

Above all, it was Cuvelier de Trie's Shakespeare pantomimes that presented a modern alternative to Ducis's Classical adaptations; they promoted the notion of Shakespeare as a popular dramatist, and focused on visual effects and reduced the dialogue – in fact reversing many of Ducis's changes. In his *Macbeth*, Lady Macbeth is left out altogether, and Macbeth becomes a simple melodramatic villain. In the *avis* to the text, Cuvelier explained:

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[21] 'L'impression toujours révoltante de l'horreur ... la vérité dans les sentiments et dans les caractères est surtout ce qui anime un ouvrage dramatique'.

[22] *Les Visions de Macbeth, ou les sorcières d'Ecosse, mélodrame*, Augustin H[apdé] (not performed; published Paris, 1817); *Les Deux Macbeth, ou l'apothéose de Ducis, impromptu*, D[ubois] (Gaîté, 29 March 1817); *Macbeth, ou les sorcières de la forêt, pantomime à grand spectacle*, Cuvelier de Trie/Othon (Cirque Olympique, 20 March 1817); *Macbeth, mélodrame*, Ducange, Anicet Bourgeois/Piccini (Porte Saint-Martin, 9 November 1829); *Macbeth, tragédie*, Halévy (Odéon, 10 November 1829).

On conviendra sans doute avec moi que Macbeth poussé par sa destinée, entraîné par son ambition, aveuglé par les prédictions des prophétesses devant lesquelles les Rois d'Ecosse eux-mêmes courbaient leurs fronts, dans ces temps d'ignorance et de barbarie, n'avait pas besoin des conseils de sa femme pour commettre un crime qui le portait au trône ... mon intention étant de donner aux spectateurs parisiens une légère idée de la pièce anglaise, je n'aurais pu, sans trop m'écarter de mon modèle, introduire l'espèce de conversion de Macbeth et le bel effet de la somnambule Frédégonde [Lady Macbeth] qui tue son enfant, puisque ce double changement appartenait au célèbre tragique [Talma] que nous venons de perdre; enfin je n'aurais pas eu le jeu admirable de Raucourt et les vers sublimes de Ducis pour adoucir l'horreur qu'inspire une femme aussi atroce ... Sous le point de vue historique, je dois dire maintenant, que la complicité de l'épouse de Macbeth n'est fondée que sur un passage d'Hector Boethius dans son histoire d'Ecosse, imprimée à Paris en 1526, copié par Holinshed, et qui devient le germe du chef-d'oeuvre de Shakespeare.[23]

[You will agree with me no doubt that Macbeth, driven by his destiny, led by his ambition, blinded by the predictions of the prophetesses before whom the kings of Scotland themselves bow their heads, in these times of ignorance and barbarity, did not need the advice of his wife to commit a crime which would take him to the throne ... my intention being to give to the Parisian audience a mild idea of the English play, I could not, without departing too far from my model, have introduced Macbeth's conversion and the beautiful effect of the sleepwalker Frédégonde [Lady Macbeth] who kills her child, since this double change belonged to the famous tragedian [Talma] whom we have just lost; finally I wouldn't have had the admirable style of Raucourt and the sublime verses of Ducis to tone down the horror that inspired such an atrocious woman ... From the historical point of view, I must say now, that the complicity of Macbeth's wife is founded only on a passage of Boëthius in his history of

[23] The story of Macbeth occupies only two pages in John Bellenden's sixteenth-century translation from Latin in three volumes, *The History and Chronicles of Scotland by Hector Boece* (Edinburgh: W. and C. Tait, 1821). Lady Macbeth accuses her husband of lacking manhood and courage, and persuades him to gather his friends for a counsel at Inverness, where the King happens to be staying. With the encouragement of his friends, he kills Duncan (vol. ii, 259–60).

> Scotland, printed in Paris in 1526, copied by Holinshed, and which became the germ of Shakespeare's masterpiece.]

Interestingly, however, Cuvier still appreciated the effect of the sleepwalking scene enough to put it into another of his plays, *La Main de fer, ou l'épouse criminelle*, and Banquo's ghost is relocated to *Valtier le cruel*.[24] Perhaps as compensation for these omissions, the witches become central to the story, and function as Providence, ultimately saving Malcolm from Macbeth. They participate in numerous visual effects, flying across the stage on dragons and conducting transformation scenes.

Augustin Hapdé's *Les Visions de Macbeth, ou les sorcières d'Ecosse*, as its title suggests, also focuses on the witches.[25] This work was never performed; as Hapdé explained in his *avis*, its first incarnation was as a series of 'tableaux dans le genre de Servandoni' (i.e. 'spectacles en décorations'), rehearsed in 1812 at the Jeux Gymniques, where Hapdé was *administrateur*. However, the theatre was closed down before the work was performed. Hapdé added dialogue to the play the following year, and it was read at the Gaîté as a *mélodrame*, but refused by the theatre's management. Its eventual publication in 1817 combined the two versions; it is a highly visual work, with numerous tableaux and pantomime scenes, usually involving the supernatural, and as Hapdé tells us, he created another character: 'a deeply wicked ambitious man, for whom, without realising, Macbeth and Frédégonde [Lady Macbeth] become agents', a type of 'esprit infernal' with long talons.[26]

The reasons given by the Gaîté for rejecting the play (listed in Hapdé's preface) are remarkably similar to Cuvelier's misgivings about the subject, set out in the *avis* to his *Macbeth*, mentioned above. The director of the theatre was apparently unhappy about staging a work that had already been performed at the Théâtre Français (Ducis's

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[24] This is pointed out in McCormick, *Popular Theatres of Nineteenth-Century France*, 140–41.

[25] This work, together with the next two, is discussed briefly in Allwyn Charles Keys, *Les Adaptations musicales de Shakespeare en France jusqu'en 1870* (Paris: Recueil Sirey, 1933), 215–17.

[26] 'Un ambitieux profondément scélérat, duquel sans le savoir, Macbeth et Frédégonde deviennent des agents'.

version), with the inimitable Talma, and also made the point that the boulevard theatres were being encouraged to move away from sombre, tragic, criminal subjects. Finally, he claimed that the *mise en scène* would be too expensive. Interestingly, these objections seem to deny the changes already afoot in the boulevard theatres: more works were being produced on themes already treated at the Théâtre Français (either parodying the style of the theatre, or simply interpreting promising subjects in a more exciting way), and the 1820s saw a move towards darker and less moral subjects; perhaps most importantly, extravagant *mise en scène* became a crucial requirement for such works.

The reservations of the Gaîté's director are indulged by Dubois's *Les Deux Macbeth, ou l'apothéose de Ducis*, staged there in 1817. As its subtitle suggests, Ducis (who had died the previous year) is more important to the work than Shakespeare. The story of Macbeth is simplified even further, and its function seems transparently to be to provide the opportunity for some Scottish local colour, and for a glorification of Ducis: in the final scene Macbeth sings to a bust of the playwright (alongside those of Racine, Corneille and Voltaire): 'thanks to him I will never die'.[27]

The spirit of Hapdé's rejected work, however, imbued the next version of *Macbeth* to be premiered in the secondary theatres of Paris – although this was twelve years later. Ducange and Anicet Bourgeois's 1829 *mélodrame Macbeth* for the Porte Saint-Martin developed the supernatural theme with the introduction of a Mephistophelean Soldat Noir, who, like the 'esprit infernal' of *Les Visions de Macbeth*, encourages the Macbeths to commit their crime.

In sum, these works moved from exploiting the Scottish setting of Shakespeare's play and its historical appeal to embracing the supernatural element; they correspondingly reflected boulevard theatre's growing focus on visual shock and the depiction of other-worldly evil.

Chelard's *Macbeth*

Given that the Opéra was in a financial and artistic crisis in the mid-1820s, and hoped, like the Théâtre Français, to emulate the realistic and modern tone of the secondary theatres in an attempt to retrieve their audiences, it is not altogether surprising that the

[27] 'Grâce à lui, je ne mourrai jamais'.

administration should have chosen to stage an adaptation of *Macbeth*. Rouget de Lisle's libretto, submitted to the reading committee of the Opéra on 3 March 1824, was heard two weeks later and finally accepted, after delays connected with the coronation of Charles X, on 8 May 1825. It was examined along with texts for *Alexandre à Babylone* and a translation of Mozart's *Idomeneo*, and an early report suggested that its *mise en scène* would be easier and cheaper to create than those of the other operas. A later report objected that the plot was founded upon terror, and that a woman who stabs herself and a man who is led to the scaffold were subjects not at all suitable for the Opéra, but as finances were a particularly important consideration in the mid-1820s (leading, for example, to the rejection of an extravagant *Faust* ballet scenario in 1827; see Chapter Four), the work was nevertheless accepted, and staged two years later.[28]

In a similar fashion to the adaptations for the secondary theatres, Rouget de Lisle's libretto for the Opéra massively simplified Shakespeare's play, reducing it to its most melodramatic elements and emphasising the supernatural and the Scottish setting. The key points of the action are as follows: the gathered witches summon the spirits of Hell and announce their prophecies to Macbeth (Act I); Lady Macbeth plans the assassination of the king and persuades her husband to commit the deed (Act II); in a sleepwalking scene Lady Macbeth reveals that Macbeth has murdered the king; she stabs herself and Duncan's ghost appears to Macbeth before he is taken away to the scaffold (Act III). Macbeth is reduced to a basically good but weak puppet of the monstrous Lady Macbeth, who in turn is presented as more evil than the witches. In common with early operatic adaptations of Walter Scott – such as Rossini's *La donna del lago* (1819), Auber's *Leicester* (1823) and Boieldieu's *La Dame blanche* (1825) – historical authenticity is largely ignored in favour of a more general 'Romantic' local

[28] Censors' reports: *F-Pan*: $O^3$1724; discussed in Keys, *Les Adaptations musicales*, 120–21. See also $O^3$1676 III and $O^3$1707 V, and La Rochefoucauld's correspondence (AJ^{13}114, 115, 117, 119) for documentation of the opera's acceptance and subsequent removal from the repertoire. The libretto was published, and manuscript orchestral and vocal parts of the original Paris performance are held at *F-Po*: Mat.19/287(1–122); the revised version, performed in Germany, was published with French and German text (Munich: Lachner, n.d.), and is held at *F-Pn* and *GB-Lbl*.

colour:[29] in Act II a ballet is built around the theme 'Auld Lang Syne'; there is a chorus of bards evoking the ghosts of dead heroes to protect Duncan's rest (an idea common in the Ossianic operas of Napoleonic France[30]); and the dance troupes included:

> Officiers écossais, montagnards écossais, 2 corps, habitans d'Inverness, un chasseur, une jeune écossaise, guerriers écossais, dames de la princesse et de Lady Macbeth, pages du roi, six musiciens montagnards.[31]
>
> [Scottish officers, Scottish Highlanders, 2 ballet corps, inhabitants of Inverness, a hunter, a young Scottish woman, Scottish warriors, ladies-in-waiting of the princess and Lady Macbeth, the king's pages, six Highland musicians.]

The critics seemed to appreciate these evocations of Scottish colour and the supernatural. A reviewer for *Le Corsaire* particularly enjoyed the ballets, which included a simulated *combat de cavaliers*, and the witches' trio in Act I was perceived by many as the highlight of the work. The critic for *Le Globe* declared that it suggested something of the 'mysterious and fantastic colour' evoked by Weber in his 'admirable *Freyschütz*', and the audience apparently applauded the number. Fétis also found other parts of the score well-written – notably the overture, based on two themes from the opera (the march from Act II and the final chorus of Act III), in which he found the staccato brass effects reminiscent of Rossini.[32] Three numbers from the opera were published immediately – those sung by Adolphe Nourrit and Laure Cinti, in the roles of the lovers Douglas and Moïna – and the *Bibliographie de la France* for

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[29] This tendency is described in Anselm Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera*, 74.

[30] For example, Le Sueur's *Ossian, ou les bardes* (1804), which employs sixteen harps and a number of folk tunes to suggest bardic local colour, and Méhul's *Uthal* (1806), in which violas replace the violins, giving a masked quality to the orchestration.

[31] Sketches of the tartan costumes for the montagnards – reminiscent, like the scene designs, of those for *La Dame blanche* – can be seen at *F-Po*: D.216/8.

[32] Fétis, *Revue musicale* (July 1827), i, 520–26.

1827 even carried an advertisement encouraging subscribers to the published score of the entire work, which was planned for the following March.[33]

Despite the praise of certain elements of the opera, however, the objections raised by critics were numerous. The most fundamental complaint was that the potential of Shakespeare's play to be turned into an opera was not fulfilled by the librettist. The critic 'C.' writing in the *Journal des débats* approved the choice of subject:

> Le *Macbeth* de Shakespeare est une espèce d'opéra sans musique. On y trouve tout: des sorcières de la mythologie calédonienne, délibérant sous l'influence d'une des principales divinités du paganisme; des guerriers et des gens de la lie du peuple; un roi vénérable par ses vertus et par ses cheveux blanches.[34]
>
> [Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is a sort of opera without music. We find everything in it: the witches from Caledonian mythology, conferring under the influence of one of the principal pagan gods; soldiers and people from the dregs of society; a king, venerable through his virtues and his white hair.]

But he was disappointed with the librettist's adaptation:

> Séduit par quelques scènes admirables de Shakespeare, il [Rouget de Lisle] a cru qu'on pouvait faire passer dans notre langue une partie des beautés de l'original ... Comme [Ducis] il a voulu débarrasser le sujet de scènes qui, dans la pièce du poète anglais, ont une teinte si originale, et contribuent si puissamment à la variété, mais qui, dans nos idées, passent pour des trivialités, et il ne s'est pas aperçu qu'en ne conservant que les situations principales, il ne pourrait éviter la monotonie et le froid.[35]

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[33] The three published numbers were: 'Dans vos murs d'Inverness' (Douglas), 'Eh quoi! cet intérêt si tendre' (Douglas and Moïna) and 'Ah si je vous suis chère' (Moïna); the chorus 'Quittez, quittez' was also published in 1835. The score of the Parisian version of the opera does not appear to have been published.

[34] 'C.', *Journal des débats* (2 July 1827).

[35] Fétis, *Revue musicale* (July 1827), i, 520–26.

> [Seduced by some of Shakespeare's wonderful scenes, he [Rouget de Lisle] believed we could retain in our language some of the beauties of the original ... Like [Ducis] he wanted to get rid of scenes which, in the English poet's play, have such an original colour, and contribute so powerfully to the variety, but which, in our view, pass for trivialities, and he didn't notice that in retaining only the main situations, he was unable to avoid monotony and coldness.]

While the librettist was expected to simplify a complex work and make its foreign idiom acceptable to a French audience, he was also required to preserve the genius of the original. Faced with such an impossible task, it was rare for a librettist adapting a foreign work to escape criticism on this count, and Rouget de Lisle was no exception.[36]

However, for most critics it was the misalliance of music and subject that was most problematic. While in many ways the subject matched the style of works seen on the secondary stages, the construction of the work was reminiscent of the *tragédies lyriques* of a previous generation of opera composers – a similar contradiction of form and content to that encountered by playwrights producing works for the Théâtre Français, mentioned above. For the critic of *Le Globe*, the language was too literary. In contrast to the frequently criticised but nevertheless simply constructed verses of Scribe, for example, Rouget de Lisle's more complex lines were not easily set to music; moreover, there were not enough ensembles, and too much recitative.[37] For Fétis this curious amalgam of the traditional and the new simply emphasised the inappropriateness of each:

> Nos auteurs veulent du romanticisme, mais arrangé à leur manière, et ne peuvent aborder franchement les choses hardies avec toutes leurs conséquences; il en résulte que nous n'avons que des productions bâtardes qui ne sont ni raisonnables, ni piquantes.[38]

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[36] This predicament is discussed in more detail with regard to Goethe's *Faust* in Chapter Four.

[37] *Le Globe* (5 July 1827). In fact the critic – probably Ludovic Vitet, although the article is unsigned – spends almost half of the review berating the genre of *tragédie lyrique*.

[38] Fétis, *Revue musicale* (July 1827), i, 520–26.

> [Our authors want Romanticism, but arranged in their way, and they won't boldly tackle daring things with all their consequences; the result is that we have only hybrid productions which are neither reasonable nor piquant.]

Furthermore, librettist and composer seem to have had little feeling for what the other was trying to do. The critic writing for *Le Globe* claimed:

> Le poète fait de la musique une psalmodie à la façon du *plain-chant*, et le musicien fait du poème un grimoire inintelligible ... [Macbeth] est un continuel assaut de médiocrité entre les vers et la musique.[39]
>
> [The poet makes of the music a psalmody in the manner of plain-chant, and the musician makes of the poem an unintelligible nonsense ... [Macbeth] is a continuous assault of mediocre verses and music.]

The music itself was roundly criticised by literary and professional music critics alike, as too difficult to listen to, and hard to sing and play – and consequently badly performed. Fétis suggested that in the witches' trio Chelard had tried to imitate Weber's *Der Freischütz* (1821); however (unlike the *Globe* critic mentioned earlier), Fétis saw the result as 'a succession of chords just about combined, and laboriously linked together, which evades any sort of analysis ... it is a chaos without logic, without connection, without progression'. He concluded that Chelard 'had less in mind to make pleasant music than to find dramatic and true effects'.[40]

Der Freischütz had been translated and adapted for the Odéon as *Robin des bois* in 1824, and was one of the most successful operas in Paris during the 1820s.

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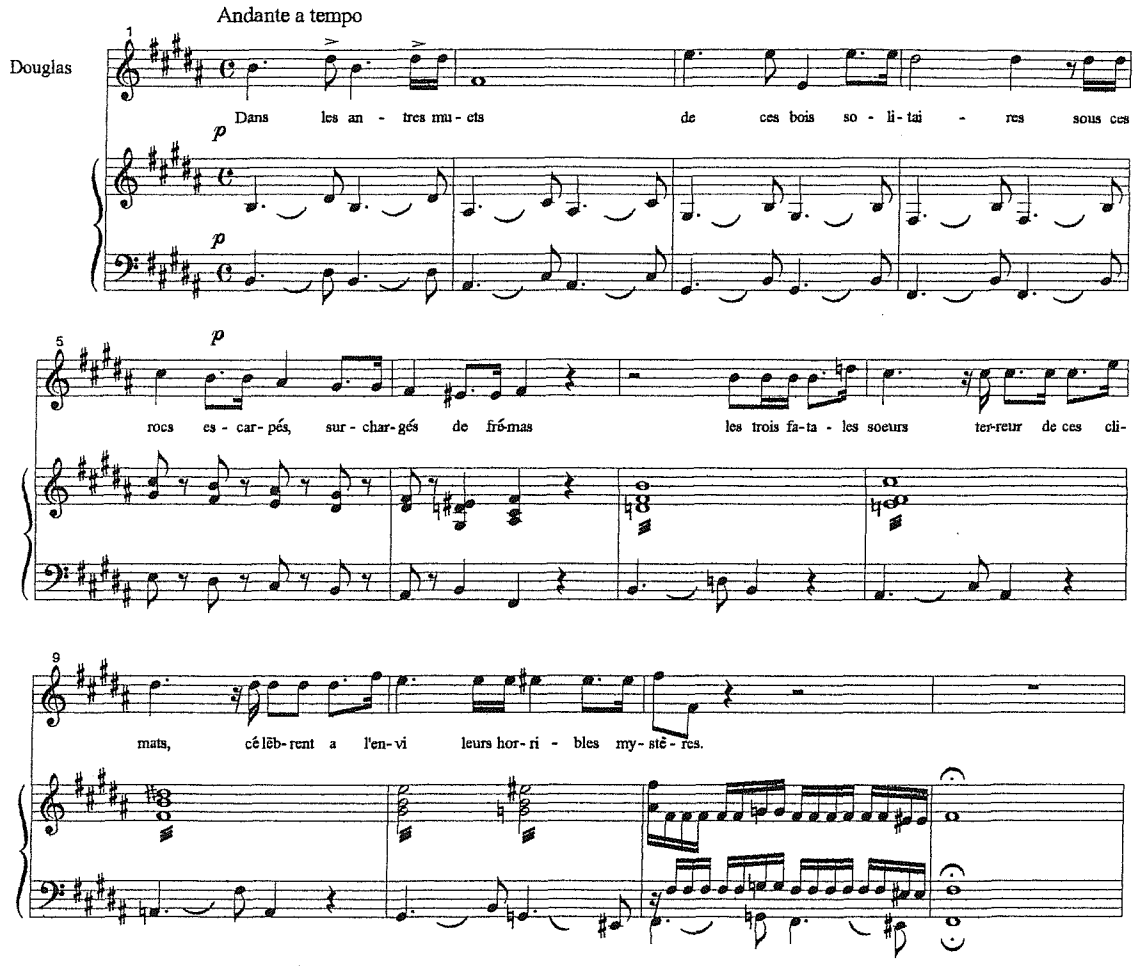
[39] *Le Globe* (5 July 1827). This specific problem is discussed in relation to Gluck in Mark Everist, 'Gluck, Berlioz and Castil-Blaze: The Aesthetics of French Opera', *Reading Critics Reading: French Music Criticism from the Revolution to 1848*, ed. Roger Parker and Mary Ann Smart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

[40] 'C'est une succession d'accords péniblement combinés, et laborieusement enchaînés, qui se refusent à toute espèce d'analyse ... c'est un chaos sans logique, sans liaison, sans progression'; 'Il a eu moins en vue de faire de la musique agréable que de trouver des effets dramatiques et vrais', Fétis, *Revue musicale* (July 1827), i, 520–26.

Comparisons drawn by critics between *Der Freischütz* and *Macbeth* were inevitable, given their shared supernatural atmospheres, and it seems, as Fétis suggests, that Chelard was consciously alluding to Weber's Wolf's Glen scene in the witches' trio (see below). However, rather than imitating Weber's careful progression of tonalities, derived from the diminished seventh chord that signifies the presence of the devilish Zamiel, Chelard relied on general textual and musical allusions to *Der Freischütz*. Furthermore, there appear to be similar references to another supernatural work, Boieldieu's *opéra comique La Dame blanche* (1825). For example, the trio in *Macbeth* is preceded by a short ballad which introduces the idea of the three witches, sung by Macbeth's companion (and Rouget's invention), Douglas (see Example 1a).



[In the silent caves of these solitary woods, under these steep rocks, burdened with trembling, the three fatal sisters, terror of these climes, vie with one another in celebrating their dreadful mysteries.]

Example 1a. Chelard, *Macbeth*: Act I, Douglas's ballad

This number recalls the celebrated ballad from *La Dame blanche*;[41] the similarity derives both from the warning that is delivered, and the language in which it is couched, and from the shape of the vocal line – octave leaps (bars 3 and 11) within a gentle scalar descent, with chromatic inflections and martial dotted rhythms, a combination which suggests both caution and a show of bravery. The descending bass line – a (tonic) B major scale in the first half followed by a chromatic descent to the dominant in the second – also recalls the opening of Weber's Wolf's Glen scene. More broadly, diminished seventh chords (here on the word '*fré*mas') and the use of ophicleides, cymbals and bass drum all help to create what was (even then) a familiarly spooky atmosphere. The continuation of Douglas's air, 'C'est là qu'il faut chercher', as the soldiers look for Macbeth, is underpinned by chromatically rising sequences of triplets, building to the moment when the 'trois soeurs fatales' finally arrive. After a brief pantomime as they 'go to find their trivet and put it in the middle of the stage',[42] they begin to chant over tremolando strings, which suggest the threat of a storm as well as the more tangible danger for Macbeth (see Example 1b). The mood and words of this number are reminiscent of the first part of the Wolf's Glen scene, where the spirits chanting on a monotone (also accompanied by tremolando strings) in turn recall Shakespeare's witches:

> Milch des Mondes fiel aufs Kraut,
> Uhui! Uhui!
> Spinweb ist mit Blut betaut!
> Uhui! Uhui!
> Eh noch wieder Abend graut,
> Uhui! Uhui!
> ist sie tot, die zarte Braut!
> Uhui! Uhui!
> Eh noch wieder sinkt die Nacht,
> ist das Opfer dargebracht!
> Uhui! Uhui!

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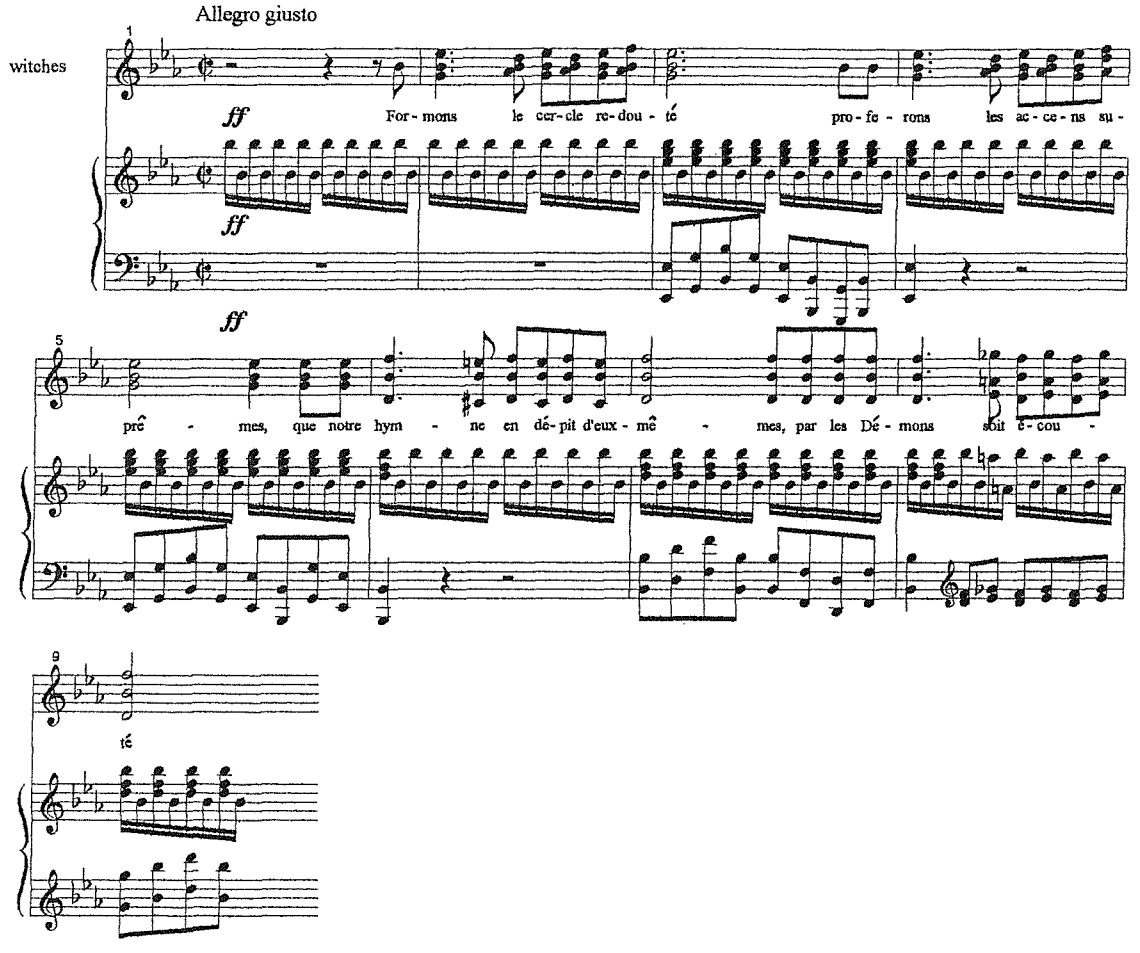
[41] *La Dame blanche* is discussed in more detail in Chapter Two, where the score of the ballad is reproduced.

[42] '[Elles] vont chercher le trepied et le mettent au milieu de la scène' (*Macbeth*, Act I).

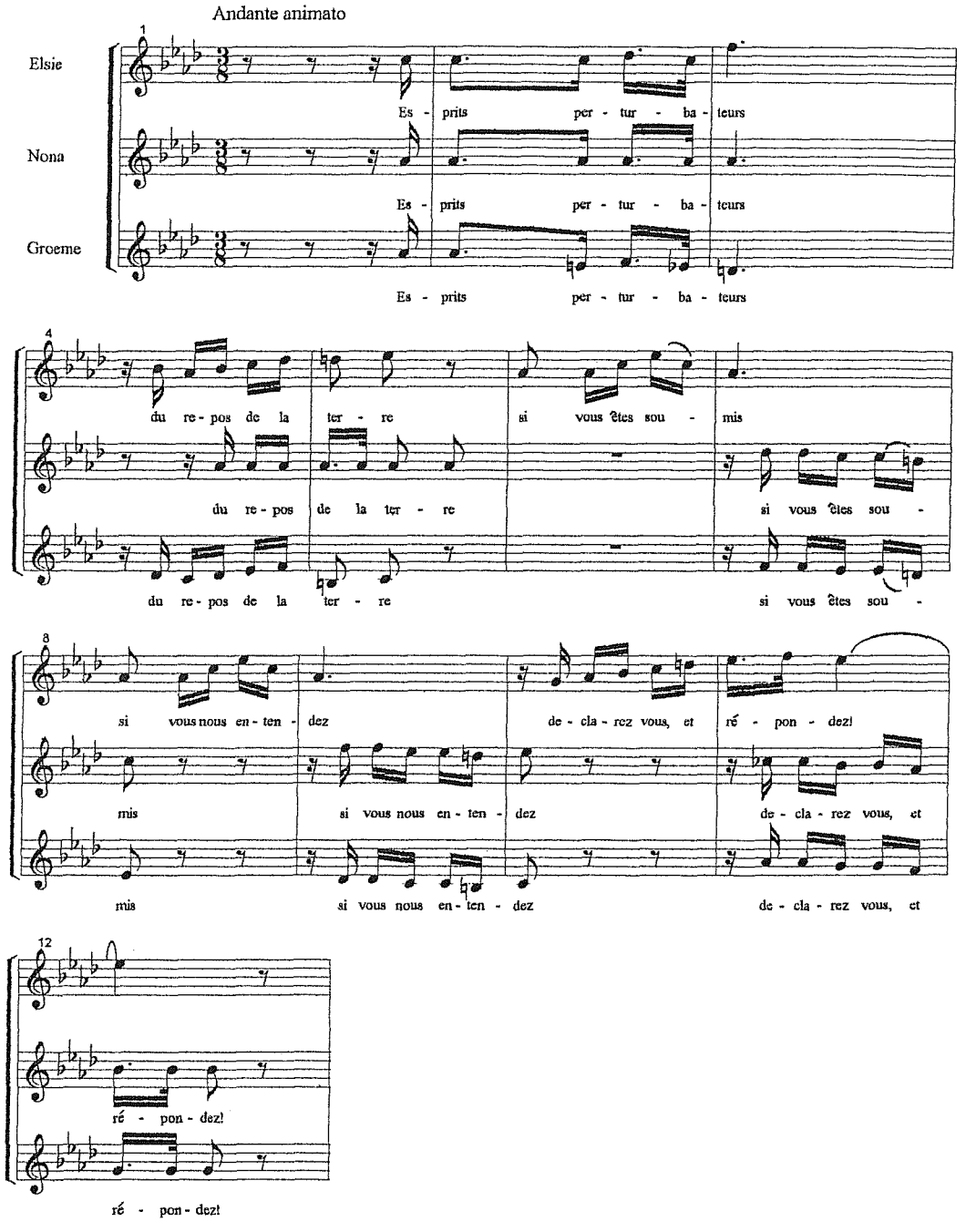
[Moon-milk falling on the grass,/Oohooey! Oohooey!/Spider's-web covered with bloody dew!/Oohooey! Oohooey!/Before evening falls/Oohooey! Oohooey!/the delicate bride will die!/Oohooey! Oohooey!/Before night is over/the sacrifice will be made!/Oohooey! Oohooey!]



[Let us form the dreaded circle, let us utter the supreme accents, may our hymn be heard by the Demons, in spite of themselves.]

Example 1b. Chelard, *Macbeth:* Act I, witches' trio (chant)

The simple, unaccompanied summoning of evil spirits which follows in Chelard's work derives its effect partly from contrast with the richer textures of what has just passed, but more obviously from the pure and penetrating sound of three closely written voices in simple harmonies (see Example 1c).



[Disruptive spirits sleeping in the earth, if you are submissive, if you hear us, declare yourselves and answer!]

Example 1c. Chelard, *Macbeth*: Act I, witches' trio

The mildly dissonant effect of the opening A flat pedal in the middle voice is increased by teasing chromatic passing notes in the outer voices, and according to one critic by the exaggerated performances of the singers:

> Elles se sont si bien pénétrées, quant à ce point, de l'esprit de leur rôle, elles se sont élevées à une fausseté si diabolique, si infernale, qu'il est presque impossible d'apprécier les beautés de ce morceau.[43]
>
> [They had so well permeated the spirit of their roles by this point, raising themselves to such a diabolical, infernal peak, that it is practically impossible to appreciate the beauties of this piece.]

Seen in isolation, there is nothing particularly remarkable about the musical language of any of these numbers in *Macbeth*. Their impact in the opera – and perhaps their effect on the critics – apparently derived from their precipitate juxtaposition, and from the melodramatic subject they were supporting. In contrast to the elaborate tonal pattern and subtle use of instrumental tone that characterised the Wolf's Glen scene, the witches' scene was constructed around simple imitations of, and allusions to, the instrumental colour, harmonic effects and dramatic moments of other supernatural works. Such effects of contrast and allusion were techniques more commonly encountered in the genres of the secondary theatres than in opera, and they did not lend themselves to Fétis's formal 'analysis' of harmonic progression.

Furthermore, whereas at the secondary theatres – and indeed in *Der Freischütz* – such musical techniques were usually underpinned by visual effects that were central to the drama, in *Macbeth*, as critics complained, *spectacle* rarely clinched the musical moment as the drama demanded. The appearance of the supernatural on the secondary stages, for example, was usually accompanied by dramatic lighting effects, diabolic dancing and the enactment of magic transformations as well as the quotation of familiar supernatural music.[44] Such scenes were usually played out as *mélodrame*,

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[43] *Le Globe* (5 July 1827).

[44] See Chapter Four for a discussion of representations of *Faust* at the secondary theatres, for example.

contrasting speech, music and gesture. This lack at the Opéra was no doubt because such effects were not part of the aesthetic of *tragédie lyrique*. But if such melodramatic subject matter was to be treated at the Opéra, by definition it had to be integrated more convincingly with the other elements of the drama.

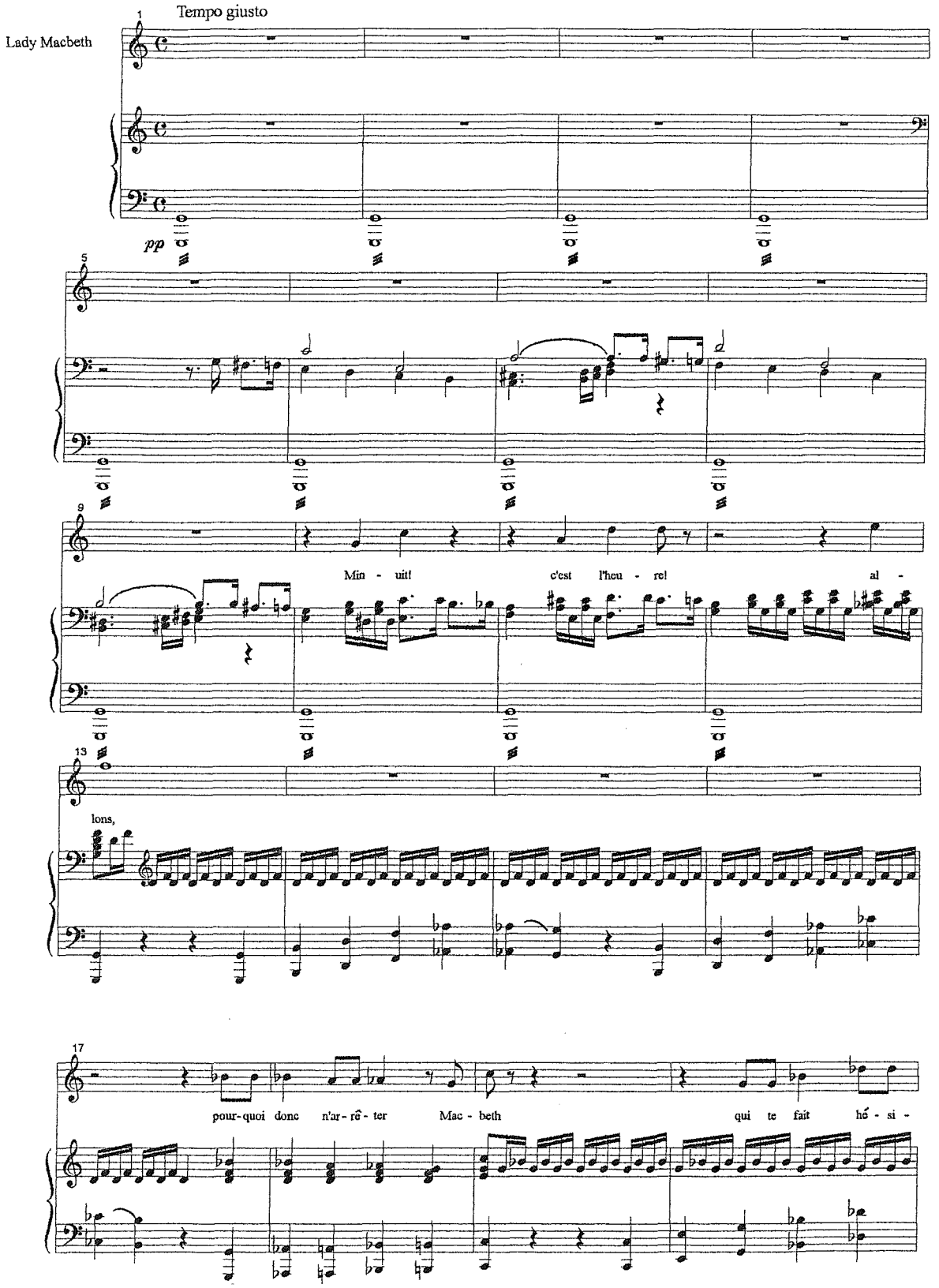
Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking trance was perhaps the most criticised scene in the entire opera for its lack of dramatic cohesion: music, visual effect and drama did not meld convincingly. Accompanied by rumbling timpani she enters in a trance; the chorus and principal characters surround her as she wonders at the blood on her arm. She then narrates the murder of Duncan (see Example 1d). Her fragmented and often angular vocal line is superimposed onto tremolando strings and a series of ascending arpeggiations of diminished seventh chords and chromatic motifs, giving an ambiguous sense of tonality.

Fétis was unhappy with such a scene being sung:

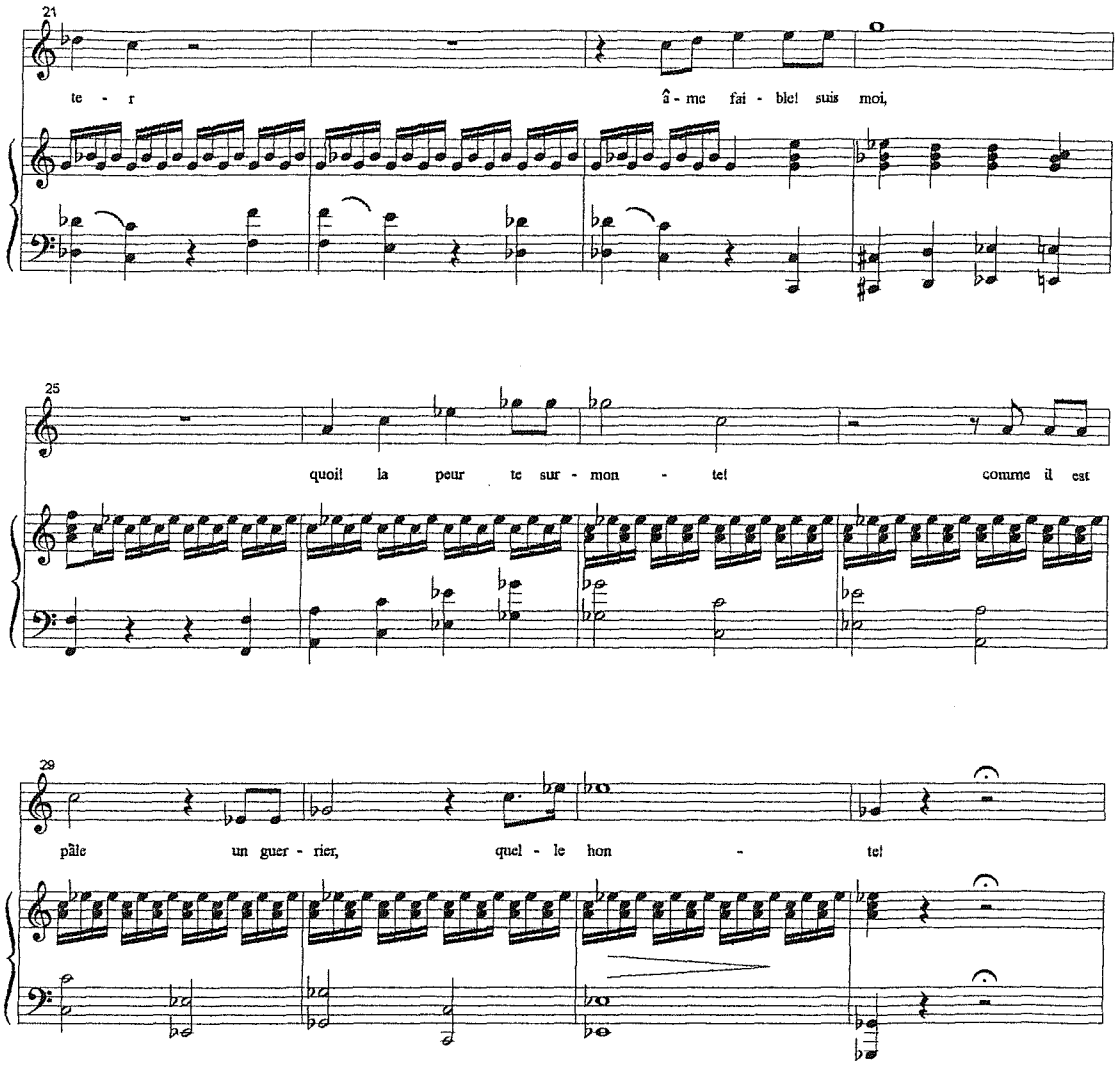
> Ces mots entrecoupés, cette pantomime, susceptibles d'un grand effet dans une tragédie, si le rôle est confié à un acteur habile, doivent perdre de leur caractère s'ils deviennent le motif d'un air. Je ne concevrais l'effet de cette scène que si on la traitait en mélodrame, c'est-à-dire si l'orchestre seul chantait, et était interrompu par des phrases parlées. Peut-être cette innovation serait-elle trouvée trop forte à l'Opéra.[45]
>
> [These interspersed words, this pantomime, capable of a great effect in a tragedy, if the role is given to a talented actor, lose their character if they become the motif of an air. I could only imagine the effect of this scene treated as melodrama, that is to say if the orchestra alone sang, and was interrupted by spoken phrases. Perhaps this innovation would be too much for the Opéra.]

Other critics were more uncomfortable with the disturbing nature of the trance. Musically it contrasts with the witches' trio – the combination of slightly more adventurous harmonies and a fragmented vocal line creates a more original

[45] Ibid.



Example 1d. Chelard, *Macbeth*: Act III, sleepwalking scene



[Midnight! It is time! Let us go, why then stop Macbeth, who makes you hesitate? Feeble mind! Follow me, what? Fear overcomes you? How pale he is, a soldier, what shame!]

Example 1d (cont'd)

atmosphere of terror. Part opera, part *mélodrame*, Lady Macbeth's behaviour escapes neat classification; it is almost too shockingly different and effective in the context – she appears more preternatural than the witches themselves. Furthermore, in her trance Lady Macbeth reveals who has killed the king, before the murder has been discovered by anyone else, and thus undermines the structure of the whole drama and

destroys the dénouement. Thus, both the suitability of Lady Macbeth's expression and the dramatic purpose of the scene were questioned by the critics – despite the potential for powerfully combining drama with visual and musical effect.

The final moments of the opera were also criticised for their lack of dramatic integrity. For 'C.' in the *Journal des débats* the action comes to rather an abrupt end, as Lady Macbeth stabs herself and Macbeth goes to the scaffold, with no resistance. Moreover, when Duncan's ghost fleetingly appears, the dramatic potential is not explored: 'Duncan's ghost appears to him, showing his bloody wound. Macbeth cries out in horror. The vision disappears'.[46]

It seemed that ultimately the problem lay not purely with the unusually melodramatic nature of the subject and its potentially shocking immorality, but with the Opéra's inexperience in dealing with such subjects, and its consequent failure to create a cogent drama. As Fétis remarked:

> Il y a si loin de la concéption du plan du poème à l'effet général des scènes, de la musique, des danses, des décorations, de cet ensemble colossal qui procure ou le succès ou la chute![47]
>
> [There is such a distance between the conception of the libretto and the general effect of the scenes, music, dance, decor, the effect of this colossal ensemble which brings success or failure!]

Despite the unexpectedly 'Romantic' subject, the libretto, music and stage effects were traditional and aesthetically unremarkable for the Opéra, and it is therefore not altogether surprising that *Macbeth* failed to achieve success. By focusing on the supernatural and on Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking, the creators invited comparison with the more visually exciting *Macbeth*s and other supernatural works of the

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[46] 'L'ombre de Duncan lui apparaît, montrant sa blessure sanglante. Macbeth jette un cri d'effroi. La vision disparaît' (Act III, final scene). 'C.' contrasts this scene with Ducis's interpretation of events, in which he makes Duncan's ghost say many of the things Banquo's ghost says in Shakespeare's drama, thus integrating the scene into the drama. *Journal des débats* (2 July 1827).

[47] Fétis, *Revue musicale* (July 1827), i, 520–26.

secondary theatres, and thus emphasised the disjunction between the traditional, neo-Classical form of *tragédie lyrique* and the popular, Romantic potential of its subject. The supernatural was essentially superimposed onto the drama – given Lady Macbeth's uncompromising character the whole story could have happened without the intermediary of the witches – and human interest was provided not by Macbeth's gradual change of mind, but by an artificially imposed love-interest between Douglas and another newly invented character, the king's daughter, Moïna, which was similarly dispensable to the action. Ultimately, what was to be Victor Hugo's grand vision for 'high' drama – the integration of colour, realistically complex characters and fusion of genres – was denied in favour of the shock of contrast preferred by the secondary theatres, but without the integrity of the visual contribution to the dramatic whole. The result was a work that failed to convince either its audiences or its critics.

Intriguingly, a performance of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* by the visiting English theatre troupe in the 1827–8 season was also a disappointment. It was not staged until the end of the troupe's visit, on 7 April 1828 at the Théâtre Italien. It had never before been given in English in France, and public expectation mounted to that awaiting the first performances of the troupe the previous September. However, the elements of the grotesque that seized the imagination on the written page apparently appeared flat or ridiculous onstage. Much of the responsibility for this lay with the *mise en scène* – the English company had to make do with scenery from Italian operas. Moreover, there was no thunder or lightning, nor music to accompany the witches, and the indecorous language shocked those who understood it, as did the contents of the witches' cauldron.[48] Although the epic quality and grandeur of the work shone through, its dramatic nature and characterisation were somewhat obscured. Harriet Smithson could not create the required effect in the sleepwalking scene, and the role in general was not especially suited to her talents, demanding greater strength and energy than she could easily command – she was more successful as Ophelia, Juliet

[48] These problems with the production are discussed in J.-L. Borgerhoff, *Le Théâtre anglais à Paris sous la Restauration* (Paris: Hachette, 1913), 118–23.

and Desdemona, as the numerous contemporary depictions of her in these particular roles suggest.[49]

Thus although Shakespeare's greatness was undisputed after the performances by the English troupe had been seen, French writers preferred either to translate his works, or to write entirely new plays; adaptations or imitations of Shakespeare were rarely undertaken on the royal stages after 1828. In 1829, following the performance of his translation of *Othello* at the Odéon, Vigny was to declare: 'Those who imitate Shakespeare in our time are as false as those who imitate the author of Athalie [Racine]'.[50] The way forward, in both spoken drama and opera, as seen in the years that followed, was a gradual loosening of the traditional style, combined with inspiration from the popular stages and from abroad, supported by a new attention to the visual dimension.

[49] Notably pictures by Delacroix, and Devéria and Boulanger, some of which are reproduced in Chapter Two.

[50] 'Un imitateur de Shakespeare serait aussi faux dans notre temps que le sont les imitateurs de l'auteur d'Athalie [Racine]', *Lettre à Lord *** sur la soirée du 24 October 1829 et sur un système dramatique*; cited in Lioure, *Le Drame de Diderot à Ionesco*, 73.

CHAPTER TWO

'Dormez donc, mes chères amours': *La Somnambule* and Representations of Trance

Jeanne d'Arc's visions were interpreted variously in nineteenth-century France as sleepwalking and ecstasy (1825), deranged hallucinations (1830s) and hysteria (1890s).[1] Even within the years of the Restoration she was depicted variously on the stage as a madwoman, a religious fanatic and a witch.[2] This confusion in naming and defining her experience was a symptom of the tendency in the early nineteenth century to consider any inexplicable behaviour as the manifestation either of an unstable mind, or of the supernatural. Hypnotism, catalepsy, delirium, natural and magnetic somnambulism, ecstasy, hallucination and hysteria were all viewed as the meeting point between sleep, lunacy and mysticism.

A similar combination of interpretations was apparent in representations of sleepwalking and madness in general on the Parisian stage in the early nineteenth century. Between June and December 1827, works in every conceivable genre featured somnambulists or delirious madwomen of ghostly appearance, all dressed in white, with staring eyes and dishevelled hair. The best-known of these works was *La Somnambule, ou l'arrivée d'un nouveau seigneur*, a *ballet-pantomime* by Scribe, choreographed by Jean-Pierre Aumer, with music by Ferdinand Hérold.[3] It was first

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[1] This shift in perceptions of Jeanne d'Arc is discussed by Tony James in *Dream, Creativity, and Madness in Nineteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 8.

[2] At least six plays about Jeanne d'Arc appeared during the Restoration; they included *Jeanne d'Arc, ou la délivrance d'Orléans, drame lyrique* (Théaulon, d'Artois/Carafa), Opéra-Comique, 10 March 1821, in which Jeanne is believed to be mad; *Jeanne d'Arc, tragédie* (Soumet), Odéon, 14 March 1825, in which she has religious visions; *Jeanne la Folle, ou la Bretagne au treizième siècle, drame* (Fontan), Odéon, 28 August 1830, in which she is believed to be a witch.

[3] Jean-Pierre Aumer (1776–1833) had experience at the secondary theatres: he was *maître de ballet* at the Porte Saint-Martin at the beginning of the century, and four of his *ballets-pantomimes* were staged at the Panorama-Dramatique in the early 1820s. He became *maître de ballet* at the Opéra in 1820. Louis-Joseph-Ferdinand Hérold (1791–1833) was *chef de chant* at the Opéra-Comique (from 1816), *accompagnateur* (1818–1826) and *chef des choeurs*

performed on 19 September 1827 at the Opéra, and is remembered today as the source for Bellini's *La sonnambula* (Milan, March 1831).[4] *La Somnambule* also spawned four *vaudevilles* on the same theme: *La Villageoise somnambule, Héloïse, La Somnambule du Pont-aux-choux* and *La Petite somnambule*; and Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking scene was the climax of Chelard's *Macbeth* at the Opéra.[5] Meanwhile, Nina, the mad heroine of Marsollier and Dalayrac's opera *Nina, ou la folle par amour* of 1786, survived in the repertoire of the Opéra in Persuis's ballet on the same story (1813), and more madwomen appeared in *La Folle de Glaris*, an adaptation of Kreutzer's German opera *Cordelia*, at the Odéon, and in a number of works based on

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(1820–22) at the Théâtre Italien, and *chef de chants* at the Opéra (1826–33); his ballets dominated the ballet repertoire at the Opéra in the 1820s. See Wild, *Dictionnaire des théâtres parisiens*.

[4] A number of Italian operas based on the theme of the sleepwalker appeared in the early part of the century, notably Foppa/Paer's *La sonnambula* (1800), Romani/Carafa's *Il sonnambulo* (1824), Romani/Rastrelli's *Amina* (1824) and Ferretti/Ricci's *Amina* (1829) and *Il sonnambulo* (1830). These works, however, took their librettos from different sources, including Pont de Veyle's 1739 *comédie Le Somnambule* in which the male sleepwalker does not appear as an innocent victim, but carries out mischievous tricks when he sleepwalks. This work was revived for a performance at Court in July 1827, but the Italian operas were not staged in Paris in the 1820s, and so are not considered in this chapter.

[5] *La Villageoise somnambule, ou les deux fiancées, comédie-vaudeville* (Bournonville, Dupin), Variétés, 15 October 1827; *Héloïse, ou la nouvelle somnambule, comédie-vaudeville* (Théaulon), Vaudeville, 25 October 1827; *La Somnambule du Pont-aux-choux, folie-vaudeville en trois tableaux* (Pellisier, Hubert), Gaîté, 10 November 1827; *La Petite somnambule, ou coquetterie et gourmandise, vaudeville* (L'Endormi [Laffillard, Gombault, Demonval], Comte, 18 December 1827; *Macbeth, tragédie lyrique* (Rouget de Lisle/Chelard), Opéra, 29 June 1827. *La Villageoise somnambule* follows an almost identical plot to the *ballet-pantomime*, while the other three *vaudevilles* introduce significant variations, particularly *La Somnambule du Pont-aux-choux*, which focuses on the farcical and mischievous activities of the sleepwalker. The title *Héloïse, ou la nouvelle somnambule* presumably alludes to the plot and overall moral tone of Rousseau's *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse* (published in 1761). Eight years earlier, in December 1819, Scribe and Delavigne had written a *comédie-vaudeville* with the same title, *La Somnambule*, based on a different story.

Walter Scott's novels, including *La Folle, ou le testament d'une anglaise* at the Gymnase and *Emilia, ou la folle* at the Théâtre Français.[6] Shakespeare's Ophelia was played famously by Harriet Smithson in the English touring theatre's production of *Hamlet* later in the year. For six months the Parisian stages were overrun with mentally unstable, spectral women.

In the twentieth century we have also tended to conflate such conditions as far as nineteenth-century opera is concerned, and given the predominance of mad rather than sleepwalking heroines in the repertoire, we prefer to see sleepwalking as a type of diluted madness. In an article on mad scenes for *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, for example, Stephen Willier's only distinction between sleepwalking and mad heroines is one of genre. Sleepwalkers are *semiseria* madwomen: amnesia, hallucination, irrational behaviour and sleepwalking all lead to 'mad scenes'.[7]

Current fascination with operatic madness centres on the fusion of mental instability with female sexuality that dominated nineteenth-century cultural representation and psychiatric practice. This association gained scientific validity around 1800 in the work of Philippe Pinel, who defined insanity as a mental and moral illness rather than a physical disease, and was developed in studies of female hysteria at the other end of the century by Charcot and Freud.[8] Despite statistics suggesting

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This work was revived in 1825 but did not appear in 1827 alongside the other sleepwalkers, although it was recalled by critics.

[6] *Nina, ou la folle par amour, comédie mêlée d'ariettes* (Marsollier/Dalayrac), Comédie-Italienne (Favart), 15 May 1786; *Nina, ou la folle par amour, ballet-pantomime* (Milon/Persuis), Opéra, 23 November 1813; *La Folle de Glaris, drame lyrique* (adapted from Kreutzer's *Cordelia* by Sauvage/Payer), Odéon, 21 April 1827; *La Folle, ou le testament d'une anglaise, comédie* (de Wailly), Madame, 17 August 1827; *Emilia, ou la folle, drame* (Soumet), Théâtre Français, 1 September 1827.

[7] 'Mad Scenes', *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1992). Simon Maguire also equates the conditions in his article 'Mad Scenes' in *The Grand Obsession: An Anthology of Opera*, ed. Rupert Christiansen (London: Collins, 1988), 236–42.

[8] See Philippe Pinel, *Traité médico-philosophique sur l'aliénation mentale, ou la manie* (Paris: Caille et Ravier, 1799–1800); Jean-Martin Charcot, *L'Hystérie*[1880s], ed. E. Trillat (Toulouse: Edouard Privat, 1971); Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer, *Studies on Hysteria* [1895] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974).

that as many men as women were committed to asylums, the attitude encouraged by literary and scientific writing throughout the century was that insanity was a specifically female susceptibility.[9] While stylised representations focused on a visual attraction, enhanced by the unexpressed, disturbing nature of insanity, real-life treatment of the mentally disturbed presented a similarly contradictory situation: safely contained in asylums, the insane were put on public view.

Some feminist theorists have explored this paradoxical attitude to the insane by taking up Michel Foucault's thesis that madness was assimilated into the broader category of 'unreason' in the nineteenth century, and perceived as a threat against the social order, its symptoms defined by society in order to exclude and control a sector of the population.[10] This political view of madness has led to interpretations that see insanity (and particularly hysteria) as a rejection of, even an escape from, patriarchal structures.[11] Indeed, opera critics such as Susan McClary and Catherine Clément have posited the mad scene itself as a means by which the heroine breaks out of the restrictions of the opera's plot and form, and thus those of society.[12] Such readings

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[9] See for example Yannick Ripa, *Women and Madness: The Incarceration of Women in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990; originally published as *La Ronde des folles*, Paris, 1986).

[10] Michel Foucault's highly influential *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972) was part of a larger backlash of the 1960s and 70s against a historiography of psychiatry that had construed it as a wholly positive, progressive process; Foucault, in contrast, suggested that in the nineteenth century the mentally disturbed, like sexual offenders and free-thinkers, were regarded as having violated bourgeois morality.

[11] Phyllis Chesler, in *Women and Madness* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), suggested that madwomen were attempting both consciously and unconsciously to escape their conventional female roles, and that symptoms by which society defined mental illness were related to accepted norms of female and masculine behaviour and identity. In other words, madness was seen as a transgression of the gender stereotype. See also Elaine Showalter and her cultural study of madness in England, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830–1980* (New York: Pantheon, 1985).

[12] Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), chap. 4: 'Excess and Frame: The Musical Representation of Madwomen', 80–111. McClary discusses the portrayal of madness in the roles of Monteverdi's nymph, Donizetti's Lucia and Strauss's Salomé. Catherine Clément, *Opera, or*

rely on the interpretation of specific visual conventions of madness – of the heroine and her surroundings, and the reactions of other characters – and of musical devices used to signify her excess of emotion and isolation.

As one might expect, these feminist analyses of operatic madness have also, on occasion, considered sleepwalking. Bellini's Amina (one of the few sleepwalkers left in the modern repertoire) shares a chapter in Clément's book with Elvira (*I puritani*), where together they typify 'girls who leap into space', and thus escape from the constraints of plot. Amina's somnambulism is also equated with Lucia's madness as a manifestation of isolation: 'Lucia and Amina sing as if they were blind', and Amina's perilous nocturnal walk is woven into Clément's broader sketch of the madwoman's power, as she concludes 'The madwomen, crossing over the bridge, have been able to get outside seduction and turn it back on the seducer'.[13] In such a view, their very conditions enable them to disrupt the neat process of the plot, and force a re-evaluation of their nature as women.

In contrast to Clément's and McClary's idealised, positive views of madness, Mary Ann Smart's discussion of *Lucia di Lammermoor* highlights the distinction between operatic madness and the reality of the condition. She questions the simplistic association of female with freedom and male with repression, and the collapsing of the creative process of opera into the reality of political control, by drawing attention to this distinction.[14] Her discussion takes as its starting point constructions of madness in post-Revolutionary France – notably the display of the insane, and paintings that depict an eroticised body which is subjected to the gaze of a (male) spectator. She then shows how these impressions influenced the depiction of madness in Italian opera of the 1830s, as post-Revolutionary fear of female power evolved into a more general social anxiety.

Yet attitudes to madness in France had undergone considerable changes in the period between Pinel's work at the beginning of the century and the height of the

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the Undoing of Women (London: Virago, 1989, trans. Betsy Wing; originally published as *L'Opéra ou la défaite des femmes*, Paris, 1979). Clément presents the madwoman as the archetypal victim/heroine of nineteenth-century opera.

[13] Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, 91–3.

[14] Mary Ann Smart, 'The Silencing of Lucia', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, iv (1992), 119–41.

vogue for mad operatic heroines in the 1830s, and any consideration of the relationship between the two must take this into account. Smart's tendency to map Parisian post-Revolutionary attitudes onto 1830s Italian culture disregards an important shift in public attitudes: despite a continuing public interest in madness, it was sleepwalking that captured the imagination of Parisians – and to some extent Europeans – in the 1820s. Scientific interest in somnambulism had been growing steadily since the Revolution, frequently borrowing or adapting theories associated with madness. When the first cluster of stage works depicting mental instability appeared in 1827, it was above all the portrayals of sleepwalkers rather than madwomen that drew enthusiastic audiences, and attracted the attention of the critics:

> Avant peu nous aurons des *somnambules* pour écritoires, serre-papiers, garniture de consoles, etc.
>
> Il pleut des *somnambules*. Les toits des maisons de Paris n'offriront bientôt plus assez de surface pour toutes les demoiselles qui vont les parcourir...
>
> Si l'on craint que cette semaine les *somnambules* ne nous tombent du haut des toits sur la tête, il faut prendre son parapluie.
>
> Le somnambulisme est une épidémie.[15]

> [Before long we will have sleepwalkers for writing cases, paper-weights, table decorations, etc.
>
> It's raining sleepwalkers. Soon there will not be room on the Paris rooftops to accommodate all the young women who wish to run across them...
>
> If you fear sleepwalkers will fall on your heads from the rooftops this week, take an umbrella.
>
> Sleepwalking is an epidemic.]

In this chapter, I compare these representations of sleepwalking to other depictions of trance on the stage, and to the state of artificial magnetism simultaneously attracting attention in medical and scientific demonstrations. While

[15] *Le Courrier des théâtres* (26 September 1827, 6 October 1827, 9 October 1827), *La Pandore* (17 October 1827).

the visual similarities between such conditions are intriguing, this comparative approach more importantly enables us to question the degree to which portrayals of madness and sleepwalking can be equated. By reinstating the image of the sleepwalker we can override the Foucauldian equation of trance/delirium with political confinement, and open up a quite different interpretation of the traditional trance scene. This admits a consideration of religious and supernatural causes – the usual non-scientific explanations for the inexplicable, as seen with Jeanne d'Arc. Finally, an understanding of the situation in 1827 provides an important foundation for the consideration of attitudes to madness and sleepwalking in Italian opera performed in Paris in the 1830s. Ultimately, these portrayals of sleepwalkers not only reflected public and scientific interests, but tapped into fundamental characteristics of French drama: namely the importance of visual expression, and the ambiguous and varied potential of musical quotation in the genres of *ballet-pantomime* and *vaudeville*.

Women in White

A tradition of comic – usually male – madness and sleepwalking in French popular theatre and comic opera already existed in the eighteenth century. However, in 1786 Dalayarac's *Nina, ou la folle par amour* presented a contrastingly sentimental picture of female melancholic distraction that was to enjoy considerable contemporary success and to influence French and Italian opera well into the nineteenth century.[16] Outside France, Dalayrac's heroine became more familiar in Paisiello's *Nina, o sia la pazza per amore* (1789), while at home the original opera was adapted in 1813 as a ballet; all three versions were staged regularly in Paris in the 1820s. Meanwhile, on the spoken stage Shakespeare's Ophelia enjoyed enormous popularity in sentimentalised adaptations of *Hamlet* all over Europe. In these versions the

[16] Nina's madness has been examined in some detail in relation to pyschiatric theory and practice of the period. See Patrick Taïeb, 'De la composition du *Délire* (1799) au pamphlet anti-dilettante: Une étude des concéptions esthétiques de H.-M. Berton' *Revue de musicologie*, lxxviii (1992), 67–107; Stefano Castelvecchi, 'From *Nina* to *Nina*: Psychodrama, Absorption and Sentiment in the 1780s', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, viii (1996), 91–112. See also Emilio Sala, 'Women Crazed by Love: An Aspect of Romantic Opera', *Opera Quarterly*, x/3 (1994), 19–41.

disturbing and bawdy aspects of her madness tended to be disregarded, and emphasis was placed on her singing and visual impression in gentle trance scenes.[17] These two visions of gentle, attractive, feminine madness, Nina and Ophelia, became icons of madness in France, frequently evoked by critics in their reviews for at least the next thirty years.

Most of the 1827 works treat mental distraction in a similar way to these late eighteenth-century portrayals: as a serious state afflicting women, frequently caused by the heroine's perceived sexual infidelity, with emphasis on her appearance.[18] Common imagery implicitly associated madwomen and sleepwalkers alike with Ophelia: the white shift, pale skin and bare feet were symbolic of simplicity, goodness, purity and virginity, and although white was also symbolic of sleep, in Shakespearean drama a white dress represented lunacy.[19] Loose hair was considered so overtly sensual that it symbolised temporary or permanent loss of reason, reflecting disordered mind and morals; on the Elizabethan stage a woman with her hair down was presumed to be either mad or the victim of rape. An optional lamp, the metaphorical source of life and clarity, was associated with virginity, and the symbolism of flowers, which contributed to the establishing of a simple, pastoral scene in several of the works, had

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[17] This sentamentalisation of Ophelia is discussed by Elaine Showalter in 'Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibility of Feminine Criticism', *Shakespeare and the Question of Criticism*, ed. Stephen J. Greenblatt (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 77–94. In France the only version of *Hamlet* to be performed at the Théâtre Français was Ducis's 1769 adaptation.

[18] There are only isolated examples of male madness on the Parisian stage at this time: notably Masaniello in Auber's *La Muette de Portici* who loses his reason after drinking a poison, but recovers to die heroically on the battlefield. The dramatic nature of this madness is very different to the emotionally induced delirium of the madwomen, and is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

[19] Mrs Siddons apparently studied the behaviour of somnambulists when she took the role of Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth for the first time in 1785. However, the London critics complained about her white dress: 'she is supposed to be asleep not mad'. *The Public Advertiser* (7 February 1785) defended her: 'there is an obvious reason why a person walking in their sleep should wear a white dress of the loose kind worn by Mrs Siddons...it [is] the nearest resemblance which theatrical effect will admit to the common sort of nightdresses'.

also come to represent deflowering or the dispensing of sexual favours. Finally, a circle of onlookers – often male – surrounded the woman. Thus, the notion of madness as a specifically female and sexual condition was implied through detailed symbolism associated with Ophelia, and mapped onto the depiction of the sleepwalker.[20]

But although Nina and Ophelia were still appearing on the Parisian stage in the 1820s, they were perhaps becoming too familiar, and enjoyed only a handful of perfomances each in 1827.[21] And while Harriet Smithson's naturalistic and passionate expression in her 'Romantic' portrayal of Ophelia was influential on French performance style, it was her realistic expression of emotion rather than her depiction of insanity that was admired.[22] Meanwhile, new portrayals of madwomen were generally criticised for their dull sentimentalism, and a critic writing in *Le Corsaire* suggested that 'madness, despite the past success of performances of *Nina*, seems to us more appropriate in a novel than on the stage'.[23] The same critic went on to criticise

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[20] Feminist readings of Ophelia's madness, from which I have drawn these associations, include Showalter, 'Representing Ophelia'; and Leslie C. Dunn, 'Ophelia's Songs in *Hamlet*: Music, Madness, and the Feminine', *Embodied Voices: Representing Female Vocality in Western Culture*, ed. Leslie C. Dunn and Nancy A. Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 50–64.

[21] *Nina* the ballet enjoyed just three performances in 1827, and the two operas were not performed at all that year, while the visiting troupe staged *Hamlet* only five times during their stay for the 1827/8 season – this perhaps seems surprising given the emphasis placed on Harriet Smithson's portrayal of Ophelia in contemporary documents, not least in Delacroix's paintings and Berlioz's correspondence.

[22] The perception of Smithson's influence is seen in the following remark about the ballerina Mlle Noblet's portrayal of Nina: 'Cette charmante danseuse a mis encore plus de grace, d'énergie et de naturel dans ce rôle difficile. Mlle Noblet nous a paru avoir emprunté quelque chose du jeu pathétique et vrai de Mlle Smithson, si touchante dans la folle Ophélia d'*Hamlet*' [This charming dancer has drawn even more grace, energy and natural expression into this difficult role. Mlle Noblet seems to us to have borrowed something of the moving and truthful acting of Mlle Smithson, who was so touching in her expression of Ophelia's madness in *Hamlet*], *La Pandore* (30 November 1827).

[23] 'La folie, malgré le succès qu'ont eu jadis les *Nina*, nous paraît plus propre à figurer dans un roman que sur la scène', *Le Corsaire* (20 August 1827). He presumably had in mind English

La Folle, ou le testament d'une anglaise, in which insanity was introduced on such a superficial level that the madwoman herself seemed to him the most sane character in the play; another critic suggested that the work should have been renamed *La Folle qui ne l'est pas* [The Madwoman who is Not], and unsurprisingly it dropped out of the repertoire after only ten performances.[24] Similarly, *La Folle de Glaris* was seen at the Odéon only five times before being withdrawn. Charles Maurice claimed that one performance was abandoned altogether due to public pressure, although this assertion should be treated with caution as he was particularly hostile to Amalia Schütz, who sang the role of the heroine.[25] Despite its eagerly awaited appearance, *Emilia, ou la folle* at the Théâtre Français, based on Scott's *Kenilworth*, survived only seventeen performances before being dropped from the regular repertoire, having failed to attract any real enthusiasm. Although it was created as a vehicle for Mlle Mars, who was hoping to rival Smithson's Ophelia, critics complained that the authors and performers were mediocre, and the madness was a dramatically unimportant addition to an unremarkable play.[26] One despairing critic bemoaned the monotony of these identical, but supposedly realistic, interpretations of madness that were rapidly turning theatres into hospitals: 'it seems our dramatists want to move to Charenton'.[27]

In contrast to the more familiar Romantic madwomen of Italian opera of the 1830s, these portrayals focused on sentimental visual appeal. But although the formula seemed to have been exhausted in the depiction of madness by the late 1820s,

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Gothic-style novels, by such authors as Mathurin and Radcliffe, as well as the French imitations that were so popular in Paris in the 1820s.

[24] Charles Maurice in the *Courrier des théâtres* (18 August 1827).

[25] *Le Courrier des théâtres* (3 May 1827). The opera was in fact a two-act adaptation of a one-act German opera, *Cordelia*, that culminated in the heroine being struck by lightning. There is no score or libretto for this opera in the London or Paris archives.

[26] Mars had reportedly studied the Irish actress's every performance; according to one critic, 'Mlle Mars n'a pas manqué une représentation. Nous l'avons vue attentive au jeu et à la pantomime de Mlle Smithson, dans le rôle d'Ophelia, pendant la scène de folie' [Mlle Mars has not missed a show. We saw her attentive to Mlle Smithson's performance and pantomime in the role of Ophelia during the mad scene], *La Pandore* (19 September 1827).

[27] 'Il paraît que nos auteurs comique vont s'établir à Charenton', *La Pandore* (19 August 1827). Charenton was a well-known mental hospital on the outskirts of Paris.

it found new popularity in the trance scenes of sleepwalkers, who emerged on the stages in the months that followed.[28]

This transfer of interest from madness to sleepwalking on the stage was paralleled by a similar shift in scientific research. While in the theatres the shared ingredient was visual imagery, in psychiatry it was the common source of both conditions in the unconscious.[29] Pinel had noted that there was a relationship between fits of mania and the kind of nervous stimulation that the somnambulist experiences, and in 1809 the philosopher Pierre Maine de Biran coined the phrase 'dream phenomena'. This term – to be taken up by Balzac and Nodier in the 1830s – embraced a number of conditions that exposed facets of the unconscious mind.[30] Meanwhile, in 1825 the doctor Alexandre Bertrand suggested in a series of articles for *Le Globe* that delirium, catalepsy, artificial and magnetic somnambulism and visions could all be understood and explained as varieties of a single condition, namely ecstasy. Physicians, philosophers and physiologists agreed that all such states were characterised by a suspension of will; they published books, treatises and articles in the press that focused primarily on the nature of the symptoms and the theory of a split between the inner and outer self. Their aim seemed to be above all to equate the conditions rather than to distinguish between them – although they attempted to differentiate at a lower level between types of madness, and between types of dream.

Yet despite the broad equation of the states of madness and dreaming, sleepwalking was something of an anomaly for both scientists and writers: it apparently broke the fundamental paradigm of 'dream phenomena', that sleep and the

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[28] Of the four *vaudevilles*, *La Villageoise somnambule* and *La Petite somnambule* in particular became staple works at the Théâtre des Variétés and Théâtre Comte respectively. The first runs were as follows: *La Villageoise somnambule*: sixty performances; *Héloïse*: twenty; *La somanmbule du Pont-aux-choux*: twenty-three; *La Petite somnambule*: twenty.

[29] My comments on scientific attitudes to sleepwalking are indebted to Tony James's detailed examination of contemporary views in *Dream, Creativity, and Madness*.

[30] The phrase 'phénomènes du sommeil' was used by Maine de Biran in his *Traîté médico-philosophique sur l'aliénation mentale* (Paris: Brosson, 1809) and subsequently by Nodier in an article in the *Revue de Paris* entitled 'De quelques phénomènes du sommeil' (23 February 1831). Tony James points to its use by Balzac in several of his novels; see James, *Dream, Creativity and Madness*, 49–66.

waking state could not co-exist. In Maine de Biran's classification of dreams which consciously paralleled Pinel's categories of madness, sleepwalking would not fit the system because, although it resembled dream in that it was forgotten on waking, it mirrored the waking state in that there was sequential memory between episodes of sleepwalking. While the absence of any plausible, scientific explanation meant that supernatural explanations were still popularly entertained, it also meant that sleepwalking became something of an obsession with a number of doctors and scientists; they turned away from largely theoretical research into natural sleepwalking (in which the nocturnal wandering self seemed to symbolise the wandering mind, but was so rarely witnessed), to a more promising study of artifically induced sleepwalking over which experimenters had some control.

Magnetism

The practice of magnetism – an early form of hypnotism – had enjoyed enormous popularity in Paris at the end of the eighteenth century following the arrival in the city of the Austrian doctor Anton Mesmer. He held séances in which he claimed to be able to heal by balancing the universal fluid he believed existed in everyone, using magnets and techniques derived from early electrical experiments.[31] Indeed there was tremendous public enthusiasm for such 'mesmerism' throughout Europe. It found its way into drama and infiltrated the Masonic lodges, famously turning up in the conclusion of the first act of *Così fan tutte*, and was apparently second only to the vogue for hot-air ballooning in the public's delight in popular science.[32] However, the ideas were discredited by the medical establishment, and the therapeutic effects of treatment were ascribed to the imagination and auto-suggestion. A series of damaging

[31] Mesmer's work is discussed in Henri F. Ellenberger's seminal work *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychology* (New York: Basic Books, 1970), 53–83. Robert Darnton takes a more broadly cultural perspective in *Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), esp. 127–59. The terms 'magnetism' and 'mesmerism' were interchangeable in France in the early nineteenth century.

[32] This claim is made by Robert Darnton in a chapter on 'Mesmerism and Popular Science', *Mesmerism*, 3–45.

reports in the 1780s, culminating in the Franklin Commission in 1786, warned of the specific threat to morality as (mostly female) patients were seduced by their (usually male) magnetisers. Although sessions were opened up to the public in an attempt to prevent magnetisers abusing their subjects, there was no abatement in the perceived threat to morality.

Post-Revolutionary interest in magnestism was, in contrast, concentrated on spiritual rather than physical cures. One of Mesmer's pupils, the Marquis de Puységur, claimed to have been the first to discover magnetic sleep (known variously as magnetic or artificial somnambulism or animal magnetism), and it was this branch of mesmerism that was to give new direction to the movement during the Restoration. Puységur replaced Mesmer's theory of 'fluid' and use of apparatus with an insight into psychological forces and the importance of 'will' and spiritual rapport, using touch and speech to cure his patients. He proposed the theory that mental illness was a sort of somnambulic distortion, and emphasised the relationship between these mental states in his book *Les Fous, les insensés, les maniaques et les frénétiques ne seraient-ils que des somnambules désordonnés?* (1812), promoting sleepwalking as the key to curing mental illness through the unconscious.[33]

Puységur claimed that magnetism was simply a way of mobilising and controlling natural somnambulism, the only differences being the way in which the state was induced, and the rapport that was established between magnetiser and subject. It was precisely this rapport, however, that caused distrust among many, as the problem of immorality associated with mesmerism was intensified by the literally hands-on nature of this treatment. Puységur claimed to have been assured by his patients that they would wake up if they perceived bad intentions from their magnetiser, but others were not convinced. An anonymous letter to Puységur suggested, 'Will not a young man who takes a young woman of nervous disposition into his arms cause a revolution in the subject he is massaging?', and another that 'For

[33] Puységur developed his theory of magnetic sleep in works published between 1784 and 1820. His *Recherches, expériences, et observations* (1811) and *Du magnétisme animal* (1820) give the most precise description of his magnetic technique. These are discussed in Adam Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud: Magnetic Sleep and the Roots of Psychological Healing* (New Haven: Yale University Press: 1993), 38–63, esp. 41.

a young woman with a virginal heart it would be difficult to resist an emotion of esteem and gratitude and not overstep proper boundaries'.[34] By the mid-1820s, despite, or as many suggested because of, this immoral association, magnetisers were practising all over Paris in salons and on the boulevards.[35]

Public interest in magnetism was twofold: the special sixth or interior sense, which was commonly believed to operate freely in the somnambulist, enabled the diagnosis of illness and communication with the spirit world. Both of these applications were exploited by practitioners, and stories of quasi-religious miracle cures as well as visions and encounters with spirits were related in newspaper articles and pamphlets, and woven into literature.[36]

Indeed, novels of the period provide perhaps the most abundant evidence of nineteenth-century interest in magnetism and sleepwalking. Nodier, Dumas, Hugo, Gautier, Lamartine and Balzac were all fascinated by these phenomena, and the specific vocabulary of the mesmerist as well as descriptions of séances and the powers

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[34] Cited in Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud*, 96–7. Even supposedly authoritative investigations into the process revelled in sexual innuendo, including Dr Husson's report to the Academy of Medicine, published in *Le Globe* (17 December 1825).

[35] Numerous journals dedicated to magnetism sprang up in the 1820s and 1830s, reflecting this popular as well as scientific interest; *Archives du magnétisme animal* (1820–23), *Hermès* (1826), *Le Propagateur du magnétisme animal* (1828), *Annales du magnétisme* (8 vols., 1814–26) are mentioned in Pierre Janet, *Psychological Healing: A Historical and Clinical Study* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1925; trans. of *L'Automatisme psychologique: essai de psychologie expérimentale sur les formes inférieures de l'activité humaine*, Paris, 1889), 38.

[36] Philippe Muray suggests that the French were obsessed during the nineteenth century with the vision of the return of the dead, and that this was manifested in the proliferation of practices relating to the occult; by extension, the fascination was exploited in the theatres. Muray fixes the beginning of this interest to 1786, the year that the overcrowding of Parisian cemeteries was recognised as hazardous to health, and when bodies were disinterred from the Cimetière des Innocents – and the year in which controversy over Mesmer's practices was at its height. See Philippe Muray, *Le 19e siècle à travers les âges* (Paris: Denoel, 1984), discussed in Stephen Bann, 'Romanticism in France', *Romanticism in National Context*, ed. Roy Porter and Mikulás Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 240–59.

of practitioners are to be found in many of their works written in the 1830s and 40s.[37] Balzac apparently learned theosophy – a philosophy of spirituality – with his mother as a child, and later consulted trance mediums and fortune tellers. He was hailed by the *Journal du magnétisme* as the novelist most knowledgeable about mesmerism, and after his death his appearance was reported regularly at séances.[38] His novels reflect the multiplicity of attitudes and theories that were in circulation not just in the 1830s and 40s when he was writing, but in the 1810s and 20s, when he was formulating his ideas, and the period in which he set some of his novels. Above all it was perhaps the visual and dramatic possibilities of sleepwalking that ensured its popularity with a novelist whose sense of theatrical literary style was particularly developed.

In *Ursule Mirouët*, written in 1841, and significantly set in 1829, Balzac provides a potted history of attitudes to somnambulism in a brief digression on magnetism, which in turn prepares a passage in which Ursule's anti-mesmerist, agnostic guardian Minoret is convinced of the reality of magnetism, and ultimately accepts the Catholic faith; after his death he comes back to Ursule in an apparition.[39] In the 'digression' Balzac describes Mesmer's findings, noting the apparently ancient and religious roots of magnetism, and the similarity of its properties to those of light and electricity. He discusses the related worlds of hypnotism, divination and ecstasy, communication with the spirit world, second sight, medicine, religious miracles, horoscopy and catalepsy, implying their interrelated status. In particular he links the phenomenon of magnetism with Swedenborg's teachings on magnetic theory and

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[37] According to Darnton, Dr Koreff acted as a sort of mesmerist literary agent and became a lion of the salons; he disseminated interest in the fantastic among novelists and poets and helped to create the vogue for the work of his friend and fellow mesmerist E.T.A. Hoffmann. Some literature of this period recreates scenes around Mesmer himself, and much of it contains references to electric shocks, ghosts, sleepwalkers and occult forces. See Darnton, *Mesmerism*, esp. 151–9. While these references can be usefully situated within the more general fascination with northern European myth, legend and the supernatural that was absorbed into French culture in this period, many of these allusions were directly influenced by mesmerism as practiced on the boulevards and in the salons during the Restoration and July Monarchy.

[38] Ibid., 155 (note).

[39] *Ursule Mirouët*, in *La Comédie humaine*, ed. Pierre-Georges Castex, vol. iii, (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 769–988.

theosophy in the early part of the eighteenth century which were, 100 years later, re-emerging in the writings of other scientists. *Ursule Mirouët* embraces all the ideas about somnambulism that were circulating in the first decades of the nineteenth century.[40]

What is particularly striking about the novel is the relationships Balzac forges between somnambulism, music and the supernatural. Ursule's love Savinien sits by her piano, listening to her play a capriccio by Hérold (the composer of *La Somnambule*). Balzac describes how 'through her playing ... her soul communicated with that of the young man.... Genuine feelings have their own magnetism, and Ursule wanted somehow to reveal her soul'.[41] These true feelings are both expressed and symbolised by the music through which the lovers are effectively reborn. Religion, mysticism and music – as non-material, spiritual phenomena – stand against the forces of materialism – philosophy and greed – and win. Balzac also makes explicit the links between emotional weakness, potential madness and susceptibility to the supernatural and spiritual: Ursule hovers on the brink of insanity after Minoret's death, and then sees him in a vision at once ghostly and religious that guides 'the somnambulism of [her] inner being'.[42]

It is highly likely that the audiences reading Balzac's novels in the 1830s, and watching sleepwalkers in the theatre in 1827, would have associated them at one level with the real magnetised somnambulists they were likely to have seen for themselves. Indeed, it has been suggested that audiences at the premiere of Bellini's *La sonnambula* in Milan in 1831 would most certainly have recognised in Amina the *veggenti-estatiche* (entranced clairvoyants) who were commonly seen in society in the company of their magnetisers.[43] Moreover, there were a number of types of

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[40] Other novels in which Balzac engages with somnambulism include *Maître Cornelius* (1831), *Louis Lambert* (1835), *Séraphita* (1835) and *Le Cousin Pons* (1847); see *La Comédie humaine*, ed. Pierre-Georges Castex (Paris: Gallimard, 1976–81).

[41] 'Par un jeu ... son âme parlait à l'âme du jeune homme.... Les sentiments vrais ont leur magnétisme, et Ursule voulait en quelque sorte montrer son âme', *Ursule Mirouët*, 891.

[42] 'Le somnambulisme d'un être intérieur', ibid., 961.

[43] See Bruno Cagli, 'Il risveglio magnetico e il sonno della ragione: Variazioni sulla calamità, l'oppio e il sonnambulismo', *Studi musicali*, xiv (1985), 157–68.

entertainment that narrowed the gulf between reality and illusion by way of *spectacle* in Paris. For example, at his phantasmagorical performances the magician and physicist Etienne-Gaspard Robert, known as Robertson, summoned up dead heroes and destroyed enemies using a magic lantern technique to project an image on a wall or gauze screen; the lighting was mounted on wheels to enable him to enlarge or reduce the size of his apparition:

> His audience, people from all levels of society and of all political persuasions, entered a dark cavern and saw figures from horrific, melancholic, and sentimental subjects ... accompanied by lugubrious music and sound effects such as rain or the tolling of funeral bells; these acoustic effects were extended by ventriloquists.[44]

These demonstrations of aural and optical illusions used topical subjects and personalities to heighten the dramatic effect. Similarly, *La Somnambule* seems to have evoked aspects of magnetic practices familiar to most of the audience, in order to make topical, and thus broaden, the dramatic situation of the *ballet-pantomime*.[45]

Scribe's scenario for *La Somnambule* is very simple: it opens with preparations for the wedding of Thérèse and Edmond. The Seigneur of the village arrives incognito and is invited to the marriage ceremony the following day; he stays at the village inn. In the second act Seigneur Rambert is shown to his room, and the flirtatious innkeeper, Gertrude, comes to see him, but they are disturbed by a noise at the window. Gertrude flees, and Thérèse enters in a simple white robe, with bare arms and feet and a lantern

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[44] Wright, *Painting and History During the French Restoration*, 51. Robertson's performances took place in Paris in the years 1798–1802, 1814–18 and 1826–30. Wright suggests that these shows, in the early years of the century at least, served as a release mechanism from the traumatic memories of the Terror, as a type of 'therapeutic theatre' – a notion that parallels theories of 'psychodrama' surrounding *Nina* (see note 16 above).

[45] Lisa Feurzeig discusses the role of music in magnetic practices in Vienna, and the rather more tenuous relationship between magnetism and some of Schubert's songs. See 'Heroines in Perversity: Marie Schmith, Animal Magnetism, and the Schubert Circle', *19th-Century Music*, xxi/2 (1997), 223–43.

in her hand. The Seigneur soon realises that she is sleepwalking, and after watching her dance and act out her wedding ceremony he settles her on his bed and disappears out of the window before he is tempted to take advantage of her. Inevitably Thérèse is discovered the next morning and the whole situation is misconstrued. Edmond furiously calls off the wedding, and in Act III Thérèse repeatedly begs forgiveness and proclaims her innocence. Edmond finally announces that he will marry Gertrude the innkeeper instead. It is not until Thérèse finally appears sleepwalking on the roof of the village mill, having climbed out of her bedroom window, that the truth is revealed. The villagers are gathered in a hushed silence, warned by the Seigneur that they must not wake her as she balances along the edge of the crumbling roof. She imagines she hears the wedding bells for Edmond and Gertrude and prays for them both. She finds her faded wedding posy in her dress and begins to cry. Everyone is moved to tears, and Thérèse wakes to find that she is wearing her wedding attire, with Edmond kneeling in front of her.[46]

The most obvious correspondence of the ballet with the conditions of a magnetic séance is in the role of the Seigneur, whose strong attraction to Thérèse when she arrives at the bedroom window recalls the immorality of the 'rapport' between magnetiser and subject. The stage directions indicate: 'Rambert has recognised that Thérèse is sleepwalking, he capitalises on the situation, takes a chair and sits next to her'.[47] A pantomime unfolds in which Thérèse clearly believes Rambert is Edmond; she recalls the events of the day, playing games and dancing, until Rambert finally takes control of matters:

"Moi, je commettrai un pareil crime en abusant de cette circonstance".... Sa vertu s'imprime sur sa désir, il court ouvrir les verroux de la porte ... on va vite lorsque la conscience est libre ... [il] hésite à partir, enfin l'honneur le lui commande.

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[46] The scenario for the ballet is published; an autograph score exists in manuscript at *F-Pn*: Vm^{6}250, comprising the entire ballet (excluding the *divertissements*) as two instead of three acts in short score, and part of it, including the second sleepwalking scene, in orchestral score; a manuscript *argument* and description of the role of each dancer survives at *F-Pan*: AJ^{13}123.

[47] 'Rambert a reconnu que Thérèse est somnambule, il profite de la circonstance, prend une chaise et se place à sa côté' (*La Somnambule*, Act II).

> ["I would be committing such a crime by abusing this situation".... His virtue overcomes his desire, he runs to open the bolts on the door ... one moves quickly when one's conscience is clear ... [he] hesitates to leave, finally honour takes hold of him.]

His response to Thérèse's condition is heightened by the fact that he is the only character in the story who appears to have come across the phenomenon of sleepwalking.[48] In the final scene it is he who effectively takes control, instructing Edmond to dress Thérèse for her wedding and to return her ring, and warning the gathered villagers not to call out and wake her. The broad similarity of the scene to a magnetic séance is striking.

Differentiating the Sleepwalker

The physical framing of the entranced heroine by enthralled onstage spectators, as seen in the final scene of *La Somnambule*, has become an important issue for opera and film critics analysing the containment of madness. The onstage spectators are generally perceived as providing a safe focus of attention for the actual audience, maintaining the sense of illusion and protecting them from being 'seduced into unreason'. The mechanism has been illustrated both in the sympathetic framing of the gentle Nina, and in the more aggressive containing of the explicit menace of Lucia, whose sexuality is clearly an element of the threat she poses.[49] However, crowds of containing onlookers were a common feature of works in the 1820s in which the heroine, although having sexually transgressed, is not necessarily mad. For example, pictures by Devéria and Boulanger and by Delacroix reveal a striking similarity between the final tableau of Nicholas Rowe's tragedy *Jane Shore* and Ophelia's mad scene, both on the Parisian stages in the mid-1820s (see Figures 1, 2, 3).[50]

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[48] One critic found the villagers' ignorance particularly amusing: 'Il paraît que la *Gazette de santé* n'est jamais parvenue dans leur campagne' [It seems the *Gazette de santé* has never reached their region], *La Pandore* (17 October 1827).

[49] See for example Castelvecchi, 'From *Nina* to *Nina*', and Smart, 'The Silencing of Lucia'.

[50] See Lee Johnson, *The Paintings of Eugène Delacroix: A Critical Catalogue*, i: *1816–1831*, ii: *1832–1863* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981–6) for plates showing similar tableaux,

Figure 1. Harriet Smithson in *Jane Shore*, Act V scene 3
A. Devéria and L. Boulanger, *Souvenirs du théâtre anglais*, 1827
Bibliothèque Nationale de France

Figure 2. Harriet Smithson as Ophelia in *Hamlet*, Act IV scene 5.
A. Devéria and L. Boulanger, *Souvenirs du théâtre anglais*, 1827
Bibliothèque Nationale de France

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including 'The Penance of Jane Shore' (plate 81), 1824, 'Hamlet Abuses Ophelia' (plate 114), 1849/50, and 'Lady Macbeth Sleepwalking' (plate 115), 1849/?50.

Figure 3. Harriet Smithson as Ophelia in *Hamlet*, Act IV scene 5
Eugène Delacroix, 1834
By permission of The British Library (1872.c.28)

Although in Rowe's play the helpless Jane does not actually lose her reason as Ophelia does, her sexuality is seen as a threat to the family unit, and thus to society, and must be contained. A group of onlookers is present not only in the final scene of Rowe's play as staged by the English troupe, but also in each of the three French adaptations of the play staged in 1824 – the image is intensified in the *mélodrame* at the Porte Saint-Martin as Jane does in fact become insane.[51] While one might argue that the framing actually has the effect of focusing more closely on the heroine rather than distancing her, there is little doubt that the device still indicated a specific scene-type: the outcast who is delirious, or on the brink of delirium.

Although all the 1827 works featuring sleepwalkers conclude with a trance scene in which a crowd of onlookers contemplate the heroine, there is some ambiguity in the extent to which she is contained. In the final scene of *La Somnambule*, for example, rather than enclosure in a restricted space, such as the castle room for Ophelia, or the walled garden for Nina, Thérèse's appearance on the rooftops with the crowd looking up at her suggests an image of isolation and freedom rather than containment. Moreover, perhaps following suggestions in the press from reviewers, the stage was darkened in later performances so that only Thérèse was visible.[52] This had the effect of unambiguously focusing attention on her, and eliminated the mediating crowd of villagers altogether. Similarly, in Chelard's *Macbeth*, Fétis suggested that although musically necessary, the chorus of courtiers who surround Lady Macbeth in her sleepwalking scene was visually superfluous and distracting: 'For such a scene to produce its effect, total solitude is necessary'.[53]

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[51] *Richard III et Jeanne Shore, drame historique* (Lemercier), Théâtre Français, 1 April 1824; *Jane Shore, tragédie* (Liadières), Odéon, 2 April 1824; *Jane Shore, mélodrame* (Decomberousse, Charvanges, Jouslin), Porte Saint-Martin, 19 April 1824. Rowe's 1713 tragedy was based on a historical legend in which Jane Shore leaves her husband to become Henry IV's mistress, is rejected by Henry's successor on the King's death, and condemned to walk the streets of London, accused as a witch. *Jane Shore*, tragedy (Rowe), Théâtre Anglais at Théâtre Italien, 15 October 1827.

[52] Charles Maurice suggested this in *Le Courrier des théâtres* (21 September 1827).

[53] 'Pour qu'une semblable scène produise son effet et soit possible, il faut une solitude absolue', Fétis, *Revue musicale* (July 1827), i, 520–26.

This apparent uncertainty on the part of the creators and critics about the need to frame the sleepwalker is not only in striking contrast to attitudes to madness, but is also at odds with the containing of Bellini's *La sonnambula*, and Verdi's Lady Macbeth.[54] If we follow through the feminist interpretation of framing outlined above, however, the ambivalence about Thérèse and Lady Macbeth points to a deeper differentiation between madness and somnambulism specific to late-Restoration Paris. While the madwomen in these 1827 works can be seen as a (stereotypical) sexual threat, contained to protect the public from identifying with them and becoming 'mad' themselves, natural sleepwalkers present no threat at all. And if real magnetised sleepwalkers were contained by spectators, this was for their own protection from the magnetiser's desires. In other words, while madness was increasingly being seen as a provocative expression of female sexuality, sleepwalking was seen as a passive, and even vulnerable, state.

In the 1827 works this difference is evident not only in the *mise en scène*, but in the drama itself. For example, when Thérèse is found in another man's bed, her sleepwalking explains and excuses her apparently scandalous behaviour, and she is eventually forgiven. However, *La Folle de Glaris* loses her mind believing that she is responsible for the death of her father and husband in a fight that follows her father's discovery of her very real clandestine marriage and pregnancy.[55] In *La Folle, ou le testament d'une anglaise* a young girl becomes insane through her secret passion for her sister's fiancé. Although in each case the madwoman is forgiven (and thus regains her reason), the story is founded on her actual sexual irresponsibility rather than her desirability and unconscious actions. Madness results from such immoral behaviour, while sleepwalking (in these works at least) leads to – and ultimately resolves – only apparently culpable behaviour.

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[54] Jonas Barrish makes the point that Verdi does not attempt to equate somnambulism with madness in his *Macbeth*; indeed, unlike Shakespeare's scene for Lady Macbeth (and for Ophelia), the opera has a sleepwalking scene of vision, looking to the future, rather than of recollection. See 'Madness, Hallucination, and Sleepwalking', *Verdi's Macbeth: A Sourcebook*, ed. Charles Rosen and Andrew Porter (New York: Norton Press, 1984), 149–55.

[55] In the original German opera she is not married, and thus her pregnancy is seen as being even more shockingly immoral.

The relationship between reality and representation that Mary Ann Smart puts at the centre of her discussion of portrayals of madness is also rather different for sleepwalking. Visually, the transformation of madness into an attractive feminine display of emotion is a larger step than the enacting of a temporary dream-like state. And while the realistic elements of madness are generally removed in the theatre, those of sleepwalking tend to be added. This goes beyond the appearance of the heroine herself (whose nightdress, ruffled hair and fixed stare make her look like she has indeed just stumbled out of bed) to the *mise en scène*, which illustrates the real physical danger of sleepwalking. This is most obvious in *La Somnambule*, in which the danger was literally heightened when a new roof was built for this final scene to enable Thérèse to hang more perilously over the edge before turning back, passing beneath an even bigger and more threatening mill-wheel. The physical danger present in many of the mad scenes, however (*La Folle de Glaris* poised at the edge of a precipice, for example), can be read more convincingly as a melodramatic metaphor for the emotional excess and danger embodied by madness. Thus while for the sleepwalkers a visual feature of their condition is integrated into the dramatic structure of the work as *spectacle*, for the madwomen similarly visual dramatic moments are not directly connected with the real experience of insanity, but instead contribute to the heightening of emotional realism.

This distinction between *spectacle* and emotional realism is further emphasised by attitudes to actresses playing the roles. The acknowledged illusion of *La Somnambule* was confirmed by the fact that the critics ignored Mme Montessu being heavily pregnant when she created the role of Thérèse, despite the fact that Thérèse is believed to have been unfaithful to her fiancé in the ballet. In contrast, the mental states of actresses playing madwomen were constantly under scrutiny; indeed the boundary between reality and representation was further blurred by the fact that Ophelia became a model for madness outside the theatre in the nineteenth century. She was a case study for hysteria and mental breakdown in adolescent girls, and a physical model for Charcot's photographs of the 1870s, which feature inmates of asylums who were encouraged under hypnosis to imitate Ophelia in their white hospital gowns and their flowing hair.[56]

[56] See Showalter, *The Female Malady*, 149–50.

This differentiation between the physical and the emotional leads to a still more important distinction between depictions of madness and sleepwalking that helps explain why sleepwalking was so popular in Paris at this time. The interest in the visual, physical elements of sleepwalking was ideally suited to *ballet-pantomime* and *vaudeville*, genres in which pantomime and tableau were important means of expression. In contrast, the perceived emotional nature of madness was more easily expressed vocally in spoken drama, or more successfully in opera, and found its ideal setting in Italian opera of the 1830s. Given the particular interest on the Parisian stage at this time in visual expression as a generating force of drama, the plight of the sleepwalker proved to be a more attractive prospect for writers.

This generic distinction perhaps helps to explain the failure of Chelard's opera *Macbeth*. Not only is Lady Macbeth presented unambiguously as heading for frenzied madness after inciting her husband to murder – a temperament not usually associated with sleepwalkers at this time – but her sleepwalking scene was criticised on musical grounds as well. Fétis in particular focused on the chosen means of expression:

> Je ne concevrais l'effet de cette scène que si on la traitait en mélodrame, c'est-à-dire si l'orchestre seul chantait, et était interrompu par des phrases parlées.[57]
>
> [I would only be able to conceive of the effect of this scene if it was treated as *mélodrame*, that is, if the orchestra alone played, interrupted by spoken phrases.]

More than the dramatic unsuitability of a passionate sleepwalker, the vocal expression of emotion seems to have been inappropriate in the circumstances.[58]

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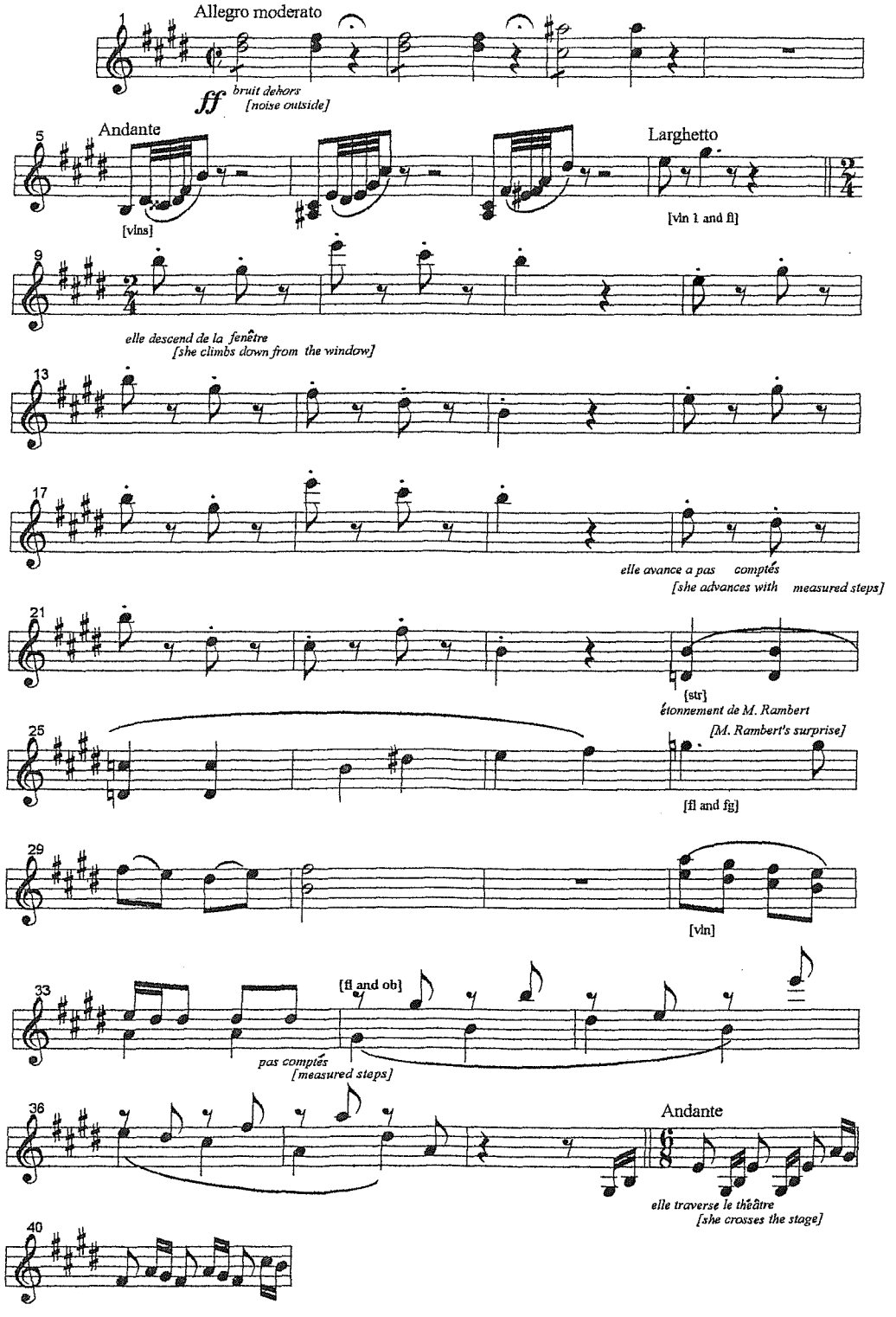
[57] Fétis, *Revue musicale* (July 1827), i, 520–26.

[58] As discussed in Chapter One, the scene was also criticised dramatically by virtually all the reviewers for establishing the guilt of Macbeth before the murder had even been discovered, increasing rather than resolving dramatic tension, and thereby undermining the function of the sleepwalking scene as typified in *La Somnambule*.

Music and the Supernatural

The musical characteristics of *ballet-pantomime* were closer to Fétis's preferred mode of expression for a sleepwalker than those of opera. *La Somnambule* combines the devices of a narrative constructed aurally from known airs and newly composed motifs with simpler techniques such as fragmented phrases and repeated patterns which, in the visual and textual setting of the work, suggest instability of the mind. Above all the music's function is to describe action and mental states by allusion rather than to imitate pure emotion. Melodies quoted by the orchestra in this work include a well-known *romance* 'Dormez donc, mes chères amours', which provides a wordless commentary as Rambert puts Thérèse to bed, and a number of melodies that reinforce the action in a more general way. These include the *contredanse* from Dalayrac's *Nina*, and excerpts from Rossini's *Armida* (1817) – whose sorceress heroine leaves the stage at the end of the opera in a mad frenzy.[59] These at once link Thérèse with their mentally unstable heroines, but also conjure up conflicting associations: Nina's innocence and abandonment by her lover, and Armida's intimidating sexual allure and supernatural links. Another Rossini opera, *La Cenerentola* (1817), provides a recurring motif that introduces each sleepwalking scene in *La Somnambule* (see Example 2a), and reappears when Thérèse and Edmond argue about her innocence, and when Edmond announces his betrothal to Gertrude. This theme literally suggests Thérèse's hesitant steps with simple staccato phrases in the violins alone, gradually growing in confidence and becoming more legato, and more generally communicates something of the confusion and surprise that characterise the scenes in both works. But it also has significant dramatic links with the original work that audiences, used to making such associations, would surely have perceived. In *La Cenerentola* it introduces the sextet 'Che sarà!', which follows the scene near the end of the opera in which Cinderella and the prince meet and recognise each other, despite the fact that Cinderella is a servant again. The reference neatly draws attention to the class

[59] There are also excerpts from Mercadante's *Elisa e Claudio* (1821), in which the misunderstandings and intrigues actually have more in common with *La Folle de Glaris* than with *La Somnambule*, as Claudio and Elisa have secretly married and had two children, unbeknown to their parents. These excerpts are noted in a review of the *ballet-pantomime* in the *Revue musicale* (August 1827 – January 1828), ii, 212–16 (signed 'C.F.').



Example 2a. Hérold, *La Somnambule*: Act II, sleepwalking scene

difference between Thérèse and the Seigneur in *La Somnambule*, and while the sextet charts the growing indignation of the ugly sisters and their household that Cinderella should have set her sights on a prince, a similar indignation is matched in the *ballet-pantomime* by the villagers, appalled that Thérèse should have chosen a nobleman. Indeed, the sisters' insults, 'Foolish woman, filthy slut', match the sentiments of the villagers in *La Somnambule*, described in the stage directions: 'O Heavens ... Thérèse in a man's bedroom ... anger of Edmond and everyone'.[60] At each appearance of the theme the plot of *La Somnambule* has become more tangled and the last two lines neatly illustrate Thérèse's predicament: 'I grope about in the dark/and am beginning to rave'.[61] Thus musical allusion in *La Somnambule* works on several different levels: it comments on the action, draws parallels with situations in other works and specifically evokes operatic madness.

In *La Somnambule* the visual conflation of sleepwalking and madness through the use of symbols associated with Ophelia (described earlier in this chapter) is thus matched musically in the choice of airs. Similar allusions are made in the *vaudevilles*. In *Héloïse* and *La Petite somnambule* each sleepwalking scene recalls music heard earlier, a technique associated with mad scenes that is also used in Dalayrac's *Nina* and in Payer's *La Folle de Glaris*. The *romance* 'Dormez donc, mes chères amours' and the *contredanse* from *Nina* appear again,[62] and the final sleepwalking scene of *Héloïse* includes an 'air de *Jeanne d'Arc*' – this is likely to be from Carafa's *opéra comique* in which Jeanne is depicted as mad.

However, the appearance of the sleepwalker also suggested another image that was similarly reflected in the choice of music in the *vaudevilles*. Although Scribe and Delavigne rejected all aspects of the supernatural in their *ballet-pantomime*, the loose white robe and the dimming of the lights (mentioned above) lent an obviously ghostly appearance to Thérèse, and this was remarked upon by most of the critics. Each of the *vaudevilles* extended this visual suggestion by drawing into their plots the idea that a

---

[60] 'Donna sciocca, alma di fango' (*La Cenerentola*, Act II); 'O ciel ... Thérèse dans la chambre d'un homme ... furie d'Edmond et tous' (*La Somnambule*, Act II).

[61] 'Vo tenton per l'aria oscura/E comincio a delirar'.

[62] Indeed, these two airs appeared at strategic moments in Scribe's and Delavigne's 1819 *vaudeville La Somnambule*, thus reinforcing their association with sleepwalking in 1827.

ghost had been seen by the villagers, which of course turned out to be the sleepwalker herself. In *La Somnambule du Pont-aux-choux* the sleepwalker is a washer woman, and the ghostly image is reinforced farcically as she appears with sheets round her shoulders, and villagers rush about the stage shrieking that they've seen the ghost.[63] The devil's song from *La Clochette* is sung, together with the 'air du fantôme de Don Juan'.[64]

Although such references were probably prompted by the ghost-like appearance of Thérèse, it is also possible that they were a response to the spiritual theories surrounding magnetism, as described in Balzac's *Ursule Mirouët*, for example. Indeed, Alexandre Bertrand's 'scientific' investigations into historical cases of somnambulism, notably those of Urbain Grandier and Jeanne d'Arc, in fact coincided with literary and theatrical portrayals of these figures that emphasised their supernatural connections: Vigny's historical novel *Cinq-Mars*, 1826, and numerous plays about Jeanne d'Arc.[65]

Most clearly, however, the supernatural finds its way into the *vaudevilles* with allusions to *La Dame blanche* (1825), Boieldieu's phenomenally popular *opéra comique* based on three Walter Scott novels, in which an apparent ghost saves a family's fortune, but turns out to be a young girl in disguise.[66] Scribe wrote the libretto for *La Dame blanche* and the scenario for *La Somnambule*, and the similarities

---

[63] The rumour of a phantom is also introduced into Bellini and Romani's *La sonnambula*, the only place in the story where the opera diverges significantly from the *ballet-pantomime* – the transferring of the setting from Provence to Switzerland and the changing of the names do not substantially alter the atmosphere of the opera.

[64] Perhaps the duet 'O statua gentilissima', or the Commendatore's solemn words in the penultimate scene of the opera.

[65] For example, in one of his articles in the series 'De l'état de l'extase', Alexandre Bertrand discusses the affair of Urbain Grandier, in which two young nuns with convulsions were said to have been possessed by the devil; *Le Globe* (30 April 1825). Some of the many stage adaptations of Jeanne d'Arc's story are listed in note 2 above.

[66] The novels are *Guy Mannering* (1815), *The Monastery* (1820) and, to a lesser extent, the latter's sequel, *The Abbot* (1820). Louise Bertin's *drame musical Guy Mannering* also dates from 1825, but it was only privately performed, despite Fétis's anouncement that it was due to be staged at the Odéon in 1827, *Revue musicale* (July 1827), i, 540.

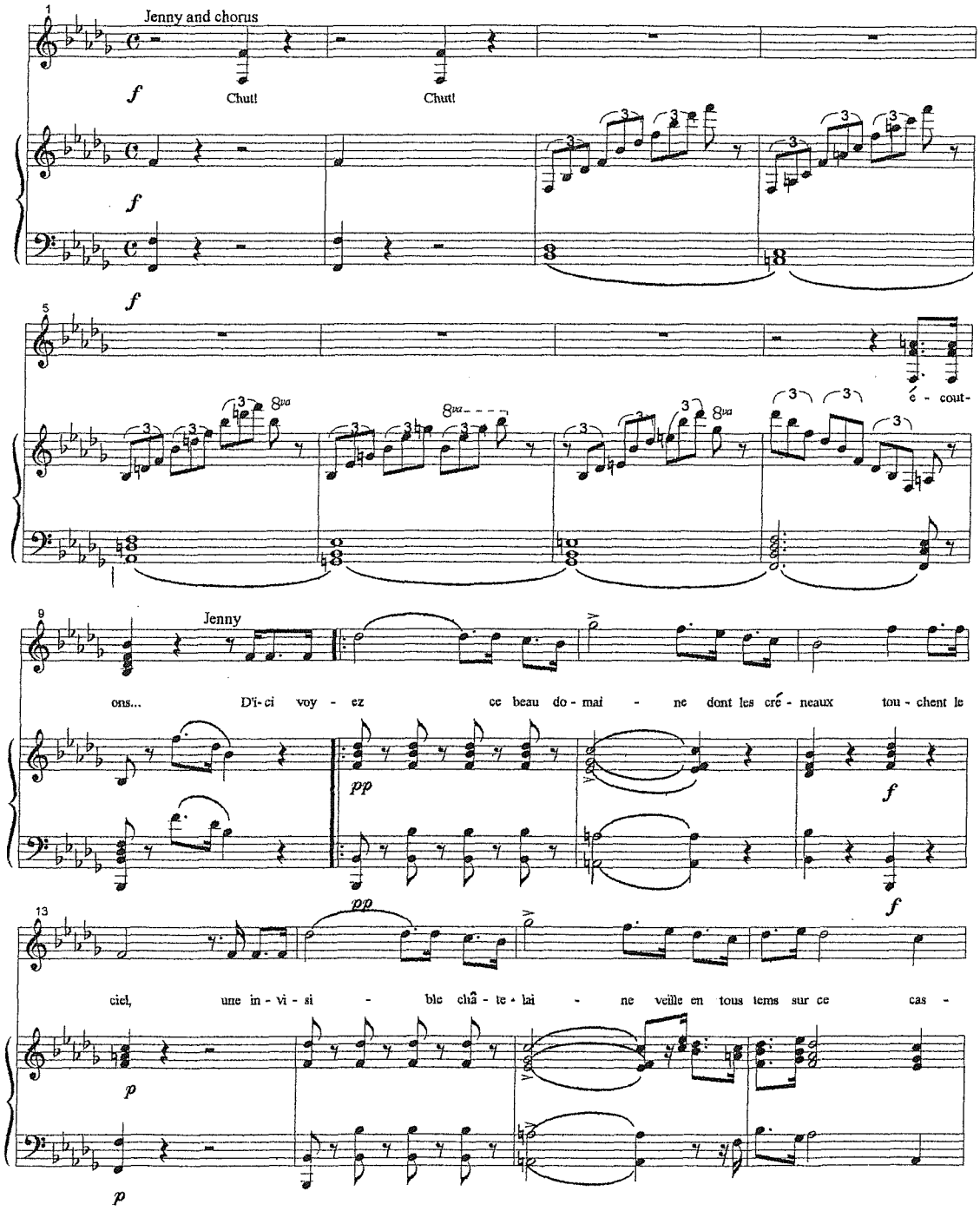
between the dramatic structures of the two works are striking. Both involve a private viewing of the ghost/sleepwalker, in which a young man is 'seduced' by her image, and then there is a public viewing, in which a truth is revealed: the ghost's identity and the sleepwalker's condition; both are shown to be unthreatening.[67] A lithograph of the final scene of the opera as it was staged in 1827 bears remarkable similarities with the scenes in *Jane Shore* and *Hamlet* illustrated above: dressed in white, the heroine is contemplated by a crowd of onstage spectators (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. *La Dame blanche*: Act III, final scene
Langlumé, after Tassaert, 1827
Bibliothèque Nationale de France: Opéra

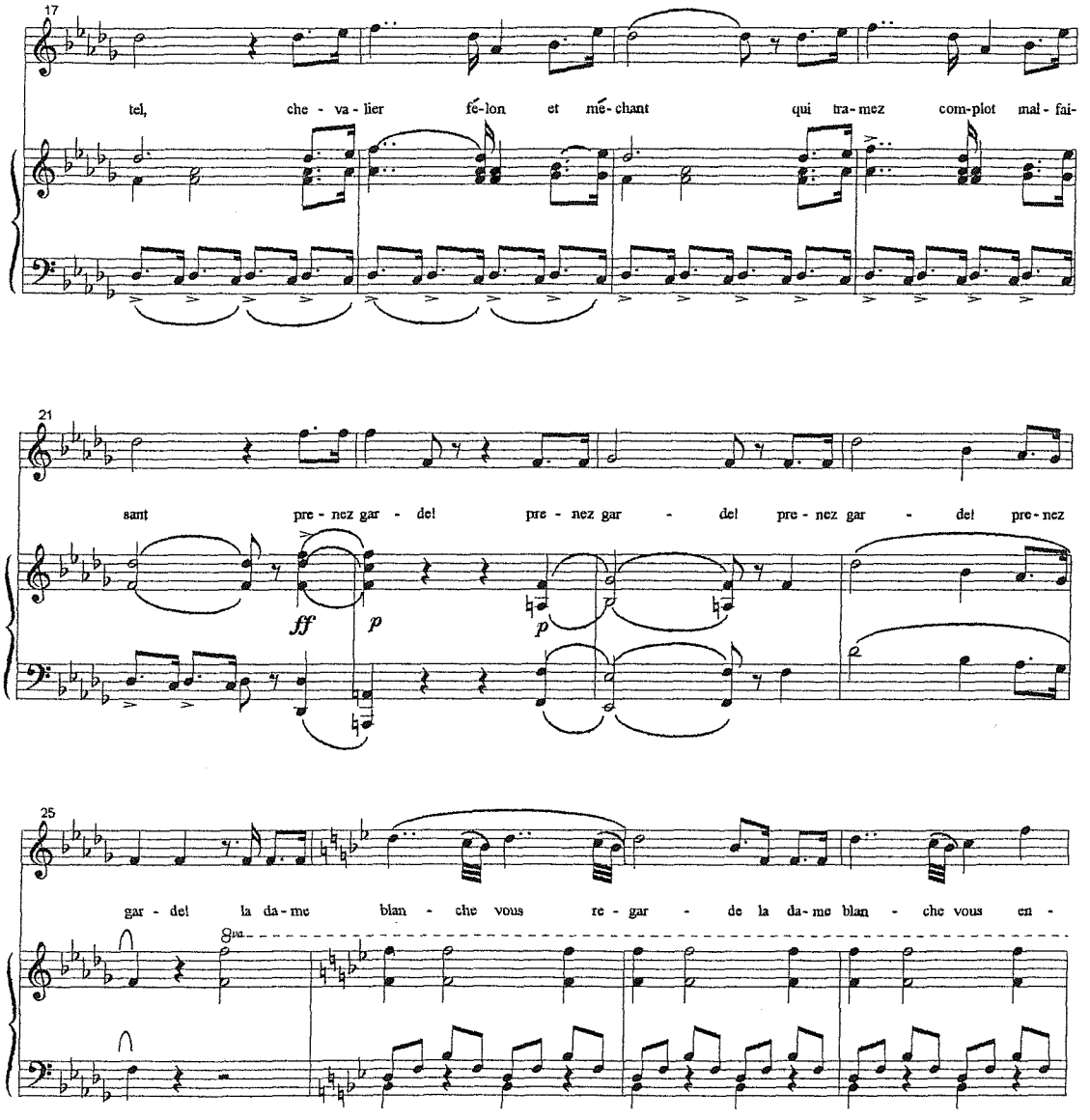
The most popular number from *La Dame blanche* was the ballad of the White Lady (see Example 2b). The harp arpeggios that open it give way to pianissimo string chords which crescendo through the refrain on insistent (tonic) B flat minor chords

[67] The precise stage movements in the opera are detailed in an anonymous manuscript *mise en scène* at *F-Po*: C.4893(3). In particular, the silent and unnoticed entry of *la dame blanche* at the end of the opera is similar to Thérèse's entrance on the rooftop at the end of the *ballet-pantomime*.

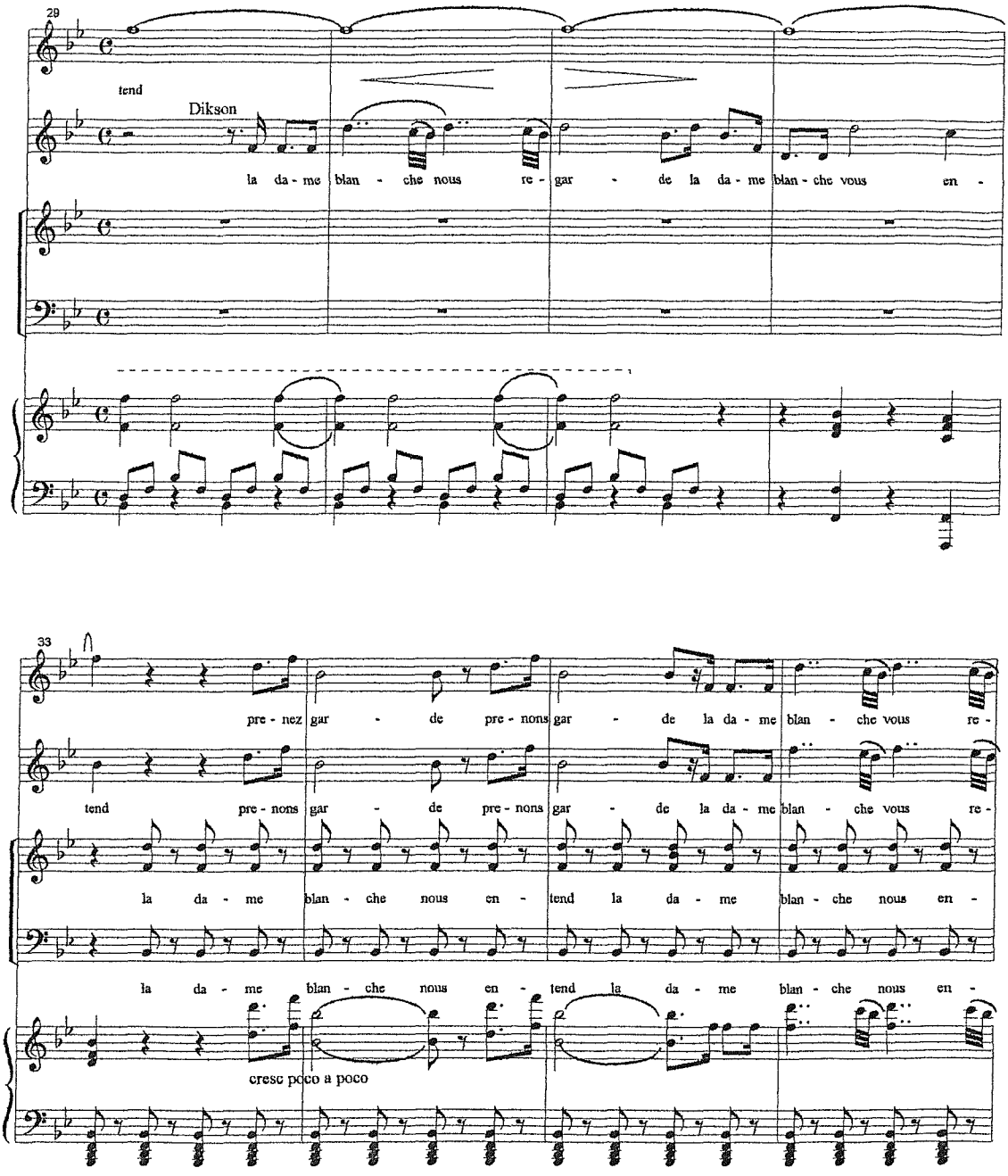
before ceding to the harp arpeggios for the next verse. This contrast between a solid chordal tread and the ethereal harp feeds the listeners' disquiet as the story unfolds.



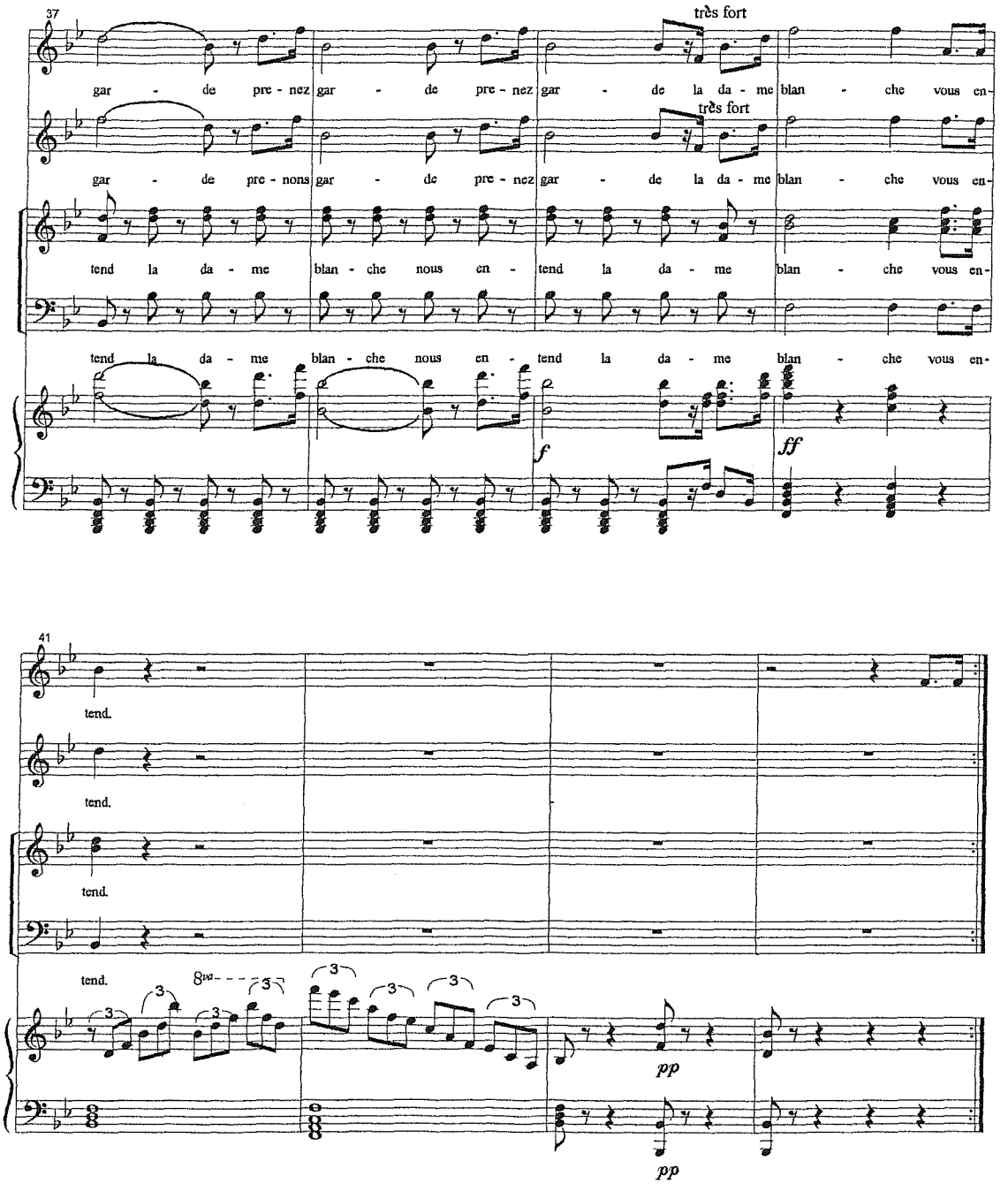
Example 2b. Boieldieu, *La Dame blanche*: Act I, 'Prenez garde'



Example 2b (cont'd)



Example 2b (cont'd)



[*first verse*: Sh! Sh! Listen... From here you see the beautiful estate, whose ramparts touch the sky. An invisible lady looks after this castle. Treacherous and wicked knight, hatching an evil plot, take care. The white lady watches you, the white lady hears you. Chorus: The white lady watches us, the white lady hears you, take care, etc.]

Example 2b (cont'd)

The ballad appears in three of the four *vaudevilles,* set to new words, and is even evoked in *La Folle de Glaris* in a *romance* in which the figure in white turns out to be the madwoman, seen from a distance:

> Rapide comme l'avalanche,
> une grande figure blanche
> avec fureur
> vers moi s'élance.
> Ah! quand j'y pense
> combien j'eus peur.[68]
>
> [As fast as an avalanche,/a great white figure/rushes at me/with fury./Ah! when I think/how afraid I was.]

In *Héloïse*, there is no direct quoting of *La Dame blanche*; instead, a harp (the signal for the presence of the 'ghost' in the opera) becomes the focus of the *vaudeville* as the sleepwalker imagines she is playing the harp in her first sleepwalking scene. A new *romance* in the style of the ballad of the White Lady, with the chorus 'Passez doucement, doucement/La pauvre Eblis est somnambule!', enjoyed considerable popularity in its own right. Bellini's *La sonnambula* also features a chorus, 'A fosco cielo', in which the rumoured phantom is described in similar terms:

> In bianco avvolta lenzuol cadente
> col crin disciolto, con occhio ardente,
> qual densa nebbia dal vento mossa.
>
> [Wrapped in falling folds of white/with streaming hair, and burning eye,/like a misty wind-blown cloud.]

---

[68] *La Folle de Glaris*, in her first air, descibes how sleep provides her only escape from this suffering, 'Un songe heureux, dans mon sommeil/vient m'offrir l'espérance' (A happy dream, in my sleep/brings me hope), and thus not only the supernatural, but also the healing properties of sleep are combined with the image of madness.

Bellini's sceptical Rodolfo replaces the similarly doubting Georges of *La Dame blanche*. Although one can only speculate as to the extent of the influence of *La Dame blanche* on Bellini and Romani, and on the creators of the 1827 sleepwalkers, the theatrical potential of the link between sleepwalking and the supernatural was clearly recognised.

Intriguingly, in the introduction to *The Monastery* (one of the sources for Scribe's libretto for *La Dame blanche*), Scott describes the inspiration for his White Lady as part Irish banshie, a demon that 'announce[s] good or evil fortune to the families connected with [it]', and part Shakespeare's Ariel. He then goes on to paint her in more realistic terms:

> The White Lady is scarcely supposed, however, to have possessed either the power or the inclination to do more than inflict terror or create embarrassement, and is always subjected by those mortals, who, by virtuous resolution, and mental energy, could assert superiority over her. In these particulars she seems to constitute a being of a middle class, between the *esprit follet* who places its pleasure in misleading and tormenting mortals [this is similar to Nodier's 1822 *Trilby*], and the benevolent Fairy of the East, who uniformly guides, aids and supports them'.[69]

She appears through the novel accompanied by bright light, often singing, and in chapter XVI Scott introduces her with a verse from the anonymous 'Magnetic Lady'. Clearly Scribe's White Lady bears a striking resemblance to that of Scott, and the blend of the supernatural, specific visual imagery and music that characterises her appearance in the novel is developed in the opera and brings similar resonances to the other works in which it is quoted or evoked.

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[69] Walter Scott, *The Monastery* [1820] (London and Edinburgh: William Paterson & Co.,1830), 7. Joseph-Marc Bailbé suggests that Scribe may have been influenced, poetically at least, by Nodier, in 'La *Dame blanche*, ou le fantastique galant (Boieldieu et Nodier)', *Etudes normandes*, no. 2 (1984) [Boieldieu issue], 7–16. And although Scott doesn't mention it, his White Lady also bears a distinct resemblance to that of German legend who similarly helped in financial crises, as a good spirit; see Pierre Larousse, 'Dame blanche', *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle* (Paris: Administration du Grand Dictionnaire Universel, 1866–79; repr. Geneva: Slatkine, 1982).

The fact that the ghost of *La Dame blanche* turns out to be explicable and good is matched by the attitude to the supernatural in the *vaudevilles*: all these works show the delight that playwrights and their audiences took in the frisson of the apparently supernatural in a beautiful, female guise. This contrasts with, and perhaps partially explains, the reluctance to accept without adaptation the inexplicable, demonic, often male, immoral magic of German Romanticism in the French theatre in the 1820s.[70] Indeed, while supernatural powers in much north European literature were associated with the devil, *La Dame blanche* and the sleepwalkers of the Parisian stage are all linked unequivocally with religious purity. Thérèse is constantly praying, both when awake and in her final sleepwalking scene (indeed critics complained that she spent too much time on her knees[71]), and *La Dame blanche* appears almost as a religious vision, surrounded by light and affecting the moral outcome of the opera. Furthermore, the *ballet-pantomime* and several of the *vaudevilles* sound the Angelus, and the heroine of *La Petite somnambule* is played by an eight-year-old girl, which takes the vision of virginal innocence to its extreme. This peculiarly French portrayal of the mystical is thus expressed in its broadest and most optimistic sense as a religious force, similar to Balzac's depiction of magnetism and the supernatural in *Ursule Mirouët*.

***

As suggested at the beginning of this chapter, much has been made by modern feminist critics of the Foucauldian political construction of madness as a means of containing the threat of women and of combatting their increasingly public profile following the Revolution. Indeed *frénétique* literature of the late 1820s can be (and has been) seen as an expression of male anxiety towards this female threat: it has a

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[70] The bogus female oracle in Kreutzer's *Ipsiboé* at the Opéra (1824) is another example of this French depiction of the supernatural during the Restoration. For a discussion of the reception of *Faust* and *Der Freischütz* in Paris, see Chapter Four. Darnton traces French interest in the supernatural to Mesmer, who he suggests was the first German Romantic to cross the Rhine. See Darnton, *Mesmerism*, 139–40, 148–59. In one sense it could be suggested that his legacy, magnetically induced sleepwalking, influenced the type of magic favoured by Parisian audiences.

[71] For example, Charles Maurice in *La Courrier des théâtres* (21 September 1827).

strong misogynist tone, depicting monstrous women (often prostitutes) who justify the sexual inadequacies of male protagonists and die horribly, punished for their power.[72] In a sense, such novels and their extremely popular adaptations for the secondary theatres reinterpreted the violent tone of post-Revolutionary *mélodrame*, which also borrowed from northern European (particularly English) literature; and their heroines are precursors of the violent, unhinged *femmes fatales* of Italian opera of the 1830s and beyond.

Yet these gruesome plays were confined to the secondary theatres, and very rarely were the women portrayed as mad. As illustrated by the failure of Chelard's *Macbeth*, portrayals of distraction in France at this time did not on the whole present the disturbing threat of insanity; the combining of tropes of sentimental delirium and monstrous behaviour had not yet been accepted by Parisian audiences in the representation of madwomen – or sleepwalkers.

This reluctance to associate delirium with violence and distress is evident in the reception of Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* at the Théâtre Italien four years later in 1831. Critics, as was usual in reviews of Italian opera, concentrated on the music and singing of the performers, with no comparison with the trance scenes that had recently dominated the Parisian stage. In particular, Anna's delirium in the final scene of the opera was praised for the 'realism' of expression of both composer and performer, and was appreciated as a scene of extreme emotion rather than a mad scene as such.[73]

Thus while there was an undoubted link in France between the sentimental madwomen of the late eighteenth-century stage and the impassioned Italian operatic heroines that took the Théâtre Italien by storm in the 1830s, there was an important period in the late 1820s when madness was not considered a suitable subject for the

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[72] See, for example, Terry Hale's Preface and Afterword to the reprint of an anonymous nineteenth-century English translation of Jules Janin's 1829 novel *L'Ane mort et la femme guillotinée*: *The Dead Donkey and the Guillotined Woman* [1851] (Chiselhurst, Kent: The Gothic Society, 1993).

[73] For more on the reception of *Anna Bolena* at the Théâtre Italien, see my article 'Traditions of Madness: *Anna Bolena* in Paris'.

French stage, despite public interest in the condition. As this chapter has shown, the dramatical potential of the trance scene was better served by sleepwalkers who could more faithfully represent their real-life counterparts, without recourse to disturbing realism.

Thus while the physical significance of sleepwalking was most effectively displayed with the body in specifically French genres (*ballet-pantomime*, *vaudeville*), the emotional nature of madness was more successfully expressed vocally in Italian opera. The lack of feminine madness in French *grand opéra* of the 1830s, despite the popularity of Italian portrayals and the influence of Italian opera on French at the time, is explained by another fundamental generic distinction between French and Italian theatre. While Italian opera generally favoured a victim that an audience might pity, French opera was moving in the direction of audience identification with the victim. In *La Muette de Portici*, for example, discussed in Chapter Three, the plight of the rebels is embodied by the mute Fenella; when she leaps to her death her anguish is subsumed into that of the failed rebels in a choral prayer and the eruption of Vesuvius: personal and collective emotion become as one, expressed in visual as much as vocal terms. The representation of madness, however, demanded a separation of the victim from the people; it was thus better suited to a genre where it could be confined and contained within the voice of the individual.

CHAPTER THREE

'N'étourdissant jamais l'oreille': *La Muette de Portici* and Traditions of Mime

The premiere of Auber's *La Muette de Portici*, on 29 February 1828, was an enormous commercial and artistic success, and was recognised by critics as a momentous night for the Opéra. Castil-Blaze declared: 'I hasten to proclaim the brilliant success of this opera: it is a real triumph for the new genre that is being created'.[1] A reviewer for *La Pandore* suggested, 'For a long time enlightened critics have thought that alongside the old *tragédie lyrique* it was possible to have a more realistic and natural drama which might suit the dignity of this theatre [the Académie Royale de Musique]'.[2] The welcomed novelty and realism of *La Muette* were most obviously apparent in its subject: it had moved away from the Opéra's usual domain of Classical mythology and ancient history, to the sort of modern historical setting that was becoming increasingly popular in literature during the Restoration in the novels of Walter Scott and others. It combined this precisely defined historical background with a Revolutionary theme evoking the spirit of 1789, a fast-moving, exciting libretto, and the novelty of a silent, dancing heroine.[3]

The fundamental departure in *La Muette*, however, was its overall expansion from the usual three acts to five, and its structural developments, both cause and effect of such a change. As Etienne de Jouy had already acknowledged in his 1826 *Essai sur l'opéra français*:

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[1] 'Je m'empresse de proclamer le brillant succès de cet opéra: c'est un véritable triomphe pour le nouveau genre que l'on établit', Castil-Blaze, *Journal des débats* (3 March 1828). *La Muette de Portici, opéra* (Scribe, G. Delavigne/Auber), Opéra, 29 February 1828.

[2] 'Depuis longtemps les critiques éclairés pensaient qu'à côté de l'ancienne tragedie lyrique il était possible de placer un drame plus vrai, plus naturel et qui pouvait convenir à la dignité de ce théâtre', *La Pandore* (3 March 1828).

[3] Copies of the published libretto, score and *mise en scène* are all held at *F-Po*; there are also manuscripts of earlier versions, sketches for costumes and scenery, and a large number of documents associated with subsequent performances (Mat.19/291).

> La division en cinq actes me paraît la plus convenable pour tout opéra qui réunirait toutes les qualités du genre, c'est-à-dire pour un drame lyrique où l'intérêt fondamental s'allierait à l'emploi du merveilleux; où la nature et la majesté du sujet permettraient ou plutôt obligeraient d'ajouter à la marche naturelle de l'action l'agrément des fêtes, l'éclat des cérémonies civiles et religieuses, et conséquemment exigeraient de fréquents changemments de scène.[4]
>
> [Division into five acts seems to me most suitable for any opera that reunites the elements of the genre, that is, for a *drame lyrique* where the fundamental interest is combined with the marvellous; where the nature and majesty of the subject allows, or rather demands, the addition to the natural progression of the action the charm of fêtes, the splendour of civil and religious ceremonies, and consequently needs frequent scene changes.]

Jouy emphasised that rather than increasing the number of verses or complicating the plot, this expansion to five acts was needed 'to expand the action, to increase the interest, to establish opposites, contrasts for which the music and decoration are eager'.[5] Indeed, although the story is relatively simple, the five acts of *La Muette* allow space for the plot to unfold on two levels: in the realisation of the dramatic progression of the opera in the *mise en scène*, and in the integration of dance and pantomime. Thus the five-act structure was not a mere extension of the libretto, but, as Castil-Blaze recognised, a crucial element in the transformation of the genre.

Despite its structural innovation, the subject, libretto and score of *La Muette* were still traditional in many respects, a fact that no doubt helped its immediate acceptance. The use of gesture, contemporary settings, local colour and

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[4] Jouy's unperformed five-act opera *Velléda, ou les gauloises* (written in 1813 for the composer P.-F.L. Aimon) and possibly his libretto for Rossini's *Guillaume Tell* predate *La Muette*. See Anselm Gerhard's edition of the *Essai*: 'Victor-Joseph Etienne de Jouy: *Essai sur l'opéra français*,' *Bollettino del Centro rossiniano di studi*, nos. 1–3 [bound as one] (1987), 63–91.

[5] 'Pour agrandir l'action, pour en graduer l'intérêt, pour y trouver ces oppositions, ces contrastes dont la poésie musicale et la peinture sont avides', Gerhard, 'Jouy, *Essai*', 70.

melodramatically evocative music were all features of *ballet-pantomime* at the Opéra. The formal aria-types and accompanied recitatives were found in French opera from the time of Gluck, and the poetry continued a tradition going back to Quinault. Furthermore, the idea of combining music, drama, design and movement had already been advanced in ballet by Noverre, and in opera by Cherubini, thirty years earlier. Even the depiction of revolution in opera had been tried at the Opéra in 1826 with Rossini's *Le Siège de Corinthe*.[6]

A number of minor innovations also enabled the Opéra to compete with and surpass the realistic and naturalistic productions of the secondary theatres. These new techniques owed much to the experience of the composer, librettists, stage director and designers, who had all worked in the secondary theatres or at the Opéra-Comique before coming to the Opéra. Daniel Auber came to be known in France as the leading composer of *opéras comiques*, and *La Muette* reflects this influence in its popular song styles and large chorus–ensemble numbers. Eugène Scribe's numerous works for the secondary theatres included ten one- and two-act *comédies-vaudevilles* for the Gymnase Dramatique in partnership with *La Muette*'s other librettist Germain Delavigne. Together they had adapted techniques developed in this popular genre for three *opéras comiques*, including *La Neige* and *Le Maçon* for Auber in the 1820s. The stage director Solomé had worked with the set designers Ciceri and Gué at the Panorama-Dramatique in the early 1820s, and when he arrived at the Opéra in September 1827, he was involved in the staging of Scribe's and Delavigne's first work for the Opéra, the *ballet-pantomime La Somnambule* (discussed in Chapter Two). A critic in *La Pandore* pointed out at the time that *La Somnambule* was a well-made opera lacking only words,[7] and the experience gained from this venture was no doubt important in the creation and realisation of the role of the mute.

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[6] For more on the nature of innovation in *Le Siège*, see Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera*, 70–94. However, his claim that much of the supposed innovation in *La Muette* had already been tried in *Le Siège* underestimates the interraction of the musical, visual and textual elements of *La Muette*, and the integration of private and public drama.

[7] 'MM. Scribe et Delavigne ... avaient fait de leur *Somnambule* une sorte d'opéra très-bien composé auquel il ne manquait que des paroles', *La Pandore* (2 March 1828).

Thus while *La Muette* was innovative in a structural sense, it consolidated and refined practices already in place at the Opéra and other theatres. This process was continued, as modern commentators have observed, not only in the *grands opéras* of Meyerbeer, but in later nineteenth-century opera.[8] Above all, the fusion of the different elements of lyric drama on a grand scale found its apotheosis in Wagner, and the influence of *La Muette* can be traced in his work and aesthetic, from *Rienzi* (1842), which was intended to outdo all previous attempts at French *grand opéra*, to *Lohengrin* (1850), in which Elsa's scene (Act I scene 2) is remarkably similar in its use of gesture to Fenella's first pantomime, and *Götterdämmerung* (1876).[9]

In his obituary *Erinnerungen an Auber* (1871), Wagner also compared *La Muette*'s effect on audiences to its revolutionary impact on history:

> This opera whose very representations had brought émeutes about, was recognised as the obvious theatrical precusor of the July Revolution, and seldom has an artistic product stood in closer connection with a world-event.[10]

Indeed the opera's claimed role in triggering the 1830 Belgian revolt against the Dutch has further contributed to our late-twentieth-century interest in *La Muette* – although it seems most likely that the opera was chosen as a coincidentally appropriate signal to

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[8] Verdi was also influenced by Parisian boulevard theatre and French *grand opéra*, particularly following his stay in Paris in 1847–9, and specific musical influences from *La Muette* have been traced, such as the similarity between the *Allegro vivace* in Fenella's first pantomime (Act I scene 4) and a theme in the overture to *Oberto*. See Emilio Sala, 'Verdi and the Parisian Boulevard Theatre', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, vii (1995), 185–205; Herbert Schneider, 'La Muette de Portici', *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*.

[9] See, for example, John Warrack, 'The Influence of French Grand Opera on Wagner'; Jean Chantavoine and Jean Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Le Romantisme dans la musique européene* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1955), 135–6.

[10] Richard Wagner, 'Reminiscences of Auber/Erinnerugen an Auber' [1871], *Prose Works*, v: *Actors and Singers* (New York: Broude Brothers, 1966, trans. by William Ashton Ellis), 35–55, esp. 53.

start the previously planned uprising.[11] Moreover, *La Muette* was staged in Paris on 4 August 1830 in a benefit performance for the victims of the July uprising, in which, by public demand, the patriotic fishermen's chorus was replaced by 'La Marseillaise'. And at a performance on 25 August, in the presence of Louis-Philippe, Nourrit sung 'La Parisienne' and 'La Marseillaise', dressed in the uniform of the national guard.

Despite this subsequent revolutionary appeal, however, it was the opera's mute heroine that was the immediate focus of interest: mutes danced across the stage of every significant theatre in the city within four months of the premiere. Dalayrac's 1806 *opéra comique Deux mots* played at the Odéon and Opéra-Comique, while at the secondary theatres a *mélodrame La Muette de la forêt*, two *vaudevilles Yelva* and *La Muette des Pyrénées*, and a *pantomime dialoguée La Muette* drew large audiences, along with two parodies, *Les Immortels* and *La Muette du Port Bercy*, and a revival of the 1826 *vaudeville La Sourde-muette*.[12] On any night in April or May 1828, one could find at least three or four of these works being performed.[13]

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[11] See Sonia Slatin, 'Opera and Revolution: *La Muette de Portici* and the Belgian Revolution of 1830 Revisited', *Journal of Musicological Research*, iii (1979), 45–62.

[12] *Deux mots, ou une nuit dans la forêt, comédie* [1806] (Marsollier/Dalayrac), Odéon, 4 May 1828 (revival), in Opéra-Comique repertoire in the 1820s, seven performances in 1828; *La Muette de la forêt, mélodrame* (Antier, Pixérécourt/A. Piccini), Gaîté, 29 January 1828; *Yelva, ou l'orpheline russe, vaudeville* (Villeneuve, Scribe, Chapeau), Gymnase Dramatique, 18 March 1828; *La Muette des Pyrénées, pièce mêlée de vaudevilles* (Motus, Laffillard, Mallain), Comte, 30 May 1828; *La Muette, pantomime dialoguée* (Redon/Bosisio), Luxembourg, 17 April 1828; *Les Immortels, folie revue* (anon.), Variétés, 15 April 1828; *La Muette du Port Bercy, vaudeville-parodie* (Dupin, D'Allarde, D'Artois), Porte Saint-Martin, 28 April 1828; *La Sourde-muette, ou la dame au voile vert, comédie-vaudeville* [1826] (Xavier, Duvert), Vaudeville, 17 April 1828. The texts of the parodies were not published, but manuscripts of the texts submitted to the censor are held at *F-Pan*: $F^{18}663A$. The other texts were all published, and can be consulted at *F-Pn* and *F-Po*. A work entitled *Les Femmes muettes* was also announced in the listings for 19 May 1828 at the Luxembourg, but there are no reviews, and no published text or manuscript at the Archives Nationales.

[13] On Wednesday 23 April, for example, *La Muette de Portici* was at the Opéra, *Deux Mots* at the Opéra Comique, *Yelva* at the Gymnase-Dramatique, *Les Immortels* at the Variétés, *La Muette de la forêt* at the Gaîté and *La Muette* at the Luxembourg.

But while Fenella's muteness in the opera is symbolic of the powerless rebels, in the secondary theatres – as the titles suggest – this political dimension is absent. Instead, muteness is presented at a purely domestic level, as a vulnerable, specifically female state, but also as a temporarily liberating condition in which each heroine effectively drives the plot forward because of her desirability to men. Such portrayals of liberated and thus sexually threatening women – as discussed in Chapter Two with regard to the representation of madness in the early nineteenth century – are often pinpointed as a response to the post-Revolutionary 'feminisation of the state', when women found access to education, politics and other public, traditionally male, spheres. Political influence became inseparable from sexual manipulation, and in the years leading up to the 1830 Revolution, the publicly intrusive woman was frequently represented as a sexual threat. However, although the appearance of many of these mutes (dishevelled, with a white dress and frightened look) recalled the image of madwomen, these representations, like those of sleepwalkers, combined physical vulnerability with the freedom and independence of image and position in theatrical space, a combination favoured in Parisian drama of the time. This curious mixture of vulnerability and power is in fact at the heart of the portrayals of mutes in 1828.[14]

In this chapter I shall concentrate on the contemporary reception of the opera, and focus on Fenella's role as the 'silent spirit' of the revolution, relating the depiction of her consciousness to that of Scott's Fenella in *Peveril of the Peak* (Scribe's literary inspiration), and to the other theatrical depictions of muteness. In so doing I hope not only to illuminate Fenella's role in its contemporary context, but also to suggest the broader significance of the mute on the Parisian stage at this time – as a symbol of defiance.

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[14] See the editors' introduction to *Rebel Daughters: Women and the French Revolution*, ed. Sara E. Melzer and Leslie W. Rabine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3–11. Furthermore, muteness was one of the clinical symptoms of raped women, who were committed to Paris's lunatic asylums in the 1840s; see Ripa, *Women and Madness*, esp. chap. 1.

The Masaniello Legend

La Muette tells the story of Tomas Aniello (Masaniello), a fisherman who led the Neapolitans in rebellion against the ruling Spanish in 1647. Taking this rebellion as a backdrop, the opera focuses on the fate of a fictional mute fishergirl, Fenella, Masaniello's sister, who has been seduced and abandoned by Alphonse, the son of the Spanish Viceroy. The curtain rises on the preparations for Alphonse's marriage to his new (and socially more acceptable) love, the Spanish princess Elvire. Following the ceremony, to Elvire's horror Fenella identifies Alphonse publicly as her seducer, and the Spanish soldiers demand Fenella's punishment. In Act II Masaniello swears to avenge his sister, and this provides the impetus to call the rebels to arms against the Spanish oppressors. Act III sees Alphonse and Elvire reconciled and determined to help Fenella, but as the Spanish soldiers despatched by Alphonse pursue Fenella, the people in the market-place rise up, defeat the soldiers and go in search of the Viceroy. In Act IV, Masaniello deceives his rebel companions by helping Fenella when she begs him to protect Alphonse and Elvire from the mob. The finale shows his comrades plotting against him while the people celebrate their preliminary victory over the Spanish under Masaniello. In the final act the Spanish regain control, and Masaniello is poisoned by his closest friend, Pietro, for betraying the people; he dies saving Elvire from the rioters. Vesuvius erupts as if in divine judgement as a despairing Fenella leaps into the lava.

The Masaniello legend was well-known throughout Europe in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[15] The first adaptation to appear on the French stage

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[15] Stage versions of the legend included Barthold Feind's *Freudenspiel, Masagniello furioso oder die Neapolitanische Fischer-Empörung*, set to music by Reinhard Keiser (Hamburg, 1706) and *Masaniello, the Fisherman of Naples, an Historical Play*, written by George Soane (who was later to adapt some of Scribe's texts for the English stage), with incidental music by Sir Henry Rowley Bishop (London, Drury Lane, 1825). In France, written accounts of the legend included a number of popular *récits historiques* based on August Gottlieb Meissner's *Masaniello: Historisches Bruchstück* (1786; reissued in 1821 and 1828). A more comprehensive list of *Masaniello* literature is given in Jean R. Mongrédien, 'Variations sur un thème – Masaniello: Du héros de l'histoire à celui de *La Muette de Portici*', *Jahrbuch für Opernforschung* (1985), 90–160.

was *Masaniello, ou le pêcheur napolitain*, an *opéra comique* written by Lafortelle and Moreau de Commagny and set to music by Michele Carafa (first performed just two months before *La Muette*, on 27 December 1827). After a number of difficulties with the censor, this work was to enjoy considerable success, despite being eclipsed by the popularity of *La Muette*.[16] The newspapers were full of comparisons: 'these two works lend each other a mutual strength; together they arouse the public's curiosity'.[17] *Masaniello*, however, took a more overtly political stance than *La Muette* and was initially seen as openly encouraging political subversion and revolt; the censors' reports suggested that the *opéra comique* glorified the rebel leader and the horrors of the uprising. Openly inflammatory sentiments ('Quelle injustice!') were sung stridently by a chorus of rioters, and it is really no surprise that it took six censors' reports to pass the opera. Chazet, one of the censors, wrote: '[*Masaniello*] offered proof of the danger of revolutions and of the consequences of leaving one's own [social] sphere'. He approved a new ending in which 'Masaniello's madness ... and the re-establishment of the duke's authority left the audience satisfied'.[18] Even then, after its first performance it was still considered dangerously revolutionary.

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[16] Although in 1828 *Masaniello* received fifty-two performances to *La Muette de Portici*'s forty-eight.

[17] 'Les deux ouvrages se prêteront un mutuel appui; ils éveillent en même temps la curiosité publique', *La Pandore* (3 March 1828). A libretto entitled *Masaniello* also appeared before the Odéon reading committee in February, but was refused 'owing to the distribution of the voices', and a three-act opera entitled *La Muette* by Jules-Henri Vernoy de Saint-Georges was accepted by the reading committee for the Opéra-Comique on 16 October 1827, but subsequently disappeared and was not performed. See *F-Pan*: AJ[13]1057, a box of administrative documents from the Opéra.

[18] '[*Masaniello*] offrait une preuve du danger des révolutions et de l'inconvénient qu'il y avait de sortir de sa sphere'; 'la démence de Mazaniello [*sic*] ... et le rétablissement de l'autorité du duc laissent le spectateur satisfait'; cited in Odile Krakovitch, 'L'Opéra-Comique et la censure', *Die Opéra Comique und ihr Einfluss auf das europäische Musiktheater im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Herbert Schneider and Nicole Wild (Hildesheim: Olms, 1997), 211–34, esp. 223.

In *La Muette* both social and political tensions are more subtly handled. In contrast to Carafa's opera, for example, in which the central relationship is between Masaniello and his wife, *La Muette* introduces a more complex situation: the love between Masaniello's sister and the son of the Spanish Viceroy, a bond that crosses boundaries of both class and nationality. This matches a similar change of emphasis made by A.J.B. Defauconpret in two works based on the legend. In his 1822 novel *Masaniello, ou huit jours à Naples*, Defauconpret focuses on Masaniello and his wife, but in the fragment of a different (and presumably later) work by the same author, entitled simply *Masaniello*, Masaniello is in love with Isabella, the daughter of the Viceroy.[19] This central relationship integrates the private and public spheres of the story, and in one sense intensifies the political implications of the plot. But whereas for Defauconpret Masaniello never lets his personal feelings for Isabella dominate his sense of duty to the people, in Scribe's libretto his concern for Fenella leads to his downfall and the defeat of the rebels, and the private is thus bound even more closely to political issues. This shift towards the personal is reflected in the title of the opera – the only adaptation of the legend not to be named after the leader of the revolt.[20]

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[19] Defauconpret was well known in France for his translations of Walter Scott's novels. Although there seems to be no copy of the novel *Masaniello, ou huit jours à Naples* extant in French, a report of it appears in Pierre Larousse, *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle*. Herbert Schneider and Nicole Wild also mention a Spanish translation of the novel by D.F. de P. Fors de Casamayor (Barcelona: Oliveres, 1844) in *'La Muette de Portici': Kritische Ausgabe des Librettos und Dokumentation ihrer ersten Inszenierung* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1993), 1–2. The fragment *Masaniello* is an uncut sheet divided into 16 pages (Paris: Boulé, n.d.) at *F-Pn*: Y^2p117.

[20] This unsuitable match between a Spanish noble and a fishergirl also finds a striking parallel in George Sand's novel *Indiana* (1832). Noun, Indiana's creole maid, understanding that her lover Raymon de Ramières is in fact in love with Indiana, drowns herself in a stream, believing that this sacrifice will allow Indiana and Raymon to love each other (in a more socially acceptable relationship) without obstruction.

History and Revolution

David Charlton has suggested that the handling of the political and personal spheres in *La Muette* unlocked possibilities for *grands opéras* to come, in which private dramas were usually set against, and interwoven with, historical episodes. Private dilemmas 'reflect and play against the simultaneous political drama'.[21] Although this is a characteristic of many operas on Classical themes, the growth of *La Muette* from a three-act opera (1825) to its five-act form (1828) illustrates particularly clearly the developing relationship between the public and private elements of the work. In the earliest version of the opera, Alphonse and Fenella love each other, but are prevented from marrying by their social difference; there is no organic connection between this story of doomed love and that of the 1647 revolution. In the final version of *La Muette*, however, Fenella has been abandoned by Alphonse before Act I; her story provides the catalyst for the rebellion, and Fenella herself comes to symbolise the powerlessness of the rebels, her death underlining their final defeat. Irony is a crucial ingredient of this relationship between public and private spheres. It comes to the fore most obviously, and perhaps most poignantly, in Act IV of the opera, where Masaniello is being heralded as leader of the people while his companions plot his murder. This personal element in the retelling of events, reinforced through irony, injects a taste of contemporaneity – the audience identifies with an individual – and thus a sense of process into history. This sense was crucially enhanced by the visual element of the opera – the physically and aurally opposed sections of the chorus, the attention to historical detail in costumes and sets, and most powerfully of all, the impact of the final eruption of Vesuvius. It was this sophisticated handling of the revolutionary theme, together with the ultimate failure of the rebels, that satisfied the

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[21] David Charlton, 'On the Nature of "Grand Opera"', *Hector Berlioz: Les Troyens*, ed. Ian Kemp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 94–105, esp. 100. Charlton differentiates between those grand operas lacking an expression of public political interest (such as *Robert le diable* – originally an *opéra comique* in any case) and those, like *La Muette*, that contain this element (other examples include *La Juive* and *Les Huguenots*).

censors that it was far removed from the comparatively crude Carafa/Lafortelle opera.[22]

By transplanting *La Muette* to a remote time and place, Scribe distanced the opera from the events of 1789. However, the southern European locale brought to mind at least two contemporary revolts in which France was involved as one of the three European powers. A revolt in Naples in 1821 threatened Austrian authority in the Italian peninsular, echoing the 1647 uprising against another foreign power. On this occasion the Bourbon Ferdinand I broke his promises made to the people of Naples on his restoration as King of Naples and Sicily in 1815. He abolished reforms made during the French occupation and returned the nobility and clergy to their privileged positions. The uprising, principally of army officers, the business class and secret societies such as the *Carbonari*, was finally crushed by Austrian troops, in spite of the opposition of France and particularly England to intervention. In the same year the eruption of the Greek War of Independence against the Turks correspondingly inspired a groundswell of popular support in Europe, drawing on Romantic appeal, philhellenism and religious fervour. Eventually, in 1827, the European powers intervened on the side of the Greek people; in October of that year (only months before the premiere of *La Muette*), the Turkish fleet was practically destroyed at Navarino, effectively signalling the end of the war.[23]

The atmosphere of these revolts was clearly evoked in *La Muette* with the southern European setting, detailed not only in scenery but also in the music, dancing and costumes (see Figure 5).[24] Additionally, the visual and musical references to the

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[22] Jane Fulcher claims that *La Muette* was perceived as a dangerous revolutionary work that backfired on the authorities. However, the comments of the censors and newspapers that she cites generally acknowledge the revolutionary content of the opera rather than criticise it as politically subversive. Jane Fulcher, *The Nation's Image*.

[23] See introduction to Woodhouse, *The Greek War of Independence*, vii–ix. These southern European revolts and their impact are also discussed in Charles Breunig, *The Age of Revolution and Reaction, 1789–1850* (New York: Norton, 1970, repr. 1977), esp. 138–45.

[24] Naples had also become a popular setting for non-revolutionary works at the Opéra, Opéra-Comique and secondary theatres. Early in 1828 an erupting Vesuvius could be seen at the Diorama, in Carafa's *Masaniello* at the Opéra-Comique, and in three *mélodrames*: Antier's

Figure 5. *La Muette de Portici*: costume sketches for ballet sequences in Act I
Hippolyte Lecomte [*c*1828]
Bibliothèque Nationale de France: Opéra

French Revolution were probably more powerful than the denials (or ambiguities) of the text and setting – as confirmed by the opera's appropriation and adaptation during the events in 1830. The fact that the people were shown to behave in as bloodthirsty a fashion as the Spanish soldiers, and that the revolt ultimately failed, did not seriously counteract the popular portrayal of a legendary hero. Indeed, Masaniello and the fishermen were portrayed in Republican phrygian caps, and an article appearing in *La Pandore*, following the premiere, noted the obvious similarities between Masaniello and Napoleon: 'The story of a poor fisherman who within several days was honoured

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Gustave, ou le napolitain and Pixérécourt's *La Tête mort, ou les ruines de Pompéïa* at the Théâtre de la Gaîté, and Saint-Hilaire's *Irène, ou la prise de Napoli* at the Cirque Olympique.

as a king, killed as a villain, and venerated as a saint'.[25] This curious mixture of anti-Revolutionary sentiment and heavy Revolutionary symbolism reflected the shifting attitude to past and present emerging not only in the theatres but also in written histories and paintings of Revolutionary battle scenes in the 1820s.[26]

Fenella is pivotal to the opera's sense of ambiguity, in the combining of private and political spheres of the plot, and in the presentation of revolution. She emerges as a silent, emblematic leader of the revolt who – unwittingly – controls the direction of the plot through her influence over Masaniello and the Spanish, and underpins the musical and dramatic structure of the opera. Paradoxically she is also the reason for Masaniello's wavering, and ultimately the cause of the failure of the revolt. Fenella's ubiquitous role matches that of Marianne at the beginning of the nineteenth century: as a symbol both of the Republic and of Liberty, Marianne's changing political significance often conflicted with broader interpretations.[27] Indeed, the live allegory of the 'goddess', enacted by ordinary female citizens (perhaps militants, or the wives

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[25] 'L'histoire d'un pauvre pecheur, qui en quelques jours a été honoré comme un monarque, tué comme un scélérat, et vénéré comme un saint', *La Pandore* (30 January 1828). Phrygian caps, placed on the heads of slaves in Ancient Rome when they were given freedom, became a symbol of freedom during the Revolution. In *La Muette* they evoke both the Revolution, and the local colour of southern Italy. The costumes of Masaniello and the fishermen are described in detail at the end of Solomé's *livret de mise en scène*; see Cohen, *The Original Staging Manuals*, 13–72, esp. 61–3. Sketches of costumes for the fishermen, soldiers and villagers can be seen at *F-Po*: D.216/8.

[26] See, for example, Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, *French Images from the Greek War of Independence, 1821–1830: Art and Politics under the Restoration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); and Wright, *Painting and History During the French Restoration.*

[27] For a study of representations of Marianne in the nineteenth century, see Maurice Agulhon, *Marianne into Battle: Republican Imagery and Symbolism in France, 1789–1880* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, trans. Janet Lloyd; originally published in Paris, 1979). Agulhon illustrates how around 1830 the constitutional monarchists used Revolutionary symbolism – particularly the image of Marianne – to evoke a more general idea of freedom.

or daughters of militants) at ceremonies during the Empire, bears a striking resemblance to Fenella's silent, symbolic role.[28]

Gesture

With *La Muette de Portici*, Scribe introduced a mute character into the Masaniello legend for the first time. The idea for Fenella came from Walter Scott's *Peveril of the Peak* (1822). In the preface to this novel, Scott tells us that he in turn took the inspiration for his deaf and dumb Fenella from Goethe's shy (but speaking) gypsy, Mignon, in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795–6). Like Scribe's heroine, Scott's Fenella bridges the personal and public elements of the plot: although driven by her unrequited love for the young hero, Julian, she is also, we eventually discover, at the centre of the political machinations of the plot. But unlike Scribe's Fenella, it is deafness rather than muteness which proves to be her most significant affliction: other characters talk of their innermost secrets in her presence, and are forced to mime to make her understand; she relies on facial grimaces and trembling to communicate emotion. This is a reversal of the situation in the opera, where only Fenella mimes, and it is she who expresses her feelings and succeeds in communicating quite sophisticated, detailed narratives through mime. About half way through the novel, however, we discover that Scott's Fenella is neither deaf nor dumb, but is in fact a political spy named Zara; her duplicitous character is reflected in animal and

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[28] Joan Landes stresses how depictions of Liberty after the Revolution – as young, innocent and pure – were metaphoric, standing for the whole social community. This image of popular sovereignty is similar to that of Fenella, who symbolises the plight of the people. However, Landes suggests that the movement away from the masculine iconography of the absolutist body politic to the female representation of the Republic was matched by a rejection of the importance of visual image alone, in favour of the higher (masculine) status of 'abstract, symbolic functions of logic, mathematics, symbolic reasoning, writing/authoring'. Again, this view has parallels in Fenella's plight: although she indirectly initiates the revolt, the resolution of the situation is decided by Alphonse and Masaniello. See Joan Landes, 'Representing the Body Politic: The Paradox of Gender in the Graphic Politics of the French Revolution', *Rebel Daughters: Women and the French Revolution*, ed. Sara E. Melzer and Leslie W. Rabine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 15–37.

supernatural associations as she slips between her two personas; this contrasts quite starkly with Scribe's portrayal of an honest, innocent heroine.

As well as this literary inspiration, Scribe was more practically influenced by traditions of mime in the theatre, stretching back to the previous century. In the 1820s mime was generally seen at the Opéra only in *ballet-pantomime*, and the conventional symbolic gestures of this repertoire were an important part of Fenella's lexicon. But perhaps more influential, given Scribe's experience, was the sort of mime used in spoken genres at the secondary theatres, notably in *mélodrame*, which derived from Pixérécourt's *mélodrames à grand spectacle* at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In such works wordless gestures or tableaux were used regularly at moments of climax to express emotions and passions more directly than was possible with speech; visual symbols, *mise en scène* and atmospheric music helped to clarify such expression.[29] A genuinely mute figure was frequently found at the heart of *mélodrame*, where difficulty in communicating provided a source of tension as his or her innocence was questioned and finally recognised. The inspiration for such mute characters is generally recognised as Jean-Nicolas Bouilly's *comédie historique*, *L'Abbé de l'Epée* (1799) for the Théâtre Français, based on the story of a famous historical character, who invented sign language and founded an institution for the deaf and dumb.[30] At the centre of the play is the young deaf and dumb orphan Théodore, whose inheritance the Abbé helps recover. In this work, and the *mélodrames* that followed, another character would translate the mute's pantomime, but often the gestures simply had a metaphorical significance. For example, in

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[29] Rousseau, in *Essai sur l'origine des langues* (*c*1761), identified physical gestures and cries as the instinctive and unmeditated 'sign'. See, for example, Ronald P. Birmingham, 'The Primordial Scream: Sound and World Vision in the Writings of J.-J. Rousseau and J.-P. Rameau', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, xii/1 (1988), 19–28; Jean-Louis Schefer, *Commentaire de l'Essai sur l'origine des langues* (Paris: Presses-Pocket, 1990).

[30] The play was still being performed at the Théâtre Français and the Court in the 1820s, and was mentioned regularly in press reviews of theatre works featuring mutes. There is a vast literature on the work of the Abbé de l'Epée and the subsequent education of deaf-mutes. For a history and a detailed bibliography, see Harlan Lane, *When the Mind Hears: A History of the Deaf* (New York: Random House, 1984).

Pixérécourt's *mélodrame Le Chien de Montargis* (1814), the mute Eloi, falsely accused of murder, tries to defend himself in a court scene. We do not need to understand what he is actually trying to communicate, but simply see that his emotion is too strong to express in words; we understand his complicated gestures as metaphor rather than literal translation.[31]

Although the gap between thought and expression was the dramatic point of such scenes, and a crucial element in the depiction of most early-nineteenth-century mutes (and Scott's Fenella), it was rejected by Scribe in *La Muette*, in favour of total legibility. This had two crucial results: muteness became important as a theme or a symbol, rather than an actuality, and there was an increasing reliance on music to express specific actions rather than vague emotions, through allusion and orchestral depiction.

Scribe's attention to expression reflected an increased public interest in the state of muteness in the 1820s. Although the Abbé de l'Epée had opened the first publicly funded institute for deaf-mutes in France in 1755, training teachers who established schools throughout Europe, it was not until the first decades of the nineteenth century that, with the efforts of his pupil the Abbé Sicard, widespread interest in deaf-mutes became apparent among the general public. By 1828, numerous books and newspaper articles highlighting concerns about deaf-mutes in the community had been published: interest was shown in educating and communicating with them in various types of sign language, reports on the medical implications of the condition were produced, and efforts were made to help them partake in the cultural life of the rest of the population.[32] In December 1827 an article appeared in *La*

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[31] Emilio Sala terms this device an expressive 'short circuit', in '"Que ses gestes parlants ont de grâce et de charmes": Motivi "mélo" nella "Muette de Portici"', *Trasmissione e recezione delle forme di cultura musicale*, ed. Lorenzo Bianconi (Turin: EDT, 1990), i, 504–20. The neurologist Oliver Sacks demonstrates how language is a vital element in the leap from a perceptual to a conceptual world, from sensation to thought; it is precisely this pre-lingual expression of sentiment that mutes in *mélodrame* are on the whole attempting to communicate. See Oliver Sacks, *Seeing Voices* (London: Picador, 1989), 65.

[32] For example, a letter was published in *Le Globe* from M. Itard, a doctor at the Institution Royale des Sourds-Muets, tutor of the renowned Wild Boy of Aveyron, and an early champion

Pandore, reporting on a meeting of deaf-mutes, and showing interest in how they communicated:

> Quand au lieu de la passion, ce sont les mots qu'on veut rendre, la langue des signes naturels devient si minutieuse et si longue, souvent même si fugitive et si confuse, qu'il vaut mieux renoncer à la pantomime dramatique et recourir aux signes de convention alphabétiques ou elliptiques.[33]
>
> [When, instead of passion, it is words that one wants to communicate, the language of natural signs becomes so detailed and long, often even evasive and confused, that it is better to abandon dramatic pantomime and resort to conventional alphabetical or elliptical signs.]

This remark highlights the two types of expression available to (real and theatrical) mutes: emotion, which can be communicated with force and immediacy through 'dramatic pantomime', and factual narrative, which cannot. Peter Brooks in his seminal study *The Melodramatic Imagination* identifies the problem as a schizophrenic shift between 'signifier' and 'signified'. Indeed, stage directions for nineteenth-century *mélodrame* commonly fluctuate between these narrative levels, describing the actor's actual gestures, the effect he or she should create, and the emotion the character should be feeling. Brooks sees a solution to this in opera, which he views as 'the full realization' of melodrama: he tantalisingly suggests that music, 'charged with the burden of ineffable expression', implicitly bridges the interpretational gap.[34]

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of the oralist campaign. He discussed in some detail his cures and methods of education. This prompted two letters from a Dr Deleau, questioning and adding to the information given by Itard; see *Le Globe* (7 and 23 December 1826 and 6 January 1828). For more on Itard's oralist views see Lane, *When the Mind Hears*, 121–44.

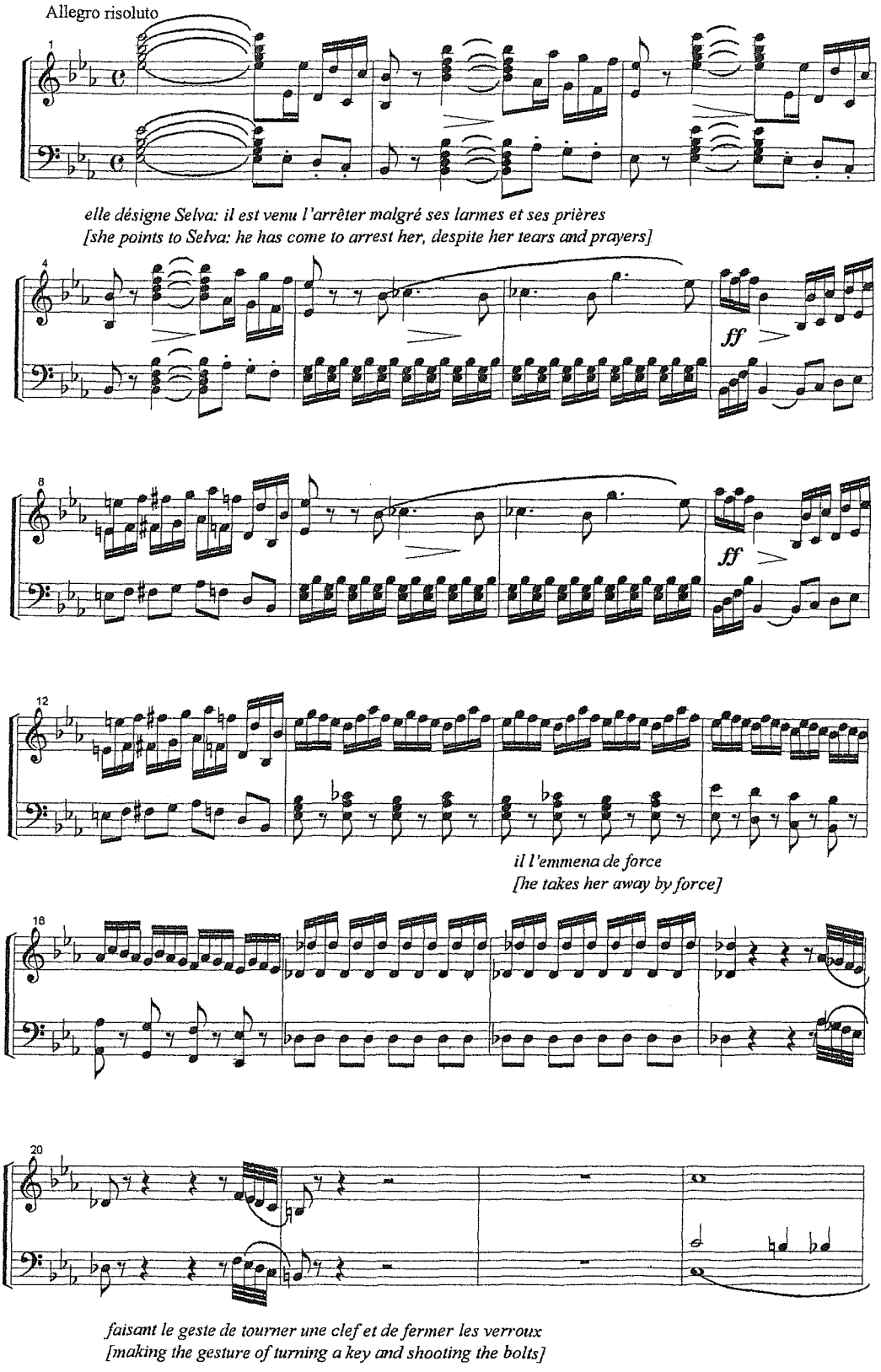
[33] *La Pandore* (28 December 1827).

[34] Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, 75. Disappointingly, Brooks does not expand on his thesis, and the way in which opera supersedes *mélodrame* remains unexplored.

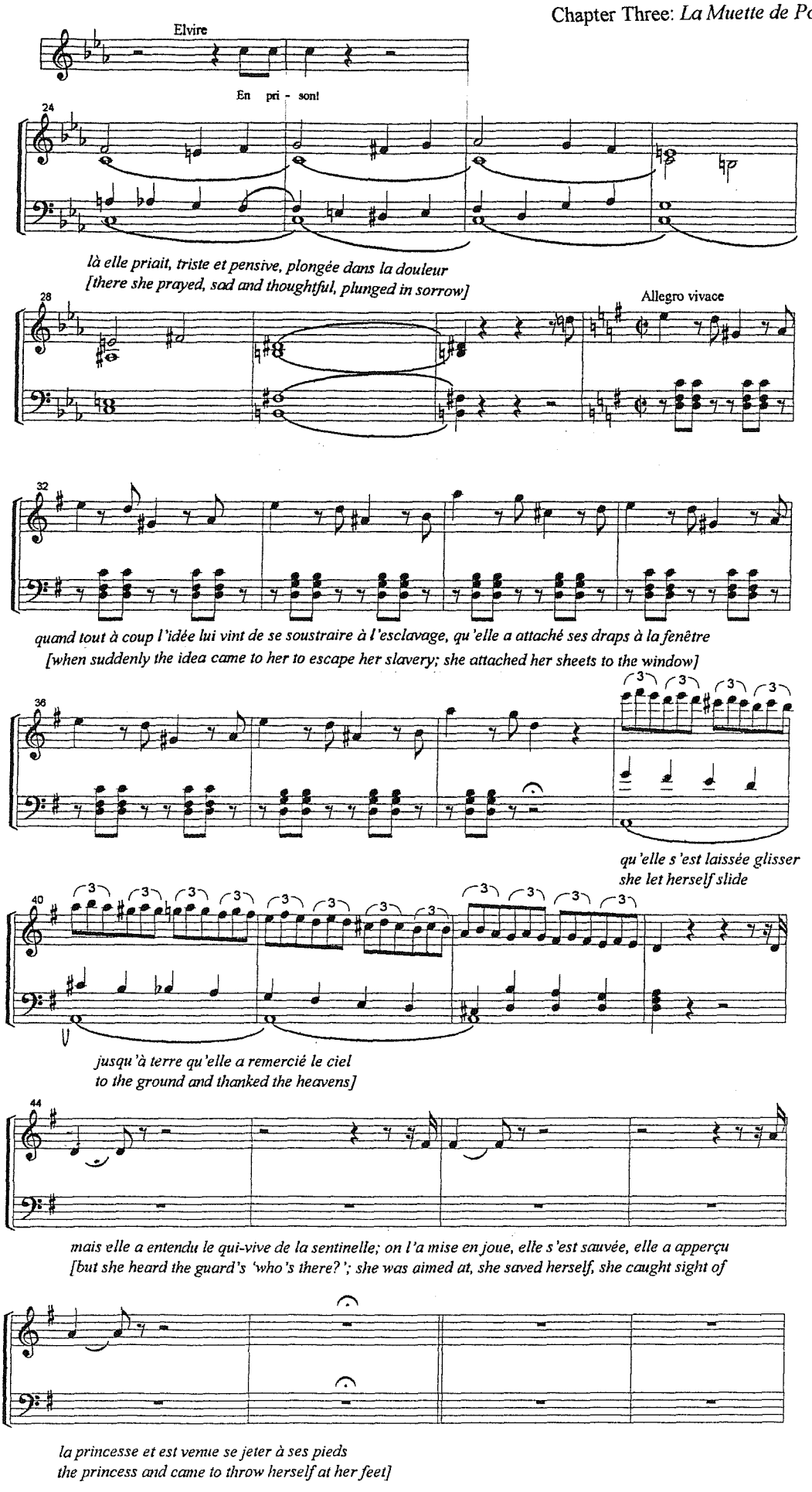
Although music may be able to suggest emotion successfully in a given context, however, it can no more communicate 'fact' than gesture can. It too is a metaphor for the 'inexpressible', and has its own language of signs that do not necessarily support the written text. In the case of Fenella, the narrative we understand from her gestures is usually provided or implied in the words of other characters, or in references to earlier moments in the opera. This is the point at which music is able to expand the potential of gesture, not only by enforcing the emotional impact, but by alluding through recurring themes and tonalities to other moments in the opera. This symbolic power of music is even more specifically invoked in *vaudeville* and *mélodrame* in the quoting of known airs at strategic moments in the drama. The next section of this chapter is devoted to an exploration of the relationship between the musical and gestural depictions of the mute's consciousness in *La Muette*.

Fenella

For both contemporary and modern critics, one of the most successful scenes in *La Muette* is Fenella's description of her escape from prison (Act I scene 4), which is particularly admired for its musical narrative. As with the mutes in early-nineteenth-century *mélodrame*, the tension and significance of Fenella's gestures derive from the urgency of her predicament and the difficulty in communicating. Yet unlike her predecessors, she is perfectly understood by Elvire, and apparently by the audience. This legibility derives from a combination of effects. Although the audience is aware of the outline of her story as Alphonse has explained it to Lorenzo in the first scene of the opera, and the Spanish soldier Selva describes her imprisonment and escape as she runs on stage, the score is packed with musical metaphors that clarify the detail of events and emphasise Fenella's fear (see Example 3a). A pounding march rhythmn accompanies the soldiers as they take her away, and a sequenced descending flourish in the bassoons and strings represents a key being turned and a bolt shot on her prison door. When she finally thinks of a way to escape, and knots her sheets together, a slithering scale in the flutes and clarinets decorated with a pattern of chromatic triplets in the violins accompanies her descent from the window. The atmospheric agitated passage that brought her on stage reappears at the end of the pantomime, returning us



Example 3a. Auber, *La Muette de Portici*: Act I, Fenella's pantomime



Example 3a (cont'd)

to the present. Fenella essentially presents the audience with a condensed and clarified version of the events before the beginning of the opera, which has been compared to a cinematic flashback.[35]

The music resonates on several levels. As in *ballet-pantomime*, it explains or translates the action through a combination of common symbolic devices and allusion. Unlike *ballet-pantomime*, however, the allusions are not simply *airs parlants*, but more subtle evocations of other works. For example, there is a clear similarity between the music that accompanies Fenella as she explains to Elvire that her despair is caused by love, and a passage in Pixérécourt's *mélodrame La Muette de la forêt* when the mute and the father of her lover try to escape from their captors.[36] In both passages a dotted figure rises sequentially over a series of repeated triplet chords, suggesting tension and hesitation. Furthermore, Fenella's escape from prison using knotted sheets and Valbelle's flight from his captors in Dalayrac's *opéra comique Deux mots* both employ the symbolic effect of a descending scale.[37]

More significantly in terms of the opera's structure, however, the music generates action through Fenella, establishing a mood shared by her and the chorus that recurrs at strategic points in the opera. In the Act I pantomime a static figure in the strings, incorporating chromatic passing notes and a descending chromatic line in a

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[35] See, for example, Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera*, 146.

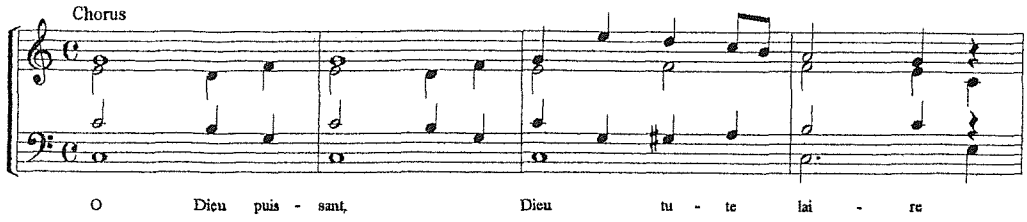
[36] Sala identifies this with illustrating passages from both works in "'Que ses gestes parlants ont de grâce et de charmes"' and in *L'opera senza canto*,182–3.

[37] There is a further similarity between the orchestral accompaniment to Fenella's leap into the lava at the end of the opera and a passage in the Wolf's Glen scene, the Act II finale to Weber's *Der Freischütz*, when Max has a vision of Agathe who, having lost her senses, is about to jump into a waterfall. Castil-Blaze's French adaptation of Weber's opera, *Robin des bois*, was premiered at the Odéon in Paris in 1824, and remained in the repertoire throughout the 1820s (discussed in Chapter Four). The D minor harmony in the Act V finale of *La Muette* also suggests the Act II finale of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Castil-Blaze's translation of which was in the repertoire at the Odéon between December 1827 and March 1828 (and the original at the Théâtre-Italien throughout the 1820s). Its first production at the Opéra, as *Don Juan* (17 September 1805), significantly featured the eruption of Vesuvius at the end of Act II (of three), lighting up the stage in a 'blood red glow'.

prolongation of a C major chord, accompanies Fenella's prayers and thoughts of Alphonse (bars 23–27). The mood of this passage is evoked in 'O Dieu puissant', a Spanish chorus that follows Fenella's pantomime, in which the people bless Alphonse and Elvire at their wedding ceremony (see Example 3b). The (tonic) C pedal returns, supporting the dactylic rhythm that characterised Fenella's passage, the voices are accompanied alternately by wind and strings. Although the melodic and harmonic content is quite different, the proximity of the two static passages, in a generally fast-moving score, suggests a recurrence of mood, and thus a dramatic link between Fenella's thoughts of Alphonse and the choral blessing of the marriage. In the Act III finale the chorus prayer 'Saint bien heureux' evokes a similar mood (see Example 3c). This time the voices are unaccompanied, but the number again centres around a tonic (E flat) pedal and after the opening dactylic pulse, bar 2 recalls the rhythmn and melodic contour of bar 3 of 'O Dieu puissant'. Finally, Fenella's prayer for her brother immediately before his death, in the last scene of the opera, is a direct quotation of 'Saint bien heureux'; the theme is heard in octaves in the wind over an urgent tremolando string accompaniment, this time in D flat (see Example 3d).[38] These four passages each accompany prayer and suggest calmness in the midst of turmoil. On each occasion they precede an important moment in the action, and emphasise a suspended moment of time – a dramatic pause – before the action steps up a gear. In Act I it appears in Fenella's pantomime while she is in prison, just before she thinks of a way to escape; the chorus which follows comes ahead of Fenella's identification of Alphonse as her seducer; 'Saint bien heureux' heralds the final battle between the Spanish and the Neapolitans; and Fenella's prayer precedes Masaniello's death, her loss of hope and her suicide. Thus, while these passages share no specific thematic link, the clear recurrence of a precise mood – a stasis suggested by a tonic pedal and a calmness suggested by a lilting rhythm – adds definition to the advance of the drama and establishes Fenella at its centre. At the end of the opera, when the mood of hope which Fenella associates with Alphonse and Masaniello is finally

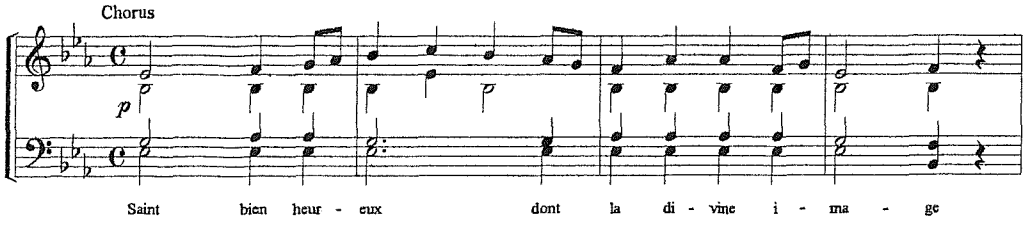
[38] It has another layer of significance for us, as Auber took it from the 'Dona nobis' of a mass he had previously composed for the chapel of a Belgian chateau of his friend the count of Caraman; see Herbert Schneider, 'Auber', *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*.

dashed, the hope of the chorus, located in the uniting of Alphonse and Elvire, prevails; the final prayer confirms Fenella's sacrifice.



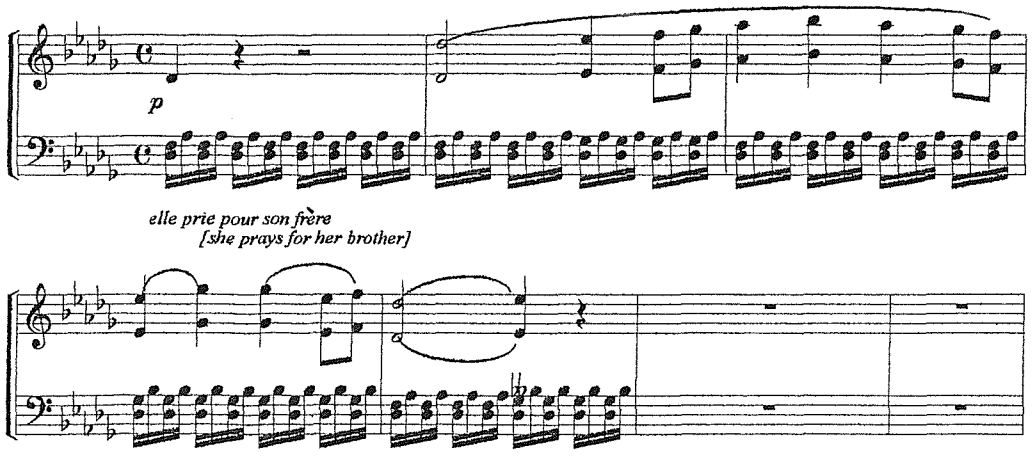
[Oh powerful God, protecting God]

Example 3b. Auber, *La Muette de Portici*: Act I, 'O Dieu puissant'



[Fortunate saint, whose divine image]

Example 3c. Auber, *La Muette de Portici*: Act III, 'Saint bien heureux'



Example 3d. Auber, *La Muette de Portici*: Act V, Fenella prays

The use of musical motives and tonalities to suggest extra-musical events or moods is of course found in late eighteenth-century opera. But in the eighteenth-

century such techniques tended more generally to underpin the text and action, as a comparison of Dalayrac's treatment of a *romance* fragment in *Deux mots* with Auber's treatment of the static figure described above will illustrate.[39] In *Deux mots* Valbelle sings to the mute Rose a *romance* from his childhood, 'Prudence, espoir et vigilance' (scene 6, in B flat), a fragment of which returns several times in the opera, gathering musical and dramatic significance. Rose memorises a flute passage from it that comes to signify her presence: when it recurs in scene 7 Valbelle replies 'oui, j'entends', and on its return in scene 9 (in the oboes, in D minor), he recognises it as a signal from Rose to make his escape from the vagabonds' cabin before he is murdered: 'Ah! here is my saviour, it is the signal to leave, I cannot doubt it'.[40] Yet, where in *Deux mots* the motif is used to represent the voice of Rose in the abstract, with no sense of the music reflecting or representing her particular emotions, in *La Muette*, the static motif signifies specific feelings attributable to the mute, and seems to 'speak' for Fenella.[41]

Perhaps more important than the use of mood motifs in *La Muette*, however, is the more general treatment of Fenella's emotion at key points in the opera. At the end of Act I, for example, after the wedding ceremony in which Fenella identifies Alphonse as her seducer, her flight is swallowed up and subsumed in the mass panic of the other characters and the chorus. Descending chromatic fragments and

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[39] For more on Dalayrac's use of motif in other operas, see David Charlton, 'Motif and Recollection in Four Operas of Dalayrac', *Soundings*, vii (1978), 38–61. The published score of *Deux mots* is held at *GB-Lbl* and at *F-Pn*.

[40] 'Ah! voilà mon sauveur, c'est le signal du départ, je n'en puis douter' (*Deux mots*, scene 9).

[41] Indeed, music is never employed to reinforce mimed narrative on the part of Rose. Most of the simple gestures detailed in the text and score simply establish her growing love for and trust in Valbelle, and the music does not add a specific dimension to this. When, for example, in the scene where she first appears, the stage directions say: 'Rose se retourne vers Valbelle ... met la main sur son coeur, regarde le Ciel comme si elle le prenait à temoin; elle a l'air de lui faire une promesse, répète le geste du silence' [Rose turns towards Valbelle ... puts her hand on her heart, looks up to Heaven as if taking it as witness; she appears to be making him a promise, repeats the gesture of silence], this is accompanied simply by Valbelle's partial comprehension: 'Dieux! Ah! Dieux!', and quiet, staccato orchestral chords. When Rose does finally explain her story to him, she does it in a written note, not in gestures.

tremolando strings accompany Fenella and Elvire as they approach Alphonse; the other main characters and a double chorus are drawn into the growing panic, asking 'Quel est donc ce mystère?'. Finally, Fenella points to Alphonse and indicates that it was he who seduced and abandoned her; this gesture is accompanied by a *fortissimo tutti* figure, echoed by Elvire's 'C'est lui!', and by the orchestra again. This triggers a frenetic duet between Alphonse and Elvire, and the chorus are again drawn into the rising panic. The words and musical juxtaposition reflect the confusion: Elvire is horrified by everything that has happened, Alphonse hopes the earth will swallow him up, the soldiers demand Fenella's punishment, the people want to let her go. Fenella's final escape, accompanied by a descending scale that echoes the narration of her escape from prison, passes almost unnoticed, yet it is absorbed immediately into the turmoil: her anguish has been transferred to the other characters; massed visual and musical panic builds, effected by the opposing choruses of the people and the soldiers.

The final scene of the opera presents a similar sublimation of Fenella's emotion. Yet modern critics have tended to focus on the unremarkable chromatic line, taken from the overture, that accompanies her suicide: 'one cannot but notice that Fenella throws herself into the erupting volcano to the accompaniment of a rather simple chromatic passage'.[42] This implication of a musically undramatic culmination to the opera seems to derive from a consideration of the moment as a purely musical one. Indeed, when listening to this final scene, one is aware of the relentlessly

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[42] Pendle, *Eugene Scribe*, 412. She goes on to surmise that Auber was not capable of writing suitably dramatic music for this scene. In fact, simple chromatic passages characterise most of Fenella's scenes in the opera. By the 1830s chromaticism was being used routinely to express emotional distress and even sexual threat in the mad scenes of Italian operatic heroines, and as the century progressed the mental instability and/or the sexual threat of Carmen, Dalilah and Salome were depicted with suggestive chromaticism. For a feminist view of the use of chromaticism in such scenes, see McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 80–111, and *Carmen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 44–61. From this perspective Fenella's gentle chromaticism could be interpreted as the Spanish perception of her as a threat to their society (by her hold on Alphonse), as a foreigner and as a poor fishergirl. She has been imprisoned at the beginning of the opera precisely for this reason, to allow Alphonse to marry a more socially acceptable Spanish noblewoman.

building tension, but the music accompanying Fenella's leap passes almost unnoticed (as does her departure at the end of Act I, described above). However, the visual aspect of the scene is crucial to its drama. Fenella prays for her brother, recalling the static theme from Act I again as she comes full circle in her predicament; her despair mounts and the tension builds as characters arrive with pieces of news, until she finally learns that her brother has died. D minor semi-quaver scales and arpeggios build to the entry of the simple descending chromatic theme, and Fenella throws a last tender glance towards Alphonse. The theme is repeated, and a series of sequenced descending wind and violin figures, high in their range, accompanies Fenella as she looks up to the sky and finally throws herself into the lava; the clouds lift and the erupting volcano melodramatically reflects Fenella's release, and the discharge of dramatic affect. Alphonse and Elvire cry out, and the people pray that this sacrifice has appeased God's anger. The personal and the political are subsumed in the lava in the final horrific tableau:[43]

> Tout le monde s'agite avec le plus grand effroi ... des mères portent leurs enfants; des hommes soutiennent leurs femmes; les uns tombent à terre, d'autres se soutiennent aux colonnades ... ceux qui viennent par la terrasse expirent sur les marches; enfin on ne saurait trop peindre la terreur dans tous les mouvements des personnages.
>
> [Everyone moves about with the greatest fright ... mothers carry their children; men support their wives; some fall to the ground, others lean on the colonnades ... those who come across the terrace die on the steps; the terror in the characters' every movement cannot be overemphasised.]

Fenella's leap is thus effectively supplanted by the tableau and the chorus prayer; the static line of this prayer is underpinned by continuing chromatic and D minor scalar quavers to the end of the opera. Rather than incompetence on Auber's

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[43] See Solomé's *mise en scène* for *La Muette de Portici* in Cohen, *The Original Staging Manuals*, 59. However, the choral prayer was added only in August 1827; see Schneider and Wild, '*La Muette de Portici*', 7.

part, as has been suggested, these final moments see a visual and musical transference of Fenella's anguish to the people, as she loses all hope, in a highly dramatic dénouement. Final choruses in *grand opéra* were to become conventionally moments of realisation for the people; here the Neapolitans understand the horror of the revolt and their ultimate powerlessness, not only in the face of their oppressors, but in the face of God.

In these scenes Fenella's voice is not merely represented in her gestures and the descriptive music. Her emotion and despair become transferred to all elements of the opera: sublimated, siphoned into *mise en scène* and chorus, making her physical presence redundant.[44] Symbolic of the hopeless rebels, Fenella effectively embodies the action of the entire opera, and ultimately her body is the locus of its resolution. She is seduced and abandoned by Alphonse, as the people are 'seduced' and abandoned by Masaniello; her gestures provide the impetus behind every action in the opera, those of Elvire, Alphonse and the Spanish, and those of Masaniello and the rebels. When Masaniello dies, both Fenella's hope and that of the rebels is lost, and thus her leap into the lava symbolises collective horror, regret and capitulation, even apparently triggering the eruption of Vesuvius. As in *mélodrame*, the language of *grand opéra* lies not merely in its music or text, but in the combined effect and the interraction of all its elements.

Reception

The censors – like some modern critics – were unable to imagine Fenella's role as an integral part of the opera, and expressed reservations when they first read the libretto:

> Il ne serait pas toujours facile de comprendre par les gestes de Fenella les intentions et les pensées que lui suppose l'auteur. Il y a dans la passion de ces

[44] This mechanism can be compared to the psychopathology of hysteria where 'the energy attached to an idea that has been repressed returns converted into a bodily symptom'. See Geoffrey Nowell-Smith's discussion of film melodrama in 'Minnelli and Melodrama', *Home is Where the Heart Is*, ed. Christine Gledhill (London: British Film Institute, 1987), 70–74, esp. 73.

> nuances des sentiments qu'il me semble impossible de rendre sans secours de la parole.[45]
>
> [It would not always be easy to understand through Fenella's gestures the intentions and thoughts which the author imagines for her. In the passion of these nuances there are sentiments which it seems to me impossible to represent without speech.]

However, as we have seen, the accompanying music helped to clarify her gestures melodramatically, with orchestral depiction of both action and atmosphere, and critics at the premiere acknowledged this. Fétis in the *Revue musicale* affirmed:

> Le mélange du mélodrame au chant ne peut déplaire qu'à ceux qui ne comprennent pas le langage de la musique instrumentale ... la musique mélodramatique qui exprime ce que Fenella ne peut dire que par ses gestes, fait le plus grand honneur à M. Auber.[46]
>
> [The mixture of *mélodrame* with singing will displease only those who do not understand the language of instrumental music ... the melodramatic music which expresses what Fenella can say only through gestures does the greatest honour to M. Auber.]

An article in the official government journal the *Moniteur universel* added:

> Une muette qui a beaucoup de choses à dire dans l'ouvrage, les dit et les exprime avec une très grande clarté, et dont les paroles renfermées dans l'orchestre sont très intelligibles pour les spectateurs.[47]

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[45] Censors' report, 8 August 1827 (*F-Pan*: $F^{21}969$).

[46] Fétis, *Revue musicale* (March 1828), iii, 133, 181.

[47] *Moniteur universel* (2 March 1828).

> [A mute who has a lot of things to say in the work says them and expresses them with very great clarity, the words locked in the orchestra are most intelligible to the audience.]

Furthermore, the place of such scenes in the dramatic structure of the opera were also praised. The *Moniteur universel* declared: 'he [Scribe] has combined the succession of his various tableaux with a most remarkable talent, to serve the composer, the choreographer and the set designer at the same time'.[48] And Castil-Blaze in the *Journal des débats* stated:

> Cette partie de l'Opéra mérite l'attention particulière des connoisseurs, la peinture musicale de l'évasion de Fenella et la description qu'elle fait du désordre de la ville et des fureurs des révoltés sont des tableaux achevés.[49]

> [This work at the Opéra deserves the special attention of connoisseurs, the musical depiction of Fenella's escape and the descriptions that she gives of the uproar in the town and the fury of the rebels are complete tableaux.]

However, the scenes of 'dialogue' between Fenella and singing characters drew criticism from Castil-Blaze: he pointed out that the orchestra occupied a schizophrenic role as both the supposed 'voice' of Fenella and the accompaniment to the other half of the dialogue.[50] Although he did not criticise Fenella's pantomimes *per se* – 'the music speaks for her with a lively and truthful accuracy'[51] – he confessed that he would have preferred her as a singing character, completing the ensembles, and balancing the rather one-sided dialogues, in which her naturally exaggerated mimes contrasted too strongly with the motionless singing character.

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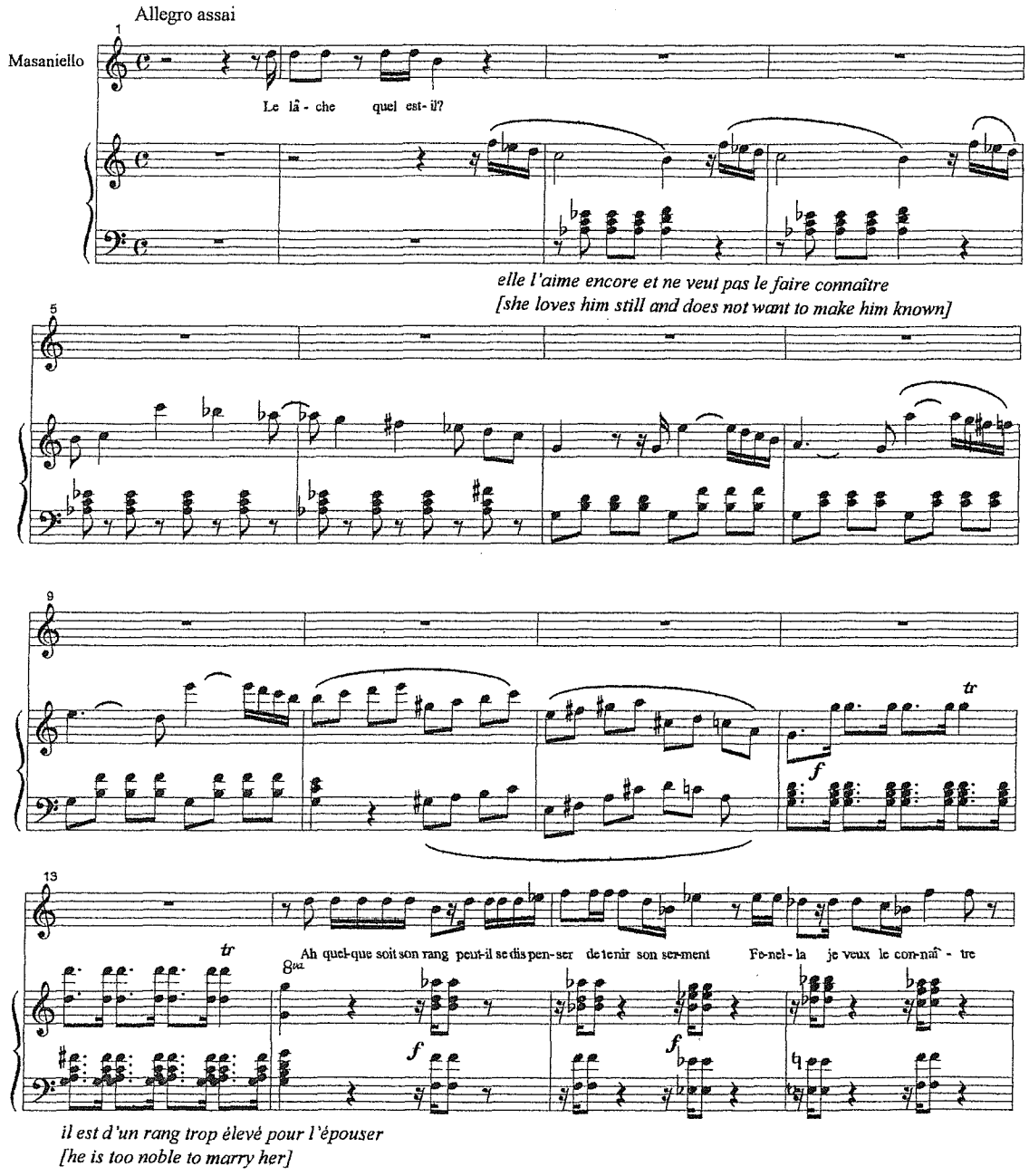
[48] 'Il [Scribe] a combiné la succession de ses tableaux divers avec un art très remarquable, pour servir à la fois le musicien, le choréographe, le décorateur', *Moniteur universel* (2 March 1828).

[49] Castil-Blaze, *Journal de débats* (2 March 1828).

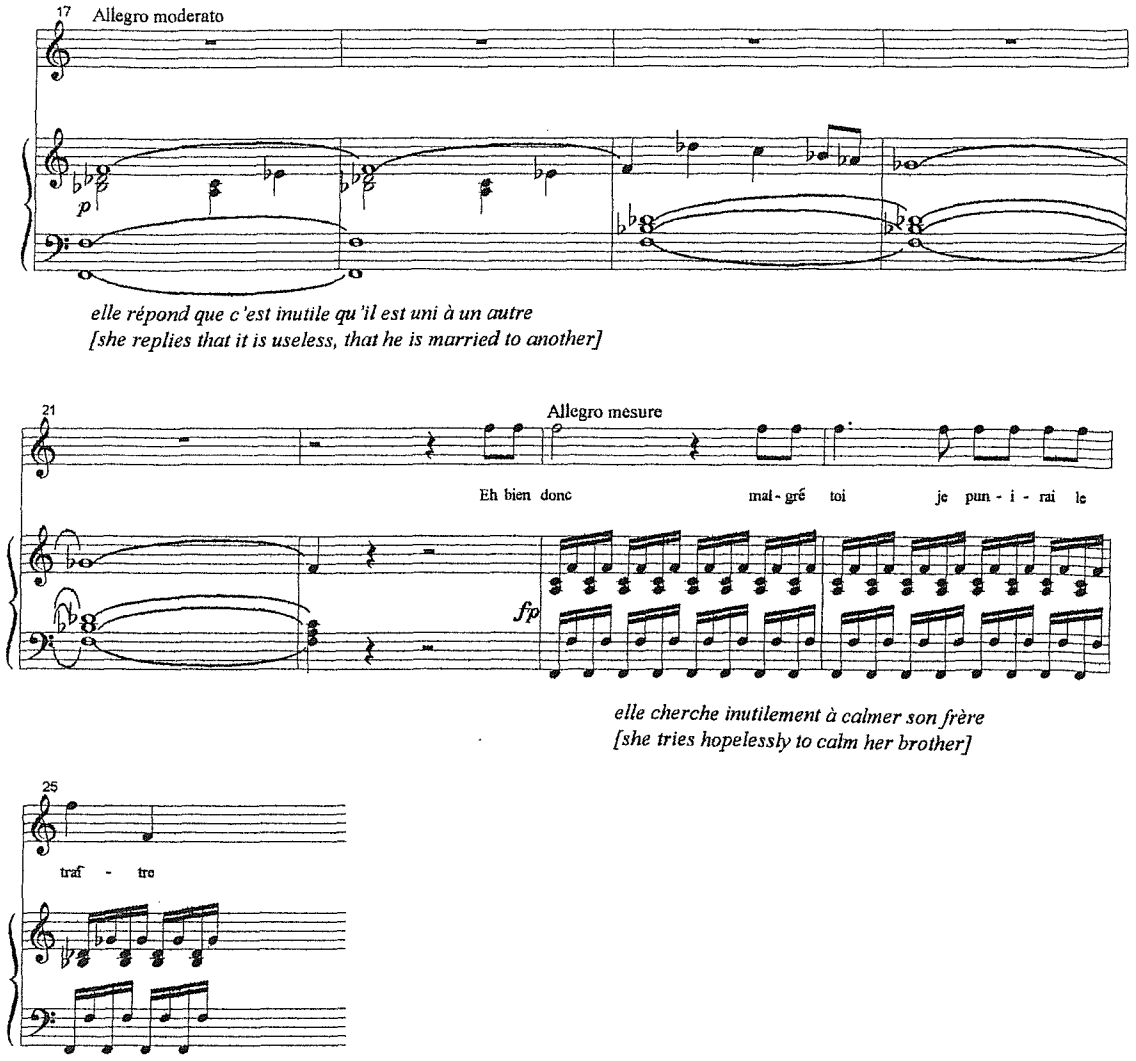
[50] Ibid. (3 March 1828).

[51] 'La musique parle pour elle avec une fidélité pleine d'esprit et de vérité', ibid. (2 March 1828).

The most problematic scenes, in this light, would appear to be those with Masaniello. Unlike Fenella's first scene, in which her explanation to Elvire of (mostly) known facts unfolds rather like an aria, the scene with Masaniello in Act II is essentially one of mimed recitative: called back from the cliff-edge, she pours out her heart to Masaniello in gestures (see Example 3e).



Example 3e. Auber, *La Muette de Portici*: Act II, Fenella and Masaniello



[Who is the coward? Ah, whatever his rank he need not bother with a sermon. Fenella I want to know his identity. In spite of you I will punish the traitor.]

Example 3e (cont'd)

Although much of what she has to say is known to the audience, it is reinforced through musical allusions. When Fenella indicates that she is unable to marry her love as he is a nobleman, she is accompanied in the wind and violins by the dotted quaver motif from the first Spanish chorus 'Du Prince objet de notre amour'. The string

melody that follows, as Fenella explains that he is married, in bars 17–21, is that of the Spanish chorus in Example 3b, sung at the wedding ceremony. Although Masaniello guesses that her seducer is Spanish, however, he does not discover his identity. At this point Fenella's personal despair is formally joined with the political project of the people: Masaniello swears vengeance on the traitor – his sister's seducer, and the leader of the Spanish.[52]

Although the clarity of Fenella's gestures may be in question, the musical allusions are confirmed by Masaniello's responses: he does not repeat what she has said, but replies so that the audience is in no doubt as to her meaning. His phrases are either unaccompanied or punctuated with occasional chords. Thus the role of the orchestra as Fenella's 'voice' in this scene is unambiguous; it is only towards the end of their conversation that Fenella's despair becomes subsumed by Masaniello's anger and call to arms. Her final gestures are simultaneous with his declaration of vengeance, and tremolando strings crescendo into the finale; thus her despair is assimilated into the broader situation in much the same way as happens at the end of the first and last acts.

Other Voices

Aside from their concern about the legibility of Fenella's gestures, which was more-or-less resolved once *La Muette* was seen on stage, the censors were uneasy about a rather more fundamental aspect of the plot. They were concerned about the fact that Fenella was not a deaf-mute from birth, but rather unrealistically and inexplicably just dumb. Public interest tended to revolve around congenitally deaf (and therefore mute) people, with the emphasis on their deafness and how other people could communicate with them (as seen in *Peveril of the Peak*, for example), or with temporary muteness caused by shock or emotion (as depicted in *mélodrame*). Unexplained muteness was for the literary-minded censors a major flaw in the plot. To solve this problem, they suggested that the authors simply insert an explanation early on in the opera. For example, they suggested that Fenella may have seen her mother die horribly, which

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[52] In fact, Masaniello never discovers that Alphonse is Fenella's seducer, thus his desire for vengeance, which provides the catalyst for the revolt, is aimed at the Spanish in general rather than at Alphonse in particular.

could be worked in quite easily. But Scribe and Delavigne decided to ignore this recommendation, and the gap remains in the opera: Alphonse simply states to Lorenzo, 'Speech snatched from her lips by a terrible event has left her defenceless against her unfaithful lover'.[53] Our ignorance of her past simply adds to her mystery as an enigmatic figure, and encourages the audience to focus on her current situation.

In contrast to *La Muette*, the other 1828 works with mute heroines focus on the loss and return of speech and its emotional cause. Frequently, the same incident that removed the voice recurs, and not only prompts a return of the power of speech, but coincides with the reuniting of the mute with a male family figure – a father, brother, son or lover. This curing of an emotional affliction by shock was a common device in psychological practice, and in theatre, at the turn of the century. It was not only restricted to muteness, but also and perhaps more commonly associated with madness: a trauma would be re-enacted in order to return the patient to sanity. The most familiar example of this is Dalayrac's *Nina, ou la folle par amour* (1786), whose sanity disappears along with her lover, and only returns with him.[54] Similarly, in *Deux mots* (1806; revived in May 1828), Rose's recovery from a self-imposed muteness follows the recurrence of the anxiety that had prompted her silence in the first place – the fear of being harmed by her captors. The mute in Motus's *vaudeville La Muette des Pyrénées* (May 1828), who lost her voice when she believed her father had been killed in a battle, discovers him alive, and recovers her voice. Dramatically, of course, this device enabled recovery and thus a happy and uncomplicated ending – in stark contrast to the tragedy of the opera, but in keeping with the tone of *vaudeville* and *opéra comique*.

The return of speech is usually accompanied in these works by recollected melodies, linked to earlier, happier times, before the loss of voice. Sometimes these

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[53] 'La parole à ses lèvres ravie par un horrible événement la livrait sans défense à l'infidèle amant'. For the full exchange about the lack of explanation of Fenella's muteness, see the censors' report O^3 1724, and the accompanying letter from Auger to La Rochefoucauld, 24 October 1825 (*F-Pan*).

[54] See Chapter Two for bibliographical references to *Nina*. Marsollier and Dalayrac, the partnership responsible for *Nina*, also created *Deux Mots*.

have been heard earlier in the work, often they are taken from other works.[55] This technique is explored extensively in Scribe's *vaudeville Yelva, ou l'orpheline russe* (March 1828). Before the play opens, Yelva has been brought as a refugee from Russia to France; the anxiety of being taken away from her country has led to her muteness. In the the first act, she flees her new home, and by chance – after a long and arduous journey – finds herself back in her childhood home in Russia. In the final scene of the work, she begins to recognise her surroundings, and memories come flooding back. Her expression of emotion as she appears to remember the surrounding gardens is accompanied by airs from an *opéra comique* and two *vaudevilles* (*Alexis et Justine*, *Léonide* and *La Petite mendiante*), and the air 'Beaux jours de notre enfance', from Isouard's *opéra comique Jeannot et Colin*.[56] These musical references recall works that between them depict the reuniting of friends, a marriage between childhood sweethearts and the discovery of a long-lost father. Similarly, following a gunshot, Yelva recognises the people around her as her brother, her former lover and her father. A web of external references is thus constructed, and as in *La Muette*, complex narrative is reinforced with specific musical allusions.

The similarity between the gestures of Yelva and Fenella is striking. In a sense, Scribe repeated the success of *La Muette*, but adapted operatic techniques to a *vaudeville*. In the second act, for example, when Yelva arrives at the Russian castle, she explains the hardship of her journey to the countess in a pantomime that recalls Fenella's first scene with Elvire:

> [Yelva] lui indique qu'elle s'est trouvée seule, sans argent et presque sans vêtements; elle souffrait; elle avait bien froid; elle a marché toujours devant elle, ne rencontrant personne, elle a continué sa route; elle marchait toujours mourant de fatigue et de froid (Refrain de la Petite mendiante), et quand elle

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[55] This technique is also familiar in the depiction of madness, from that of Nina to the Italian mad scenes of the 1830s, but also in other repertoires. See, for example, McClary, *Feminine Endings*, chap. 4: 'Excess and Frame: The Musical Representation of Madwomen', 80–111.

[56] *Alexis et Justine, opéra-comique* (Dezède), 1785; *Léonide, ou la vieille de Surène, vaudeville* (Saint-Hilaire), Vaudeville, 1824; *La Petite mendiante, vaudeville* (Brisset), Nouveautés,1827; *Jeannot et Colin, opéra comique* (Isouard), 1814.

> rencontrait quel'qu'un, elle tendait la main et se mettait à genoux, en disant: Prenez pitié d'une pauvre fille.... Soudain elle a aperçu une lumière... (Musique douce) c'était celle du château; elle a marché avec courage, et, quand elle s'est vue aux portes de cette habitation, elle s'est traînée jusqu'à la cloche qu'elle a sonnée. (Air de Jeannot et Colin: Beaux jours de notre enfance.) On est venu ouvrir, et la voilà dans les bras de sa bienfaitrice'.[57]
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> [[Yelva] indicates to her that she found herself alone, without money and almost without clothes; she suffered; she was cold; she walked onward, not meeting anybody, she continued on her way; still she walked, dying of tiredness and cold (Refrain from *La Petite mendiante* [The Little Beggar]), and when she met someone, she held out her hand and knelt, saying: Take pity on a poor girl.... Suddenly she saw a light... (Sweet music) it was the castle; she walked with courage, and, when she found herself at the doors of this dwelling, she dragged herself as far as the bell, which she rang. (Air from *Jeannot et Colin*: Beaux jours de notre enfance.) Someone opened the door, and there she was in the arms of her benefactress]

The difference between such detailed narrative and the emotional frustration that characterised mute scenes in early-nineteenth-century *mélodrame* is described in a review in *Le Globe*:

> Enfin Yelva ne se trouve pas dans une position où son infirmité soit, comme dans *L'Abbé de l'Epée*, un de ces grands obstacles dramatiques qui offrent à la fois tant de difficultés et de resources à l'auteur: mais ne suffisait-il pas à M. Scribe de donner à sa muette l'occasion d'une pantomime tour-à-tour gracieuse et pathétique, jusqu'à ce que, plus puissant que l'abbé Sicard, il rendît la parole à son héroine?[58]

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[57] Later as she tries to explain to Tchérikoff (who she is to discover is her brother) that she recognises her surroundings, his responses call to mind Masaniello's scenes with Fenella in which they participate in a sort of dialogue.

[58] *Le Globe* (22 March 1828).

> [Ultimately, Yelva does not find herself in a position where her condition is one of those great dramatic obstacles that provides both difficulties and resources for the author, as it does in *L'Abbé de l'Epée*: but isn't it enough for M. Scribe to give his mute the opportunity for a pantomime, alternately graceful and pathetic, until the time when, more powerful than the abbé Sicard, he can return speech to his heroine?]

In terms of muteness providing dramatic obstacles, Motus's *La Muette des Pyrénées* is even further from Bouilly's model. Although onstage most of the time, the mute Christine hardly mimes at all. The nearest we get to seeing her communicate is when her adoptive father reads out a letter: 'she dictated these words to me by her expressive gestures'.[59] It seems that Christine's muteness is simply a topical novelty that emphasises her vulnerability as an (apparent) orphan, and no attempt is made to depict the means of her communication.

Muteness as dramatic impediment is instead to be found in Redon's *pantomime dialoguée La Muette* (April 1828), which was loosely based on *La Muette de Sénès*, a bleak 1805 *mélodrame à grand spectacle*. However, like Fenella, Alexina is permanently mute, and this affliction seems to give her extra moral strength in the face of unjust treatment. As one might guess from its generic description, and its antecedent, this work is very much in the style of early-nineteenth-century *mélodrame*. The mysteriously silent Alexina, accused of murdering her husband and son, has been imprisoned by a villainous count because she will not marry him. She uses very simple gestures, and often participates in more general mimed tableaux with the other characters. Only in one scene does she try to communicate a narrative: confronted with the count she explains that because of what he has done to her she has nothing left to fear, and will not marry him, whatever his threats. She eventually explains her innocence, to everyone, by painting a picture that depicts the count tearing out her

[59] 'C'est sous la dictée de ses gestes expressifs que j'ai tracé les mots'.

tongue to prevent her from betraying him. She reveals him as the true murderer of her husband.[60]

The previous month, an article in *La Pandore* entitled 'Les sourds-muets de naissance et les muets artificiels' [Deaf-Mutes from Birth and Artificial Mutes] underlined the fact that while a congenitally deaf mute has no memory of spoken language, a newly afflicted mute 'will remember the past in the bitterness of his heart'; indeed the writer suggested that one cannot make someone mute, even by cutting out their tongue: 'he would speak with his eyes, with contempt and indignation; he would cry from his throat; he would roar like a lion ... never hope for his silence!'.[61] The intensity of her experience similarly leads Alexina to find other means of communication. Like Fenella, she finds an inner strength through the hardships she has endured, and is shown to be more powerful than the other characters, despite – even because of – her voicelessness.

Pixérécourt's *mélodrame La Muette de la forêt* (January 1828), despite its genre, was much lighter in tone than Redon's *La Muette*. The plot is based on the same episode from Matthew Gregory Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) that inspired *Deux mots*.[62] A young mute goat-herd fled her home and job when her master, the count,

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[60] This is reminiscent of the Greek legend of Philomela, whose tongue was cut out after she had been raped, in order to prevent her telling what had happened. Although she could not speak, she revealed her story by weaving it into a robe.

[61] 'Il se souviendra du passé dans l'amertume de son coeur ... Il parlerait des yeux en lançant le mépris et l'indignation; il crierait de la gorge; il rugirait comme un lion ... n'espérez jamais son silence!', *La Pandore* (19 March 1827).

[62] *The Monk*'s rich supply of violent and ghastly subplots supplied subject matter for Cammaille Saint-Aubin's five-act *mélodrame à grand spectacle*, *Le Moine* (1798), and its revision into three acts (1802), and a host of other popular plays and operas, including Gounod's *La Nonne sanglante* (1854). Berlioz had a version of the libretto of *La Nonne sanglante* and set portions of the first act, and a *drame* by Anicet-Bourgeois and Maillan on the same story of the bleeding nun, set to music by Piccini, was performed at the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin in February 1835. Paul de Kock's popular novel *Soeur Anne* (1824) develops an episode from *The Monk*, and is cited as a source in the frontispiece to *La Muette de la forêt* (this is discussed by Sala in '"Que ses gestes parlants ont de grâce et de charmes"').

refused to let her marry his son, Eugène; she now finds herself imprisoned by vagabonds in the forest. Following a spectacular tableau in which she helps to save a nobleman taking shelter with the vagabonds – who she recognises as the count – her voice returns and she is reunited with Eugène. Despite a familiarly melodramatic tale and setting, the role of this mute is very different from those of Pixérécourt's early *mélodrames* such as *Le Chien de Montargis*. There is tension, but it is dependent on the mute's situation rather than on misunderstanding caused by her muteness. Her gestures and music are thus entertaining rather than dramatically crucial. Alongside the expected atmospheric passages of melodramatic *agitato* or *misterioso*, the composer introduces a number of quotations of well-known airs that effectively voice the mute's thoughts.[63] For example, the orchestra plays the beginning of the air 'Je ne saurais danser' as Agathe indicates, in answer to a suggestion that she dance, that she has sore feet and does not want to dance.[64] Later, accompanied by the tune 'Quand je suis saoûl dès le matin', Agathe indicates that the men are asleep because they are

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Weber's opera *Silvana* (1810, libretto by Franz Carl Hiemer after Carl von Steinsberg), based on his *Das Waldmädchen* (1800), elaborates a similar theme, but introduces a mute character; it ends with the following stage directions, which are remarkably similar to the end of *La Muette de Portici*: 'A ce moment Sylvana, suivie de Melchior, est parvenue au bord du précipice. Elle semble dire adieu à tout ce qu'elle aime, jette un long et triste regard sur Rodolphe, puis tout à coup prend sa résolution et se précipite dans l'abîme' [At this moment Silvana, followed by Melchior, reaches the edge of the precipice. She seems to say farewell to all that she loves, throws a long and sad look at Rudolphe, then suddenly makes up her mind and leaps into the abyss] (Edition published with text by Mestépès and Victor Wilder, Paris: Girod, 1875). The pastiche *Le Bohémiens* performed at the Odéon in 1827 mostly comprised music from *Silvana*.

[63] This technique of quoting airs was almost unknown in *mélodrame* by the mid-1820s (although popular earlier in the century, and still popular in other genres during the Restoration), and rarely used to accompany mime scenes. The orchestral parts survive at *F-Po*: Mat.th. 205. Of the thirty musical numbers (anything from two to sixty bars long), thirteen are citations from other works.

[64] This popular air from the late eighteenth century appears in a collection of *6 pot-pourris* by Charles Doisy, dated *c*1805.

drunk, not because they are tired.[65] In a more extended mime scene, Agathe has seen one of the vagabonds drug one of the bottles of wine they are to have with their supper; she surreptitiously swaps the bottles round so that the vagabonds drink from the wrong bottle and fall asleep as she and the captive escape. During this scene the orchestra plays 'Prenez garde' [Take Care] from *La Dame blanche*. On these occasions music has a quite crucial role in making clear what Agathe's gestures signify, and in a sense assumes the 'burden of expression' through allusion.

Despite the generic differences and the variations in tone of these works, their heroines share with Fenella a move towards greater legibility, and almost revel in the restrictions of muteness. This legibility is achieved in different ways: through the use of literal musical allusions to specific words or situations (as in *Yelva* and *La Muette de la forêt*), and a claimed total comprehensibility that is never witnessed by the audience (in *La Muette des Pyrénées*). Only in the opera, and perhaps in *Yelva*, however, does detailed mimed narrative become an intrinsic element of the work.

The relationship between gesture and narrative is explored in a parody of the opera, Dupin's *La Muette du Port Bercy* (April 1828), in which Mathieu-Chauchaud wants to follow the example of the legendary Masaniello and punish a port inspector who has bought the right to fish anywhere on the river. Mathieu's sister, Fédébras, who has been seduced and abandoned by the inspector's son, Phonse, is suffering from intermittent paralysis of the tongue, and has been ordered by the doctor to rest her voice for a year. In the final scene Phonse agrees to marry her, but her voice returns and she degenerates into a gossiping fishwife and Phonse changes his mind.[66] The parody poked fun at rival theatres, mocking the music and singers at the Opéra and satirising the supposed patriotic fervour of the people in a parody of 'Amour sacré de

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[65] This air comes from Devienne's *opéra comique Les Visitandines* (1793).

[66] Bercy, today in south-east Paris, was a village outside the city in the nineteenth century. The names in this work clearly reflect the defining characteristics of each role: Chauchaud (Masaniello) refers to the hero's 'hot-headed' actions, Fédébras (or Fait-des-bras: made of arms) the mime – this also sounds like 'Fenella', Phonse (Alphonse) the 'dark one', Tirelire (the counterpart of Elvire) the 'moneybox' and Butor (the equivalent of Pietro) the 'bolshy' one. The libretto survives in manuscript at *F-Pan*: $F^{18}663^{A}$.

la patrie', as 'Amour sacré de la paresse' [Sacred love of laziness], sung to the Revolutionary tune 'Marianne'. However, most of the comedy derived from the longwindedness of mime to communicate facts in narrative.

In the first act Fédébras tries to indicate to a particularly slow Tirelire, as did Fenella to Elvire, that she has no voice; the stage instructions suggest:

> Elle montre la bouche voulant indiquer qu'elle est muette.
> Elle fait signe que ce n'est pas la faim qui la tourmente, et qu'elle ne peut parler.
> Elle fait signe qu'elle ne souffre pas des dents et que c'est la parole qui lui manque.
>
> [She points to her mouth, wanting to show that she is mute.
> She indicates that it is not hunger which torments her: she cannot speak.
> She indicates that she is not suffering from toothache: she is lacking speech.]

Mime is no longer a means of merely expressing emotion or narrating facts. Its principal function here is in fact the reverse: to show how mime is an unclear and tedious means of communication as the gap between dramatic representation and reality is highlighted.

Another point made explicit in the parody is the idealism of the silent wife, and her physical beauty. When Fédébras's voice returns Phonse can barely get a word in; she chatters away affirming that he is doing the right thing marrying her for love rather than Tirelire for her money and position. Alphonse's guilty and regretful air from Act I, 'Ah, ces cris d'allégresse', is replaced in the parody by the following:

> J'aurais fait ci, j'aurais fait ça,
> Et jamais le moindre reproche
> Quel grac' dans les jamb' dans les bras!
> N'étourdissant jamais l'oreille
> Une femme qui n' parle pas
> Je n' trouverai pas sa pareille!

> [I could have done this, I could have done that/And not the slightest reproach/What grace in her legs and her arms!/Never deafening my ear/A woman who doesn't speak/I will never find anyone like her!]

The desire for a silent wife is emphasised in the other 1828 works. Although in these cases desire is not determined solely by cynical thoughts of a quiet life, muteness nevertheless adds to the attraction. For example, Valbelle in *Deux mots* announces on hearing about the mute 'Rose doit me seduire' and dreams of their life together before he has spoken to her, and before she has even seen him. Jealous rivalry for the mute's affections is the mainspring of the action in Redon's *La Muette* and in *Yelva*. And when Clarice in Xavier's *vaudeville La Sourde-muette* pretends to be deaf and dumb in a desperate attempt to avoid having to marry her father's choice of a suitor (an ugly but rich old man), far from discouraging the suitor, these apparent afflictions make her even more desirable as a wife. The same attitude is even apparent in the reviews: a critic writing in *Le Corsaire* after the premiere of *Yelva* quipped, 'Mlle Fay is truly charming when she doesn't speak or sing. More ballets, M. Scribe!'.[67] Another was disappointed with the actress playing the part of Agathe in *La Muette de la forêt*: 'We have never seen two such sturdy legs as those burdened with supporting the torso of Mlle Ancelin. A natural concern with her appearance should encourage this dancer to wear her skirts a little less short'.[68] The mute's affliction and desirability were thus combined in her physical presence.

The muteness portrayed in these works, however, is very different to the aesthetic ideal of muteness, typified in English Romantic poetry, for example. The

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[67] 'Mlle Fay est vraiement charmante quand elle ne parle ni chante. Faites des ballets, M. Scribe', *Le Corsaire* (19 March 1828).

[68] 'On n'a vu deux jambes plus robustes que celles qui sont chargées de soutenir le torse de Mlle Ancelin. Une coquetterie bien entendue engagerait cette danseuse à se faire tailler des jupes un peu moins courtes', *La Pandore* (29 January 1828). Although such comments were common in reveiws of all sorts of works, they were particularly frequent in articles about these mute works.

silent, unresponsive, 'dead' women of Romantic imagery are objects, things.[69] While they too might be objects of desire, the mute women in these Parisian works are also strong and independent, and their husbands or lovers are keen to contain the power and mystery that is an attribute of their silence. As the parody *La Muette du Port Bercy* makes clear, the return of the voice accompanies domestication (and thus a subservient role); muteness can only be a temporary, emotional state. The tragic ending of the opera results from Fenella's realisation that she has lost both Alphonse and Masaniello, and the domestic status they represent. Her predicament is effectively symbolised by the permanence of her muteness: the only way out is death.

The independence and moral virtue of the mutes frequently engender strength in other female characters. For example, in Fenella's first scene it is Elvire to whom she tells her story and expresses her despair, and who understands and declares 'it is I who shall interpret her pain'. In the wedding scene that follows, when the soldiers start to menace Fenella, the women warn her 'keep back, fear these fierce soldiers'. In the market scene in Act III it is the women who fight off the soldiers who have come to find her: '[they] take their guns in both hands and fight with them', singing 'Ô ciel l'innocence captive'.[70]

In contrast, the effect of the mutes on male characters is often to render them hysterical and unreliable. In Redon's *La Muette*, once Alexina has painted the scene showing how she lost her tongue, the count becomes a babbling wreck in the face of this unequivocal and unexpected proof of his guilt. In Dalayrac's *Deux mots* Valbelle, alone and fearing he will be murdered in his bed, gives way to hysterical jabbering in an *allegro agitato* passage in which musical and dramatic illustration of his panic

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[69] The significance of female muteness as an expression of sexual difference is discussed in the context of English Romantic poetry, and with relation to Jane Campion's 1993 film *The Piano*, in Barbara Johnson, 'Muteness Envy', *Human, All Too Human*, ed. Diana Fuss (London: Routledge, 1996),131–148.

[70] 'De sa douleur je serai l'interprète'; 'n'approchez pas, craignez ces farouches soldats'; '[elles] prennent leurs fusils des deux mains et luttent avec eux'; *mise en scène* in Cohen, *The Original Staging Manuals*, 15, 30.

belies the lines 'when a good heart defends me/I can defy all the villains'.[71] In several versions of the Masaniello legend, the leader of the rebels is poisoned by his colleagues and goes mad. And in the parody *Les Immortels*, which satirises a number of operas from the 1827–8 season, Carafa's Masaniello accuses Auber's Fenella of having usurped his position:

> C'est elle qui m'a pris d'abord
> Et mon Vésuve et mon revolte
> Elle m'a pris mon dénouement
>
> [It is she who took from me first/both my Vesuvius and my revolt/she took my denouement]

Although this highlights the resentment that *La Muette de Portici* was more successful than *Masaniello*, it also points up the internal balance of power in *La Muette* between Masaniello and Fenella. Fenella effectively appropriates her brother's leadership and hijacks the purpose of the revolt, as his actions are driven by his desire to avenge her. His madness, however, is not caused by his mental instability in the face of this threat, but by a poison administered by his colleagues for his betrayal of their cause. Finally, Fenella brings him back to sanity for long enough to lead the people into a preliminary victory over the Spanish, before he dies heroically on the battlefield. Thus his power and dignity are restored by Fenella, who in turn loses control.

Fenella's role in the opera is ambiguous: the helpless fishergirl, victim of the plot and symbol of the oppressed Neapolitans is paradoxically a threat to Alphonse's marriage, and to Spanish rule. Moreover, she bridges the worlds of the Spanish and the Neapolitans, the rulers and the oppressed, gaining the sympathy not only of Alphonse and Masaniello, but also of Elvire. Ultimately, she functions as a pivot between

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[71] 'Quand un bon coeur prend ma défense/je puis braver tous les méchans'. Once Rose has helped him escape, however, they fall back into their 'rightful' gender roles: in the final tableau he in turn rescues Rose from the vagabonds, who have discovered Valbelle's escape. She swoons; when she comes round, her voice has returned and she is ready to marry Valbelle.

genres (opera, ballet and *mélodrame*), between libretto, score and *mise en scène*, and between the private and public dramas of the opera. While the other mutes exhibit facets of this role, it is only in Fenella that the full complexity is realised: having absorbed influences from a variety of genres, she hovers outside the opera, in her own gestural world, while simultaneously embodying its themes.

CHAPTER FOUR

'Cette diablerie philosophique': French *Fausts* and *Robert le diable*

It was Madame de Staël who first introduced part one of Goethe's *Faust* (1808) to the French, in a chapter of her highly influential *De l'Allemagne*, a work that defined the German nation and its culture for a generation of Europeans, and presented the ideas of German Romanticism in a coherent way to the French for the first time. Although completed (in exile) in 1810, the book was banned by Napoleon as a piece of German propaganda and was not published in France until 1814.[1] However, during the next few years it went through five editions and its reception benefited from the contact with other countries that France was beginning to enjoy after the end of the Empire. Fundamentally, de Staël recognised and celebrated the individuality of foreign cultures. In contrast to the received view of Germany, long condemned by the French as barbaric, dull and faintly ridiculous, she promoted a country that she saw as intellectually exciting, its culture reflecting the essential character of its people: 'the difference between French theatre and German theatre can be explained by the difference between the two nations'.[2] Prizing this individual national character, she pointed out in her chapter on *Faust* that:

An earlier version of this chapter is to be published as '"Cette diablerie philosophique": *Faust* Criticism in Paris *c*1830', *Reading Critics Reading: Opera and Ballet Criticism in France from the Revolution to 1848*, ed. Roger Parker and Mary Ann Smart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

[1] De Staël was in exile owing to her royalist sympathies, and *De l'Allemagne* was first published in England in 1813. References in this article are to Germaine de Staël, *De l'Allemagne* (Paris: Flammarion, 1968). For more on de Staël's influence in France and throughout Europe, see Ian Allen Henning, *L'Allemagne de Mme de Staël et la polémique romantique: Première fortune de l'ouvrage en France et en Allemagne (1814–1830)* (Paris: H. Champion, 1929); John Clairborne Isbell, *The Birth of European Romanticism: Truth and Propaganda in Staël's De l'Allemagne* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[2] 'La différence du théâtre français et du théâtre allemand peut s'expliquer par celle du caractère des deux nations', *De l'Allemagne*, 253.

> La croyance aux mauvais esprits se retrouve dans un grand nombre de poésies allemandes; la nature du Nord s'accorde assez bien avec cette terreur; il est donc beaucoup moins ridicule en Allemagne, que cela ne le serait en France, de se servir du diable dans les fictions.[3]
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> [Belief in evil spirits is found in a great number of German poems; the nature of the North suits this terror well; it is therefore much less ridiculous in Germany than it would be in France to use the devil in stories.]

This opinion was to prove fundamental to the reception of *Faust* in Paris: although hailed as a German masterpiece, its adaptation for the French stage was controversial. Indeed, although de Staël believed that different nations should read each others' literature to inspire their own developments, she cautioned against simple imitation:

> La pièce de *Faust* cependant n'est certes pas un bon modèle. Soit qu'elle puisse être considérée comme l'oeuvre du délire de l'esprit ou de la satiété de la raison, il est à désirer que de telles productions ne se renouvellent pas.[4]
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> [*Faust* is not, however, a good model. Although it could be considered as a work of the mind's delirium or the satiety of reason, it is to be hoped that such productions are not renewed.]

Despite de Staël's warning, and despite the views of conservative critics such as Vicomte de Saint-Chamans, who described *Faust* in 1814 as 'a mixture of human horrors, diabolical gaiety and poetic dementia',[5] by the end of 1827 not only had three translations of *Faust* been published, but adaptations of the work had begun to appear

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[3] Ibid., 366.

[4] Ibid., 367.

[5] 'Ce composé d'horreurs humaines, de gaietés diaboliques et de démence poétique', in *Anti-Romantique* (published in 1816, two years after it was written); the author criticised the work of Schlegel, Sismondi and de Staël. Cited in Fernand Baldensperger, *Goethe en France: Etude de littérature comparée* (Paris: Hachette, 1920), 125.

on the Parisian stage.[6] Yet, in addition to such imitations, the legend provided inspiration: as the most popular German work in Paris at that time, it became emblematic of the northern European Romanticism that in turn was helping to shape the wave of French Romanticism emerging at the end of the decade. In this chapter I briefly consider the impact of the first French translations of *Faust* and the attitudes to adaptations of northern European literature in general on the Parisian stage in the 1820s, before moving on to a more detailed account of the fortunes of *Faust* as a subject of *mélodrame*, *drame* and finally opera in the last years of the Bourbon Restoration.

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The appropriation of *Faust* as a tool for Romanticising in France was effected through a fundamental transformation of the work: its perceived German essence – the metaphysical foundation – was gradually eroded and the emphasis was transferred to its visual trappings. This shift can be traced through the succession of translations, paintings and stage representations that appeared during the 1820s.[7] The first complete French translation, by Albert Stapfer, was published in January 1823 as volume IV of the collection *Oeuvres dramatiques de Goethe*; it remained close to the original, depicting Mephistopheles as an aspect of Faust's nature, and attracted great interest. Auguste Saint-Aulaire's elegant translation followed in November of the same year, published as volume IX of Ladvocat's series *Chefs-d'oeuvre des théâtres étrangers*; it proved more popular than Stapfer's version, departing from Goethe's text to 'preserve the spirit' of the work, simplifying the language and ideas.[8] Saint-Aulaire

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[6] The literary critic Claude Pichois refers to the year 1827 as 'l'année Faust' in *Philarète Chasles et la vie littéraire au temps du romantisme*, (Paris: Corti, 1965), i, 264.

[7] The variety of approaches is described in Max Milner, *Le Diable dans la littérature française, 1772–1861* (Paris: Corti, 1960), i, 402: 'some writers made Satan the porte-parole of their bitter and passionate claim against the Creator, there were others who were even more concerned to exploit poetically the resources that the Prince of Darkness and his domain offered their imagination, captivated by colour, movement and mystery ... the favoured climate was one of ancient legends, where supernatural elements, rather neglected by amateurs of the troubadour genre, were developed and orchestrated with brio'.

[8] Ginette Picat-Guinoiseau describes how Saint-Aulaire omitted altogether the passages that he found too difficult to understand (notably the scenes of the Witch's Kitchen and Walpurgis

took a traditional Christian moral stance, suggesting that we should perceive Mephistopheles as the devil within us all. Both translators, however, admitted in their prefaces that they did not understand the significance of the general devilry that suffused the work; indeed, Stapfer went further, wondering how the generally pious German nation could enjoy such infernal workings. Significantly, it was this very incomprehensiblity that was to prove both the most popular and the most criticised aspect of *Faust* in France.

When in 1825 Saur and Saint-Geniès adapted Friedrich Klinger's *Fausts Leben, Thaten und Höllenfahrt* (1792) as *Aventures de Faust et sa descente aux enfers*, merging it with elements of Goethe's *Faust*, the pessimistic and complex vision of Evil in the original was replaced by a simplistic blend of optimism and the supernatural horror so decried by Stapfer and Saint-Aulaire.[9] Jules Loudière, writing in *Le Globe*, complained at this mix of history and fantasy, his implicit point – as one would expect from *Le Globe* – was that the work lacked dramatic truth, morality or indeed respect for its subject.[10] However, the approach of Saur and Saint-Gènies was to characterise most subsequent French versions of Goethe's *Faust*: the legend was interpreted rather than understood, and treated like the *pièces à diables* that had been popular during the Revolution – as an excuse for devilry. For example, although Gérard de Nerval in his *Faust* (November 1827) claimed to reintroduce the philosophical depth that he believed audiences at the recent premiere of Théaulon's *Faust* adaptation at the Théâtre des Nouveautés wanted, his version was intended as

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Night), supplying instead Stapfer's translation in footnotes; see *Une Oeuvre méconnue de Charles Nodier: Faust imitée de Goethe* (Paris: Didier, 1977), 52.

[9] Vicomte Joseph Henri de Saur and Léonce de Saint-Geniès, *Aventures de Faust et sa descente aux enfers* (Paris: Bertrand, 1825) is discussed in some detail in Milner, *Le Diable dans la littérature française*, i, 444–9.

[10] *Le Globe* (13 January 1825). The *Globistes* were notoriously ambivalent about translating foreign literature. The traditional view, illustrated by Stapfer and Saint-Aulaire, was that a translater should adapt foreign works to the taste of the French public, suppressing passages perceived as dull or immoral. De Staël was one of the first to protest against this in 1816, and the *Globistes* took the same view, that such uniformity sacrificed the physiognomy and character of the original text, for elegant language. See Goblot, *La Jeune France libérale*, 461–2.

an independent French classic rather than as a mere translation. (Goethe famously acknowledged the literary value of this adaptation which inspired a generation of French Romantics, including Berlioz and Théophile Gautier.[11])

Increasingly distanced from Goethe's work, the legend generated visual rather than literary interpretations for the rest of the decade. Delacroix's *Méphistophélès apparaissant à Faust* was accepted by the salon jury in January 1828 (see Figure 6), and his seventeen lithographs illustrating a new edition of Stapfer's translation were published in February of the same year.[12] In May of the same year, Retzsche's collection of twenty-six *Faust* engravings (originally published in Stuttgart in 1816) was brought out in Paris in a second edition.[13]

The ultimate transference from the philosophical to the visual, and thus from the moral to the demonic elements of the work, came with a number of stage versions of the legend which, as mentioned above, were already influencing the nature of translations and paintings. The first to appear was Théaulon's *drame lyrique* for the Théâtre des Nouveautés in 1827, which departed from Goethe's work somewhat and ended with Faust being saved from a statue that had come to life, with obvious overtones of *Don Giovanni* and *La Dame blanche*.[14] A year later another *Faust*

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[11] Goethe declared that he had never understood himself so well as when reading Nerval's rendering of *Faust*, in which the text acquired a freshness of impression that it did not have in German. See Baldensperger, *Goethe en France*, 131.

[12] Delacroix apparently began work on the project as early as 1825, after seeing an adaptation of the play (presumably that of Bishop, based on Spohr's opera) in London. See Johnson, *The Paintings of Eugène Delacroix*, i: *1816–1831, Text*, 106–7. All Delacroix's *Faust* illustrations have been reproduced in colour in a sumptuous edition of Nerval's text: *Goethe: Faust*, ed. Diane de Selliers (Paris: Diane de Selliers, 1997).

[13] A further edition, brought out in September 1828, included an analysis of Goethe's *Faust* by Elise Voiart (1786–1866) which seems to have been influenced by translations and stage versions of the period – notably that at the Porte Saint-Martin. Mentioned in *Le Corsaire* (2 November 1828).

[14] First performed on 27 October 1827; in three acts with music arranged by Béancourt. Structurally the work was indistinguishable from an *opéra comique*. *Don Giovanni* was in the repertoire at the Théâtre Italien, and Boieldieu's *La Dame blanche* at the Opéra-Comique, in 1827.

Figure 6. *Méphistophélès apparaîssant à Faust*

Eugène Delacroix, 1827–8

The Wallace Collection

appeared, a *drame* at the Porte Saint-Martin that stayed closer to Goethe's text, with Faust being dragged to hell at the end; it proved even more successful than Théaulon's work, and was typical of the theatre's visually sumptuous productions.[15] Two *Faust* operas appeared at the Théâtre Italien, a theatre at which interest was typically focused on the singers rather than the *spectacle*. First, in April 1830, a visiting German company gave three performances of Spohr's 1813 *Faust* (the libretto by J.C. Bernard was based on Klinger's work and the folk legends rather than on Goethe).[16] Louise Bertin's *Fausto* was peformed the following year (her own adaptation based on Stapfer's translation and close to Goethe's text); although not heavily criticised in the press it appeared at the end of the season and had only three performances before closing.[17] Although these operatic *Faust*s were not met with much enthusiasm, the legend had nevertheless spread from the city's secondary stages to its most prestigious in just four years.

This popularity of the *Faust* legend in the theatres fits into the broader appeal of northern European literature that dominated the Parisian popular stage in the 1820s.[18] De Staël had made explicit the cultural differences between North and South; despite her enthusiasms for German culture, however, for the first years of the Restoration it was British rather than German literature that had the most widespread impact in France. As mentioned in previous chapters, the works of Byron, Walter Scott and Shakespeare were translated and adapted as *mélodrames*, pantomimes and *vaudevilles*; in addition, Scott novels inspired *La donna del lago* at the Théâtre Italien

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[15] First performed on 29 October 1828; in three acts, by Béraud, Merle and Nodier with new music by Alexandre Piccini. This work was essentially a *mélodrame* (although terminology was evolving with the genre), with spoken dialogue supported and enhanced by orchestral rather than sung music.

[16] First performed in Prague in 1816; Paris premiere on 20 April 1830.

[17] First performed on 17 March 1831. Additionally, Lesguillon's *drame Méphistophélès, ou le diable et la jeune fille* was staged at the Panthéon in 1832. Originally written in 1829, it was banned by the censor for its attacks on the establishment; its satirical tone was unusual for the time. A further text, *Faust, ou les premières amours d'un métaphysicien romantique, pièce de théâtre de Goethe* (anon.), was published in 1829, but not performed.

[18] Details of works translated and adapted are included in Bray's thorough survey of the literary and political developments of the period, *Chronologie du romantisme*, esp. 38–78.

and *La Dame blanche* at the Opéra-Comique, and adaptations of Shakespeare were staged at the Théâtre-Français and the secondary theatres. For many this cultural invasion was seen as a threat to the national image, coming so soon after the fall of the Empire; battle lines were drawn up between defenders of French Classical tradition and enthusiasts for the new Romanticism who looked abroad for inspiration for the cultural renewal that was needed to match the social regeneration of the state.[19]

Among the first English texts to appear during the Restoration were Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and John Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819). Both were translated into French, and adapted almost immediately for the stage by Nodier and Scribe and their collaborators, gaining instant popularity with wide audiences.[20] The ease with which such works transferred to the stage reflected both their visual potential (at a time when dialogue and music were restricted on the secondary stages) and a broader interest in monstrosity and popular science – manifested most obviously in public demonstrations of scientific experiments and medical treatments. French adaptations of these works, and of Byron's *Manfred* (1817) and Mathurin's *Bertram* (1816) and *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), were extremely popular. Together with home-grown works in the same style, such as Nodier's *Smarra, ou les démons de la nuit* (1821) which featured devils as an expression of a tormented conscience, they

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[19] Debates centred, for example, on the views of de Staël (and her successors, such as Lady Morgan, whose *La France* (1817) expressed similar opinions), and on the English theatre troupe that visited the Porte Saint-Martin in 1822; the company was famously booed for its renderings of Shakespeare, who was hailed as an aide-de-camp of Wellington. Nevertheless, after a second and more successful visit in the 1827–8 season, a review in *Le Mentor* (12 November 1828) suggested that the actors in Béraud's *Faust* at the Porte Saint-Martin had been influenced by the acting style of the English troupe; see Théophile Gautier, *Histoire du romantisme* [1872] (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993) and Borgerhoff, *Le Théâtre anglais à Paris sous la Restauration*, 174.

[20] *Le Vampire, mélodrame*, Carmouche, Nodier, de Jouffroy d'Abbans (Porte Saint-Martin, 13 June 1820); *Le Vampire, comédie-vaudeville*, Scribe, Duveyrier (Vaudeville, 15 June 1820); *Le Monstre et le magicien* [*Frankenstein*], *mélodrame-féerie*, Merle, Béraud, Nodier (Porte Saint-Martin, 10 June 1826). Charles Nodier was one of the most influential men of the period to encourage this interest in English literature both with his own writing and with his salon, the first and most famous of the Romantic *cénacles*, where foreign literature was read voraciously.

became notorious for their gratuitous horror and immorality. The adaptation of *Frankenstein* as *Le Monstre et le magicien* at the Porte Saint-Martin, for example, as its title suggests, ignored most of the philosophical and spiritual elements of the novel in favour of magical and melodramatic effects, which included the first use of the vampire trap – the *trappe anglaise* – in Paris, and numerous scene changes.[21] While traditionalists in the literary world were quick to criticise such adaptations as the worst examples of Romanticism, many Romantics were also keen to distance themselves from such extremes. Even Nodier, largely responsible for the popularity of what he termed the *école frénétique*, later classed such works as a type of 'romantisme malade'.[22]

Essentially, for the French, while the immorality of the original English novels was excusable, that of French adaptations and imitations was not. When adaptations of *Faust* began to appear in Paris, they inherited this double standard: Goethe and Byron were both perceived as respectable Romantics in their own countries, and Faust was seen as a companion to the Byronic hero, but in the opinion of many French critics their innate immorality should not be translated to the French stage. The common element of devilry and witchcraft in much English and German legend, together with the tendency of de Staël and others to refer to England as a Germanic nation (blurring national identity in an attempt to reinforce the broader North/South division), ensured that *Faust* was equated with the English Byronic School and French adaptations were seen as offshoots of the *frénétique*. These works were thus dismissed not merely as 'Germanic', but more importantly as bad examples of popular Romanticism.[23] Nodier emphasised the split in attitudes between the literary

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[21] For a description of the *trappe anglaise* see the Introduction, p. 10.

[22] Nodier coined the term in 1821 in *Annales de la littérature*. For a more detailed explanation of the *école frénétique*, see Milner, *Le Diable dans la littérature française*, i, 271–81, and Bray, *Chronologie du romantisme*, esp. 68–81, where the relationship between the *frénétique* and emerging Romanticism is discussed, together with Nodier's vacillating opinion. See also Jean-Luc Steinmetz's anthology of *frénétique* literature (with commentary), *La France frénétique de 1830* (Paris: Phébus, 1978), and Terry Hale's translated anthology, *The Dedalus Book of French Horror: The 19th Century* (Sawtry, Cambs: Dedalus, 1998).

[23] German theatre had already acquired connotations of the 'popular' and therefore of inferiority, as typified by French *mélodrame*. In 1818 Nodier had described *mélodrame* as 'la

establishment – who read the papers, attended the academies and frequented literary *cercles* – and the public, who read novels, attended the theatres and frequented salons. It was the very success of Goethe's masterpiece with audiences at the secondary theatres that exercised the critics. As a German literary work, read by the few, *Faust* was part of the new interest in foreign culture, science and history, and fitted into the vision for Romantic drama set out in Hugo's *Préface de Cromwell* (1827) in which the tragic was combined with the comic, and local colour was of fundamental importance. But in a French context, as a popular boulevard piece, *Faust* offended moral sensibilites and *goût*, crossing perceived intellectual boundaries.

This 'low culture' association helps explain the ambivalence towards the legend as a suitable theme for the royal theatres, as implied in the cool reception given to the operas of Spohr and Bertin, mentioned above. Indeed, *Faust* was not adapted for the Théâtre Français at all, and it was not until 1831 that the Opéra, bastion of aesthetic traditionalism in the 1820s, finally staged a Faustian work: Meyerbeer and Scribe's *Robert le diable*, which centres on the struggle between Good and Evil for the hero's soul. In this chapter I address the Opéra's ambivalence about adapting the legend, despite an obvious demand for treatment of such a topical subject, by considering the reception of these other *Faust*s in detail, balancing critical interpretation against audience enthusiasm. My concern in the rest of the chapter is to trace the Opéra's appropriation of this quintessential German legend as the main inspiration for *Robert le diable*, one of the first French Romantic *grands opéras*.[24]

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tragédie romantique des allemands', and the following year an anonymous commentator had suggested that German drama was merely 'un mélodrame de qualité'. See Bray, *Chronique du romantisme*, 27, 30.

[24] Auber's *La Muette de Portici* (1828) and Rossini's *Guillaume Tell* (1829) predate *Robert*, as does Castil-Blaze's adaptation of Weber's *Der Freischütz* (*Robin des bois*, 1824), but their innovations gel more convincingly in the synthesis of styles that was *Robert le diable*; Meyerbeer and Scribe are generally recognised as the partnership that consolidated the techniques that came to define *grand opéra*. See, for example, Charlton, 'On the Nature of "Grand Opera"'.

Faust on the Boulevards and at the Italiens

Thanks in part to the efforts of de Staël, critics reviewing the stage *Fausts* tended to emphasise the value of Goethe's original work. Problems with adaptions of *Faust* were seen principally as a result of the fact that the work was not designed for the stage (particularly not the French stage), nor to be set to music. For Heinrich Heine:

> Le mérite consiste plus dans la poésie que dans l'action et la passion ... agit plus sur le lecteur solitaire que sur une grande assemblée. Ce qui, au théâtre, entraîne la masse des spectateurs est justement l'action et la passion ... les Français par leur nature sont plus agissants et plus passionnés que nous. L'important pour le poète dramatique en France est de s'arranger pour que le public ne puisse ni rentrer en lui-même, ni respirer, pour que les émotions se suivent coup sur coup.[25]
>
> [The merit [of Goethe's *Faust*] lies more in poetry than in action and passion ... it is more effective when read to oneself than when heard among others. At the theatre it is naturally action and passion that attracts the mass of spectators ... the French, by nature, are more active and passionate than us. What is important for the dramatic poet in France is to write so that the public can neither become reflective, nor catch their breath, so that emotions follow one after the other.]

This last sentence sums up the style of works seen at the secondary theatres in particular, which were noted for their excitement and special effects rather than their intellectual substance. Although not designed for the stage, *Faust*'s demonic subject matter was nevertheless ideal for *mélodrame*, and like countless novels adapted for the stage, as Heine implied, *Faust* had simply to be clarified and compressed to make a direct impact on the audience, its poetry transformed into 'action and passion'. Even the conservative Charles Maurice, writing after the premiere of *Faust* at the Porte Saint-Martin, acknowledged:

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[25] *Chroniques de la Gazette d'Augsbourg et Lettres confidentielles* [to M. Auguste Lewald in Stuttgart] (Paris: Delpeuch, 1927), 108; cited in Picat-Guinoiseau, *Une Oeuvre méconnue*, 57.

> Les imitateurs de Goethe n'ont pas eu à faire de grands frais d'imagination, mais les changements et les additions qu'ils ont apportés dans la pièce nouvelle ont contribué à rendre sa marche plus rapide, et lui a donné cet intérêt qu'elle n'a pas toujours dans l'original, où les tirades philosophiques, fort bien pensées sans doute, tiennent lieu de ce mouvement et de cette action animée qui sont les mobiles principaux du drame français.[26]
>
> [Those who have imitated Goethe have not had to use their imagination, but the changes and additions that they have brought to the new play have helped it move more quickly, and given it interest, not always apparent in the original, where the philosophical tirades, clearly thought out no doubt, take the place of movement and animated action – the driving forces of French drama.]

However, tampering with Goethe's structure seems to have created as many problems as it solved, and other critics reviewing this premiere at the Porte Saint-Martin questioned whether the work should have been adapted at all, as writers were inevitably caught between making *Faust* dramatic and suitable for a French audience, and removing its worth altogether. An anonymous reviewer writing for *Le Globe* questions the type of audience a writer was aiming at: 'this profound idea, which gives rise to such a lively delight in dreaming, can it be dramatised? Would our public understand so much poetry?'.[27] Indeed, this rather condescending view is a key to the development of critical attitudes, as hinted at above: Romanticism as foreign menace is supplanted gradually by the threat of the uneducated classes. German morals (seen as notoriously suspect) find support among the (similarly morally questionable) spectators at the secondary theatres. Despite the diverse make-up of such audiences (particularly at the Porte Saint-Martin, where the most expensive tickets were the same price as at the Opéra), the genres staged and the audience reaction were always perceived by critics as inferior: common, immoral and lacking intelligence. The audience could not win, however, as when whistles of disapproval were heard on the first night of Béraud's *Faust*, as Faust tries to seduce Marguerite in the garden, the

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[26] *Courrier des théâtres* (31 October 1828).

[27] 'Cette profonde conception, qui cause un si vif plaisir de rêverie, peut-elle être dramatisée? Notre public comprendrait-il tant de poésie?', *Le Globe* (1 November 1828).

critics accused the audience of not understanding: 'people with austere principles wanted to erupt against this situation; people of taste knew how to appreciate its merit';[28] or, 'some out of habit, and some who were so foolish that they saw in Mephistopheles only the devil personified, wanted to belittle what they did not understand';[29] or, 'one must admit that the metaphysical idea that dominated it [the play] is not something readily understood by a boulevard audience'.[30] Some suggested simply that such productions removed everything of value from the work and that only those who knew the original could begin to appreciate such travesties:

> Il y a des gens qui ne voient dans *Faust* que de la diablerie.... Outre les idées sublimes qu'il renferme, ce poème ... se recommande par un genre de mérite qui ne peut être apprécié que par ceux qui savent l'allemand: *Faust* est un chef-d'oeuvre, sous le rapport littéraire.[31]
>
> [There are people who see in *Faust* only devilry.... Besides the sublime ideas that it captures, this poem ... recommends itself by a type of merit that can be appreciated only by those who understand German: *Faust* is a literary masterpiece.]

There was thus a contradiction between the unquestioned status of the original work and the reductive adaptations enjoyed by audiences at the secondary theatres. While a perceived lack of taste was somehow acceptable in the original, there was no excuse, it seemed, for capitalising on it in the theatres, where it was divorced from its philosophical motivation, and where the audience was implicated in its inferiority. A lexicon of loaded terminology was brought into operation: the words

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[28] 'Des gens à principes austères ont voulu se déchaîner contre cette situation; les personnes de goût ont su apprécier son mérite', *Courrier des théâtres* (31 October 1828).

[29] 'Quelques routiniers et quelques sots qui ne voient dans le rôle de Méphistophélès que le diable personifié, veulent dénigrer ce qu'ils ne comprennent pas', *Echo de Paris* (12 November 1828).

[30] 'Il faut avouer que l'idée métaphysique qui la domine n'est pas à la portée d'un public des boulevards', *Le Cosaque* (30 October 1828).

[31] *Le Corsaire* (2 November 1828).

'mélodramatique' and 'romantique', associated condescendingly with the boulevards, were equated with 'germanique', a shorthand for incomprehensible and immoral.

The conflation of Germanness and Romanticism was not restricted to the reception of *Faust*. Indeed, for a time in mid-1820s Paris German opera in general became synonymous with Romanticism. Works by Winter, Weber, Spohr and Hoffmann were performed by visiting German troupes at the Théâtre Italien, and in translation at the Odéon. They contrasted strongly – in subject matter as much as musical idiom – with the unadventurous works in the repertoires of the Opéra and Opéra-Comique and in the Italian repertoire of the Théâtre Italien. More than any other work it was a French adaptation of Weber's Faustian *Der Freischütz* that set the tone for both supernatural opera and German music in Paris, and for how to criticise them. It was first performed at the Odéon in an adaptation by Castil-Blaze and Thomas Sauvage as *Robin des bois* in December 1824, and seen in the original German version in 1829. Castil-Blaze, an adapter of German and Italian operas for provincial theatres, some of which were performed at the Odéon, broadly simplified the plot, transferred German icons of Romanticism to a traditional French setting and shifted the emphasis from the philosophical to the visual – in much the same way as adapters of the *Faust* legend for the secondary theatres were doing.[32] Much of the vocabulary ('bizarre', 'barbare') habitually used by critics to describe German plots peppers the reviews, but the overall impact of the work, and its success with audiences, was dependent above all on the music, and it was this element that seemed to prompt the most generous responses from commentators. Fétis located the power of the work in its 'colour': its choruses and instrumentation above all. For others this new foreign sound was a welcome alternative to Rossini and the Italian school. Although the simple visual appeal of the production was noted, the 'low culture'

[32] Hunting and forests, for example, were re-established as symbols of medieval France. The reception of *Der Freischütz* in Paris and the changes introduced by Castil-Blaze and Sauvage in *Robin des bois* are detailed in Gérard Condé, 'Les Aventures du *Freischütz* en France', *Avant-scène opéra*, nos. 105–6 (1988) [*Der Freischütz* issue], 114–25; see also Frank Heidlberger, 'Die "Livrets de mise en scène" der "Freischütz"-Aufführungen in Paris 1824 (1835) und 1841', *Weber-Studien*, i (1993), 133–54.

associations that were to dominate the *Faust* reviews at the secondary theatres – namely immorality and a lack of intelligence – were virtually absent.

The simplification of the plot and the removal – or at least subduing – of the Germanness of the subject seen in *Robin des bois* can also be discerned in Béraud's *Faust* at the Porte Saint-Martin. The setting was changed to the Tyrol for the first two acts, where it was possible to create a less direct Germanic flavour (looking ahead to Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*), and to Venice for the third act (Italy was a fashionable location at this time, and the aesthetic complement of Germany). In addition, the problematic metaphysical developments were cut; for example, when Goethe's Faust looks into the enchanted mirror in the witch's kitchen, he sees the image of an abstract woman which the potion allows him to recognise in all women, but at the Porte Saint-Martin it is specifically Marguerite whom Faust sees. Towards the end of the play Marguerite's madness is given the topical and rational explanation of moral suffering: 'exhausted by the pain of torture, she no longer has the strength to reply, or even to listen [to the chancellor].... Her extreme misery has driven her mad'.[33] Mephistopheles is a humanised devil with little power beyond his psychological superiority over Faust, and God is correspondingly absent from the work. Even Faust himself is simplified, his spiritual journey replaced by, rather than combined with, his pursuit of Marguerite and wealth. But these changes do not mean a reduction of the marvellous; rather, instead of a medieval supernatural, we have the illusion of *mélodrame* and its machines: everything is reduced to magic tricks, simple appearances and disappearances through trapdoors, even Goethe's powerful elixir becomes simply a rejuvenating potion. The real and imaginary are separate worlds.[34]

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[33] 'Epuisée par la douleur des tortures, elle n'a plus de force pour répondre, et même pour écouter.... L'excès de ses misères l'a rendue folle' (Act III scene 6).

[34] For a detailed discussion of the differences between Goethe's *Faust* and Béraud's adaptation, see Picat-Guinoiseau, *Une Oeuvre méconnu*, 60–73. A similar process is at work not only in *Faust* at the Nouveautés, but in *Le Monstre et le magicien* in which the setting is also moved to the Veneto, the characters acquire Italian names and magic replaces the metaphysical. The historian Robert Darnton finds a similar tendency to 'nationalise' legends in the folk tales of early modern Europe. Having compared the developments in particular tales common to France and Germany he suggests, 'where the French tales tend to be realistic, earthy, bawdy, and comical, the German veer off toward the supernatural, the poetic, the exotic

Despite the work's success with audiences, critics condemned its simplification of Goethe's work. Maurice's protestation 'this philosophical devilry belongs essentially to the black realm of *mélodrame*' was typical,[35] and for the critic of *Le Globe* the beauty of the original legend was destroyed altogether in Théaulon's *Faust* for the Nouveautés, which seemed to go too far in removing the mystery:

> Nous ne voyons dans cette fantasmagorie diabolique et sacrée qu'un mélodrame vulgaire et d'une moralité plate.... Les personnages ne sont ni réels ni fantastiques; ils n'ont pas de caractère, point de vie.... Toutefois nous ne serions pas surpris que *Faust* obtînt beaucoup de succès. On y remarque de bons morceaux de musique, et puis il n'est point mal joué ... les machines sont ingénieuses, les costumes riches, les décorations magnifiques; et de tout cela il résulte un spectacle brillant et varié, qui ne s'adresse à l'esprit ni au coeur, mais qui est loin d'ennuyer et qui doit attirer la foule.[36]
>
> [We could see in this diabolical and sacred phantasmagoria only a vulgar, morally undistinguished *mélodrame*.... The characters are neither real nor fantastic; they have no character, no life.... However, we would not be surprised if *Faust* were to achieve success. We discern some good pieces of music, not at all badly played ... ingenious machines, rich costumes, magnificent decor; in short a brilliant and varied *spectacle* that does not

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and the violent'. Darnton cautions against neat national generalisations, but suggests that such tendencies 'provide clues about their [French peasants'] way of viewing the world'. See 'Peasants Tell Tales: The Meaning of Mother Goose', *The Great Cat Massacre*, 17–78, esp. 57. It is tempting in the European post-Revolutionary context to map the continuing distinction between realism and magic, immediacy and philosophy, onto national images of the 1820s: French anxiety and social and cultural renewal versus a German search for national unity through folk history; internal against external quests. Yet the very persistence of such tendencies over at least three centuries clearly demands a far more complex explanation that is outside the bounds of this dissertation.

[35] 'Cette diablerie philosophique rentrait essentiellement dans le noir domaine du mélodrame', Charles Maurice, *Courrier des théâtres* (30 October 1828).

[36] *Le Globe* (1 November 1827).

address the spirit or the heart, but which is far from boring and which must surely attract a crowd.]

These last lines are central to the aesthetic dilemma not only of the *Globistes* but also of the majority of critics. Their unease lay not with the popularity of grotesque visual *spectacle* as such, but with the misrepresentation of Goethe – after all, many more people (critics included) would have seen this simplified version than read Goethe's original in German. Rather than broadening the audience for Goethe in a positive fashion, such works were seen as transgressions of high culture; rather than deepening the drama, the complex psychological nature of *Faust* was replaced by simple visual excitement, supported, not expanded, by musical quotation.

However, as indicated earlier, it was precisely the requirement of dancing demons and special effects – a sort of *couleur locale* – that attracted French writers and audiences to *Faust*: 'the infernal creatures ... are there for their bizarre names, for their proliferation ... for their vertiginous spinning and above all to hammer home their piercing couplets in verses of five syllables'.[37] Indeed, the name of Faust was introduced into works that had nothing to do with the legend, including *Le Cousin de Faust*, a *féerie mêlée de danses* by Mélesville, Brazier and Carmouche at the Gaîté in March 1829, which was actually *L'Enchanteur maladroit*, a work staged the previous year at the Nouveautés, with a few extra scenes and a *ballet de volatiles*.[38]

Music was an important ingredient of this local colour, using a familiar array of harmonic and instrumental effects. At the Nouveautés the subject inspired an imaginative selection of appropriate melodies from other works, together with some newly composed atmospheric passages by the house composer, Béancourt. Fétis lists the pieces he recognised: the overture of Weber's *Euryanthe*, Annette's prayer from

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[37] Milner, *Le Diable dans la littérature française*, i, 409.

[38] The Faust/Mephistopheles relationship also featured in other works, such as *Le Chasseur noir, mélodrame* (Antier, Nézel, Ouvernay, Lemaître), Porte Saint-Martin, 30 January 1828; *Une Nuit de Paris, ou l'école des jeunes gens, comédie-vaudeville* (Carmouche, de Courcy, ?Brazier), Vaudeville, 28 March 1829. Towards the end of 1828 *Faust* even gave its name to a new design of fabric, used particularly for négligés. It was black with a green design on it that *La Fashionable* (7 December 1828) reported as looking very 'bizarre'; cited in Picat-Guinoiseau, *Une Oeuvre méconnue*, 48.

Robin des bois ('Sous le voile du mystère', originally Agathe's 'Leise, leise') and the bacchanal from Salieri's *Danaïdes*, as well as a number of less dramatically or stylistically related works.[39] Yet the music was expected simply to support and enhance the visual effects, evoking the Romantic atmosphere of German opera through familiar airs.

However, the relationship between plot and musical effect was rather more complex in opera. Castil-Blaze, in his review of Spohr's *Faust* in 1830, suggested that the Romantic nature of the subject was not matched in the music: 'Either Romanticism is misunderstood for being badly defined, or the qualification Romantic given to the opera is unfair'. He tells us that the form of the music is Classical, 'even scholastic',[40] and concludes:

> Toutes les modifications que l'on fait subir à la pièce ne peuvent classer la musique dans telle ou telle catégorie ... toutes ces nouveautés romantiques ... ne seraient point à l'Opéra, si la musique ne procédait romantiquement. Weber a su trouver une infinité d'effets inconnus, inouïs ... qui, pour être des barbarismes, n'en sont que plus essentiellement romantiques. *Freyschütz* ou *Robin des bois* est bien un *romantische Oper*. *Faust* me paraît appartenir encore au genre classique, et ce n'est point un reproche que je lui fais.[41]
>
> [All the modifications to the work cannot recast the music in any particular category ... these novelties ... will not be Romantic at the Opéra if the music does not proceed Romantically. Weber found an infinity of previously

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[39] *Revue musicale* (June–December 1827), i, 326. Boieldieu, composer of the recently successful supernatural *La Dame blanche* for the Opéra-Comique, had been asked by Béraud in March 1827 to write music for his new *Faust*. Boieldieu refused, knowing that Scribe and Meyerbeer were working on a *Faust* for the Opéra-Comique (letter of 9 March 1827); cited in Picat-Guinoiseau, *Une oeuvre méconnue*, 22–3. As Mark Everist's chronology makes clear, this was *Robert le diable*; see 'The Name of the Rose: Meyerbeer's *opéra comique*, *Robert le diable*', *Revue de Musicologie*, lxxx (1994), 211–50.

[40] 'Ou le romantisme est mal compris pour être mal défini, ou la qualification de romantique donnée à l'opéra de *Faust* n'est point juste ... [les formes sont] scolastiques mêmes', Castil-Blaze, *Journal des débats* (23 April 1830).

[41] Ibid. (23 April 1830).

> unknown and unheard of effects ... which, although barbarisms, were no less essentially Romantic. *Freyschütz* or *Robin des bois* is certainly a *romantische Oper*. *Faust* seems to me to belong to the Classical genre, and that is not a criticism.]

However, Castil-Blaze does not try to explain precisely why he believes the opera to be in the 'Classical genre', and this apparent anomaly of a German opera whose music was not Romantic dissolves when he discusses the music in greater detail. The features he picks out are surely what were perceived at the time as both typically German and typically Romantic characteristics:

> La musique du *Faust* de Spohr est, en général, aride et tourmentée. On y remarque beaucoup d'habileté dans l'arrangement des parties, des successions d'accords très hardies; mais elles sont trop multipliées, et l'effet d'une modulation nuit à l'effet de celle qui le suit de trop près. La musique de *Faust* a quelque rapport de ressemblance avec la partition de *Freyschütz*.... La chronologie justifie d'avance M. Spohr, et nous lui devons une part des éloges accordés à Weber pour les nouvelles combinaisons de sons que le *Freyschütz* nous a fait connaître.[42]

> [The music of Spohr's *Faust* is in general arid and tormented. We observe a competent arrangement of parts, daring successions of chords; but they are too many, and the effect of a modulation dilutes the force of one that follows too quickly. The music of *Faust* has some similarity with that of *Freyschütz*.... Chronology favours M. Spohr, and we owe him a part of the eulogies accorded Weber for the new combinations of sounds introduced to us by *Freyschütz*.]

The confusion in identifying what constituted Romanticism in the music of German operas was in fact typical of attitudes to Romanticism generally. Alfred de

[42] Ibid. (23 April 1830). The criticism of Spohr's music has much in common with early nineteenth-century descriptions of the music of other German composers, notably Haydn and Mozart, and in the 1820s, Beethoven. See Leo Schrade, *Beethoven in France: The Growth of an Idea* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942), esp. 14–38.

Musset, amusingly charting definitions of the word through the 1820s and early 1830s, noted:

> In the provinces the word *romantic* generally has a meaning easy to grasp: it is synonymous with absurd, and no one bothers about it.... Weary of analysing and pondering, finding always empty phrases and incomprehensible professions of faith, we came to believe that this word *romanticism* was no more than a word; we thought it beautiful, and it seemed a pity that it meant nothing.... Until 1830 we believed that romanticism was imitation of the Germans, to whom we added the English, upon advice given to us.[43]

Yet although by the mid-1820s the word 'Romantic' was used to describe German opera, the works of northern European authors such as Byron, Scott and Goethe, and French *mélodrame*, it was still not seen as an appropriate term for French or Italian opera, however Romantic the plot might be. The reception of Louise Bertin's *Fausto* (1831) for the Théâtre Italien, for example, is in striking contrast to that of Spohr's opera. Virtually all the critics were more interested in contrasting the 'vigorous' music with the gentle nature of the (female) composer than in considering her setting of the legend; the generally over-used word 'bizarre' is employed in their reviews to describe the subject of the opera, but not the music, and the term 'Romantic' is not used. Indeed Fétis notes a monotony in the music, but unusually blames this on the restrictions of the subject: Mephisto is onstage most of the time, and so the suitably devilish music is not confined to tableaux at the ends of acts, but runs through the opera.[44] Another critic muses on the difficulty of 'animating the

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[43] From Alfred de Musset, *Lettres de Dupuis et Cotonet* [1836–8], in *Oeuvres complètes en prose* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), 820–8; translated in Lilian R. Furst, *European Romanticism*, 46–7.

[44] *Fausto* was accepted by the Théâtre Italien as early as July 1827 (mentioned by Fétis in the *Revue musicale* (July 1827), i, 540, note 1). Bertin published an arrangement for piano of the last scene of *Faust* in July 1826. The remarkably uncritical reception of the opera is at least partly explained by Bertin's family connections with musicians, writers and critics of the day (her father and uncle owned the *Journal des débats* for which Castil-Blaze worked), and the opera is dedicated to her teacher – Fétis. The work is discussed in Denise Lynn Boneau,

fantastical figure of Faust melodiously and without strangeness'.[45] These reservations signal the aesthetic difficulty of creating a French opera based on a German legend: how can an incomprehensible subject, both undramatic and immoral, be set to meaningful music? Moreover, what should replace the metaphysical structure and poetry of Goethe's legend (so problematic to the French) in a *Faust* opera?

As *Robin des bois* had shown in 1824, a new musical language was needed that would do more than simply reflect the mood of the opera but would actually help to establish the atmosphere and to structure the opera, indeed music that would transcend the perceived absurdity of the subject matter. However, as far as the critics were concerned the plot was still the most important element of a French opera. But in 1828, Castil-Blaze, in his music column in the *Journal des débats*, and Fétis, in his newly established journal the *Revue musicale*, had undertaken analytical reviews of Habeneck's concerts in Paris of Beethoven's symphonies, and of Auber's opera *La Muette de Portici*.[46] The analysis of music's inherent dramatic power was finally beginning to emerge as a means of dealing with the apparent incongruity of plot and music.

Faust at the Opéra

Records at the Archives Nationales and the Opéra show that several *Faust* works were considered by the reading committee at the Académie Royale de Musique in the late 1820s.[47] The first reference to Etienne de Jouy's four-act opera *Faust* comes in a

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Louise Bertin and Opera in Paris in the 1820s and 1830s (diss., University of Chicago, 1989), ii, 323–7.

[45] 'Comment s'y prendre pour animer mélodieusement et sans étrangeté la figure fantastique de Faust', *Nouvelle année littéraire* (17 March 1831).

[46] At the Société des Concerts, founded on 15 February 1828, Habeneck promoted Beethoven's works, and Castil-Blaze and Berlioz were early champions. The premiere of *La Muette* followed two weeks later. The 1830s were to see a rapid expansion of music journalism in Paris. Katharine Ellis considers this development in *Music Criticism in Nineteenth-Century France*.

[47] These texts are at the Archives Nationales: AJ^{13}139: an untitled *argument* in four acts [Bohain?]; AJ^{13}139/57: a four-act opera *Faust* [Jouy?]; AJ^{13}140: a three-act opera *Episode de la vie de Faust* [Roujoux] – the author later changed its title to *Marguerite* (this is referred to in

letter dated 9 February 1827, in which its presentation before the reading committee is rescheduled. Later the same year (27 November) Roujoux's three-act opera *Un Episode de Faust* was sent to the Opéra by its author.[48] The *programme* of a ballet *Faust* by Victor Bohain, to which Berlioz hoped to write the music, was received at a meeting on 19 July 1828.[49] Finally, in 1830 several letters from Rossini refer to a fantastic opera on *Faust*, with singing fates and genii; Scribe was supposed to be writing the libretto, for which Rossini claimed to have been waiting for nine months.[50]

Although each of these texts retains a strong German flavour, like the *Fausts* at the Porte Saint-Martin and Nouveautés they modify Goethe to suit a French audience, reducing the metaphysical aspects and introducing magical effects, and developing the love interest between Faust and Marguerite. In Jouy's text the setting is moved to the Alps, and the witch Bebo gives Faust a magic ring to lead him to Marguerite: 'it is

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a letter of 14 February 1828). I have used references in letters and internal memos to suggest the authors of these texts, as indicated. Letters are in series $AJ^{13}120$–21 at the Archives Nationales and AD 50–52 at the Opéra. Claude Pichois describes the manuscript of a *Faust* libretto among the papers of Philarète Chasles. He claims that the *argument* is by Chasles, Act II by Clémence de Presle and Act III by Jouy; the whole work is covered with corrections in Chasles's hand. See Pichois, *Philarète Chasles*, ii: 264–6. I have not seen this manuscript, and cannot comment on its relationship to the other texts.

[48] Baron Prudence-Guillaume Roujoux (1779–1836) was an administrator and writer.

[49] Victor Bohain (1805–56), a publicist, bought *Le Figaro* in 1827, and in 1831 became director of the Nouveautés with Adolphe Bossage. His *drame Mirabeau* was staged at the Odéon in 1832 without success, and he also collaborated on a number of plays for the secondary theatres, including *Les Immortels* (1828). In a letter of 12 November 1828 to La Rochefoucauld Berlioz writes: 'J'ai mis en musique la plus grande partie des poésies du drame de Goethe, j'ai la tête pleine de *Faust*' [I have set to music most of the poetry of Goethe's drama, my head is swimming with *Faust*]. Cited in Hector Berlioz, *Correspondance générale*, i: *1803–32*, ed. Pierre Citron (Paris: Flammarion, 1972), 217–8. Although his claim should be treated with caution, some of the music may have been published in 1829 as part of his opus 1, *Huit scènes de Faust.*

[50] Janet Johnson, 'Rossini in Bologna and Paris during the Early 1830s: New Letters', *Revue de Musicologie*, lxxix (1993), 63–81. Johnson suggests that references to an opera in a letter of around 4 May 1830 (from Bologna) to Lubbert are to his planned *Faust.*

love not hell that imposes its law upon me'.[51] Marguerite ends up going mad in her prison cell, and Faust's punishment is not damnation – instead he is left on Earth while Marguerite goes to heaven: 'I have been punished enough'.[52] Musical numbers are indicated, including a *romance* sung by Faust, 'Vers moi son âme est entraînée', which returns several times in the opera. Roujoux's libretto, set in fifteenth-century Transylvania, adheres more closely to Goethe than the other texts, but more emphasis is placed on the love between Faust and Marguerite – they have known each other for a long time before the opera starts – and it has a happy ending. When Faust announces in desperation 'I worship her God', he is saved by an invisible force, his only crime has been ignorance.[53] He and Marguerite are returned to her village, where they find her mother, miraculously returned from the dead. Finally, in Bohain's ballet scenario, although the setting is still Wittemberg, and Faust is damned at the conclusion, there is an explicit shift from the psychological to the purely physical and magical, as Mephistopheles gives an aged Faust the bodily form of Marguerite's young lover Henri. Faust's damnation is presented as a rather neo-Classical penance: we see him abandoned on rocks with birds of prey circling overhead, like Prometheus punished by Zeus, or indeed like Lewis's Monk, discarded by the devil:

> Des rochers, la mer en furie, des éclairs sillonent la nue. Le Démon traverse le théâtre dirigeant son vol vers le point le plus élevé, il tient dans les griffes le malheureux Docteur poursuivi par des oiseaux de proie. Faust foudroyé, vient tomber sur la pointe des rochers et roule dans la mer. Rejetté par les flots sur la plage, il respire encore, et la tempête apaisée, il peut apercevoir dans les cieux Marguerite, avec la robe des élus, ravie par des anges.[54]
>
> [Rocks, raging sea, flashes of lightning criss-cross the skies. The Devil crosses the stage, flying towards the highest point; he holds in his talons the unfortunate Doctor, and is followed by birds of prey. Faust, struck by lightning, falls on the summit of the rocks and slides into the sea. Expelled by the waters onto the

[51] 'C'est l'amour non l'enfer qui m'impose sa loi'.

[52] 'Je suis assez puni'.

[53] 'J'adore son Dieu'.

[54] Final scene, in manuscipt $AJ^{13}139$.

beach, he is still breathing; the storm having abated, he catches sight of Marguerite in the heavens, clothed in the gown of the chosen, claimed by the angels.]

Indeed, elements of these *Faust* manuscripts (and of the *Faust*s being staged in the secondary theatres) in fact anticipated crucial developments made in *Robert le diable*. For example, the *valse infernale* 'Noirs démons, fantômes', sung by Bertram and a chorus of invisible demons in *Robert*, is prefigured in a waltz danced in Act I of *Robin des bois*, which becomes positively diabolical in the Porte Saint-Martin *Faust* and in the texts of both Jouy and Bohain. Similarly, the celebrated ballet of debauched nuns in *Robert* was prefigured in Jouy's text – Mephistopheles brings on a stream of mythical women to try to help Faust forget Marguerite – and in Roujoux's libretto –women are again gathered by Mephistopheles, but this time to rekindle Faust's desires and to help him forget the death he has caused.

The official explanation for the rejection of all these submissions, in spite of their apparent stylistic suitability, was simply that there were too many *Faust*s in Paris. Documents in the Opéra archives suggest that the administration was desperate to find a suitable new ballet in 1827,[55] but even so the Bohain/Berlioz submission was rejected, ostensibly because of the cost of the *mise en scène* and the success of the sumptuous *Faust*s at the Nouveautés and the Porte Saint-Martin, whose lavish and novel effects they may have felt unable to improve upon.[56] More importantly, the Opéra had a chance to follow the success of Rossini's *Guillaume Tell* (1829) with his *Faust*, but this project was not completed either. A crucial factor in these rejections may well have been the failure of Chelard's *Macbeth*, withdrawn after only five performances: the adaptation of a similarly well-known northern European work that

[55] See correspondence from 23 and 24 September 1828 at *F-Po*: AD 51 (no. 127).

[56] Indeed, Charles Maurice writing in the *Courrier des théâtres* said of the production at the Nouveautés the previous year 'On se croit, en voyant la pièce de *Faust*, transporté à l'Opéra' [One believes oneself, seeing *Faust*, transported to the Opéra] (30 October 1827). And according to *Le Corsaire*, the Porte Saint-Martin's seventeen set changes included the walls receding, the ground opening up, the chapel sinking into the earth, people appearing and disappearing and Mephistopheles making a wall fall to show a public square full of people (30 October 1828).

featured not only murder but seduction and religious doubt would naturally have been met with some caution at the Opéra during this time of strict moral and religious censorship. Furthermore, a *Faust*-inspired opera by what would surely be a fruitful partnership (Scribe, doyen of the boulevards, and the recently successful Meyerbeer) was already planned for performance at the Opéra-Comique at the end of the same year, as a follow-up to its celebrated foray into the supernatural with *La Dame blanche*.[57] However, by the time the Rossini/Scribe *Faust* was apparently being considered in 1829, the Meyerbeer/Scribe Faustian *opéra comique Robert le diable* was already being reworked as a five-act opera for the Académie Royale itself.[58]

What, then, was different about the libretto of *Robert le diable*, and why was it deemed suitable for the Opéra as early as 1827 where *Faust* was not? Although features of the *Faust* manuscripts prefigured some of the most successful moments in *Robert*, Scribe managed both to integrate such elements into the dramatic structure of the opera, and also to set this world of the demonic supernatural within the broader framework of historical reality. The (apparently) accurate depiction of a specific historical period had proved particularly successful in *La Muette de Portici* and *Guillaume Tell* at the Opéra, and reflected contemporary fascination with the past, as described in the novels of Walter Scott, for example. This historical grounding enabled a more radical approach to the de-philosophising and de-Germanising process than had been the case with earlier French *Fausts*: a French rather than a German legend was taken as the basis of the opera, and the action was set in Norman controlled thirteenth-century Sicily, combining a fashionably exotic environment with a sense of national familiarity.[59] Thus, in a way that de Staël would no doubt have

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[57] Meyerbeer had enjoyed considerable success with his *Il crociato* at the Théâtre Italien (1824) and *Marguérite d'Anjou* at the Odéon (1826).

[58] For a detailed study of the development of *Robert le diable* from *opéra comique* to opera (focusing primarily on the music), see Everist, 'The Name of the Rose'.

[59] A version of the legend circulating at the end of the eighteenth century was *Histoire de Robert le diable duc de Normandie, et de Richard sans peur, son fils, Nouvelle bibliothèque bleue*, ii (Paris, 1775). Other versions of the legend are listed in Milner, *Le Diable dans la littérature française*, ii: 612–3, note. Of the many changes Scribe introduced, perhaps the most fundamental is the recasting of the evil and cruel Don Juan-like Robert of legend as a sympathetic and repentant character. Robert's character was instead preserved in a close

approved of, French opera had found a means of being inspired by, rather than merely imitating, German literature. It was this peculiarly French grounding of the supernatural in historical reality, distancing it from the problematic immorality of the *frénétique*, that assured its respectability and thus suitability for the Opéra.[60]

Robert le diable started life as an *opéra comique* as early as 1825, a supernatural successor to *Robin des bois* at the Odéon, *La Dame blanche* at the Opéra-Comique and the planned *La Nymphe du Danube* at the Odéon, as well as to *Don Giovanni* at the Théâtre Italien. However, Scribe and Meyerbeer's reworking for the Opéra must have been influenced by works that appeared in Paris in the late 1820s, including the translation of E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Die Elixire des Teufels* which appeared in 1829, as well as the *Fausts* at the secondary theatres. Of the changes made to the opera during this crucial period, perhaps the most significant was the expansion of Bertram's role, paralleled by the reduction of the largely comic and narrative role of Raimbaut.[61] This modification was enhanced by the translation of the spoken infernal scenes of the *opéra comique* into sung numbers. The Mephistophelean devil of the *opéra comique*, closer to those of the boulevard productions, becomes a devil to be

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adaptation of the legend made for the Nouveautés – *L'anneau de la fiancée, ou le nouveau Don Juan* (Brisset/Blangini, 28 January 1828) – which concluded with a statue dragging Robert to hell. Indeed this combining of the legends of *Faust* and *Don Juan* was relatively common in the first half of the nineteenth century; the most obvious alliance came in Christian Dietrich Grabbe's 1829 tragedy for Frankfurt, *Don Juan und Faust*. The Opéra's production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* in 1834, translated into French with newly composed recitatives by Castil-Blaze, seems to have embraced the spirit of the *Fausts* of the 1820s and *Robert*, mixing the grotesque with religious purity in the final tableau: a chorus of the damned sing the Dies Irae from Mozart's Requiem, as skeletons waving torches dance around Don Juan. A procession of young virgins, accompanied by religious music, bring in a coffin containing Donna Anna, who peers out. This finally sends Don Juan mad, and the Commandeur appears once more, pushing him into the arms of the damned.

[60] A (perhaps fictitious) reader had written into *Le Globe* in October 1827 justifying the popularity of devilry (much criticised as irrelevant and superfluous) by pointing out its relevance in a context of ancient and medieval superstition.

[61] Changes between the *opéra comique* and opera (focusing on the characters) are discussed in Pendle, *Eugene Scribe*, 427–55.

pitied, with a positive human trait – love of his son. This adds new psychological depth to the character: with the transfer of Faust's moral dilemma to the devil Bertram, Evil acquires a morally acceptable motivation.[62] Correspondingly, the role of Alice, a symbol of purity, was enlarged and strengthened, combining elements of Marguerite and the invisible presence of God in *Faust.* Furthermore, Robert's love for Isabella evolves alongside Alice's love for Raimbaut, independently of the devil. Perhaps the most significant development in the opera, compared to both its earlier incarnation and Goethe's *Faust,* is in the nature of the *spectacle.* Although the last three acts are dominated by devilry, the overall effect depends as much on historical accuracy as on the abstract supernatural. The acclaimed scene (discussed below) in which debauched nuns try to tempt Robert into the sacrilegious act of taking the magic branch, which provides power and immortality, from the tomb of Saint Rosalie is set in an apparently accurate replica of the ruins of the sixteenth-century Montfort-l'Amaury cloister (Seine et Oise).[63] The scene is remarkably similar to Théaulon's *Faust* in which Faust is tempted to snatch the crown of white roses, symbolising the girl's virtue, from the statue of Clotilde while Marguerite sleeps; and indeed to Hoffmann's *Die Elixir des Teufels* in which the statue is also the tomb of Saint

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[62] Matthias Brzoska pinpoints this duality of Bertram as the central idea of the libretto, both as the dramatic fulcrum of the opera and as a shock to audiences; see '*Mahomet* et *Robert-le-diable*: L'Esthétique musicale dans *Gambara*', *Année balzacienne*, nouv. ser. no. 4 (1984), 51–78.

[63] The ruins were classed as a historical monument, and were popular with Romantics – see, for example, Hugo's *Dix-huitième ode* (1825) – this is discussed in Allévy, *La Mise en scène en France*, 104. Catherine Join-Diéterle suggests that the set actually borrows from several different sources; the effect is thus one of historical accuracy created rather than merely imitated; see '*Robert le diable*: Le Premier opéra romantique', *Romantisme*, nos. 28–9 (1980), 147–66.

Rosalie.[64] Furthermore, the talisman appears as a branch of myrtle in Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) and its many French adaptations for the stage.[65]

In contrast to the special effects of the *Fausts* at the secondary theatres, however, those in the opera were given dramatic motivation and integrated into the action. The nuns' scene at the end of Act III, at the dramatic centre of the plot, is a good example of this. Initially it was planned as a traditional pantomime *divertissement*, representing Olympus – similar to the scene evoked in Jouy's unperformed *Faust* libretto – but Duponchel thought up the idea of the cloister scene (see Figure 7):[66] 'Clouds cover the stage, then disperse.... the stars glint in the sky, and the cloister is lit only by the moon', this effect is created by gaslights hanging in the flies.[67] Bertram enters and suspended lamps spontaneously light up as he passes; he commands: 'Nuns who rest beneath this cold stone, hear me ... arise!'.[68] The tombs open and the nuns gather silently. Bertram tells them that Robert must take the magic branch, and warns 'if his heart hesitates and deceives me, seduce him with your charms; force him to fulfil his unwise promise'.[69] As Bertram leaves the stage the bacchanal begins: 'The nuns take from their tombs the objects of their worldly passions ... soon they hear only

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[64] Similarly, the final scene of the opera, in which Bertram falls back into hell, and the church doors open to receive Robert, is reminiscent of the final scene of *Faust* at the Porte Saint-Martin, in which the stage splits to reveal heaven and hell.

[65] These influences and more are noted by Milner, *Le Diable dans la littérature française*, ii: 613. Join-Diéterle discusses the relationship between Act III of *Robert* and *The Monk* as well as the significance to the opera of Mathurin's *Bertram* and *Melmoth*; '*Robert le diable*: Le Premier opéra romantique', 155–6. However, the changing relationships of such works to each other (following new translations and stage adaptations which fuelled one another) make it dangerous to draw definitive conclusions as to their specific borrowings and influences.

[66] See Nicole Wild, 'Le Spectacle lyrique au temps du grand opéra', *La Musique en France à l'époque romantique (1830–70)*, ed. Joseph-Marc Bailbé et al. (Paris: Flammarion, 1991), 21–57, esp. 37.

[67] 'Des nuages couvrent la scène, puis se dissipent.... Les étoiles brillent au ciel, et le cloître n'est éclairé que par les rayons de la lune' (stage directions in the libretto).

[68] 'Nonnes qui reposez sous cette froide pierre, m'entendez-vous ... relevez-vous!'.

[69] 'Si son coeur hésite et trompe mon attente, par vos charmes qu'il soit séduit; forcez-le d'accomplir sa promesse imprudente'.

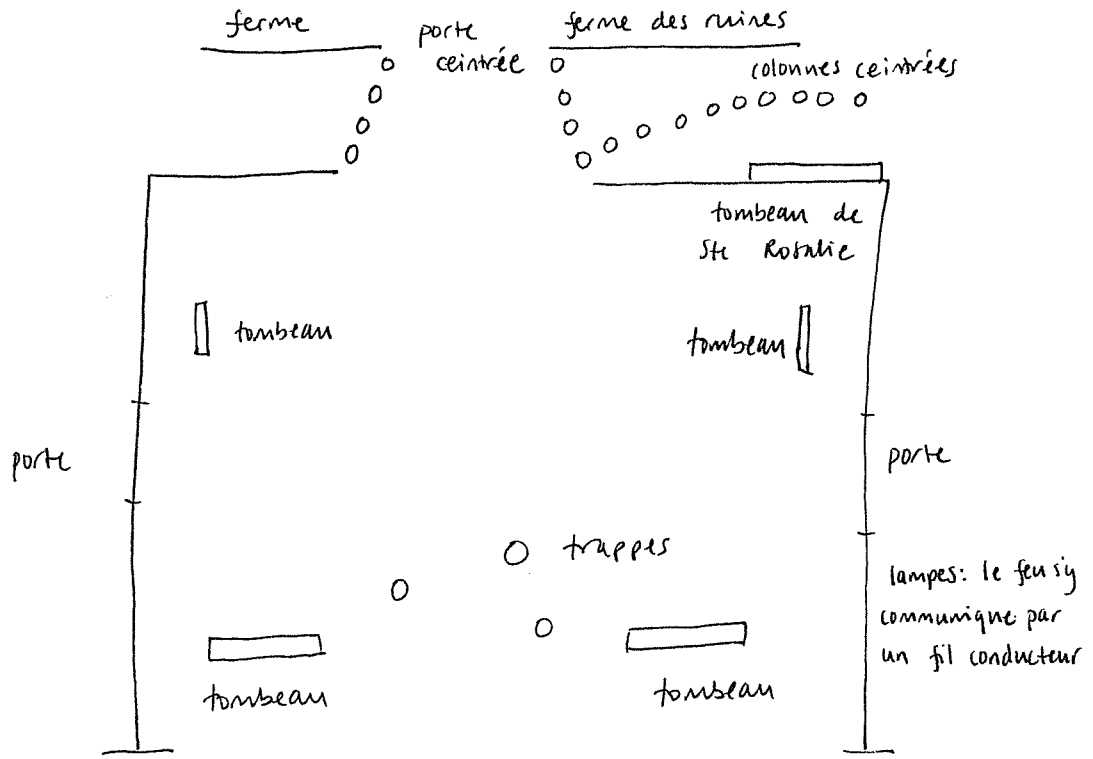

Figure 7. *Robert le diable*: *mise en scène* for nuns' scene, Act III
Copy of an anonymous manuscript
Bibliothèque Nationale de France: Opéra (*F-Po*: B.397/4)

the attraction of pleasure, and the dance becomes a fiery bacchanal'.[70] When they see Robert approach they stop abruptly and hide. Although he has come for the talisman, he is reluctant to take it and draws back. The nuns surround him and try to draw him in; when this has no effect they gradually begin to seduce him. He finally takes the talisman, thunder strikes and the nuns turn into ghosts; demons emerge and dance around him, singing 'He is ours!'.[71] Thus a lengthy *divertissement*, an element of opera more usually presented as an interlude, is placed at the heart of the action, and for the rest of the century it remained the most celebrated part of the opera. The scene is perhaps most famously represented in Edgar Degas's 1876 painting (see Figure 8),

[70] 'Les nonnes tirent des tombeaux les objets de leurs passions profanes ... bientôt elles n'écoutent plus que l'attrait du plaisir, et la danse devient une Bacchanale ardente'.

[71] 'Il est à nous!'.

Figure 8. *Robert le diable*: Act III, final scene
Edgar Degas, 1876
Victoria and Albert Museum

in which, despite the fact that the opera was then being staged at the new Palais Garnier, the *mise en scène* of the original production is preserved.

The integration of *spectacle* into drama prepared the way for music to do more than simply reinforce the uncanny with the usual diminished seventh chords, tremolando strings and the sombre sounds of ophicleides and trombones. Significantly, this proved to be the way in which many critics, previously unable to justify settings of the *Faust* legend, were able to accept *Robert le diable*: by focusing on the music as the emotional and dramatic point of the opera rather than as a monotonously sinister accompaniment. In *Robert* every nuance of emotion is reflected in the instrumentation and musical style. Yet some were still unable to bridge the gap between plot and music. A critic writing for the *Revue des deux mondes* stated that 'the text is absurd and unworthy of being presented at the Opéra'.[72] Although it has been suggested that the number of parodies and arrangements of the work confirmed this view of the opera as unworthy, these should be seen rather as a sign of its success not of its 'low culture' associations.[73] Indeed, more striking in the light of the criticisms of the earlier *Fausts* was the very lack of dismissive vocabulary in the majority of the reviews. There were few descriptions of the work as 'mélodramatique', 'romantique' or indeed 'germanique'. Rather, most critics attempted to explain the dramatic power of specific scenes with reference to the music. The perception was that unlike Louise Bertin in *Fausto*, Meyerbeer had succeeded in translating the contrasting emotions of the characters into music. A critic in *Le Globe* noted that in the Act III duo (no. 12) 'the basses modulate through every key, a slow, plaintive, pitiful phrase that expresses simultaneously the deception,

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[72] 'Le poème est absurd et indigne d'être présenté même à l'Opéra', *Revue des deux mondes*; cited in Jane Fulcher, *The Nation's Image*, 76.

[73] See Fulcher's remark, ibid. Parodies included: *Robert le diable, à propos-vaudeville* (Villeneuve, Xavier) Palais-Royal, 22 December 1831; *Robert le pauvre diable, grande bêtise en six petits actes* (anon.) Funambules, 6 January 1832; *Titi à la représentation de Robert le diable, opérette-monodrame burlesque en un scène* (Ambroise/Dejazet) Palais-Royal, 6 July 1832.

Bertram's cold malice and Alice's fear'.[74] Fétis, writing in *Le Temps*, suggested that in the Act III *duo bouffe* (no. 9) 'the damned Bertram's character is revealed more through the music than through his words', again partly through contrast, as he echoes mockingly the naive Raimbaut's phrases (see Example 4a).[75] In the refrain exaggerated violin phrases accompany the melody, and a somber combination of clarinets, bassons and strings double Raimbaut's phrase 'récompense de ses bienfaits', underlining Bertram's mockery of his sentiments. The parallel movement and exchange of phrases between the two voices suggests that Raimbaut is being won over, yet the distinct instrumentation for each voice indicates their continuing opposition. Castil-Blaze noticed in particular how Meyerbeer's exaggerated imitation of late-eighteenth-century style further intensified the irony:

> Il faut convenir que la nouvelle école sait aussi déclamer quand il faut; 'Ah, l'honnête homme' est conçu et distribué dans le style de Grétry. Le dédain et l'ironie sont employés ici avec autant d'esprit que d'artifice.[76]
>
> [One must admit that the new school also knows how to declaim when necessary; 'Ah, l'honnête homme' is conceived and delivered in the style of Grétry. Disdain and irony are employed here with as much spirit as artifice.]

In general the critics were interested in describing what the music expressed in terms of emotion and moral conflict, and employed metaphors and allusions to similar dramatic situations in other works. They thus viewed the music as one element of the

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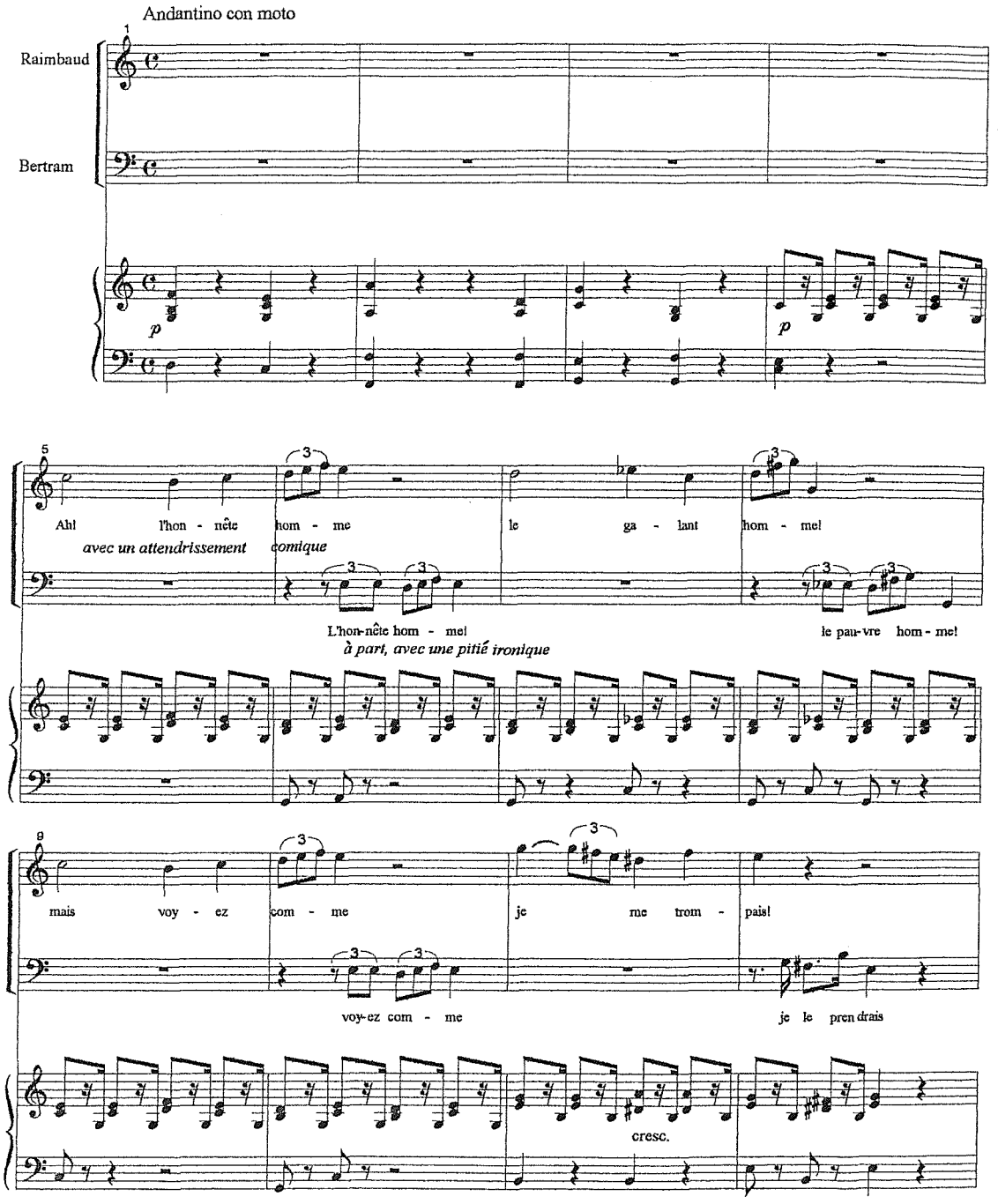
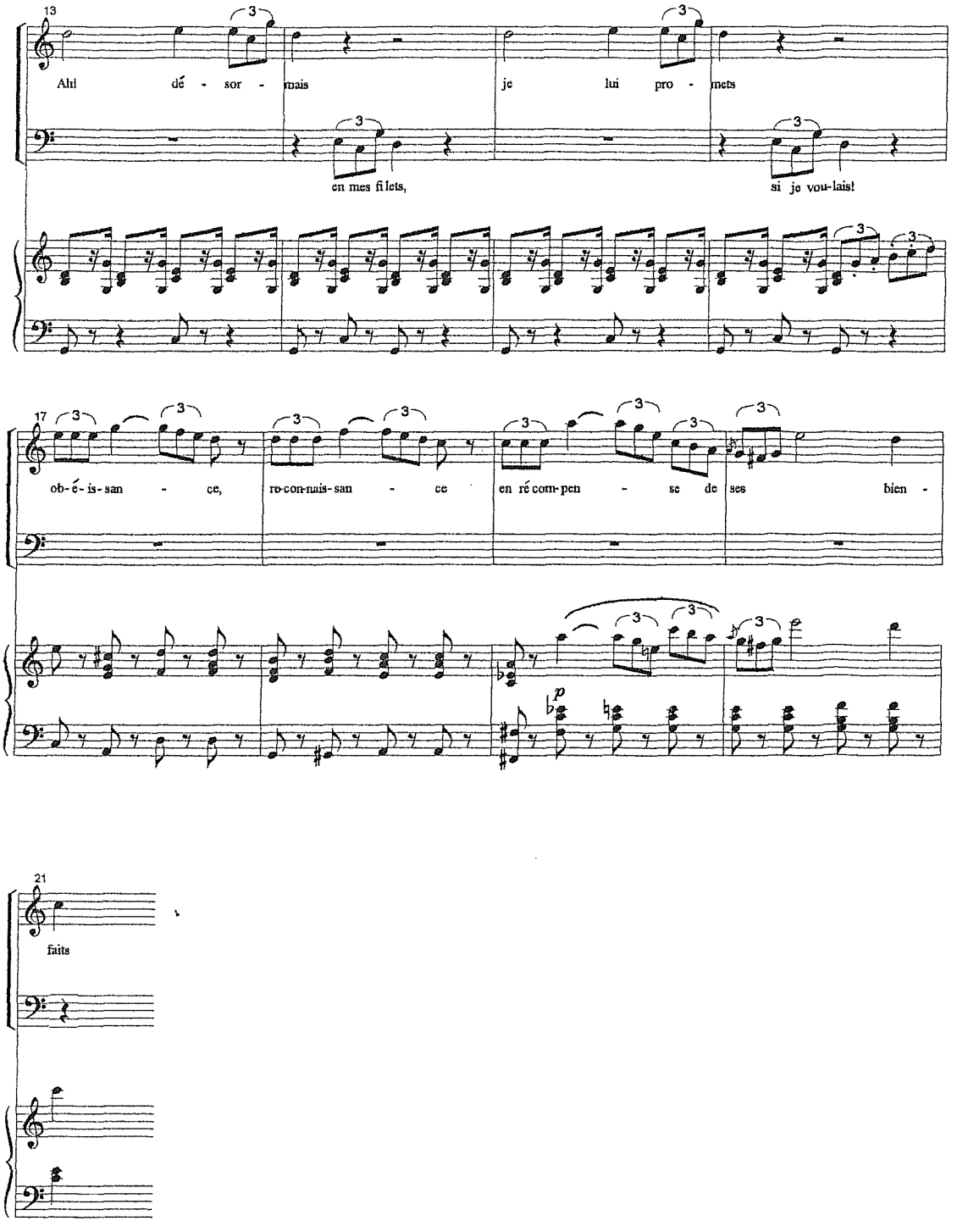
[74] 'Les basses modulent sur tous les tons une phrase lente, plaintive, lamentable, où respirent à la fois la ruse, la froide malice de Bertram et la frayeur d'Alice', *Le Globe* (27 November 1831); the critic is likely to be Ludovic Vitet.

[75] 'Le caractère du damné Bertram se dessine plus encore par la musique que par les paroles', *Le Temps* (25 November 1831).

[76] Castil-Blaze, *Journal des débats* (16 December 1831). The first verse suggests an eighteenth-century courtly dance, the second a church sonata with organ effects and the final verse evokes a popular melody.



Example 4a. Meyerbeer, *Robert le diable*: Act III, *duo bouffe*



[Raimbaut (*with comic tenderness*): Ah! The honest man, the galant man! But see how I am mistaken! Ah! In future I will promise him obedience, gratitude, in return for his kindness.
Bertram (*aside, with ironic pity*): The honest man, the poor man! See how I would take him in my nets, if I wanted!]

Example 4a (cont'd)

dramatic whole, 'less to be flattering to the ear than expressive and true'.[77] Where Castil-Blaze had taken delight in criticising the harmonic 'bizarreries' of Spohr's *Faust*, in *Robert* he now turned his imagery round, praising such features as innovative, fresh and dramatically effective. This approach is strikingly similar to de Staël's resolution of the high/low contradictions of German culture: she claimed to be able to feel the 'deep, poetic feeling' beneath the 'vulgarity of the external forms' of the German people.[78] Critics at all levels of musical proficiency were finally beginning to judge the effect of an opera as a whole, rather than focusing almost exclusively on its plot.

Robert and *Poésie*

The 'poetic feeling' valued by de Staël is one of the central themes of Balzac's 1837 novel *Gambara*.[79] The search for a definition of *essence musicale* is developed through a discussion between a rich dilettante *mélomane*, Count Andrea Marcosini, and a Hoffmannian composer, Gambara. They consider several works, including Gambara's own fictional *Mahomet*, and *Robert le diable*. At the core of the novel is a celebration of the absolute revealed by specifically German (or Austrian) musical genius, illustrated with *Don Giovanni*, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and finally *Robert le diable*.

The count's criticisms of *Robert le diable*, broadly in line with those of conservative journalists (such as the critic for the *Revue des deux mondes*, mentioned above), centre on the disjunction between music and plot. He suggests that Meyerbeer simply wants to show himself as bizarre and fantastic, ignoring truth and musical

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[77] 'Moins d'être flatteuse à l'oreille qu'expressive et vraie', *Le National*, signed 'Z.' (4 December 1831); cited in Marie-Hélène Coudroy, *La Critique parisienne des 'grands opéras' de Meyerbeer* (Saarbrücken: Galland, 1988), 81.

[78] Cited in Rupert Christiansen, *Romantic Affinities* (London: Vintage, 2/1994), 136.

[79] *Gambara* was serialised in Schlesinger's *Revue et gazette musicale* between 23 July and 20 August 1837. Caroline Boujou provides a commentary on the *Robert le diable* passage in 'Balzac critique de Meyerbeer', *Avant-scène opéra*, no. 76 (June 1985) [*Robert le diable* issue], 79–81. She states that Balzac looked at actual reviews to find both the warmest and the most acerbic opinions. References in this chapter are to Balzac, *Le Chef d'oeuvre inconnu – Gambara – Massimilla doni* (Paris: Flammarion, 1981).

unity; he questions the value of the libretto and the accuracy of the musical translation of the moral drama and sentiments, criticising the domination of harmony over melody. Gambara, having consumed a quantity of wine, defends the opera by claiming that it displays all human expression and addresses fundamental questions. He claims that the music allows the spectator to experience the same feelings as Robert, and implies that if the count has missed the point it is because he is not intelligent enough to understand. His argument, like that of many contemporary critics, hangs on this claim of a higher sensibility. Although he recants the following day, having sobered up, Gambara nevertheless affirms that 'if the opera pleases so it is because it is for everyone, and will prove popular'.[80]

Both the popular appeal of *Robert le diable* and the critical attitudes of the count and the more traditional critics centre on the portrayal of the devil. As de Staël declares in praise of *Faust* 'the devil is the hero of this work', so the count complains of *Robert le diable* that 'Meyerbeer has given the devil too good a role'.[81] In her analysis and translation of passages of *Faust* de Staël makes Mephistopheles far more important to the story than Faust, although rather than the ironic individual of Goethe's legend, she smoothes him into an embodiment of evil, responsible for the outcome of the story.[82] Similarly, Bertram dominates the story of *Robert*, but this time for his very lack of power. His human characterisation, which combines the excitement of evil with the emotion of a loving father, is at the dramatic heart of the opera.

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[80] 'Si l'opéra plaît tant c'est qu'il est de tout le monde, ce sera populaire', *Gambara*, 134.

[81] 'Le diable est le héros de cette pièce', *De l'Allemagne.*, 343; 'Meyerbeer a fait au diable une trop belle part', *Gambara*, 120. Of course these are both variations on the maxim that the devil gets all the best tunes.

[82] John Isbell discusses in some detail de Staël's alteration of Goethe's work, indeed he suggests 'the work undergoes massive distortion in her hands'. Despite her 'Romantic' ideals, like the first French translators of the legend, she finds it hard to reconcile Romantic fantasy with Classical truth, and produces a curious mixture of melodramatic exaggeration and neo-Classical simplification. Faust's actions are apparently beyond his control, and Gretchen is transformed into a passive victim, thus both become respectable as they are not responsible for their actions. See Isbell, *The Birth of European Romanticism*, 70–95.

This ambivalent image of Evil is a metaphor with which Balzac explores the creative process and the power of music in *Gambara*. The struggle of the composer is neatly illustrated in the Faustian dilemma of the opera: Gambara's tug-of-war between the forces of Good and Evil is played out through Robert; the quest for the absolute is a Faustian quest for freedom. As Jean-Pierre Barricelli describes it in his study of the musical dimension in Balzac's novels:

> The offerings of heaven are free for anybody's contemplation, but not free for anybody's possession. A mortal who tries to possess them is being unconsciously inveigled by the infernal forces to which Faust also fell prey.[83]

Because Gambara will not compromise with imperfection in his composing, he lays himself bare to 'the tail of the devil wriggling in this world'.[84] Ultimately, he understands that he has failed as an idealist:

> Ma musique est belle, mais quand la musique passe de la sensation à l'idée, elle ne peut avoir que des gens de génie pour auditeurs, car eux seuls ont la puissance de la développer. Mon malheur vient d'avoir écouté les concerts des anges et d'avoir cru que les hommes pouvaient les comprendre.[85]
>
> [My music is beautiful, but when music passes from sensation to idea, it can only have geniuses as listeners, for they alone have the power to develop it. My misfortune comes from having listened to the concerts of angels and believed that men could understand them.]

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[83] Jean-Pierre Barricelli, *Balzac and Music: Its Place and Meaning in his Life and Work* (New York and London: Garland, 1990), 166.

[84] 'La queue du diable frétillant en ce monde', *Gambara*, 123.

[85] Ibid., 137.

The count recognises that what Gambara seeks is something more than music, 'the intelligence of this man has two windows, one shut to the world, the other open to heaven: the first is music, the second is poetry'.[86]

For Balzac, the distinction between 'music' and 'poetry', sensation and idea, is illustrated in the familiar opposition between Italian sensualism and German idealism, between the music of Rossini and Beethoven, between the Italian count and the Hoffmanian composer. The Restoration historian Augustin Thierry said memorably of Rossini's operas: 'when the ear is amused the mind must withdraw so moral pleasure will not disturb the physical pleasure'.[87] Beethoven was seen as the aesthetic opposite: performances of his symphonies at the Société des Concerts attracted intellectuals, mocked by caricaturists of the time.[88] However, James Johnson, in his recent study of nineteenth-century reception history, *Listening in Paris*, suggests that far from being antithetical (and inferior) to the absolute music of Beethoven, Rossini's operas actually primed audiences to listen to music for its own sake.[89] In the same way that the mesmerising, technical performances of Pasta or Malibran in the 1820s can be compared to those of Paganini or Liszt in the 1830s, the almost physical energy of a Rossinian *crescendo tutti* can be equated with the power of a Beethoven

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[86] 'L'intelligence de cet homme a deux fenêtres, l'une fermée sur le monde, l'autre ouverte sur le ciel: la première est la musique, la seconde est la poésie', ibid., 117.

[87] Cited in Johnson, *Listening in Paris*, 224. Substitute 'eye' for 'ear' and this could equally come from the pen of a critic writing about the boulevard *Fausts*.

[88] For example, Eugène Lami's watercolour *La Première audition de la Septième Symphonie de Beethoven* (1840) captures the stern absorption of a group of men in the audience. This contrasts with depictions of the audiences at the Théâtre Italien, such as Gustave Doré's *L'Opéra Italien*, which presents a group of voluptuous women lounging in their seats and paying scant attention to the performance. These pictures are reproduced in Johnson, *Listening in Paris*, 263, 189.

[89] Johnson, *Listening in Paris*, 219–27. However, Johnson's implication that Beethoven's success in the 1828 concerts came as a bolt from the blue is not strictly true. Although German composers enjoyed little exposure in concerts in the 1820s, German opera was heard at the Odéon and Théâtre Italien (as mentioned above) by the same audiences and critics that were to attend the Société des Concerts. Thus the development of critical vocabulary through the late 1820s was a response to Weber, Spohr and others, as well as to Beethoven.

symphony: the response of the audience was one of rapt attention in both cases. But despite this undeniably visual aspect to the performances of the virtuosi of the 1830s, Johnson ignores the essential difference between the rapture experienced in the opera house, stimulated – or at least enhanced – by the visual impact of costumes and *mise en scène* that extended beyond the performer(s), and the purely auditory impact and euphoria encountered at the performance of a symphony. In other words, there was still a fundamental difference in the expectations of an audience and the way that they would listen to each type of work.

This extra-musical context is almost entirely ignored by both Balzac and Johnson. Yet the importance of the visual dimension of *Robert le diable* is evidenced by both the unprecedented amount of money spent on scenery and costumes, and the space in reviews given over to descriptions of the scenic effects as part of the dramatic whole.[90] Local colour, presented visually as well as musically, is central to the structure of the opera: the separate realms of the chivalrous world of the court, the demonic world of Bertram and the heavenly sphere of Alice are evoked and contrasted through costumes, scenery and lighting as well as through instrumentation and musical style. The sombre sounds of the ophicleides, bassoons and timpani that accompany Bertram in Act III, for example, are matched by a similarly dark, gothic landscape and sinister lighting effects, and by Bertram's costume of black satin with a purple cloak, clearly suggesting his satanic associations. Furthermore, the progress of the plot is presented in a series of contrasting tableaux at the ends of the acts; as in *La Muette de Portici* the visual drives the opera at a structural level.

In contrast to Auber's frequent juxtaposing of airs and choruses and use of recurring motifs for dramatic effect in this visual context, however, Meyerbeer uses orchestration to delineate character and to suggest internal conflict. He thus incorporates musical expression into the drama at a more intimate and fundamental level. For example, in Isabelle's italianate Act II cavatine 'En vain j'espère' (no. 4), in which she laments the fact that Robert has apparently abandoned her, the critic for the *Revue de Paris*, Joseph d'Ortigue, noticed, 'everything that is melancholic in these

[90] 37 000 francs were spent on the scenery alone; see Join-Dieterle, '*Robert le diable*: Le Premier opéra romantique', 161.

plaintive harps ... penetrating in the strains of the cor anglais'.[91] Similarly, Fétis describes how the organ and choir, heard coming from the cathedral, are integrated into the drama in the final act, at the point when Robert stops himself from yielding to Bertram: 'religious sentiments ... awaken in him the sounds of the organ, the singing in the church and the memory of his mother.[92]

The final scene of the opera, however, Bertram's fall back into hell, is, like that of *La Muette*, above all a transcendent visual moment, symbolic of the victory of the heavenly powers as well as of Bertram's own personal failure.[93] As Bertram disappears, thunder sounds, and ascending diminished fifths in the flutes and upper strings are accompanied by diminished seventh chords in the middle- and low-range instruments of the orchestra, including the brass and bass drum; gradually the clouds lift and the thunder dies away, and the interior of Palermo Cathedral is revealed, to the rising and falling arpeggios of two offstage harps, accompanied by gentle sustained wind chords, wandering harmonically and finally arriving on a dominant seventh on C (see Example 4b). This prepares a concluding prayer in F major: a double chorus of angels (accompanied by organ and harps) and the people (accompanied by the orchestra). Essentially the music supports and intensifies both the visual tableau and the moral outcome of the opera.

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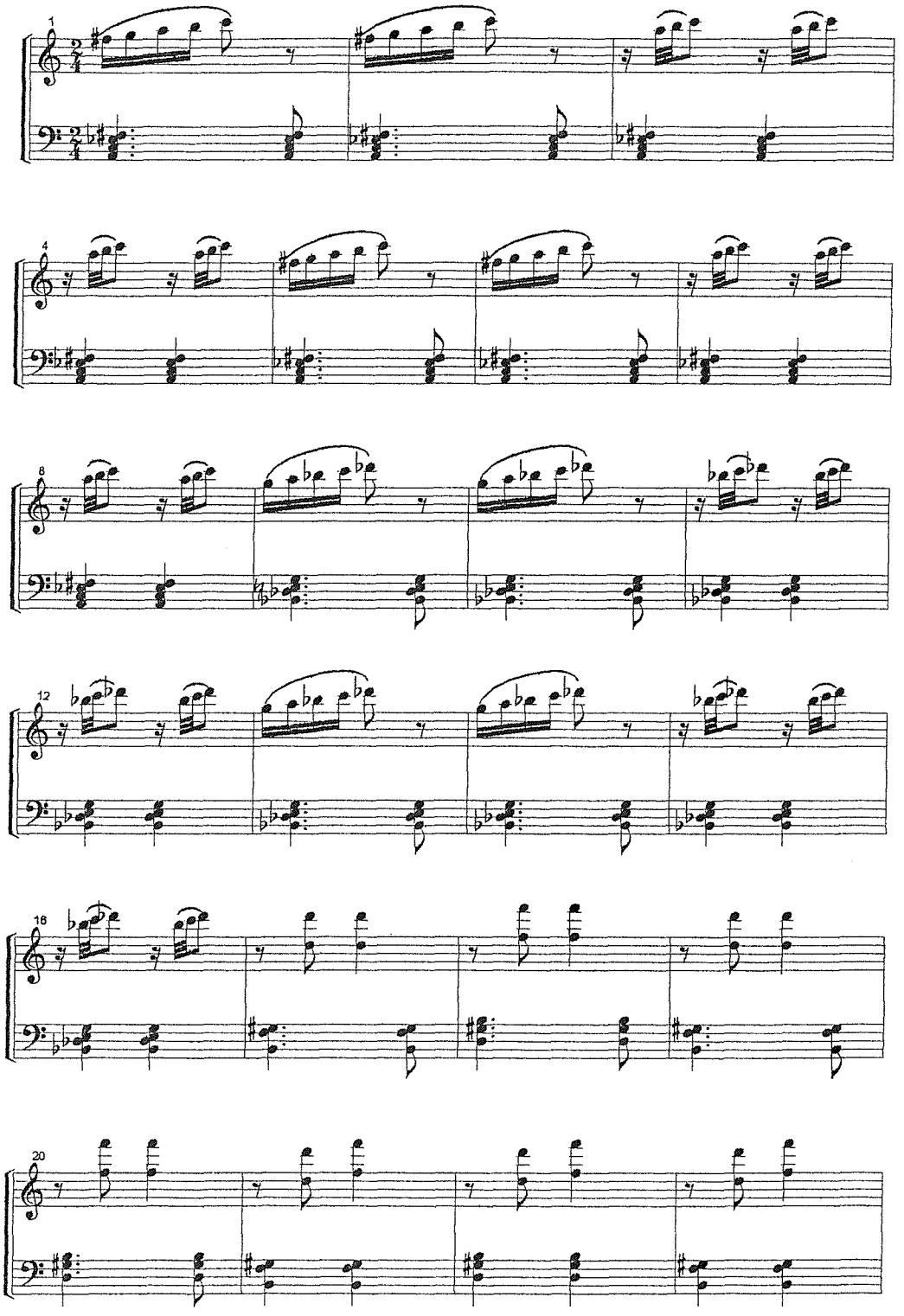
[91] 'Tout ce qu'il y a de mélancolique dans ces harpes plaintives ... de pénétrant dans les accens du cor anglais', Joseph d'Ortigue, *Revue de Paris* (1831), xxxiii; cited in Coudroy *La Critique parisienne des 'grands opéras' de Meyerbeer*, 54.

[92] 'Les sentiments religieux ... réveillent en lui les sons de l'orgue; les chants de l'église et le souvenir de sa mère', Fétis, *Revue musicale* (26 November 1831).

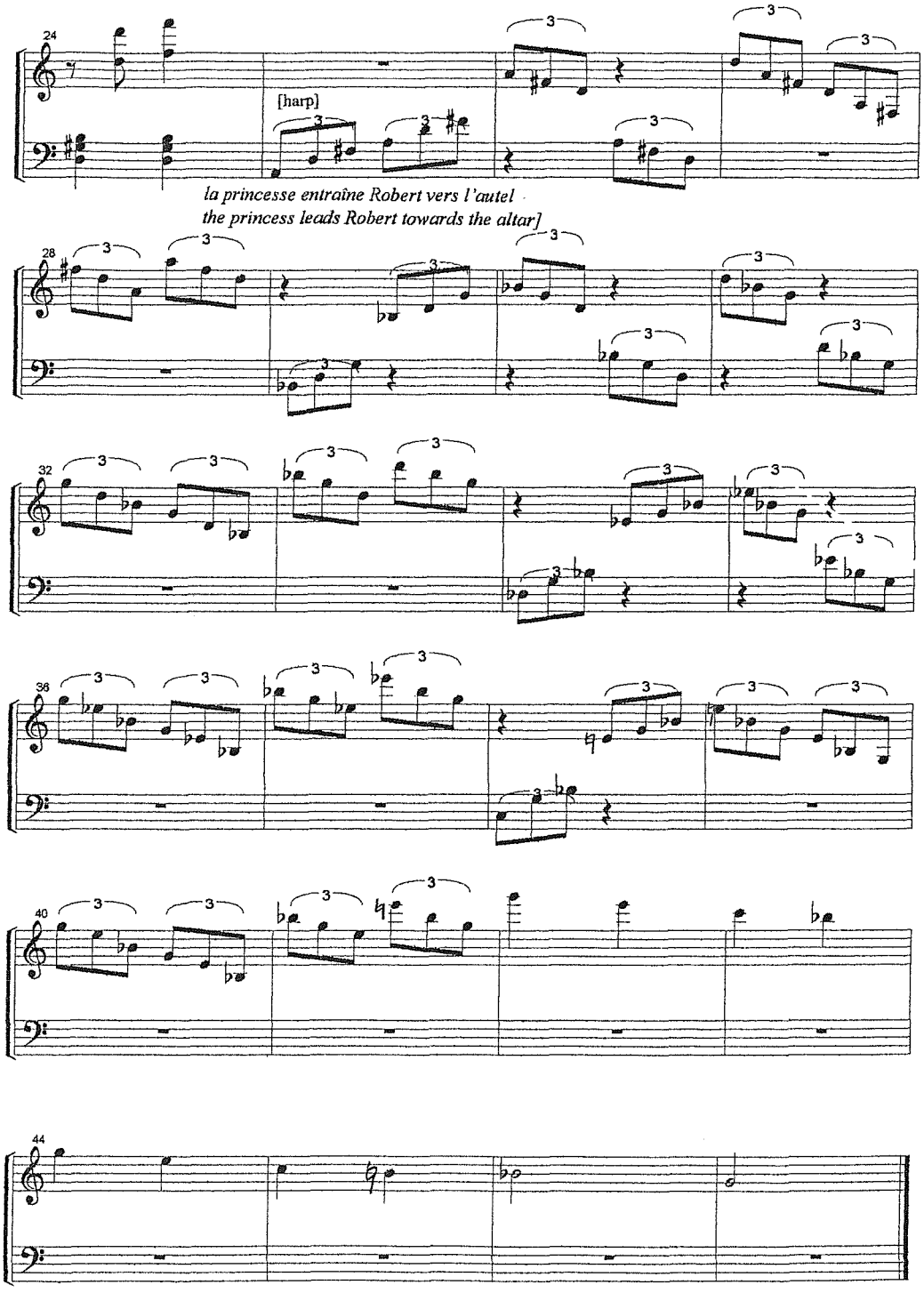
[93] Indeed, the dependence of the moment on the purely visual was illustrated on the first night, when Adolphe Nourrit, playing the part of Robert, lost his footing and tumbled after Nicolas Levasseur, playing Bertram, through the trapdoor into hell. As Nourrit landed on the pile of mattresses alongside him, Levasseur reportedly asked whether the ending had been changed; Nourrit, somewhat overcome, said 'no, but what will the public think?', illustrating how the whole moral outcome of the opera depended on this moment of almost purely visual action. This anecdote, as told by Armand de Pontmartin in 'Les Trois chutes de Robert-le-diable' in *Souvenirs d'un vieux mélomane* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1879), is reproduced in *Avant-scène opéra*, no. 76 (1985) [*Robert le diable* issue], 87–90.

le théâtre est couvert de nuages, le tonnerre gronde
[the theatre is covered with clouds, thunder grumbles]



Example 4b. Meyerbeer, *Robert le diable*: Act V, final scene

les nuages se lèvent et l'on voit l'intérieur de la Cathédrale de Palerme, remplie de fidèles:
[the clouds lift and we see the interior of the Cathedral of Palermo, full of worshippers:



Example 4b (cont'd)

Balzac's focus on *essence musicale* in opera is thus only half the story of *Robert*'s success. By comparing it with Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, he makes the implicit assumption that the internal dramatic truth of a Beethoven symphony can be equated with the external, visual dramatic truth of an opera; and one could make a similar case that a production at a non-lyric theatre can be equated with an opera through their shared visual vocabulary, despite the difference in their musical idiom. In a sense Johnson's perception of a progression from Rossini's lyricism to Beethoven's more complex dramatic music in *Listening in Paris* is paralleled in visual terms in this advance from the 'emotional' visual effect characterising the secondary theatres to the integrated 'dramatic' effect of *Robert*. It is precisely this cocktail of physical and moral pleasures that defines the success of *Robert* for so many critics. Goethe's territory – an emotionally as well as intellectually powerful devil – is reclaimed through the poetic truth of dramatic synthesis. Gambara's dissatisfaction at the end of the novel, that only geniuses can understand his 'music of ideas', is belied by the popular success of *grand opéra*.[94] *Robert le diable* effectively embraces social and national polarities: 'popular' and 'high' art, Italian and German musical aesthetics.[95]

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[94] 'Popular' success is of course a relative term. The audiences at *Robert* were still largely drawn from the upper classes, but when, within the first year of the 'citizen king' Louis-Philippe's reign, Louis-Désiré Véron took over responsibility for the running of the Opéra, he made significant changes to both the artistic and the administrative policies of the theatre, in an attempt to attract the newly-wealthy bourgeoisie. See Louis-Désiré Véron, *Mémoires d'un bourgeois de Paris* (Paris: G. de Gonet, 1853–5); William L. Crosten, *French Grand Opera: An Art and a Business* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1948); Johnson, *Listening in Paris*, 241–8.

[95] *Der Freischütz* is a striking omission from *Gambara*, given its similarity with *Robert* in terms of its subject and aspects of its musical idiom, and given its adaptation for a French audience. Like Meyerbeer, Weber was also recognised by critics as having successfully combined 'Italian' emotion with 'German' ideas, taking the appeal of Rossini to a new level: 'Les spectateurs qui assistent à une représentation d'un opéra de Rossini ont toute cette exaltation d'esprit que procure le vin généreux enfanté par le sol de Champagne, tandis que ceux qui écoutent les productions de Weber semblent avoir mêlé à ce même vin quelques grains d'opium' [Those present at the performance of one of Rossini's operas have all the

Commentators have seen a precursor of Wagner in Gambara's synthetic vision of opera, but more obviously, with his own fictional opera *Mahomet*, Gambara sets up the Meyerbeerian ideal.[96] Despite the doubts he has about *Robert le diable* when he is sober, he points the way forward with historical grand opera, the direction that Meyerbeer himself took the year before *Gambara* was published with *Les Huguenots*. In a sense, then, the novel is a tribute to de Staël's vision of German culture thirty years before: it both celebrates German musical genius and honours emerging French *grand opéra*.

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Attitudes to the *Faust* operas of Spohr and Bertin staged in Paris at the end of the Bourbon Restoration were to a large extent shaped by the views – indeed the specific vocabulary – of critics of the productions at the secondary theatres. But despite ambivalent attitudes to the legend's potential on the Parisian stage, it ultimately proved an agent for the popularisation of German Romantic ideas, and for their absorption into French opera. This transfer was most clearly acknowledged by Fétis, who claimed that in Act V of *Robert*: 'it is the music that Goethe himself would have created for the finale of his *Faust*, had heaven accorded him a second lyre'.[97] Yet it was not simply that music took the place of poetry in this process; rather, the combining of music and *spectacle* in the 'total' art of music drama provided another focus. As seen in the reviews of the boulevard *Fausts*, *spectacle* was the most important element in popular theatre during the mid-1820s. And the visual tableau began to rival plot as the primary source of interest, purpose and theoretical and aesthetic challenge in the emerging Romantic *drame* of Hugo and Dumas. Its transfer to the Opéra similarly involved the re-establishing of a French context and aesthetic via historical realism. However, de Staël was ultimately proved right in her assertion

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heightened spirit one acquires from drinking the generous wine of Champagne, while those listening to Weber seem to have added a few grains of opium to the same wine], C*** in *La Pandore* (18 December 1824).

[96] For example, see Léon Guichard, *La Musique et les lettres au temps du romantisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955), 328.

[97] 'C'est de la musique telle que Goëthe lui-même aurait pu en faire pour le finale de son *Faust*, si le ciel lui eût accordé une double lyre', *Revue musicale* (26 November 1831).

that the devil was not at home in French literature. Although Mephistopheles continued to enjoy a career in spoken drama in the early 1830s, French opera, at least for the present, preferred the realism of historical events in which the dilemmas of an individual could be embodied in a specific national plight, rather than expressed as a universal spiritual unease.

CONCLUSION

As Chapters One to Four have shown, the emergence of *grand opéra* at the Académie Royale in the late 1820s was greatly influenced by the genres staged at the secondary theatres in terms of technology, subject matter and visual effects. And, despite its reputation for conservatism, the Opéra also presented broader cultural and social concerns in an innovative way. Interest in history, foreign literatures and the gothic, together with attitudes towards women, revolution, religion and scientific experimentation were embraced, and new methods of combining visual, musical and textual elements were explored. Although the different layers of themes presented in each chapter perhaps threaten at times to overwhelm the work being considered, such in fact is the point of this means of presentation: it is only by understanding the complexity of the interlinking ideas surrounding each work that we can begin to understand their appeal to contemporary audiences.

Chapter One reveals how with *Macbeth* the Opéra was keen to embrace the vogues for English literature, historical Scottish settings and interest in the supernatural. The fact that the opera failed seems to have resulted from a mismatch of form and content. Although the dark and violent nature of the story was unlike any other work being staged at the Opéra at the time, this was not suggested as a reason for the opera's failure by contemporary commentators. Rather, the melodramatic subject was not treated as melodrama should be: the overarching importance of dramatic tension and visual effect was neglected. Strings of static airs and the dramatically flawed finales to Acts II and III meant that musical and visual expression were superficial rather than integral to the action. However, many essentially visual elements of the opera were to be developed with more success in works produced during the next few years: the conjunction of the 'real' and the spiritual worlds (*Robert*), the relationship of landscape and *mise en scène* to the main protagonist's state of mind (*La Muette*), the trance scene (*La Somnambule*) and the focus on historical accuracy (*Robert* and *La Muette*).

Chapter Two describes how a specific image – that of an entranced woman – provides the theme for *La Somnambule*, the first new work for the Opéra since *Macbeth*. Here, images and ideas surrounding the natural and magnetic

somnambulists that were attracting public and scientific interest in the 1820s are combined with visual, textual and musical allusions to theatrical representations of other entranced women, namely madwomen and ghosts. An examination of various portrayals of sleepwalking shows how the suitability of the silent and solitary sleepwalker's trance for realistic representation in dance and pantomime ensured its success at a time when visual image was becoming an increasingly important component in French theatre. Such portrayals mark an important contrast to the emerging, highly vocal, mad heroines of Italian opera of the 1830s.

Chapter Three considers the plight of another type of afflicted woman: the mute. However, the success of *La Muette de Portici* seems to have derived more specifically from its virtuoso adoption of different techniques from the secondary theatres than from the contemporary relevance of its theme. It took a quite revolutionary attitude to the visual, whereby the melodramatic link between *mise en scène* and emotion was taken to new heights: the mute's vocal powerlessness is not merely symbolic of her own situation, but of that of the rebels in the opera, and of oppressed nations generally. The relationship between Fenella and the other characters is further complicated by the unexpected power that lies in her voicelessness: musically and visually she drives the entire opera. The work reveals how the Opéra was not simply inspired by aspects of the productions seen at the secondary theatres, reproducing their effects on a grander scale, but was also advancing the move towards visual legibility that was beginning to influence spoken drama.

Finally, in Chapter Four *Robert le diable* is examined from the perspective of the audience and critics. Attitudes to French translations and adaptations of *Faust* provide the context in which *Robert* is received: we see how the Opéra overcame the problems of the 'popular' appeal of *Faust*'s potential for spectacular visual effects in the theatre. Rather than denying the importance of *spectacle* to an audience, the opera revelled in it and put it at the heart of the dramatic action. Similarly, musical style and instrumentation contributed to the detail of the drama, suggesting expressed and unexpressed emotion in a way that critics were able to describe to their readers.

In essence, during the years 1827–31 the creators of opera experimented with *spectacle* to suggest historical accuracy and to represent the supernatural. Although

these came together magnificently in *Robert*, where visual elements were fundamental to the structure of the drama, it seemed to be an uneasy balance, and many critics were still unconvinced of the suitability of the theme for the Opéra.

Robert's supernatural successor at the Opéra was in fact a ballet – *La Sylphide* – in which magic was interwoven with Scottian realism (the ballet also recalled Boieldieu's *La Dame blanche* and Chelard's *Macbeth*).[1] Adolphe Nourrit showed the Opéra's director Véron his scenario for *La Sylphide* while *Robert* was still in rehearsal. It captured something of the opera's atmosphere, developing the relationship between a spirit and a mortal, and also capitalised on the ballerina Marie Taglioni's talent for the ethereal, displayed in her performance as the Abbess Hélène in the nuns' ballet in *Robert*. The story, inspired by Charles Nodier's short novel *Trilby* (1821), also developed the idea of the seductively destructive woman and her inevitable death, an idea nascent in *Macbeth*, *La Somnambule*, *La Muette* and *Robert*, that was to culminate in the wilis' dance of death in Adam's *Giselle* (1841).[2] While the critics' praise of the spectacular staging of *La Sylphide* was effusive, so too was the reaction to Taglioni's naturalistic expression – indeed it recalled the response to Harriet Smithson's 'realistic' portrayals of Shakespearean heroines that had been so influential on French actresses and dancers in the 1820s. (The blurred distinction between acting styles in different genres was further illustrated by the fact that Smithson played the role of Fenella in 1832.) The combination of spectacular effects and simplicity of expression that proved so successful in *La Sylphide* was to characterise ballet in the 1830s and 40s.

Opera, meanwhile, went down the path of historical realism: the drama inherent in history was better suited to serious opera than to ballet, and provided the opportunity to establish contrasting worlds of 'local colour' both visually and musically. In their next opera, *Les Huguenots* (1836), Meyerbeer and Scribe developed the idea of confrontation between two groups of people, as seen in *La Muette*. By focusing on crowds who represented sections of the people, and by paying ever-closer attention to accurate visual details, they were able to invite the audience into the *spectacle*, rather than leaving them as mere observers of the action. Thus

[1] Opéra, 12 March 1832; music by Schneitzhoeffer, choreography by Taglioni.

[2] Opéra, 28 June 1841; scenario by Saint-Georges and Gautier, choreography by Coralli.

while the first spectators at the diorama in the early 1820s were presented not merely with impressive and accurate representations of landscapes and buildings, but were shown movement which brought the scenes to life, so opera audiences found themselves being drawn into the action by a similarly realistic aproach to *spectacle.*

Although *Macbeth*, *La Somnambule*, *La Muette* and *Robert* in many ways responded to the social and political context of 1820s Paris, they can also be viewed rewardingly in relation to the processes of boulevard theatre. Above all, they embodied the shift in French theatre generally at this time towards greater visual legibility. The combination of turning away from well-known plots to newly written, complex librettos and the darkening of the auditorium during performances (thus preventing audiences from following the action by reading the libretto), meant that the Opéra had to put its energies into making clear to the audience every aspect of the unfolding drama. Music and visual effects were the obvious means of achieving this: the multifarious associations of the sleepwalker were suggested by visual and musical allusion; the legibility of every nuance of emotion in Fenella's pantomimes was achieved through gesture and the use of the orchestra; and Bertram's diabolic character was evoked through instrumentation, musical style and lighting. Essentially, the Opéra built on the simple techniques of the secondary theatres and developed them in a shift from the literary to the visual underpinning of the music. The attraction of *grand opéra* of the 1830s, poised at the juncture between 'high' and 'low' aesthetics, was therefore its adoption of the mass appeal and relevance of 'popular' theatre, in an acceptably intellectual mode.

Appendix A
Works Discussed in Chapter One

Les Visions de Macbeth, ou les sorcières d'Ecosse
mélodrame
Hapdé
unperformed (1817)

Les Deux Macbeth, ou l'apothéose de Ducis
impromptu
Dubois
Gaîté, 29 March 1817

Macbeth, ou les sorcières de la forêt
pantomime à grand spectacle
Cuvelier de Trie/Othon
Cirque Olympique, 20 March 1817

Macbeth
tragédie lyrique
Rouget de Lisle/Chelard
Opéra, 29 June 1827

Macbeth
mélodrame
Ducange, Anicet Bourgeois/Piccini
Porte Saint-Martin, 9 November 1829

Macbeth
tragédie
L. Halévy
Odéon, 10 November 1829

Appendix B
Works Discussed in Chapter Two

Nina, ou la folle par amour
comédie mêlée d'ariettes
Marsollier des Vivetières/Dalayrac
Comédie-Italienne (Favart), 15 May 1786

Nina, o sia la pazza per amore
commedia
Lorenzi/Paisiello
Caserta, 25 June 1789

Nina, ou la folle par amour
ballet-pantomime
Milon/Persuis
Opéra, 23 November 1813

La Dame blanche
opéra comique
Scribe/Boieldieu
Opéra-Comique, 10 December 1825

La Somnambule, ou l'arrivée du nouveau seigneur
ballet-pantomime
Scribe/Hérold
Opéra, 19 September 1827

La Villageoise somnambule, ou les deux fiancées
comédie-vaudeville
Bournonville, Dupin
Variétés, 15 October 1827

Héloïse, ou la nouvelle somnambule
comédie-vaudeville
Théaulon
Vaudeville, 25 October 1827

La Somnambule du Pont-aux-choux
folie-vaudeville en trois tableaux
Pellisier, Hubert
Gaîté, 10 November 1827

La Petite somnambule, ou coquetterie et gourmandise
vaudeville
L'Endormi [Laffillard, Gombault, Demonval]
Comte, 18 December 1827

Macbeth
tragédie lyrique
Rouget de Lisle/Chelard
Opéra, 29 June 1827

La Folle de Glaris
(adapted from Kreutzer's *Cordelia*)
drame lyrique
Sauvage/Payer
Odéon, 21 April 1827

La Folle, ou le testament d'une anglaise
comédie
de Wailly
Madame, 17 August 1827

Emilia, ou la folle
drame
Soumet
Théâtre Français, 1 September 1827

Anna Bolena
opera
Romani/Donizetti
Milan, 1830
(Paris premiere: Théâtre Italien, 1 September 1831)

Appendix C
Works Discussed in Chapter Three

Masaniello, ou le pêcheur napolitain
opéra comique
Lafortelle, Moreau de Commagny/Carafa
Opéra-Comique, 27 December 1827

La Muette de la forêt
mélodrame en un acte
Antier, Pixérécourt/Piccini
Théâtre de la Gaîté, 29 January 1828

La Muette de Portici
opéra en cinq actes
Scribe, G. Delavigne/Auber
Opéra, 29 February 1828

Yelva, ou l'orpheline russe
vaudeville en deux actes
Villeneuve, Scribe, Chapeau
Gymnase-Dramatique, 18 March 1828

Les Immortels
folie revue/vaudeville en un acte
Variétés, 15 April 1828

La Muette
pantomime dialoguée, mêlée de danses et combats en trois tableaux
Redon/Bosisio
Luxembourg, 17 April 1828

La Sourde-muette, ou la dame au voile vert
(revival)
comédie-vaudeville en un acte
Xavier, Duvert
Vaudeville, 17 April 1828 [1826]

La Muette du Port Bercy
vaudeville-parodie en cinq actes
Dupin, D'Allarde, D'Artois
Porte Saint-Martin, 28 April 1828

Les Deux mots, ou une nuit dans la forêt
(revival)
comédie en un acte et en prose
Marsollier/Dalayrac
Odéon, 4 May 1828 [1806]

Les Femmes muettes
Luxembourg, 19 May 1828

La Muette des Pyrénées
pièce en un acte et en deux tableaux
mêlée de vaudevilles
Motus, Lafillard, Mallain
Comte, 30 May 1828

Appendix D
Works Discussed in Chapter Four

Der Freischütz
Oper
Kind/Weber (after Apel and Laun)
Berlin, 1821
(Paris premiere: Théâtre Italien,
12 May 1829)

Robin des bois
opéra-féerie
(adaptation of *Der Freischütz)*
Sauvage, Castil-Blaze/(Weber)
Odéon, 7 December 1824

Faust
drame lyrique
Théaulon/Béancourt
Nouveautés, 27 October 1827

Faust
drame
Béraud, Merle, Nodier/Piccini
Porte Saint-Martin, 29 October 1828

Faust
Oper
Bernard/Spohr
Prague, 1816
(Paris premiere: Théâtre Italien,
20 April 1830)

Fausto
opéra semiséria
Bertin
Théâtre Italien, 7 March 1831

Robert le diable
opéra
Scribe, G. Delavigne/Meyerbeer
Opéra, 21 November 1831

Unperformed:

Faust
opéra
[Jouy?]
(Opéra, 1827)

Marguerite, ou une épisode de la vie de Faust
opéra
[Roujoux]
(Opéra, 1827)

Faust
ballet
[Bohain/Berlioz?]
(Opéra, 1828)

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