The opera parodies of Florent Carton Dancourt

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Abstract: Unlike the opera parodies performed at the Comédie-Italienne in the 1690s and collected by Evariste Gherardi, Dancourt's *Angélique et Môdo* and Renaud et Armide* were performed during the première runs of their target operas – Lully's and Quinault's *Roland* and *Armide*, respectively. Undoubtedly prompted by Lully's opera monopoly and the draconian restrictions on music and dance that affected the musical repertory at the Comédie Française, Dancourt's parodies take a tongue-in-cheek view of the madness of opera in general, while specifically satirizing the themes, characters, and operatic situations found in *Roland* and *Armide*.

In his landmark 1941 article ‘Seventeenth-Century Parodies of French Opera’, Donald J. Grout traced the practices of operatic parody as found in French plays of the early 1690s. These farces, written by the playwrights Fatouville, Monchesnay, Lenoble, Palaprat, Dufresny, and Regnard for the commedia dell'arte actors of the Comédie-Italienne, were published in 1700 in the collected *Théâtre Italien de Gherardi*. In addition to offering parodies of spoken plays, several of them targeted the operas of Jean-Philippe Quinault and Jean-Baptiste Lully – which remained staples in the repertory of the Académie Royale de Musique for nearly a century after Lully’s death in 1687. Until now, scholars have accepted eighteenth-century theater historian Louis Riccoboni’s claim that the Gherardi collection contained the first examples of opera parody to appear in France.

However, opera satire and parody first appear in French comedy much earlier. Indeed, a tradition of satire and opera parody can be traced back to 1674, only two years after Lully purchased the royal opera privilege from Pierre Perrin and...

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3 Gherardi, Evaristo, ed., *Le Théâtre italien de Gherardi*, 6 vols. (Paris, 1700). This collection consists of fifty-five comedies performed at the Comédie-Italienne during 1683–1697 under the direction of Evariste Gherardi; the earliest opera parodies written for this theater were Palaprat’s *Arlequin Phaeton* and Dufresny’s *L’Opéra de campagne*, both acted on 4 Feb. 1692.

established the Académie Royale de Musique (the Paris Opéra).\(^5\) The most significant of these early parodies, Dancourt’s *Angélique et Médror* (1685) and *Renaud et Armide* (1686) – which target Quinault’s and Lully’s *Roland* (1685) and *Armide* (1686), respectively – not only predate the Gherardi collection but were performed in close temporal proximity to their target operas.\(^6\) This sets them apart from the later parodies, which were written long after the Quinault-Lully operatic canon had been established. The premières of Dancourt’s parodies at the Comédie-Française during the first runs of *Roland* and *Armide* at the Opéra allowed the seventeenth-century spectator to perceive thematic connections probably imperceptible to modern audiences.\(^7\) Consequently, Dancourt’s *Angélique et Médror* and *Renaud et Armide* will be the main focus of this essay. Before examining them, however, I will consider some relevant contextual issues, *viz.*: the background of the earlier opera parodies, the ongoing rivalry among Parisian theaters, the musical limitations imposed by Lully’s *privilege* on public theater and subsequent restrictions, and the rationalist objections to opera expressed in spoken plays of the time.

**Early opera parody**

Several earlier French plays prefigure the parodic procedures that inform Dancourt’s opera parodies. These defining features include: (1) the satire of opera in general, and of the Quinault–Lully *tragédies-lyriques* in particular; (2) the introduction of a sung ‘operatic’ performance within the context of a spoken play; (3) the portrayal of opera as a costly and irrational form of entertainment; (4) reference to the Opéra and to the current state of musical affairs in Paris theaters; and (5) an implicit connection between opera and madness.

Shortly after Lully acquired the opera *privilege* from Pierre Perrin in 1672, Hauteroche’s comedy *Crispin musicien* alluded to the shift of power that had taken place in the Paris opera scene.\(^8\) This musical comedy became so closely identified

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\(^5\) Lully’s opera *privilege*, awarded on 23 March 1672, signed by the king on 29 March, and registered by Parlement on 27 June, revoked ‘all permissions and privilèges that we might have previously given and granted, even the one of the aforesaid Perrin, pertaining to the aforesaid musical plays under whatever names, qualities, conditions, and pretexts that they might be.’ See ‘*Establissement d’Academie Royale de musique en fauor du Sieur de Lully,*’ reproduced in Marcelle Benoit, *Musiques de couv: Chapelle, Chambres, Ecurie (1661–1733)* (Paris, 1971), 37–8.

\(^6\) In fact, Dufresny’s *L’Opéra de campagne* (1692), in which the parody of Quinault’s and Lully’s *Armide* is used to bring together the young lovers, owes a debt to both Dancourt’s *Angélique et Médror* and *Renaud et Armide*.

\(^7\) There is ample evidence that many audience members knew the Quinault-Lully operas by heart. Season subscribers (*pensionnaires*) were entitled to come to the Opéra as often as they liked to see the same opera again and again, and some knew the music well enough to sing along. See Caroline Wood and Graham Sadler, ed., *French Baroque Opera: A Reader* (Aldershot, 2000), 36–38.

with the new operatic art form that a provincial company billed it as ‘l’Opéra de l’Hôtel de Bourgogne’.

In this play, the master of the house is both a singer and harpsichordist, and his household servants display varying degrees of musical talent. The play’s overture is performed on stage by six of his lackeys playing strings (in compliance with recent restrictions on theater music, which limited instrumentalists to six). While there is no mention of the Quinault–Lully operas then in repertory, the cast of *Crispin musicien* featured an opera singer from Gascony – a character no doubt inspired by the provincial opera singers Lully inherited from Perrin’s defunct Académie Royale des Opéra. Recruited mainly from Languedoc, these singers reportedly could not speak proper French.

That same year Brécourt’s *L’Ombre de Molière* appeared, and became the first play to include a quotation from a Quinault–Lully opera. The troupe of the Hôtel de Bourgogne paid tribute with this musical comedy to the memory of their great rival and Lully’s former collaborator. The setting is the Elysian Fields, where a tribunal is to be held. Molière’s ghost is brought before Pluto, accused by various character types that he satirized in his comedies and *comédies-ballets*: a précieuse, a marquis, an imaginary cuckold, and Monsieur de Pourcaugnac. Quinault becomes the target of ridicule in scene 2, where a figure identified only as ‘le Poète’ bemoans finding himself among the shades. The ferryman Charon reproaches him for having portrayed Greek heroes in *Alestè* as ‘very pretty boys’ (*de fort jolis garçons*), and himself as a teller. The poet’s line ‘Hélas, Caron, hélas!’, which is then mockingly repeated by Charon, is from the underworld scene in Act IV of *Alestè*. Given that Lully’s melodic setting consists only of a pleading half-step, this line could easily have been sung by the actors.

In August of 1680, the two French companies in Paris – the Théâtre de Guénégaud and the Hôtel de Bourgogne – were joined by royal decree to form the Comédie-Française. During its first season the new company premièred *Les Fous divertissants*, a *comédie-ballet* by the actor-playwright Raymond Poisson that borrowed material from Quinault’s and Lully’s latest *tragédies-lyriques*, *Proserpine* (III,3) and

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10 The restriction signed on 22 April 1673 limited the musical resources of public theaters to two singers and six instrumentalists, and forbade the employment of ‘any external singers, or of a greater number of strings for their entractes, or likewise having any dancers or any orchestra pit, upon penalty of disobedience’ (‘Ordonnance portant défenses aux comédiens de se servir dans leurs représentations de plus de deux voix et six violons,’ reproduced in Benoit, *Musiques de cour* [see n. 5], 41).


12 This play was republished by Fournel in *Les Contemporains de Molière* (see n. 8), I: 519–48.
Bellérophon (II,1). It is set in an asylum, where the young lover Léandre gains entrance by pretending to be an opera lunatic, driven mad by having to sing repeated high notes. In II,9, Léandre and his beloved Angélique perform for the amusement of Grognard, her fiancé and the warden of the asylum. During the course of their operatic performance, Grognard remarks amusedly on the miraculous effect that Angélique’s singing seems to be having on the madman, and how convincingly they play the roles of lovers. Two features of Les Fous divertissants would be further developed in Dancourt’s Angélique et Médor: the feigned madness of one of the singing lovers, and the ruse of an operatic performance to facilitate an elopement.

The musical machine-plays and royal restrictions on music

Dancourt's opera parodies followed several spectacular musical productions that tested the royal restrictions imposed on music and dance. Upon the formation of the Comédie-Française, the company began reviving its older repertory of machine-plays with music by their resident composer, Marc-Antoine Charpentier. After its 1680 production of Poisson’s Les Fous divertissants and the successful 1681 revival of Gabriel Gilbert’s musical machine-play Les Amours de Diane et d'Endimion (1657), the company had every reason to expect that the king would consider lifting the ban on music and dance in the public theater. Indeed, the newly-added Prologue to their 1681 court revival of Le Ballet des Muses featured the actors Poisson and Rosimond heatedly debating with Scaramouche and Harlequin the relative merits of French vs. Italian opera. Fiorilli (known as Cinthio), head of the Italian troupe, and La Grange, head of the Comédie-Française, finally intervene and Cinthio proposes that the Italian actors put on 'a little Italian opera'. At the end, La Grange reconciles them 'by pointing out the advantages of drama and music, and concludes that nothing is able to satisfy all the spectators more than a staged play combined with music'.

In July of 1682 the Comédie-Française revived Pierre Corneille’s 1650 machine-play Andromède in a spectacular production with a new musical score by Charpentier. The performances were scheduled to coincide with the première of Persée, Quinault's and Lully's tragédie-lyrique based on the same Greek fable. However, the king (probably at Lully's behest) upheld the ban of 1673, and further stipulated that henceforth the two singers permitted must be regular members of the

13 Les Fous divertissants, comédie par R. P. (Paris, 1681). Premiered on 14 November 1680, this was the first new comedy given by the Comédie-Française during its initial season. For a recent recording, see New Chamber Opera Ensemble (cond. Gary Cooper), Marc-Antoine Charpentier: Incidental Music to 'Les Fous divertissants' and 'Le Mariage Forcé' (Gaudeamus, CD GAU 167).

14 See the Mercure Galant (Sept. 1681), 369–79; reproduced in facsimile in Albert La France, ed., Paolo Lorenzani: Nicandro e Fileno (Versailles, 1999), lxvi–lxiii, and (with minor errors) in Claude and François Parfait, Histoire du Théâtre Français depuis son origine jusqu'à présent (Paris, 1745; repr. New York, 1968), XII: 273–5. This 'little Italian opera' was undoubtedly Lorenzani's Nicandro e Fileno.

15 The première of Andromède had taken place thirty-two years earlier (on 26 February 1650), when it featured music by Charles Coyepeau (dit Dassoucy).
Rationalist prejudices toward opera

The context in which operatic borrowings are introduced in French comedies suggests the critical attitudes held by many toward Quinault, Lully, and their operas. In seventeenth-century France, classical spoken tragedy was the standard against which other forms of theater were judged. Consequently, some felt that opera—with its absurd occurrences, its obsession with gloire and amour, its wanton disregard of the unities, and its direct appeal to ‘the pleasure of seeing and hearing’—was essentially an irrational or meaningless entertainment. In Andromède Pierre Corneille took care not to entrust anything pertinent to song; as he explains in the Examen d’Andromède, ‘since singing usually prevents the words from being heard, nothing of importance to the understanding of the plot should be sung’. Whereas in Baron’s Le Rendez-vous des Thilleries the Marquise acknowledges that ‘it is fashionable to affect being wild about music’, she ‘could not bear “hearing at the expense of good sense and reason all of these heroes speak of their misfortunes by singing”’. A century later, Beaumarchais’s Figaro would echo this common wisdom, proclaiming that ‘today whatever isn’t worth the trouble of saying is sung’.

Opera’s lack of appeal to the reasoning faculties was, and continued to be, a common complaint among its critics. François Riccoboni, the author of several opera parodies (and the son of Louis Riccoboni), wrote contemptuously of the genre in 1746: ‘Opera is a type of composition that neither withstands nor merits criticism: one is obliged to sacrifice everything to the pleasure of seeing and hearing, [and] one almost never has occasion there to speak to the intellect’. By Riccoboni’s time, the intellectual emptiness of opera had long been a theme in opera parodies, and it was already well-established in these early works. For example, when a performance of an operatic borrowing is used to advance a courtship obstructed by a parent, guardian, or jealous fiancé, the off-stage spectators are typically represented as so caught up in the theatricality of the event and the sensuous appeal of the music that they fail to notice the (rational) meaning of the sung lyrics. The inherent irrationality of the genre is further emphasized when one of the performers

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16 Two years later the Comédie-Française would hire a salaried ‘musicienne’, that is, a professional singer (Mlle Fréville), to perform appropriate acting roles and to sing in their productions along with Monsieur Poussin, an actor and haute-contre singer; see the Douzième Registre pour les seuls Comédiens du Roy, fol. 225v (Archives de la Comédie-Française).

17 Baron, Le Rendez-vous des Thilleries, Prologue, scene 9.


19 Baron, Le Rendez-vous des Thilleries, II,9.

20 Beaumarchais, Le Barbier de Séville, 1,2.

21 F. Riccoboni, ‘Discours sur la Parodie,’ 47. I thank Susan Harvey for pointing out this passage to me.
pretends to be mad – as in Poisson’s *Le Fou raisonnable* (1664), *Les Fous divertissants* (1680), and Dancourt’s *Angélique et Mélor* (1685) – or surrenders to operatic madness, as in *Renaud et Armide* (1686).

The insanity of opera

Spoken comedies that portray the feigned or real madness of a singing ‘operatic’ character satirize opera’s irrationality on a higher level. Michel Foucault, who has made a study of madness during the Ancien Régime, identifies four general categories of literary madness as depicted in French drama of this time: (1) madness caused by identification with some fictional character or ideal; (2) madness brought on through delusion of superiority or omnipotence; (3) madness caused by guilt; and (4) madness of the desperate lover. In light of the plays surveyed here, opera-mania – in which characters have been driven mad by singing, studying, or otherwise obsessing on operatic music, situations, passions, costumes and sets – could also be added to Foucault’s list.

Musical performance is depicted as a creative outgrowth of madness, particularly when the lunatic fancies himself a mythological singer or an operatic character. Charles Beys’s early comedy, *L’Ospital des fous* (1636), devotes much space to the entertainments furnished by the lunatics in a madhouse. The pageant of lunatics includes a philosopher, a lawyer, an astrologer, a soldier, an alchemist, a poet, an actor, and a singer who believes himself to be Orpheus. The latter enters playing his lute, claiming to make rocks and trees come alive with his divine song (1,3), and then departs to sing his chanson backstage to an imaginary Pluto.

Another opera-lunatic is Crisotine, the heroine of Saint-Évremond’s comedy *Les Opéra* (c. 1676), who has ‘lost her mind by reading opera scores’. She finds a kindred spirit in Tirsolet, a young opera fanatic, with whom she converses in song as the two imagine themselves to be Cadmus and Hermione (from the Quinault–Lully opera). The physician Guillon declares that Crisotine’s madness is analogous to the literary delusions of Don Quixote, and suggests that marriage might restore her to her senses (a theme which recurs in Dancourt’s *Angélique et Mélor*). And so

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24 Protzman’s edition of the play includes the variant readings found in the four published versions, dated 1636, 1639, 1653 (*L’Ospital des Fous*) and 1653 (*Les Illustres Fous*). In the first three versions, ‘Orpheus’ appears in Act III scene 4 (see pp. 72–4).
25 *Les Opéra, comédie in Œuvres masquées de M. de Saint-Évremond, Publiées sur les Manuscrits de l'Auteur* (London, 1705), II: 37–106; modern ed. by Robert Finch and Eugène Jollivet (Geneva, 1979). Of particular interest are Guillon’s discussions of the early operas of Perrin, Gilbert, and Cambert, and of Quinault’s and Lully’s *Cadmus, Alcestis, Thésée*, and *Atys*; his criticisms of Venetian opera (in II,4); and the quotations from *Cadmus, Thésée*, and the *tragédie-ballet* version of *Psyché* (by Molière, Corneille, Quinault, and Lully).
Crisard offers her to his cousin, the Baron de Pourgolette—who is advised to communicate with her through song. He attempts an air from *Psyché* ("Aimable Jeunesse"), but when Crisotine immediately formulates a parody on it ("Honteuse Vieillesse") the Baron loses his temper and decides to give her up. Hearing Crisotine singing with Tirsolet (again in the character of Cadmus and Hermione), the physician proposes that the young lovers go join the Opéra in Paris—predicting that, after six months of rehearsals, continual singing, putting on and taking off costumes, and discovering that the machines are but painted backdrops, the gods and goddesses are but singers, and that the miraculous flights are effected by means of ropes, they will rid themselves of their operatic delusions and return home saner and wiser.

**Angélique et Médor and opera satire**

Dancourt’s opera parodies began appearing shortly after the Comédie-Française abandoned the revivals of its older repertory of musical machine-plays. By the mid-1680s, Lully and the Comédiens du Roy were still at odds—and one cannot help but speculate that Dancourt’s opera parodies were designed in some measure to pique the draconian director of the Opéra. The plot of *Angélique et Médor* revolves around a performance that Monsieur Guillemin is preparing to give in his home, and the play’s dialogue provides tantalizing details that seem to pertain to the current state of affairs in opera. Merlin, a valet posing as an opera authority, mentions that they no longer sniff the candles at the Opéra,26 and that the costly machines are no longer in fashion.27 Dancers are another expensive luxury that Guillemin would readily omit, as they appear to him ‘too puppet-like’ (‘trop marionette’) on stage. However, Merlin cannot conceive of opera without dancers, and contends that they constitute ‘le saupiquet [spicy sauce] d’un opéra’.28

Opera singers also become the butt of laughter, and many of the ironic asides look forward to Marcello’s famous satire, *Il teatro alla moda* (1720). We learn in scene 1 that good singers are hard to find—although mediocre ones will suffice for this private performance, as Guillemin is ignorant about musical matters.29 As proof of this, the young lover Eraste arrives posing as an opera singer in scene 8—which prompts Guillemin to observe that ‘he has a very good manner, and one sees very

26 LIsETTE: You will sniff the candles. MERLIN: The fool! Does one sniff the candles at the Opéra?
27 Lancaster suggests that this is probably an allusion to the fact that fewer machines were employed in *Roland* than in Quinault’s and Lully’s earlier operas; see *A History of French Dramatic Literature* (see n. 9), Part IV, iii: 582.
28 In scene 5 Guillemin refers to ‘a certain mademoiselle Mandane, who they say dances extremely well’; but Merlin says that she is away in the country for several months. Might this be an allusion to the dénouement of some real-life love intrigue?
29 LIsETTE: He’s looking for musicians everywhere. MERLIN: That’s a really rare commodity. There won’t be any trouble finding some; all the streets are full of them. It isn’t just the good ones who get shown to advantage, and those people aren’t as easily found as one might like. LIsETTE: Get along, now, the most mediocre ones would be fine here—we’re not dealing with a knowledgable man. I told him that I knew some admirable singers.
few singers who look so good’. Later, Dorise, a fifteen-year-old singer, shows up to audition for the opera. Despite the fact that she cannot read music, she knows nearly all of the airs from Roland. Clearly, opera was viewed as an easy road to fame – for the young singer ingenuously remarks to Guillemin: ‘Excuse me, sir, but I have been told that I had only to sing in an opera to make myself known and have some reputation.’

Later on we are introduced to Cléante, a conceited opera singer who has become discontented at the Paris Opéra. He arrives in scene 13 singing an ‘entrance aria’:

Je quitte l’Opéra,
Y chante qui voudra,
Puis qu’on y veut retrancher nos gage,
Je n’y veux plus chanter davantage

[‘I am leaving the Opéra, let whoever wishes sing there; since they insist on cutting our wages I will sing there no longer’]

Cléante then proclaims that the present opera will be worth nothing unless he sings in it – to which he will not agree unless Guillemin entreats him and agrees to pay him handsomely. When Guillemin refuses, Cléante has an immediate change of heart and agrees to sing in Guillemin’s opera after all. Of course, he will not deign to perform anything but ‘les grands Roles’.

Dancourt devotes scene 11 of Angélique et Médor to broad satire aimed directly at Lully and Quinault. Monsieur Guillemin, with an eye to curbing the mounting production costs, decides that it would be too expensive to commission an original work. ‘You are right’, agrees Merlin, ‘and you would have to deal with some miserable poet who would sell you shoddy merchandise at great cost, and who would just enrage you’. Furthermore, Merlin adds that ‘there is nothing that makes a musician curse more than a poet, and Music and Poetry never go well together when they work out of self-interest’. Guillemin thereupon decides that it would be cheaper and less trouble to choose a ready-made opera, and he considers several by Quinault and Lully – but rejects them for various reasons: Cadmus et Hermione requires gunpowder to make the flaming dragon’s breath in the Prologue, which might frighten people; Alyss sets a bad example by portraying an old woman who wishes to corrupt a young priest; and Aës et Médor contains a tombeau scene that would be ‘trop triste & ennuyeux’. While Guillemin admits that there is an attractive scene in Amadis featuring ‘infantry soldiers armed with swords who tilt at the ring’, he finally settles on Roland, Quinault’s and Lully’s latest opera – despite the fact that ‘at first they said that it was not worth anything, and no one went to see it’. Merlin assures him that Roland is ‘the most beautiful of all the operas.’ Moreover, it calls for a large

30 Angélique et Médor, scene 8. Merlin then praises Eraste’s musical skills, telling Guillemin that ‘c’est un charme de lui voir chanter de ces grands airs, là, de ces airs qui enlevent.’ The pun on ‘enlever’ (with its dual meaning of ‘transport’ and ‘abduct’) predicts the operatic performance, where such airs will facilitate Eraste’s enlevement of Guillemin’s daughter.

31 Angélique et Médor, scene 12.

32 Angélique et Médor, scene 11.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.
cast of colorful and exotic characters: islanders, Indians, cupids, mermaids, river-gods, enchanted lovers, and the ghosts of heroes.  

Dancourt also satirizes contemporary opera performance in general. In the satiric vein of Marcello's *Il teatro alla moda*, Merlin proclaims that ‘however wretched an opera might be, it will not fail . . . to attract a crowd’. Furthermore, he points out that not everyone pays attention to the on-stage spectacle, for ‘there is a certain amount of dealing and connection between those in the upper balconies and those in the pit that attracts many people’. The subject matter of opera comes under fire in scene 5, when the valet Merlin claims to have had experience in composing operas:

MERLIN  
Je fis l’année passée un Opera Turc qui est la plus belle chose du monde.  
GUILLEMIN  
Un Opera Turc.  
MERLIN  
Oui vraiment un Opera Turc. Celà vous étonne! Oh je fais de Opera de toutes façons moi, & tenez j’en ai fait un où il y a toutes sortes d’airs & toutes sortes de langues, & celà est si beau, celà passé si fort l’imagination, que les plus habiles gens n’y comprennent rien.

[MERLIN: I composed last year a Turkish opera that is the most beautiful thing in the world. GUILLEMIN: A Turkish opera? MERLIN: Yes, truly, a Turkish opera. That surprises you? Oh, I compose all kinds of operas, you see, and I composed one in which there are all kinds of airs and languages, and that is so fine and so exceeds the imagination that the most knowledgeable people understand nothing in it.]

Dancourt’s satire broadens into farce when Merlin recalls having sung in a production of *Hercule mourant* at Brussels, wherein he delighted the audience by seizing a man by his feet and breaking his head against the wall: ‘Everyone was enchanted with that,’ he tells us.

The first musical quotation in *Angélique et Médor*, however, is not from *Roland* but rather from *Les Amours de Diane et d’Euridiction* – Gilbert’s 1657 machine play, which

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35 For an amusing description of the magical world of French opera as told to a wonderstruck Siamese visitor, see Wood and Sadler, *French Baroque Opera* (see n. 7), 24–25.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
38 This mention of Turkish opera must be an allusion to the ‘Cérémonie Turque’ that concludes the popular Molière/Lully comédie-ballet, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (1670), and which featured erotic lyrics in *lingua franca*. Whereas Lully had reused this Turkish divertissement in *Le Ballet des Bouffons* (1671) and in *Carnaval Mascarade* (1675), the original comédie-ballet had been revived at court as recently as 1685. Given that the next Turkish divertissement to appear in France was in Campra’s *opéra-ballet* *L’Europe galante* (1697). Dancourt’s reference to Turkish opera most likely was inspired by the recent court performances of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*.
39 No such opera was given at Brussels before Dancourt’s comedy was written, but the first opera given in Holland is concerned with the labors of Hercules. Lancaster speculates that Merlin’s remarks may have been suggested by this Dutch production; see *A History of French Dramatic Literature* (see n. 9) Part IV, ii: 583n.
recently had been revived at the Comédie-Française with new music by Charpentier. In scene 6 of Dancourt’s parody, Mme Bélise arrives looking for her daughter Isabelle, who is upstairs en tête à tête with her lover Eraste. Thinking fast, Merlin warns the lovers by singing the line ‘Séparez-vous, séparez-vous heurieux amans’ (see Ex. 1). To distract Guillemin and Bélise further, Merlin praises the beauty of this air and then proceeds to give them a detailed (and unwanted) explanation of Gilbert’s plot. The quotation of Charpentier’s music at this point in the play prepares for the later introduction of musical quotations from Roland. Moreover, the juxtaposition of musical excerpts by Charpentier and Lully invites a comparison that gains resonance in the central musical episode, which featured ‘improvements’ upon the Quinault–Lully tragédie-lyrique (Ex. 2a).

Dancourt’s singing characters also use rationalist prejudice toward opera to their own advantage. With Guillemin looking on, Eraste (singing the role of Médor) proposes that Angélique (sung by Isabelle) run away with him – and uses double entendres delivered via the medium of improvised song to conceal the meaning of his lyrics. Only the first couplet (‘How happy Médor is | Angélique has fulfilled his wishes’) is borrowed from Act IV of Roland. The remaining lyrics constitute Eraste’s addition, which in turn becomes the instrument that facilitates his elopement with Angélique. After their departure, Merlin is left explaining to the bemused Guillemin that ‘Isabelle and the singer have gone to finish the opera.’ Finally realizing that he has been duped, Guillemin announces that he is quite beside himself and he displays his anger through pantomime and gesture. Meanwhile, Merlin and the maid Lisette furnish sung commentary borrowed from Act IV of the opera, where it describes the outward manifestations of Roland’s madness (Ex. 3). Here, the importation of Quinault’s lyrics and Lully’s music into a burlesque context results in the comic transformation (described by Louis Riccoboni as ‘tourner en ridicule’) that lies at the heart of parody.

At some point Charpentier composed a more extensive, ‘operatic’ love-scene for Isabelle and Eraste, for his autograph manuscripts contain a ‘Dialogue d’Angélique et de Médor’. This setting incorporated the sung lyrics found in the Flemish editions of the play (with slight modification), together with additional lyrics – all set to continuous music (Ex. 4). Given the amount of dialogue in his play devoted to discussing Guillemin’s opera preparations, Dancourt may well have decided that this central musical episode required further amplification – and so he turned to Charpentier to provide Eraste’s ‘improvements’ upon the scene from Roland.

40 For fuller discussion and further examples of the interconnections between music, drama, and madness, see John S. Powell, Music and Theatre in France, 1600–1680 (Oxford, 2000), Chapter 7 (‘Music, Dance, and the Performance-within-the-Play’), 82–147 (at 134–47).
41 According to Riccoboni, in opera parody ‘the poet holds up to ridicule the most noble action and the most tragic incidents’; see Observations sur la comédie (n. 4), 287.
42 For reasons unknown, the parody Angélique et Médor is not included in the French editions of Dancourt’s complete works; the versions I consulted are found in the Dutch (La Haye, 1705) and Belgian (Brussels, 1711) editions.
SCÈNE VI
Mad. BELISE, Mr. GUILLÉMIN, MERLIN.

BELISE
Ah, ah, bon jour, Monsieur, où est donc ma fille?

GUILLÉMIN
Est-ce qu'elle n'étoit pas là haut avec vous?

MERLIN a
Gare la musique.

BELISE
Lisette m'avoit dit que vous étoiez ici bas ensemble.

GUILLÉMIN
Est la même Lisette vient de me dire qu'elle étoit
dans votre chambre avec vous.

MERLIN à la porte de la Salle

Air d'Endimion

Separate, young lovers, separate!

SCÈNE 6
Mad. BELISE, Mr. GUILLÉMIN, MERLIN.

BELISE
Ha, ha, good day, Sir, where then is my daughter?

GUILLÉMIN
Is she not upstairs with you?

MERLIN
Watch out! Music!

BELISE
Lisette told me that you were down here together.

GUILLÉMIN
And the very same Lisette just told me that she
was with you in your chamber.

MERLIN at the door of the hall

BELISE
Qu'est-ce a dire cela, Lisette...

MERLIN à Guillaume
Voilà un des plus beaux airs qu'on ait jamais fait;

GUILLÉMIN
Il n'est pas maintenant question de la beauté d'un

MERLIN à Belise
air, Lisette.

C'est Diane & Endimion qui sont ensemble.

BELISE
Je n'ai que faire de Diane ni d'Endimion, Lisette.

MERLIN à Mr. Guillemin.
Le Soleil cherche à les surprendre.

GUILLÉMIN
Hola, Lisette.

MERLIN
Mais l'Aurore qui est une fort bonne personne

GUILLÉMIN
vent toute effrayée qui leur chante. Separez-vous

Hé, de grace, Monsieur, laissez-là le Soleil &

GUILLÉMIN & BELISE
l'Aurore en repos.

Lisette.

a The original reads "MARTON".

Ex. 1: Dancourt's Angélique et Médor, 1685: scène 6.
SCENE XVIII  
Mr GUILLEMIN, ISABELLE, ERASTE, LISETTE, MERLIN, CLEANTE, DORISE, Mr. NICOLAS, Violons

MERLIN  
Personne n’entrera sans mon congé, & n’en sortira point que je ne le mette dehors.
GUILLEMIN  
Fort bien, qu’allez-vous chanter.
ERASTE  
Une Scene de Roland, Monsieur, comme vous l’avez dit.
GUILLEMIN  
Et quel Scene encore?
ERASTE  
C’est une Scene qui vous paroitra toute nouvelle, & qu’il vous plait, au commencement du quatrieme Acte lors qu’Angélique & Médor sont tous prêts à partir.
GUILLEMIN  
Mais nous n’avons que faire de cette Scene-là nous.
MERLIN  
Pardonnez-moi vraiment, & ce sera le beau d’encherir sur l’autre Opera.
LISETTE  
Monsieur a raison.
GUILLEMIN  
Mais ces Messieurs n’ont point les parties de cette Scene-là.
MERLIN  
Oh bien, ils n’ont qu’à jouer à la rencontre.
GUILLEMIN  
Vraiment à la rencontre, cela ne vaudra rien.
ERASTE  
Nous n’avons pas besoin d’instruments pour cette répétition.
GUILLEMIN  
Allons donc.
MERLIN à Eraste  
Votre Scene est bien concertée.
ERASTE  
Tout va le mieux du monde. Mais il nous manque encore quelque voix.
MERLIN  
Je vous secondrai comme il faut.
LISETTE  
Et moi je vais vous donner votre ton.

Ex. 2a: Dancourt’s *Angélique et Médor*, 1685: scène 18.

Dancourt might well have expected some kind of response from Lully and Quinault. Not only had his play made a travesty of their latest *tragédie-lyrique*; it also showcased music by a rival composer and exceeded the limitations placed on theater
How happy Médoc is,
Angélique has fulfilled his wishes.

ERASTE chante
*Pour jour d’un bonheur extreme,
Il faut s’éloigner de ces lieux,
Thersandre peut nous être utile.*

ERASTE sings
*To enjoy perfect happiness,
We must depart from these shores.
Thersandre can be helpful to us.*

ISABELLE chante
*Voudra-t-il servir notre Amour,
Et nous conduire au Port par quelque heureux detour.*

ISABELLE sings
*Would that he will wish to serve our love,
And lead us to the Port by some fortunate detour.*

MERLIN
Je suis donc Thersandre, moi.

GUILLEMIN
Fort bien.

MERLIN
Et que faudra t-il que je reponde à tout ce que vous me dites?

ERASTE
Rien du tout. Vous nous accorderez ce que nous souhaitons. Vous passez devant nous pour nous conduire au Port, & nous vous suivons.

LISETTE
Celà ira parfaitement bien comme celà.

MERLIN
Ah j’entends; repetons celà encore une fois, s’ïl vous plait, comme si nous étions sur le Théâtre, & donnons-y bien tout le temps qu’il faut. Allons, recommencer cette fin.

MERLIN
I am thus Thersandre.

GUILLEMIN
Very well.

MERLIN
And what must I respond to everything that you say to me?

ERASTE
Nothing at all. You will grant us what we wish. You will go ahead of us to lead us to the port, and we will follow you.

LISETTE
That will go perfectly well that way.

MERLIN
Ah, I understand; let’s rehearse it one more time, if you please, as if we were on-stage, and give all the time that is required. Let’s go, begin again this ending.

Ex. 2a (continued).

music. As we have seen, the previous success of the machine plays at the Comédie-Française (also with music by Charpentier) had brought on a new wave of restrictions curtailing the company’s illegal musical practices. But whereas these machine spectacles had aimed to rival the Quinault–Lully operas, Dancourt’s parody posed no such threat. Indeed, Angélique et Médoc might well have been regarded as

Angélique et Médoc featured four singing characters on stage – twice the number permitted by the 1673 ordinance. According to the play’s spoken dialogue, Guillemin claimed to have hired twenty string players and as many dancers to appear in his private opera performance (the royal restrictions allowed only six string players, and forbade the use of dancers); whether twenty strings actually appeared on stage in scene 18, where they are listed simply as ‘violons,’ remains unknown.
Ex. 2b: Charpentier's *Dialogue d'Angélique et de Médom.*

a kind of ongoing advertisement for *Roland.* That the Comédie-Française performed Dancourt’s parody 29 times during 1685–90 suggests that it enjoyed continued and unfettered success.

44 Seventy-five years later, the Abbé Frailh recognized that success of a work might be gauged by the appearance of its parody, for 'the more successful a tragedy is, the more one is sure to pay the usual tribute to the Italian comedians' (plus on réussit dans une tragédie, plus on est sûr de payer aux comédiens Italiens le tribut acquis). See *Querelles littéraires ou mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des révolutions de la république des lettres, depuis Homère jusqu'à nos jours,* vol. II ("Les Parodies"), 382–94 [at 391–2], discussed in Susan Harvey, *Opera Parody in France 1685–1766* (see n. 4), 11–5.
Opera and madness in *Renaud et Armide*

*Renaud et Armide* (1686) marked a significant advance over Dancourt's earlier opera parody. Whereas *Angélique et Médor* devoted much space to satire of contemporary opera, with barbs aimed at Lully, Quinault, and the Paris Opéra, in *Renaud et Armide* the operatic quotations are more extensive, and the comic refocusing is more
subtle and masterful.45 This parody was clearly calculated to ride upon the wave of popularity enjoyed by *Armide*, the latest Quinault–Lully opera. From the beginning, the public’s enthusiasm for this new and fashionable entertainment surpassed anything ever before known in Paris. As observed by one of the characters in

45 According to Margaret Rose, the ‘comic refocusing’ of dramatic and musical elements from a target source is a defining feature of parody, distinguishing it from related forms such as satire and burlesque; see *Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Post-modern* (Cambridge, 1993), 28–29, 52.
Hauteroche’s *Crispin musicien*: ‘since the arrival of the Opéra the rage for music has come over Paris, and everyone has been bitten by the bug’. By the time *Renaud et Armide* premièrè at the Comédie-Française in July of 1686 *Armide* had been playing at the Opéra for five months, and undoubtedly many spectators had seen the

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46 Noël le Breton, sieur de Hauteroche, *Crispin musicien* (Paris, 1674). Jean de La Fontaine describes how opera performances attracted audiences from all classes, and knowing how to sing snatches of recitative became a status symbol. (Épître à M. de Nyert, 1677; trans. in Wood and Sadler, *French Baroque Opera* [see n. 7], 30–31).
SCÈNE XX
Mr. GUILLEMIN, MÉRLIN, LISETTE.
CLEANTE, DORISE, Mr. NICOLAS. Violons

GUILLEMIN
Ah, ah, où sont-ils donc allez?

MERLIN chante

I saw this Queen so lovely leaving from the Port.

LISETTE
Angélique est partie?

MERLIN chante

And Mélor with her;
I have just opened the door for them, fortunately I had the key to it.

GUILLEMIN
Qu’est-ce que cela veut dire?

MERLIN
Celà veut dire qu’Isabelle et le Musicien sont allez achever l’Opera.

GUILLEMIN
Isabelle & le Musicien?

MERLIN
Ils vont se marier, c’est leur unique soin.

GUILLEMIN
Ils vont se marier?

MERLIN
Oui, Monsieur.

GUILLEMIN
Ah! me voilà tout hors de moi-même.

CLEANTE
Morbleu cet Opera me fait crever de rire.

MERLIN
Monsieur ne joue pourtant pas mal Roland.

GUILLEMIN
What does that mean?

MERLIN
That means that Isabelle and the singer have gone to finish the opera.

GUILLEMIN
Isabelle and the singer?

MERLIN
They go to marry; it is their only concern.

GUILLEMIN
They are going to marry?

MERLIN
Yes, sir.

GUILLEMIN
Ah! behold I am quite beside myself.

CLEANTE
Egad, this opera makes me burst with laughter.

MERLIN
The gentleman however doesn’t do a bad job playing Roland.

Ex. 3: Dancourt’s Angélique et Mélod. 1685: scène 20.
The opera parodies of Florent Carton Dancourt

tragédie-lyrique many times. Dancourt therefore could be reasonably assured that the public would recognize the operatic passages quoted in his parody; moreover, the publication of these borrowed excerpts along with Lully’s vocal music made for easy comparison.47

Dancourt’s plot is, generally speaking, conventional. A widower, Monsieur Grognac, has a widowed sister, Mme Jaquinet, and two daughters, Angélique and Mimi. Although engaged to the elder Monsieur Filassier, Angélique loves M. Filassier’s son Clitandre, whom she has not seen for three months. During this time Mme Jaquinet, her aunt, has become infatuated with a young man who needs her money to purchase a commission in the dragoons. When the young man comes calling on Mme Jaquinet, he proves to be none other than Clitandre – and is surprised to learn that Angélique is engaged to wed his father. The valet Lolive and the maid servant Lisette come to the rescue, and devise a ruse to bring the young lovers back together.

Overlaying this plot is a broad satire of Armide. Mme Jaquinet, an opera fanatic, met Clitandre at the Opéra, and the two have developed their courtship under the operatic personas of Armide and Renaud. Dancourt introduces some quotations from Armide early on, and as his plot unfolds the borrowings increase in both length and frequency while they become progressively intertwined with the dramatic action. Collectively, they form a dramatic arc parallel to the plot-progression of the opera, so that at the end Mme Jaquinet’s opera fantasies can take over apparently quite naturally. At first, Mme Jaquinet quotes from the opera to express her infatuation with her ‘petit Renaud.’ Later on, the valet Lolive contributes to the fantasy by pretending to be crazy, and then by re-enacting a scene from the opera (in which he engages Filassier and Grognac in the performance by having them dance). The central operatic performance by the young lovers leads to the dénouement and the catastrophic ‘mad scene’ of Mme Jaquinet – who by this time has fully adopted the persona of the forsaken Armide, complete with her music.

Procedures of parody and comic meaning

Dancourt’s Renaud et Armide surpassed the satire and quotation of Angélique et Méidor in its integration and comic refunctioning of the borrowed material. Early references to actual performances of Armide (then playing concurrently at the Paris Opéra) reach beyond the play’s fictional frame, and establish a network of associations between the parody and its target opera. For example, the servants have seen Armide, and are more familiar with it than are their masters (except for Mme Jaquinet). The maid Lisette provides the following critical comment: “The Prologue bores me, Act I makes me drowsy, the slumber scene puts me to sleep, and I don’t

47 The vocal excerpts (without continuo accompaniment) are reproduced in the reprint ed. of Florent Carton Dancourt, Œuvres de Théâtre 12 vols. in 3 (Paris, 1760; Geneva, 1968). These excerpts may well have been copied from scores for Roland and Armide purchased by the Comédie-Française at the time that Dancourt’s parodies premiered (‘Frais extraordinaires, un opéra de Rolan . . . 12#10s’; ‘ supplemental livres de Musique d’Armide . . . 12#10s’); see the Archives de la Comédie-Française, Tiersème [sic] Registre pour les seuls Comédiens du Roy (30 avril 1685–16 avril 1686; entry for 18 July, p. 77) and the Quatorzième Registre pour les Comédiens du Roy (22 avril 1686–17 mars 1687; entry for 31 July, p. 98).
LOLIVE
La folie de mon maître étoit plus facile à guérir que celle de Madame Jaquinet. Si tu voulais m’épouser aussi, toi, pour me guérir la mienne? Qu’en dis-tu?

LOLIVE
The madness of my master was easier to cure than that of Madame Jaquinet. Would you like to marry me too, to cure me of mine? What do you say?

LISETTE
Moi, je dis que

LISETTE
Me, I say that

The bonds of Hymen give me pause.

LOLIVE
Et va, va, mon enfant, tu n’en mourras pas non plus qu’une autre.

LOLIVE
Eh, go on, my sweet, you will not die of it any more than another.

LISETTE
M’en réponds-tu?

LISETTE
And what do you say to me?

LOLIVE
Oui vraiment.

LOLIVE
Yes, truly.

LISETTE
Allons donc; & si nos maîtres sont d’accord, nous n’aurons pas de peine à nous accorder.

LISETTE
Well enough, then; and if our masters agree to it, we will not have any trouble reaching an agreement ourselves.

Ex. 4: Dancourt’s Renaud et Armide, 1686: dernière scène.

awaken until the hurly-burly at the end. Moreover, Dancourt’s audience undoubtedly enjoyed his portrayal of Mme Jaquinet – whose opera obsession may well have been modeled after that of contemporaneous, real-life opera fanatics.

The mechanics of comic refu nctioning in Renaud et Armide are driven by (1) the extent to which a given quotation is refashioned, and (2) the dramatic context in which it appears. A simple quotation from the opera might be placed unchanged in a neutral context, or one dramatically comparable to that from which the quotation was taken. For example, at the play’s conclusion the valet Lolive proposes marriage to the maid Lisette. Lisette coyly expresses her nuptial misgivings in a quotation (“La chaîne de l’Hymen m’étonne”) borrowed from Act I, scene 2 of the tragédie-buryke – where Armide’s uncle presses her to choose a husband. Even though in the parody the characters are ordinary rather than héroïque and the tone is lighthearted rather than serious, the quotation largely retains its original meaning and dramatic effect (Ex. 4).  

48 Renaud et Armide, scene 15.
49 For contemporaneous descriptions of real-life opera fanatics, see Wood and Sadler, French Baroque Opera (see n. 7), 32–33.
50 Louis Riccoboni (Observations sur la comédie [n. 4], 281) uses the term ‘travesty’ to describe the parodic procedure in which ‘heroic characters and their situations’ are replaced by ‘ordinary characters and situations that correspond to their ordinariness’ (… et je nomme travestir, substituer à des personnages héroïques, & à leurs situations des personnages bas, & des situations qui répondent à leur bassesse).
The opera parodies of Florent Carlon Dancourt

Me. JAQUINET
Hé bien, ma chère Lisette, ce pauvre Renaud ne s'est-il point bien ennuyé pendant mon absence?

MADAME JAQUINET
Well, my dear Lisette, was my poor little Renaud at all bored during my absence?

LISETTE
Lui, Madame, ennuyé? il est gai comme un Pinçon, le voilà qui décampe avec la Gloire.

Me. JAQUINET
Avec la Gloire? c'est ma nièce.

MADAME JAQUINET
With La Gloire? That's my niece.

Ah! je suis au désespoir.

LOLIVE
Ne vous désespérez point, Madame.

LOLIVE
Do not despair, Madame.

Ah! I am in despair.

You will be, after Glory,
The one he will love best.

Ex. 5: Dancourt's Renaud et Armide, 1686: dernière scène.

A higher level of comic refuencing takes place when the original meaning of a quotation is completely changed by placing it in a burlesque context. For example, the last scene of Dancourt’s parody parallels the action of Act V, scenes 4–5 of the opera, where Armide returns to find Renaud departing with his knights to pursue ‘la Gloire.’ Renaud consoles her with the line, ‘you will be, after Glory, the one I will love the best.’ The conflict between amour and gloire is central in most of the later Quinault–Lully operas, and Dancourt gives it comic spin when Mme Jaquinet is informed that her ‘Renaud’ has packed off with ‘La Gloire’ – ‘La Gloire’ being the pet name that Clitandre had given to his beloved Angélique (Ex. 5). Mme Jaquinet’s entreaties, reproaches, and animosity mimic the emotions expressed by the abandoned Armide in Act V, scene 5 of the tragédie-lyrique, but Mme Jaquinet

51 This line is also quoted in Fatouville’s Banquenautier (1687) where, in a long, burlesque speech of farewell, Arlequin concludes ‘Adieu, mon cher fils Nicodème, embrassez ma chancelante paternité. Je vous laisse à regrets dans ces lieux: vous regnerez toujours dans ma mémoire; et vous serez après la gloire ce que j’aimerai le mieux.’ That Fatouville’s comedy concludes with a song sung to an air from Roland attests to the influence of Dancourt’s parodies on the plays of the Gherardi collection.
Ah, je n’en puis plus, je me meurs; perfide, barbarie!

Ah, I cannot take any more, I am dying; traitor, barbarian!

You enjoy, while leaving.
The pleasure of causing my death.

Hé, allons, Madame, contre fortune bon cœur.
Me JAQUINET
Traître, attends, je le tiens, je le tiens, son cœur perfide. Ah! je ne tiens rien, je suis trahie, je suis outrée; mais je me vengerai, je me vengerai.

Come, come, Madame, keep a stiff upper lip.
MADAME JAQUINET
Traitor, just wait, I am holding it, I am holding his faithless heart! Ah! I am holding nothing, I am betrayed, I am humiliated; but I will be avenged, I will be avenged.

The hope of vengeance is all that remains for me,
Demons, demons, destroy this Palace,
Destroy this Palace. (she exits)

Ex. 6: Dancourt’s Renaud et Armide, 1686: dernière scène.

(having been jilted by her ‘petit Renaud’) becomes a ridiculous figure, and her trite situation is thereby set in comic relief (Ex. 6).52

Parody frequently involves travesty of the target opera’s original lyrics.53 For example, in scene 20 Mme Jaquinet takes her leave of Clitandre – just as Armide does of Renaud in Act V, scene 1. But whereas Armide departs to confer with ‘the infernal powers,’ Mme Jaquinet goes off with purse in hand to appear at her ongoing court case – in which she plans to prevail by offering the judge a bribe. In the tragédie-lyrique, Armide entrusts her beloved Renaud to the care of Pleasures and to

52 The vocal line of Dancourt’s contrafactum musical setting is borrowed from the end of Armide’s final scene (mm. 36–8 and 40–2, corresponding to Quinault’s lines: ‘L’espoir de la vengeance est le seul qui me reste… attrait, Démons, détruissez ce palais. Fuyez plaisirs, fuyez…’); the continuo line has been added from these measures.

53 Louis Riccoboni describes a type of mythological travesty in which the heroic names of the characters are retained, and burlesque language is substituted for the noble expression of the original; according to the author, this creates ‘a contrast that renders the jokes much more piquant’ (‘un contraste qui rend les plaisanteries bien plus piquantes’; Observations sur la comédie, [see p. 4] 281–2). In this instance, substitution of a different level of language (‘bas’ for ‘héroïque’) underscores the comic discrepancy between Mme Jaquinet and Armide.
Fortunate Lovers while she is away; in the play, Mme Jaquinet leaves Clitandre in the care of her niece — and cautions him not to flirt with her any more while she is away. Clitandre’s lyrics nearly match Renaud’s word for word, whereas Mme Jaquinet’s pedestrian lines offer a comic foil to Armide’s ‘heroic’ lyrics (given in italics in the musical underlay of Ex. 7). The end result is a farcical metamorphosis of one of the most poignant scenes in Armide (Ex. 7).54

Further transformation of the target occurs when completely new lyrics are set to some memorable music from the opera — a practice akin to the vaudevilles sung in popular ‘fair theaters’ (théâtres de la foire) at the end of the century. Dancourt reserves this contrafactum procedure for a musical performance given in scene 21, where the two servants predict the play’s happy dénouement to the music of the famous passepiaille from the final act of Armide (Ex. 8).55 Love is indeed the best treatment for Clitandre’s madness, and this cure takes place in the next scene, a parody of Act V, scene 3 of the opera. In the latter, the knight Ubaldo brings Renaud back to his senses by holding the shield of diamonds before his eyes; in Dancourt’s parody, the valet Lolive shows Angélique to Clitandre — which immediately cures him of his madness.

**Opera parody and character portrayal**

Dancourt uses his borrowed excerpts both to inform his plot and to shape his character portrayals. For example, in scene 12, when Clitandre unexpectedly meets Angélique at the home of her aunt, the social distinction between masters and their servants is pointed out by the young lovers’ unconscious parody of Quinault’s and Lully’s treatment of amour in Armide. Indeed, there are echoes of Armide’s famous II,5 monologue (‘Quel trouble me saisit, qui me fait hésiter?’) in the lovers’

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54 In her analysis of this scene from the opera, Lois Rosow points out that Renaud’s recurring line ‘Armide, are you going to leave me!’ comes across as a question rather than as an exclamation, and Armide’s declarative (though evasive) answers conclude with authentic cadences; see ‘The Articulation of Lully’s Dramatic Dialogue,’ in Lully Studies (see n. 11), 72–99 (at 79). In Dancourt’s play, the original effect of both Quinault’s lyrics and Lully’s music is comically transformed. Clitandre’s recurring line (‘Armide, are you going to leave me’) still ends with a half-cadence, as in the opera; but now it becomes an exclamation of disbelief and delight at his good fortune, for Mme Jaquinet is about to leave Clitandre alone with his beloved Angélique. Moreover, Mme Jaquinet’s declarative responses, like Armide’s, complete the harmonic progression while they present a comic foil to the target opera: her ignoble decision to bribe the judge in her pending court case: ‘My case is being decided, | I am going to meet with the judge. | The side that’s in the right always has need of help, | my judge is an old fool whom my opponent pesters, | And only money can tempt him’, becomes the burlesque metamorphosis of Armide’s noble indecision about her own future course of action: ‘I have need of hell’s counsel, I go to consult it. | My art requires solitude. | The love I feel for you causes the distress | That agitates my heart.’

55 The vocal bass of the duet derives from the vocal bass of the Act V, scene 2 chorus, ‘Les plaisirs ont choisi pour arisle’; the vocal soprano line has been editorially supplied. The bass solo that follows derives from the vocal bass of the next choral passage (‘C’est l’Amour qui reticent dans ses chaînes’). The continuo line has been added from these passages.
Translation of Quinault's original lyrics

RENAUD

Armine, are you going to leave me?

ARMIDE

Translation of Dancourt's parody

CLITANDRE

Armine, are you going to leave me?

Me JAQUINET, a purse in hand

Ex. 7: Dancourt's *Renaud et Armine*, 1686: scène 20.
The opera parodies of Florent Carton Dancourt

I have need of hell's counsel, I go to consult it.
My art requires solitude.
The love I feel for you causes the distress
That agitates my heart.
RENAUD

My case is being decided, I am going to meet with
the judge. The side that's in the right always has
need of help; my judge is an old fool whom my
opponent pesters, and only money can tempt him.
CLITANDRE

Armide, are you going to leave me?
ARMIDE
But look where I leave you.
RENAUD

Armide, are you going to leave me?
Me JAQUINET
But look with whom I leave you.
CLITANDRE

Can I see anything but your charms?
ARMIDE
Pleasures follow you incessantly.
RENAUD

Can I see anything but your charms?
Me JAQUINET
Then you won't flirt any more with my niece?
CLITANDRE

Are there any where you are not?

Gladly, but do not dally.

Ex. 7 (continued)

exchanges. The parody is strengthened by the servants’ matter-of-fact behavior in
the face of the lovers’ swoons and extravagant language. Not only do the servants
literally hold the lovers up – they take this unexpected opportunity to further their
own courtship:

ANGÉLIQUE
Ah, Heavens! What a pleasant surprise, my mind reels, my strength
is failing; support me, Lisette.
LISETTE
Eh, what are you doing, Madam? You can’t be serious!
LOLIVE
The time is ripe, take her in your arms, Sir.
CLITANDRE:
What strange turn of events! I can’t go on any more; I die, Lolive.
LOLIVE
Sir, hey, Sir? Can you hear me? This is a fine contretemps of mutual
feeling! Egad! what stupid people.
LISETTE
I cannot support you any more, I must warn you, Madam.
LOLIVE
He’s as heavy as a devil. I will let you fall, darn and blast it!
LISETTE
Let’s see then what we will do about it.
LOLIVE
I’m dying to embrace you, and to greet you a little closer.
LISETTE
And I too.
LOLIVE
This is embarrassing.

56 According to Louis Riccoboni (Observations sur la comédie [n. 4], 282), the amorous
obessions of noble characters like Aeneas, Dido, Turnus, and Lavinia make them prime
targets for parody, because the principal motive for their actions is the passion of love.
M. FILASSIER
Mais c'est entretenir son extravagance, au lieu de
songer à le guérir.

M. FILASSIER
But it would mean keeping up his lunacy, instead
of looking to heal him.

LOLIVE
Point du tout, au contraire, Monsieur, donnez-vous
patience. Lisette & moi nous le divertirons bien
tous seuls. Allons, ma Reine, la passacaille
d'Armide; chorus, vous autres.

LOLIVE
Not at all, on the contrary, Monsieur, have some
patience. Lisette and I will entertain him well by
ourselves. Come, my queen, the passacaglia from
Armide; you others, sing the chorus.

LISETTE AND LOLIVE singing

If my master has been struck mad,
It is love that masks his mania;
How many lovers that I see,
Are a thousand times crazier.

(Lolive dances)

LOLIVE sings while motioning to Clitandre

Ex. 8: Dancourt's Renaud et Armide, 1686: scène 21.

LISETTE
Very well, what is it, Mister Lolive? You have hardly thought of me
since last we saw each other?

LOLIVE
Oh, yes, my child, sometimes now and then at certain times.

ANGÉLIQUE
Ah, heavens!

LISETTE
Hey, come on, confound it, revive; you’ve picked a really great time
to faint.

As always, the servants also show supreme skill in manipulating their masters.
Consequently, they effectively act as stage directors for the central operatic
The opera parodies of Florent Carton Dancourt

"Tis love that holds him in its chains,
'Tis I alone who strives to make him content,
Without hope of seeing my pains rewarded
By the death of a devil, one would not take much.

(Lolive dances)

M. FILASSIER
Oh! si tu les tire de-là, je te paierai bien, je t'en réponds.

M. FILASSIER
Oh, if you can bring them out of it, I will pay you well, I assure you.

Ex. 8 (continued).

performance. Lolive, Clitandre’s valet and companion, identifies closely with Ubald, Renaud’s fellow knight, and Lolive explains in scene 17 that he will play this role in the upcoming performance. The maid Lisette, having seen Armide ‘three or four times’ while accompanying Mme Jaquinet to the Opéra, claims to know some of the more memorable passages. In scene 16 she sings the Act IV duet with Lolive (while compelling M. Filassier and M. Grognard to dance a branle), and then goes off to teach the role of Renaud to Clitandre.

Dancourt’s subtle use of opera quotation serves to underscore Mme Jaquinet’s growing mental imbalance. Not only has her highly romanticized relationship with Clitandre been carried on via the personas of Armide and Renaud, but she has gone as far as encouraging Clitandre to become a soldier like Renaud. Her first sung excerpt in scene 6 quotes from a passage in Armide (II,4) assigned to a nymph who proved to be a demon in disguise. Later on Mme Jaquinet quotes some lines that were originally sung by Renaud as he fell under Armide’s magic spell (V,1). That both of these musical borrowings from the opera had been associated with scenes of delusion—where things are not what they appear to be—underscores Mme

57 This use of fictional personae to facilitate courtship is reminiscent of the amorous games played earlier in the précieux salons of Mlle de Rambouillet—satirized in Molière’s witty Les Précieuses ridicules (1659). Jean Laurent Le Cerf de la Vièville (Comparaison de la musique italienne et de la musique française, 1704–6) describes how audiences became transfixed by the emotions in Armide, while Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux (Satire X, ‘Les Femmes’, 1694) warns about the power of Lully’s music to inspire young ladies to follow the examples of Angélique and Armide. See Wood and Sadler, French Baroque Opera (see n. 7), 38–39.
Jaquinet's own self-deception in becoming enamored with an ambitious but penniless young man. Her folly becomes manifest in scene 9, when she announces her intention to turn her chambers into 'un palais enchanté', and then quotes music originally assigned to demons disguised as 'bergers et bergères galantes'.

As the plot unfolds, Mme Jaquinet's growing identification with Armide and her plight leads to more extensive quotation (and less contrafactum alteration of lyrics). When she learns that Clitandre has left her, Mme Jaquinet's sung reaction, juxtaposed with the spoken lines of the other characters, underscores the madness to which her opera obsession has led her—so that by the end of the parody the persona of Armide has completely taken over. In the final scene of Armide, the sorceress invokes her demons to pursue Renaud as her enchanted palace collapses.

At the end of Dancourt's parody, Mme Jaquinet’s entreaties, reproaches, and rancor parallel that of the sorceress (see Ex. 6), prompting Lolive to remark that 'the madness of my master was easier to cure than that of Madame Jaquinet' (Ex. 4).

Dancourt's two parodies thus take a tongue-in-cheek view of the madness of opera in general, while specifically satirizing the themes, characters, and operatic situations found in Quinault's and Lully's Roland and Armide. They leave us with tantalizing glimpses of the opera scene during Lully's tenure at the Paris Opéra, and shed new light on the methods of comic refunctioning that would inform later opera parodies.

A note regarding the examples