

## **The Prologues of the Tragédies Lyriques (Operas) of Philippe Quinault: “A Very Agreeable Propaganda”**

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In this paper I investigate the pragmatic rhetoric that informs a somewhat unfamiliar genre, the operatic prologue of the 17<sup>th</sup> century as it was conceived by the French librettist Philippe Quinault (1635-1688) and the composer Jean-Baptiste Lully. During the reign of Louis XIV this team produced eleven operas, or *tragédies lyriques en musique*, as they were originally called. These spectacles, which each comprise a prologue and five acts, were enormously successful. They combined chorus, soloists, dancers, sumptuous decors, elaborate special effects, and rich costumes adorned with hundreds of ostrich plumes. We might say that Lully and Quinault were the Rogers and Hammerstein or the Andrew Lloyd Webber of their day. However, the prologues of these *tragédies lyriques* offered more than a lavish musical entertainment to their 17<sup>th</sup> century audience. The *exordia* of their operas, like other epideictic (ceremonial) genres of the period, such as the parliamentary speech, the academic speech and the harangue, were really rhetorical tools for the extravagant glorification of Louis XIV.

Like these other types of discourse, the prologue, which dates back to classical Greece, had its own traditions, conventions and rhetorical strategies, many of which Lully and Quinault retained. But their collaborations, I believe, exploited the prologue's theatrical context for political ends to a greater degree than did their predecessors. In the *tragédies lyriques* of Lully and Quinault, the prologue provided a means to further the monarchist propaganda that they

were encouraged to disseminate. One has only to read Pierre Zoberman's book, *Les Cérémonies de la parole: l'éloquence d'apparat dans le dernier quart du siècle*, to comprehend how thoroughly this endeavour occupied the creative energies of the literary, artistic and politically astute elites of that society.<sup>1</sup>

The analysis that I offer here of some of the rhetorical strategies found in the prologues of Quinault's librettos attempts to explain the significance that they had for their original audience. It examines in particular their appeals to *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos*. The discussion also aims to engender an appreciation of the persuasive values of this introductory and quasi-independent part of the opera, which, while it entertains, exhorts the spectator to accept a particular ideology. There are indeed elements in Lully's music that support the text in this function, but at present I will concentrate for the most part on the rhetorical procedures in the poetry. Among these, we will examine the role of allegory, the maxim, and hyperbole, as well as Quinault's use of the figures of *pathos* to involve the audience in the allegory, and the notion of this involvement as an almost religious social ritual.

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<sup>1</sup>The biographers and the critics of Lully and of Quinault, as well as the study by Pierre Zoberman, *Les Cérémonies de la parole: l'éloquence d'apparat dans le dernier quart du siècle* (Paris: Honoré, 1998), confirm the fact that Louis XIV was interested in every artistic, literary and musical activity during his reign. His aim was to control the quality of works, and to ensure that their ideological values conformed to his own policies. In *Jean-Baptiste Lully and his Tragédies Lyriques* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1974) musicologist Joyce Newman says that, based on the research of Franklin Ford in *Robe and Sword* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), "no element of French life escaped the attention of Louis XIV, and every cultural and political institution was given new form" (44). According to the biographers of Lully and of Quinault, there is no doubt that they were interested in politics and that their friendship with the king influenced their operatic production. Some examples here will show to what extent Louis XIV was involved in the *tragédies lyriques* of Lully and Quinault: Étienne Gros describes in *Philippe Quinault: sa vie et son oeuvre* (Aix-en-Provence: Éditions "du Feu," 1926) the making of an opera, in the words of the 17<sup>th</sup> century arts critic, LeCerf de la Viéville: "He [Quinault] would choose several [subjects], which he presented to the king. The king, in turn, would choose, give his advice and his opinion . . . . Quinault composed his libretto and, when he had finished a few scenes, he would run to show them to the Académie Française" ("Il [Quinault] en choisissait plusieurs [sujets], qu'il présentait au roi. Le roi choisissait à son tour, donnait des conseils et des avis . . . . Quinault composait son livret et, dès qu'il avait achevé quelques scènes, il courait les montrer à l'Académie Française" Gros 106). We know that the king chose the subject of *Atys* (Newman 73), that of *Persée* (Cuthbert Girdlestone, *La Tragédie en musique (1673-1750)* [Genève: Librairie Droz, 1972] 98-99), that of *Amadis* (Gros 114, Girdlestone 99), and that of *Armide* (Girdlestone 125). All translations of French passages are by the author of this article.

The action in the prologue of Quinault is usually an allegorical scene drawn from a mythological source, often from the works of Ovid, or from subjects dating from the Early Middle Ages, adapted from Ariosto and Tasso. The plot is meagre, and complex arguments, so evident in the recitative of the play which follows, are lacking; in fact the verses are set as a simple alternation of charming arias and choruses which express the joy and gratitude of all concerned for the presence of the courageous, victorious and beneficent “Hero” who is always so preoccupied with defending them against their enemies that he has no time for peace and its attendant pleasures. The political motivation for this pervasive theme is Quinault’s absolute allegiance to his sovereign and to the monarchist ideology.

The eulogy was the forte of Quinault. His mastery of epideictic rhetoric must have been very useful to him at court. An example of one of the harangues that he improvised before the king reveals not only his ease in this genre, but also his political engagement:

What good fortune for us [writes Quinault] to have such a glorious Protector who gives us such memorable events to celebrate! We have no need to look elsewhere than in himself for a perfect model of heroic Virtue, and we are certain that the immortal splendour of his glory will descend upon our Works, and will transmit to them the privilege of passing into Posterity forever.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Zoberman cites this passage in *Les Panégyriques du Roi prononcés dans l’Académie française (1671-1689)* (Paris: Presses de l’Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1991): “Quel bonheur pour nous [écrit Quinault] d’avoir un Protecteur si glorieux, qui nous donne à célébrer des événements si mémorables! Nous n’avons pas besoin de chercher ailleurs qu’en luy-mesme un modèle parfait de la Vertu héroïque, & nous sommes certains que l’éclat immortel de sa gloire se répandra sur nos Ouvrages, & leur communiquera le privilège de passer jusqu’à la dernière Postérité” (188). Note that we retain the original spelling, including the 17<sup>th</sup> century application of diacritical accents, in all citations taken from works of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The “Protector,” the “glory,” the “celebration,” the “perfect model,” the heroic virtue,” and the “immortal splendour” in this passage are precisely some of the subjects that Quinault deals with in his theatre.

The librettos of Quinault date from the years 1672-1686. The titles and the dates of the first performances of the operas are as follows:<sup>3</sup>

<i>Cadmus et Hermione (Le Serpent Python)</i>	1673
<i>Alceste (Le Retour des Plaisirs)</i>	1674
<i>Thésée</i>	1675
<i>Atys</i>	1676
<i>Isis</i>	1677
<i>Proserpine</i>	1678
<i>Persée</i>	1680
<i>Phaéton (Le Retour de l'Age d'Or)</i>	1682
<i>Amadis</i>	1684
<i>Roland</i>	1685
<i>Armide</i>	1686

Most of these are preceded by a prologue which bears little or no narrative relationship to the operatic play for which it serves as an opener. Lully's biographer, Manuel Couvreur, calls them “a sort of vestibule . . . to the entire edifice.”<sup>4</sup> However, when we take into account the text of this *seuil* (threshold) — to use Gérard Genette's term<sup>5</sup> — of the work, the prologue really does seem to act as a means of persuasion, or at least it would have for the audience of its time, who would have grasped the hidden meaning of the allegorical references in its text.

Victor Fournel, editor of Quinault's *Théâtre choisi*, tells us that the divinities in the prologues, who celebrate the glory of Louis XIV, make allusion to current events. The poet

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<sup>3</sup>The text we will use to study the prologues of Quinault is his *Théâtre* (1672-1686; rpt. Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1970). See original publication dates of the tragédie lyriques above. They are found on the following pages: *Cadmus et Hermione* 390-392, *Alceste* 407-408, *Thésée* 425-427, *Atys* 444-445, *Isis* 462-463, *Proserpine* 481-482, *Persée* 510-511, *Phaéton* 527-28, *Amadis* 541-542, *Roland* 556-557, *Armide* 579-580. Further references appear parenthetically in text.

<sup>4</sup>In the original, “une sort de vestibule . . . [de] l'édifice entier.” Manuel Couvreur, *Jean-Baptiste Lully: musique et dramaturgie au service du prince* (Paris : Marc Vokar, 1992) 328.

<sup>5</sup>Genette, Gérard. *Seuils* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1987).

makes capital out of peace, or of war, of the victories outside of the country, or the splendours within. Fournel writes:

The circumstances were not always equally favourable, and sometimes the royal sun, the august emblem who furnished a bottomless mine of dithyrambic images and parallels, found himself veiled in clouds; but nothing embarrassed a man so gifted for flattery. Under the double veil of mythological allegory and excessive adulation, one can find . . . the trace of historical events and even private changes in the grand reign.<sup>6</sup>

Documents from the period confirm this assertion.<sup>7</sup> In them, there is frequent reference to Louis XIV as “the hero.” In my opinion, if we recognize that by “the hero” in Quinault’s works, the author also intends us to understand Louis XIV, the allegory in the prologues is clearly political.

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<sup>6</sup> “[C’est] une espèce de cantate dialoguée qui convoque les divinités de l’Olympe pour leur faire célébrer la gloire de Louis [XIV], en variant toutes les formes de l’adulation . . . . L’allégorie y tient une large place. Par ses allusions, le poète y fait oeuvre d’actualité; il tire un égal parti de la paix ou de la guerre, des victoires de dehors ou des splendeurs du dedans. Les circonstances n’étaient pas toujours également favorables et parfois le soleil royal, cet auguste emblème qui fournissait une mine inépuisable d’images et de rapprochements dithyrambiques, se trouvait voilé de nuages; mais rien n’embarrassait un homme si bien doué pour la flatterie. Sous le double voile de l’allégorie mythologique et de l’adulation à outrance, on y peut retrouver . . . la trace des événements historiques et même des transformations intimes du grand règne” (Victor Fournel, Introduction, *Théâtre choisi* by Philippe Quinault, Paris: Laplace, Sanchez et 2. Cie., 1882) viii.

<sup>7</sup> L’abbé Dubos in 1719 writes in *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture* (1770 ed.; rpt. Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1967): “Quinault a montré comment il y falloit traiter ces actions allégoriques [dans les prologues], et les allusions qu’on y pouvoit faire des événements récents dans les tems où les Prologues sont représentés” (Première Partie, 230). (“Quinault showed how one must treat these allegorical actions [in the prologues], and the allusions that one could make to recent events in the time when the Prologues are performed.”) Jean Duron, responsible for the documentary research for a recent recording of the opera *Atys*, found letters which are “peut-être écrites par un secrétaire zélé de Lully” (Jean Duron, liner notes to *Atys*, by Jean-Baptiste Lully, libretto by Philippe Quinault, Les Arts Florissants, Cond. William Christie, Arles: Armonie Mundi, 1987, 1996) 6. (“perhaps written by a zealous secretary of Lully.”) The following citation taken from one of these letters shows the relationship of the prologue to the contemporary activities of Louis XIV: “On parle beaucoup, déjà, du prologue d’*Atys* où, seuls, les Dieux paraîtront pour glorifier les victoires de Louis en Franche-Comté” (qtd. in Duron 6). (“People are already talking a great deal about the prologue of *Atys* where, alone, the Gods will appear to glorify the victories of Louis in Franche-Comté.”) Another letter from the same author informs us that this *tragédie lyrique* served to exhort the king to succeed in his campaigns as well as to praise him: “Louis médite sa prochaine campagne; la Cour, pour encourager son héros à pourfendre l’ennemi, veut lui offrir un spectacle digne de sa gloire. . . . C’est *Atys* bien sûr, que l’on répète actuellement” (qtd. in Duron 7). (“Louis is thinking about his next campaign; the Court, to encourage its hero to ward off the enemy, wants to offer him a spectacle worthy of his glory . . . . It is *Atys* of course that they are rehearsing right now.”)

We will begin an examination of the persuasion at work in these divertissements with a discussion of the appeal to *logos*, which is achieved through the use of allegory and maxims, with their attendant hyperbole. In the spectacle of theatrical production, especially in the prologues, which are concerned with beautiful music, dancing and splendid staging rather than plot, an appeal to *logos* must be simplified to be clearly understood.

The *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* of 1695 defines allegory as “a discourse by which in saying one thing, one makes known another, of which it is the figure.”<sup>8</sup> We will speak of the interpretation of the meaning Quinault hides when he uses allegory, but first we must identify the main rhetorical figure in these staged images or tableaux, which is personification (*prosopopoeia*). The “living beings” in the prologues are characters that represent deities, mythological personages, the virtues and vices, and often other incarnations of abstractions that relate to life at the court of Louis XIV: the Games, the Amours, the Pleasure, Fame, Rumours, etc. All these beings participate in a lovely imaginary world where a perfect hero protects them. It seems that the sole occupation of the inhabitants of this world is the pursuit of pleasure — innocent pleasure, of course, where shepherds and nymphs “flee the burdensome pomp of grandeur” — indeed! — and play in the countryside. This parody of rustic behaviour was a convention of the nobility of the period. As well, these characters glorify the advantages of the leadership of the “New Mars,” Louis XIV, whose wars enable beautiful artistic enterprises. For example, the goddesses Melpomène and Flore in *Atys* sing:

Let us make ourselves, if it is possible, worthy of his regard:

Let us join lively and pure beauty,

Of which Nature shines,

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<sup>8</sup>*Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* (1695; rpt. Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1968).

To the ornaments of the loveliest of Arts.<sup>9</sup>

This allegory is not specific. However, opera historian Cuthbert Girdlestone identifies certain moments in the prologues where Quinault makes allusion to political events which took place during the period of the creation of his operas.<sup>10</sup> The poet himself says, in the stage directions of *Cadmus and Hermione*, that his intention is that the audience will interpret his prologue with reference to the achievements of Louis XIV. He writes:

The allegorical sense of this subject is so clear that it is useless to explain it. Suffice it to say that the King has placed himself above ordinary praises, and that, to form some idea of the grandeur and the brilliance of his glory, he must be elevated to a Divinity even of the light [that is, the sun] of his emblematic figure.<sup>11</sup>

According to Étienne Gros, Quinault's principal biographer, the political role of the prologue in the 17<sup>th</sup> century became "a tool of the government: by initiating the people in the glory of the sovereign, it [fulfilled] an office similar to that which the *Gazette de France* filled."<sup>12</sup> Couvreur explains that the "message" found in the prologue of the opera *Thésée* is the dominant idea in all the prologues: "Its meaning is that, despite the war which the king continues to wage on his enemies, the Pleasures, Amours and Games have no less place at the court."<sup>13</sup> The endless repetition of this theme in the same words demonstrates Quinault's attempt to confirm

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<sup>9</sup>Rendons-nous, s'il se peut, dignes de ses regards: / Joignons la beauté vive et pure / Dont brille la Nature, / Aux ornemens des plus beaux Arts" (Quinault, "Atys", *Théâtre* 445).

<sup>10</sup>Girdlestone's examples of political and historical references in the prologues are cited in Appendix I.

<sup>11</sup>"Le sens allégorique de ce sujet est si clair, qu'il est inutile de l'expliquer. Il suffit de dire que le Roi s'est mis au-dessus des louanges ordinaires, et que, pour former quelqu'idée de la grandeur et l'éclat de sa gloire, il a fallu s'élever jusqu'à la Divinité même de la lumière, qui est le corps de sa devise" (Quinault *Théâtre* 390).

<sup>12</sup>"deviendra . . . un moyen du gouvernement: en initiant les peuples à la gloire du souverain, il remplira un office semblable à celui que remplissait la *Gazette de France*" (Gros 525-526).

<sup>13</sup>"Son sens est que, malgré la guerre que le roi continue à porter chez ses ennemis, les Plaisirs, Amours et Jeux n'en ont pas moins leur place à la cour" (Couvreur 73).

the values such as *gloire*, beauty, virtue, and wisdom that the regime of Louis XIV inculcated, as well as the privileges and pastimes that it furnished: *l'amour*, pleasure, luxury, gardens, dance, songs, and wine. The prologues justified the way of the life of the French courtier, thus augmenting the pleasure and pride of the public who witnessed them. They also praised the virtues, such as revenge, victory, honour, and extraordinary acts, which Aristotle says prompt epideictic rhetoric.<sup>14</sup> These all relate to the exploits of the king. As Chaïm Perelman explains, the confirmation of values is important; it creates a “communion” in the audience.<sup>15</sup> I will return to that notion when we examine how Quinault makes the spectators participate emotionally and spiritually in the ritual of the prologue.

In addition to providing these persuasive strategies, the prologues were useful in impressing the foreign dignitaries who attended them. Their sumptuous luxury represented a rather convincing declaration of the power and wealth of a monarch with the funds, the leisure and the human resources to present, apparently without end, and even in a time of war, these marvellous spectacles. The operas were thus the rhetorical “proofs” of the power of France, and their presentation aimed at persuasion. This was a trick of propaganda adapted from the theatre of antiquity which the mid-seventeenth century theatre critic, the abbé d’Aubignac, had already described.<sup>16</sup>

At the end of this discussion I have included some passages from the prologues which illustrate Quinault’s use of rhetorical figures for pragmatic aims. The effect of the personification

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<sup>14</sup>Aristotle speaks of these subjects in his *Rhetoric*, ed. and trans. H. C. Lawson-Tancred (London: Penguin Books, 1991) 1366b-1367a.

<sup>15</sup>Chaïm Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*, trans. John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1969) 51.

<sup>16</sup>Abbé François Hédelin d’Aubignac in *La Pratique du theatre* (1715 ; rpt. Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1971) tells us that the Ancients also recognized the political value of ostentation: “. . . quand durant la guerre on continuë ces Jeux dans un Etat, c’est donner des témoignages bien signalez, qu’il a des tresors inépuisables et des hommes de reste; Que les perils et les travaux d’une campagne qui vient de finir, et d’une autre qui commencera bien-tôt, ne changent, ni l’esprit, ni l’humeur, ni le courage de ceux qui composent les armées” (2–3).



is to render the tone more elevated and to enhance the *ethos* of Louis XIV. For example, it is not another nation, but rather Discord or Envy itself, a transcendental, powerful enemy, which troubles France. In the examples I have chosen, the hyperbole is without limits: the hero is immortal, his achievements manifold (Appendix I). All this encourages in the spectator the recognition of and respect for the model of perfection, of altruism, of patriotism and of valour that was Louis XIV. In embracing Quinault's mythological society, the spectator "signs" a contract in which he agrees to accept each myth it represents. It is then easier to listen to the simplistic and artificial doctrine that we see in these examples.

Since these rhetorical arguments are sung, the short, pithy maxim is the perfect rhetorical figure to convey this doctrine. The maxim affirms an idea without demanding a deep reflection upon its meaning. Unlike the maxims in the tragedy proper, which often express in an ironic way a dubious morality, those in the prologues concern the joys of abandoning oneself to the innocent pleasures of love. Verses such as "Les Jeux et les Amours / Ne regnent pas toujours" (Lover's sports reign not forever) remind us that these pleasures are ephemeral, and that it is thanks to Mars that Venus can reign — thus a justification of the king's military exploits which, in these prologues, he prefers to romantic distractions. Quinault's maxims, highly regarded by Voltaire, incidentally, are full of clever poetical figures that make them memorable. Set in Lully's charming, tuneful airs, they aptly fulfil the poet-as-rhetorician's mandate to please.

While allegory, maxim and hyperbole are the main logical strategies in the prologues, and clearly, these figures are also ethical, it is rather the appeals to *pathos* which Quinault prefers as the means to persuade the receptor. If we consider the *tragédie lyrique* as a whole as a

rhetorical discourse, the prologue serves as its *exordium*. And as Cicero says, the function of the *exordium* is “to move the heart.”<sup>17</sup>

Quinault excites the emotion of the spectator through the use of figures of mimetic *pathos*,<sup>18</sup> especially by hyperbolic exclamations, rhetorical questions and *apostrophe*, which move the same passions — fear, horror, joy, etc. — as those felt by the characters on the stage. Molinié points out the artificial character of the *exclamation*<sup>19</sup> and, in the context of the prologues, where this figure announces nothing new, this is certainly the case. The order of such expressions in the text is not important and the meaning does not contribute to the plot, because there is none. The following example comes from a dialogue between Victory and Discord in *Proserpine*:

(La Victoire) Ah! qu’il est beau de rendre

La paix à l’Univers!<sup>20</sup>

From the same work comes the following example of *ecphronesis*, an emotional exclamation, and *apostrophe*, which addresses a personified abstraction: “O Vertu charmante! / Votre empire est doux.”<sup>21</sup> These hyperbolic enthusiastic utterances are somewhat self-congratulatory suggestions for the French audience, which is flattered to think of its nation as peaceful and virtuous. We find rhetorical questions as well in the prologues that express these sentiments.

Other figures are distinguished by the imperative (“let us”), which indicates exhortation, wish or prayer and which represents a collective incitement of the spectators to consent to the praises of the characters and values in question. Expressions such as “Let us witness the

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<sup>17</sup>“ad impellendos animos” (Cicero, “De Partitione Oratoria” in *De Oratore, Book III*, trans. H. Rackham [Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, Harvard UP, 1997] I, 4).

<sup>18</sup> See Albert Halsall, *L’Art de convaincre* (Toronto: Paratexte, 1988) 215-231.

<sup>19</sup>Michèle Aquien and Georges Molinié, *Dictionnaire de rhétorique et de poétique* (Paris: La Pochotèque, 1996) 168.

<sup>20</sup>Victory: “Oh ! Isn’t it lovely to bring peace to the Universe!” (Quinault, *Proserpine*, *Théâtre* 481).

<sup>21</sup>“O charming Virtue ! Your empire is sweet” (Quinault, *Persée*, *Théâtre* 510).

immortal glory of a king who is the astonishment of kings and of the greatest heroes,” “Let us unite our voices; let each of us respond,” and “Let us sing of the kindness of his laws, of his glorious exploits,”<sup>22</sup> although addressed to other characters on the stage, suggest that the public also is included in the “us.” Because Quinault presents these injunctions in such an agreeable way, embellished with lovely music and theatrical marvels, the public is more amenable to accepting the obligatory propaganda.

Rather than serving as a cog in a sinister propaganda machine, the prologues seem to have the function of a social rite, or celebration, in which the audience participates. In fact, some of the choral sections are hymns, and the text clearly a *paeanismus*, or solemn chant of praise. The praise is always directed at the magnanimous hero who drives out Discord and Envy from the domain of Venus. Through mimetic figures of antipathy, such as *onedismus* (objuration, or reproach), *epiPLEXIS* (reproach in the interrogative form), *bdelygmia*, which expresses extreme aversion, and curses, Quinault encourages the spectator to fear and detest the “monster” enemy (who, in the prologue, takes the form of a serpent that “Apollo,” the sun god, must vanquish). This demonizing of the enemy has its antithesis in the deification of the hero, the one who “brings peace.” Quinault employs the figures of *mempsis*, *optation* and *deesis*, which are rhetorical devices expressing prayer or supplication. These figures inspire the spectator’s gratitude towards the king and recognition of his political and military successes. We find an example of *mempsis*, or complaint, in this quotation from the Nymph of the Seine in *Alceste*:

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<sup>22</sup>The first expression is spoken by Alquif, l’Enchanteur in “Amadis”: “Allons être témoins de la gloire immortelle / D’un Roi l’étonnement des Rois / Et des plus grands héros le plus parfait modèle” (Quinault, *Théâtre* 542). The second is spoken by La Gloire in “Armide”: “Que l’éclat de son [du Héros] nom s’étende au bout du monde: Réunissons nos voix; / Que chacun de nous réponde.” The third is spoken by La Gloire, La Sagesse, and les Choeurs: “Chantons la douceur de ses loix; / Chantons ses glorieux exploits” (Quinault, “Armide,” *Théâtre* 580).

Le héros que j’attends ne reviendra-t-il pas?  
 Serai-je toujours languissante  
 Dans une si cruelle attente?  
 On ne voit plus de fleurs qui naissent sous nos pas.<sup>23</sup>

The reference is likely to the absence of the king, perhaps at war, a subject on which the prologues frequently dwell.

Still, through *optation*, or wish, one uses the subjunctive mode to plead for “a happy outcome.”<sup>24</sup> For example, in the prologue of *Thésée*, which takes place before a stage set representing the palace of Versailles, Bacchus and Cères say:

May all the rest of the world  
 Be envious of the good fortune of this appealing abode.<sup>25</sup>

Another figure of supplication is *deesis*, where the speaker addresses his wish to a god. Lanham says that, by this figure one directs his words to human beings as well.<sup>26</sup> In the artificial world of Quinault, which mixes mythological characters with the historic hero, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish the divine *destinataire*, or addressee, from the mortal. At the end of the prologue of *Armide*, the choir prays,

May in the temple of Memory  
 His (the Hero’s) name be forever engraved;

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<sup>23</sup>Will the hero whom I await not return? / Will I languish forever / In such a cruel expectation? / We no longer see the flowers that grow beneath our feet (Quinault, “Alceste,” *Théâtre* 407).

<sup>24</sup>Bernard Dupriez, *A Dictionary of Literary Devices, Gradus, A – Z* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991) 471.

<sup>25</sup>(Bacchus et Cères) “Que tout le reste de la terre / Porte envie au bonheur de ces lieux pleins d’attraits . . . / (Mars et Vénus) Au milieu de la guerre / Goutons les plaisirs de la paix” (Quinault, “Thésée,” *Théâtre* 426-7).

<sup>26</sup>“Deesis: the vehement supplication either of the gods or of men.” Richard Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms* (Berkeley: University of California press, 1991) 328.

It is to him that is reserved

To unite Wisdom and Glory.<sup>27</sup>

The mention of supplication suggests perhaps that the audience experiences the prologue as a sort of pseudo-religious rite. Quinault's insistence on the glorification of the monarch and on the quasi-liturgical repetition of words reminds us of the Catholic mass. This is not to suggest that the prologues smack of sacrilege, since the Christian religion is not specifically alluded to in prayer, or by oaths or symbols. While Louis XIV is a "god" of Versailles, he is the equal, according to Quinault, of all mythological gods. It is tacitly implied in the prologues that Louis XIV is divine, an accepted notion at the time.<sup>28</sup> Thus, in some cases, the prologue serves as a model of a liturgical rite, but with a secular end. If the word liturgy means, according to Russel Hirst, "the ceremony, song, chanting, reading, preaching, praying, acting, dancing, gesture, use of visual symbols, and every other aspect of communal religious worship,"<sup>29</sup> we understand clearly why Gros speaks of the "cult of royalty"<sup>30</sup> when he explains the goals of the Quinaultian prologue.

D'Aubignac points out that while the gods who appear in the classical dramas were real for the Greek audience, they were "imaginary Divinities"<sup>31</sup> for the French audience of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, he clarifies that "living in a Monarchist State, we hold as sacred the person of the Kings,"<sup>32</sup> thus distinguishing the pagan from the divine. Louis XIV is transformed

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<sup>27</sup>"Que dans le temple de Mémoire / Son [du Héros] nom soit pour jamais grave; / C'est à lui qu'il est reserve / D'unir la Sagesse et la Gloire" (Quinault, "Armide," *Théâtre* 580).

<sup>28</sup>Manuel Couvreur makes a strong case for this point of view in *Jean-Baptiste Lully; musique et dramaturgie au service du prince*.

<sup>29</sup>Russel Hirst, "Liturgy" in *An Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition*, ed. Theresa Enos (New York: Garland, 1996) 394.

<sup>30</sup>"culte de la royauté" (Gros 525).

<sup>31</sup>"des Divinités imaginaires" (d'Aubignac 320).

<sup>32</sup>D'Aubignac writes, "vivant dans un Etat Monarchique, nous tenons comme sacrée la personne des Rois" (304).

into Apollo in the allegory of the prologues, but as the perfect hero, according to Couvreur, he is also the descendant of God. Couvreur says,

. . . everyone believed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century that the king is of a different nature than that of other men. Only the prince possesses a *double corps*; one is mortal like that of any human being; the other is immortal and survives in the dynastic succession. Like Christ, the king is both mortal and immortal and this double essence makes him the *lieutenant of God on earth*.<sup>33</sup>

It is not difficult to recognize the emblem of the king, the sun, as suggestive of the association of Louis with Apollo. But in the prologues we can isolate another type of reference to the divinity of the monarch. Musicologist Patricia Howard points out that even the music of the Lully-Quinault operas imposed the symbolic convention of the association of Louis XIV to a god, be it Apollo or the Christian god.<sup>34</sup> The pompous dotted rhythms (“saccade” is the musical term in French), an innovation of Lully, have their parallel in the music of the religious offices, which Louis attended. As Couvreur says, this ceremony “always ended with the motet, *Domine salvum fac regem* [composed by Lully]. Devoted to showing the connection between the king of this world and That of Heaven, this motet was the crucial point in the Chapel services.”<sup>35</sup> Louis entered the theatre to the musical overture of the *tragédie lyrique*, with its characteristic “saccade.” This is also the musical figure that Lully uses sometimes to accompany the entry of “the Hero,” of the king or of the god in the prologue or tragedy. One of the pragmatic ends of the

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<sup>33</sup>“ . . . chacun croit au dix-septième siècle que le roi est d’une nature différente de celle des autres hommes. Seul le prince possède un *double corps*: l’un est mortel comme celui de tout être humain; l’autre est immortel et se survit dans la succession dynastique. Comme le Christ, le roi est à la fois mortel et immortel et cette double essence fait de lui le *lieutenant de Dieu sur terre*” (emphasis in original, Couvreur 346).

<sup>34</sup>Patricia Howard proposes this theory in her unpublished thesis, *The Operas of Jean-Baptiste Lully* (University of Surrey, 1970) III-328-15.

<sup>35</sup>“La cérémonie s’achevait toujours sur le motet *Domine salvum fac regem*. Consacré à la mise en évidence du lien qui unit le roi de ce monde à Celui des Cieux, ce motet était le point crucial des services de la Chapelle” (Couvreur 334).

rhetoric of the prologues is therefore to reaffirm the association of the king and God, in a ceremonial, but secular context.

Moreover, where the librettos imitate ritual aspects of the Christian liturgy, Quinault uses such figures as *encomium* (praise), *eucharistia* (prayer of thanks), and *eulogia* (benediction). These passages have the vocabulary, the grammatical structures and the reverential tone that we find in such liturgical texts as the *Magnificat*, and in the *Gloria* and the *Sanctus* from the mass. Where these texts use the word God or the Almighty, Quinault substitutes the word king in the prologues, meaning Louis XIV. This word during his reign was almost synonymous with the word *gloire*, meaning the honour acquired by a man of high rank through his great and magnanimous actions. It implied self-sacrifice, certainly a Christian tenet. Quinault's verses reiterate the debt we owe to the Hero who offers himself in this way. They repeat the words God, heaven, powerful, glory and immortal, as do many biblical passages. A passage from one of the prologues (the first in Appendix I of this article) illustrates Quinault's use of such language. Likewise, stage directions even indicate in the prologue of "Cadmus et Hermione" that, after having vanquished the evil which prevailed on earth, and having pronounced his benediction, Apollo or "the Sun," "rises up to heaven,"<sup>36</sup> perhaps evoking the image of Christ. Lully usually sets Quinault's quasi-liturgical verses with hymn-like homophony, frequently responsorial in nature, thus imitating the style of sacred music. To further the ecclesiastical comparison in the prologues, Quinault uses metaphors and images involving altars, temples, trophies, sacrifices and offerings. Lighting effects mentioned in the stage directions and the union of great forces of choirs and instruments help to give the impression that earth is transformed into heaven by the presence of the king. These factors seem to add up to what Zoberman calls "that imperceptible

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<sup>36</sup>Quinault, "Cadmus et Hermione," *Théâtre* 392.

border between the profane and the sacred,”<sup>37</sup> which he indicates was a feature of the ceremonial discourse of the Académie Française of the period.

I would draw a parallel between attendance in those days at church and at the opera. If the tragedy itself corresponds to the sermon, in that it instructs by its use of an *exemplum* illustrating the correct moral behaviour to follow, then the prologue corresponds to the service that precedes that lesson. Through beautiful ritual in song, hearts are stirred and minds consent to an oft-repeated and comforting message that reaffirms the faith in the perfect monarch and his divine right.

Since Louis XIV involved himself in the creation of these performances by proposing or choosing their subjects and by influencing their ideological content, and as he faithfully attended the performances and even many rehearsals,<sup>38</sup> he was simultaneous orator and audience. And it seems to me that no one was more “persuaded” by the prologues than the king himself. This in turn, must have influenced the reception of the public: no one would have risked offending the patron of these divertissements who was also their main character. Thus, rhetoric is at the root of reception. It follows that, as Steven Mailloux suggests, reception study “makes significant contributions to what might be called the study of cultural rhetoric — the tropes, the arguments,

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<sup>37</sup> Zoberman calls this “cette insaisissable frontière entre le profane et le sacré” (*Les Cérémonies de la Parole* 657).

<sup>38</sup> “Sa Majesté ne se contentait pas d’indiquer les sujets [des operas de Lully], Elle tenait encore à suivre les répétitions . . . Assidu aux répétitions, Louis XIV connaissait les tragédies en musique par coeur. Cette méchante langue de Saint-Simon prétend même qu’il ‘chantait dans ses particuliers les endroits les plus à sa louange des prologues des opéras’” (Couvreur 21-33). (“His Majesty was not content to indicate the subjects [of Lully’s operas], He was fond of attending the rehearsals . . . Regular at the rehearsals, regular at the performances, Louis XIV knew the *tragédies en musique* by heart. That naughty tongue of Saint-Simon even claims that he ‘used to sing in private the places most laudatory of himself in the prologues of the operas.’”) According to Gros, “Louis XIV, passionné de la musique, entendait sans lassitude dix fois de suite le même opéra” (Gros 112). (“Louis XIV, passionate about music, would listen without fatigue to the same opera ten times in a row.”)



the narratives circulating in a culture at particular historical moments.”<sup>39</sup> The cultural rhetoric of the 17<sup>th</sup> century was very different from our own.

We have seen the importance of allegory, of maxim, and, obviously, of hyperbole to the *logos* of Quinault’s prologues. The elements that suggest religious ceremony also subtly augment their appeal to *pathos* because they arouse an emotional participation in the celebratory experience. Since the prologues remind the public, by their allusions to the Christian and to mythological Greek tradition, of the celebration of the praises of divinities, they also make a strong appeal to *ethos*. The prologues of Quinault and Lully, in the guise of innocent entertainments, can be seen as a means to influence, by a process of rhetorical amplification, the opinion of their audience, particularly its opinion of the monarch who had paid for these sumptuous and engaging spectacles.

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<sup>39</sup>Steven Mailloux, “Reception Study,” *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition*, ed. Theresa Enos (New York: Garland, 1996) 592.

**APPENDIX I: ALLEGORICAL EXCERPTS FROM THE PROLOGUES**1. From Quinault, “Phaéton,” *Théâtre* 527:

(Saturne) Un Héros, qui mérite une gloire immortelle,  
 Au séjour des humains aujourd’hui nous rappelle. . . .  
 Il fait mêler les jeux à cent travaux divers:  
 Rien ne peut nous troubler; la Discorde est aux fers.  
 L’Envie en vain frémit de voir les biens qu’il cause;  
 Une heureuse paix est la loi  
 Que ce vainqueur impose.

(A Hero, who merits immortal glory,  
 Recalls us today to the dwelling places of humans. . . .  
 He mixes plays with a hundred public works:  
 Nothing can worry us; Discord is in chains.  
 Envy trembles in vain to see the benefits he brings about;  
 A happy peace is the law  
 That this conqueror imposes.)

2. From Quinault, “Atys,” *Théâtre* 444:

Ses [le héros] justes loix,  
 Ses grand exploits  
 Rendront son mémoire éternelle :  
 Chaque jour, chaque instant  
 Ajoute encore à son nom éclatant  
 Une gloire nouvelle.

(His just laws,  
 His great exploits  
 Render his memory eternal.  
 Each day, each moment  
 Adds new glory  
 To his dazzling name.)

3. From Quinault, “Thésée,” *Théâtre* 425-427:

(Le Choeur)  
 Les Jeux et les Amours  
 Ne règnent pas toujours.

(Chorus)  
 Lovers’ Sports  
 Reign not forever.

*(Les Amours, les Grâces, les Plaisirs et les Jeux se retirent.)*

(VÉNUS)

Revenez, Amours, revenez;  
Pourquoi quitter ces lieux  
Où l'on est sans alarmes?  
La beauté perd ses plus doux charmes,

Si-tôt que vous l'abandonnez.  
Revenez, Amours, revenez.

Beaux lieux, où les Plaisirs suivoient  
par-tout mes pas,

Que sont devenus vos appas?

Qu'un si charmant séjour est triste et  
solitaire!

Hélas! Hélas! Les Amours n'y sont pas!

Sans les Amours, rien ne peut plaire.

Revenez, Amours, revenez;  
Quel chagrin si pressant vous a tous  
emmenez?  
Est-il quelque danger dont Mars ne vous  
délivre?

Il chasse les fureurs de ces lieux fortunés;

A la seule Victoire il permet de le suivre.

Revenez, Amours, revenez.

*(On entend des trompettes et des tambours,  
dont le bruit se mêle au son de plusieurs  
instrumens champêtres. Cependant Mars  
paroît sur son char avec Bellone.)*

*(The Amours, the Graces, the Pleasures and the Games withdraw.)*

(VÉNUS)

Return, Amours, return;  
Why do you leave this place  
where we are out of harm?  
Beauty loses its sweetest  
charms,

As soon as you abandon it.  
Return, Amours, return.

Lovely places, where the  
Pleasures followed my  
footsteps everywhere,

What has become of your  
charms?

How sad and lonely is such a  
charming abode!

Alas! Alas! The Amours are  
not here!

Without les Amours, nothing  
can please.

Return, Amours, return;  
What distress so urgent has  
taken you away?  
Is it some danger from which  
Mars does not deliver you?

He chases the furies from  
happy places;

He allows none but Victory  
To follow him.

Return, Amours, return.

*(We hear trumpets and  
drums, whose sound blends  
with the sound of several  
rustic instruments. Mars,  
however, appears on his  
chariot with Bellone.)*

(MARS, sur son char)	(MARS, on his chariot)
Que rien ne trouble ici Vénus et les Amours:	Let nothing here disturb Venus and the Amours:
Que sous d'aimables loix, dans ces douces retraites,	May one pass happy days in repose under gentle laws in these sweet retreats.
On passé en repos d'heureux jours;	We pass happy days in peace;
Que les hautbois, que les musettes	May oboes, may bagpipes
L'emportent sur les trompettes	Prevail over trumpets
Et sur les tambours.	And over drums.
Que rien ne trouble ici Vénus et les Amours.	May nothing here disturb Venus and the Amours.
<i>(On entend plus le bruit des trompettes &amp; les tambours, et plusieurs instrumens champêtres jouent dans le tems que Mars descend.)</i>	<i>(We hear again the sound of trumpets and drums, and several rustic instruments play while Mars descends.)</i>
Partez, allez, vôlez, redoutable Bellone;	Leave, go, fly, fearful Bellone;
Laissez en paix ici les Amours et les Jeux:	Leave here in peace the Amours and the Sports;
Que Cères [blé], que Bacchus [vin]	Let Ceres [wheat], let Bacchus [wine]
s'avancent avec eux;	come forth with them;
Eloignez ce qui les étonne.	May whoever frightens them depart.
Portez aux ennemis de cet empire heureux	Bear to the enemies of this happy empire
Tout ce que la guerre a d'affreux;	All that war has that is dreadful;
Vénus le veut, Mars vous l'ordonne.	What Venus wants, Mars commands you.
Partez, allez, vôlez, redoutable Bellone.	Leave, go fly, fearful Bellone.
<i>(Bellone obéit et s'envole.)</i>	<i>(Bellone obeys and flees.)</i>
(VÉNUS)	(VENUS)
Inexorable Mars, pourquoi déchaînez- vous contre un Héros vainqueur tant d'ennemis jaloux?	Inexorable Mars, why do you unleash so many jealous enemies against a Conquering Hero?
Faut-il que l'univers avec fureur conspire Contre ce glorieux empire,	Must the universe with fury Conspire against this glorious empire,
Don't le séjour nous est si doux?	Whose abode is so sweet to us?
Sans une aimable paix, peut-on jamais attendre de beaux jours ni d'heureux?	Without an amiable peace, can one ever expect lovely days or happy moments?
La plainte la plus tendre,	The most tender complaint,

Les plus doux soupirs des amans  
Sont le seul bruit qu'on doit entendre  
En ces lieux si charmans.

The sweetest sighs of lovers  
Are the only sound that we  
must hear in such charming  
places.

(MARS)  
Que dans ce beau séjour rien ne vous  
Épouvante;  
Un nouveau Mars rendra la France  
triumphante:  
Le destin de la guerre en ses mains est  
remis;  
Et si j'augmente  
Le nombre de ses ennemis,  
C'est pour rendre sa gloire encor plus  
éclatante.  
Le Dieu de la valeur doit toujours l'animer.

(MARS)  
Let nothing frighten you in  
this lovely abode;  
A new Mars will make  
France triumphant:  
The fate of the war is placed  
in his hands;  
And if I increase  
The number of his enemies,  
It is to render his glory even  
more dazzling.  
The God of worth must ever  
rouse him.

(VÉNUS)  
Vénus répand sur lui tout ce qui peut  
charmer.

(VENUS)  
Venus lavishes on him all  
that can charm.

(MARS)  
Malheur, malheur à qui voudra contraindre  
Un si grand Héros à s'armer!

(MARS)  
Woe, woe to whomever will  
Force such a great Hero to arm  
himself!

(VÉNUS)  
Tout doit l'aimer

(VENUS)  
All must love him.

(MARS)  
Tout doit le craindre.

(MARS)  
All must fear him.

(VÉNUS ET MARS)  
Tout doit le craindre.  
Tout doit l'aimer.

(VENUS AND MARS)  
All must fear him.  
All must love him.

## APPENDIX II: POLITICAL AND HISTORIC ALLUSIONS IN THE ALLEGORY OF THE PROLOGUES

The following passages taken from *La Tragédie en musique* by Cuthbert Girdlestone show the influence of political events on the allegory in the prologues of Quinault:

### *Cadmus et Hermione* 27 avril 1673

“Palés, déesse des pasteurs, Mélisse, divinité des forêts et des montagnes, suivies de nymphes et de bergers, se réunissent pour chanter la beauté de la campagne au lever du jour et les bienfaits du soleil - entendez, du roi. Mais leur fête est interrompue par des bruits souterrains et une espèce de nuit qui oblige l’assemblée à fuir sur un chœur d’épouvante. Sa place est prise par l’Envie qui ‘évoque le monstrueux serpent Python’ et les Vents pour l’aider à troubler les beaux jours que le soleil donne au monde. Au cours du ballet elle essaie d’éteindre les feux du soleil, mais celui-ci lance des traits enflammés qui embrase le serpent et contraint l’Envie à abandonner la partie. Allégorie transparente: en 1673 la France est en guerre contre la Hollande. Laquelle vient de s’unir à l’Autriche et le Brandebourg. ‘Tu triomphes, Soleil, tout est en ton pouvoir’ n’est pour l’instant qu’un pieux souhait qui ne se réalisera qu’en 1678 avec la paix de Nimègue. Pasteurs et nymphes reviennent célébrer sa victoire et le dieu lui-même daigne enfin apparaître en proférant des vœux de bonheur universel” (Girdlestone 59-60).

### *Alceste* 11 janvier 1674

[Le prologue d’*Alceste*] “se joue devant le palais des Tuileries. ‘La nymphe de la Seine paraît appuyée sur une urne au milieu d’une allée dont les arbres sont séparés par des fontaines’. Elle déplore l’absence du roi, alors à la guerre, s’écriant jusqu’à huit fois:

Le héros que j’attends ne reviendra-t-il pas?

La gloire la rassure.

Vois comme sa valeur a soumis le fleuve  
Le fleuve le plus fier qui soit dans l’Univers; -

le passage du Rhin est du juin 1672” (Girdlestone 69).

### *Thésée* 11 janvier 1675

“Dans le prologue le théâtre représente les jardins et la façade du palais de Versailles, le ‘château neuf’ achevé deux ou trois ans plus tôt. Son sens est que, malgré la guerre que le roi continue à

porter chez ses ennemis, les Plaisirs, Amours et Jeux n'en ont pas moins leur place B la cour. 1674 est l'année des campagnes de Turenne en Alsace et au Palatinat et de la seconde conquête de la Franche-comté; janvier 1675 voit les Alliés chassés de l'Alsace" (Girdlestone 73).

***Atys*** 10 janvier 1676

"L'année 1675 fut celle de la mort de Turenne, de la défaite de Créqui suivie de la reconquête de l'Alsace. Le prologue d'*Atys*, aussi pompeux que les précédents, est moins précis et se contente de louer l'humeur belliqueuse et la gloire du roi.

Le temps des jeux et du repos  
Lui sert B méditer de nouvelles conquêtes." (Girdlestone 77)

***Isis*** 5 janvier 1677

"L'année 1675 avait vu trois victoires navales de Duquesne en Méditerranée. Quinault crut bon de les célébrer dans le prologue d'*Isis* dont les personnages sont la Renommée, Apollon et Neptune. C'est ce dernier qui entonne l'éloge du roi.

Publiez des exploits nouveaux.  
C'est le mème vainqueur  
Si fameux sur la terre  
Qui triomphe encor sur les eaux." (Girdlestone 81)

***Proserpine*** 3 février 1680

"Entre le 10 août 1678 et le 2 septembre 1679 s'échelonnent les signatures des cinq traités dont l'ensemble constitue la paix de Nimègue. Le prologue de *Proserpine*, composé pour être représenté en février 1680, célèbre ce moment le plus glorieux du règne. Il montre la libération de la Paix, tenue en esclavage par la Discorde et la Haine, grâce B l'intervention de la Victoire. La Félicité, l'Abondance, les jeux et les Plaisirs font l'éloge du vainqueur qui se sert de celle-ci pour faire triompher la Paix" (Girdlestone 84).

***Persée*** 17 avril 1682

"Le prologue est le premier où il ne soit pas question de guerres et de victoires. Son sens est que, grâce au roi, la Vertu fait la paix avec la Fortune" (Girdlestone 90).

***Phaéton*** 6 janvier 1684

“Le sens du prologue est que, grâce au roi, Saturne et Astrée ramènent l’âge d’or; en 1682-83, en effet, Louis XIV n’a aucune guerre sur les bras; c’est l’époque des ‘annexions pacifiques’. La flagornerie Bl’adresse du Roi-Soleil y est encore plus épaisse que d’habitude” (Girdlestone 98).

***Amadis*** 15 janvier 1684

“Dans le prologue, grâce BLouis XIV, Alquif et Urgande, roi et reine des fées, se réveillent pour faire représenter l’histoire d’Amadis” (Girdlestone 103). Girdlestone est de l’avis que la pièce qui suit ce prologue est aussi sans “portée morale.” “C’est au spectacle et au chatouillement des émotions multiples que Quinault fait appel pour conquérir son public” (103). En ce qui concerne la propagande, ce prologue est donc le moins spécifique.

***Roland*** 8 janvier 1665

“Le prologue roule sur les dangers de l’amour et l’extinction du flambeau de la guerre par Louis XIV. (Nous sommes en 1684.) Démorgon, roi des Fées et le premier des Génies de la Terre, annonce la paix. ‘Tout cède au plus grand des héros’” (Girdlestone 112).

***Armide*** 15 février 1686

“Dans le prologue la Gloire et la Sagesse s’unissent pour louer et suivre le roi. (Nous doutons que ‘les monstres’ que le roi est dit tenir dans les fers soit une allusion Bla révocation de l’édit de Nantes, comme le croit Gros)” (Girdlestone 118).



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