UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Barbara

Get thee to an asylum: reflecting on the evolution of mental illness and its portrayal in Thomas's operatic mad scene

A supporting document in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Musical Arts in Music

by

Naomi Hanna Merer

Committee in charge:

Professor Benjamin Brecher, Chair

Professor Isabel Bayrakdarian

Professor Martha Sprigge

June 2021

The supporting document of Naomi Hanna Merer is approved.

Isabel Bayrakdarian

Martha Sprigge

Benjamin Brecher, Committee Chair

May 2021

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank the members of my committee, Professor Isabel Bayrakdarian, Professor Benjamin Brecher, and Professor Martha Sprigge, without whom none of this would have been possible. Thank you all for your advice—both for my singing and for my scholarship—these past six years. In particular, I would like to thank Professor Sprigge for your scholarly guidance in helping me craft my dissertation and your unrelenting support for me as a singer and scholar.

Second, I would like to thank my wonderful voice teacher, Dr. Linda Di Fiore. I would not be the singer, teacher, or scholar I am today without your guidance and encouragement.

Third, thank you to my coach, Professor John Ballerino. You helped me truly hone my craft and always worked with me to be better.

Thank you to Dr. Tyler Reece, Dr. Molly Clementz, and Christina Esser for your time and help with edits. Thank you to Professor Martha Sprigge's Dissertation Seminar classes of 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, who always brought new perspectives and ideas when discussing my dissertation.

Finally, I want to thank my friends and family—especially my parents, Drs. Michelle and David Merer, my brother, Gary Merer, and my fiancé, Wyatt Witzen. Your love and support through this process, particularly during the difficult times of the COVID-19 pandemic inspired me and helped me achieve my goals.

VITA OF NAOMI HANNA MERER
June 2021

Education

Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance and Opera with a Music Theory minor, Northwestern University, June 2011 (magna cum laude and with vocal honors)
Master of Music, University of California, Santa Barbara, March 2019
Doctor of Music Arts, University of California, Santa Barbara, June 2021 (expected)

Professional Employment

2019-present: Teaching Assistant in Musicology, Department of Music, University of California, Santa Barbara
2015-2019: Teaching Assistant in Voice, Department of Music, University of California, Santa Barbara
2016-present: Section Leader and Soloist, Santa Barbara Choral Society, Santa Barbara
2016-present: Recitalist and private voice instructor, Santa Barbara
2015-present: Section Leader, All Saints by the Sea Episcopal Church, Montecito, California
2015-2020: Soloist and Chorus Member at Opera Santa Barbara

Awards

2021: 2nd Place, Performing Arts Scholarship Foundation, Santa Barbara, CA
2018: 2nd Place, Performing Arts Scholarship Foundation, Santa Barbara, CA
2017: 2nd Place, Performing Arts Scholarship Foundation, Santa Barbara, CA
2016: Music Departmental Travel Grant for AIMS (American Institute for Musical Studies) in Graz, Austria from UCSB
2015-present: Full Tuition Scholarship, Teaching Assistantship Stipend UCSB

Fields of Study

Major Field: Vocal Performance and Pedagogy
Studies in Vocal Literature, Opera Literature, and Vocal Technique with Dr. Linda Di Fiore, Adjunct Professor of Voice at DePaul University in Chicago, IL
Studies in Women in Music, French Grand Opera, and Operatic Mad Scenes of the Nineteenth Century with Professor Martha Sprigge
Studies in Acting Technique with Professor Benjamin Brecher
Studies in Music Performance Anxiety with Professor Isabel Bayrakdarian

ABSTRACT

Get thee to an asylum: reflecting on the evolution of mental illness and its portrayal in Thomas's operatic mad scene

by

Naomi Hanna Merer

This dissertation discusses the operatic mad scene of Ophelia (or, Ophélie) in Michel Carré, Jules Barbier, and Charles Ambroise Thomas's 1868 *Hamlet*. Mad scenes have been widely studied in vocal performance, musicology, and feminist studies, with scholars such as Leslie C. Dunn claiming that madness in women (especially looking at Shakespeare's Ophelia) acts as a revolution against the hold of the patriarchy, and Mary Ann Smart discussing how Gaetano Donizetti used the *bel canto* musical style to portray madness in his 1835 *Lucia di Lammermoor*. However, Ophélie's mad scene is studied very little. In fact, while examining this scene, I came to realize that performers and directors of opera play her like a nineteenth-century hysterical woman without understanding the history behind views on women's hysteria and mental illness as well as how these beliefs were used to keep a patriarchal stronghold on women during this era. As a result, in performing these roles without studying the history, we are portraying Ophélie as a stereotypical madwoman instead of as the victim of circumstances put upon her by the men who held power over her. In other words, we continue to dehumanize her character instead of respecting the trauma she suffered

and accurately and believably portraying her mental illness in the terms a twenty-first-century audience would understand. Thus, this dissertation endeavors to take the histories that affected Carré, Barbier, and Thomas in their creation of this Ophélie to show how they created the archetypal nineteenth-century hysteric. Specifically, I will look at the musical underpinnings of Thomas's *Hamlet—bel canto* mad scenes and tropes in French grand opera—as well as the history of hysteria and views on women's mental illness, and alterations made to Ophelia's character and the actors who played her to show how Thomas's character was created in the image of a nineteenth-century audience's perception of the ideal operatic madwoman. I then argue that we must re-define Ophélie's mental illness by studying these histories. We must use them to find specific symptoms in her text and music (and possibly create an overarching twenty-first-century diagnosis) to change how we portray women, and especially those with mental illness, on stage to better fit twenty-first century views on women, mental illness, and the patriarchy. In conclusion, by studying the history behind mad scenes, this dissertation elucidates how nineteenth-century composers used onstage madness to disempower women and how we, as twenty-first-century performers, directors, voice teachers, and vocal coaches, can legitimize Ophélie's mental illness and humanize her character.

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Introduction[1]

How many sopranos have we all seen lie on their backs with their heads dangling into the orchestra pit, parroting madness, scream-singing and tearing things in blood-soaked costumes with their hair down in disarray? And after these scenes, how often do we yell "Brava!" because of the exceptional singing, not because we connected with the character's distress? How many audience members with mental illness have ever watched an operatic mad scene and thought it was believable or relatable? To the first and second question, the answer is too many, while to the third, too few. While exquisite singing is important in opera, the composer wrote the music to tell a story—and that story came first. In other words, if all we are conveying to an audience is pretty singing, we are not doing our jobs as singing actors. This is particularly prevalent in operatic mad scenes, where the extremes of range, the necessity of vocal power and breath control, and virtuosity required for both slow legato and faster melismatic repertoire, often overshadow that which mad scenes should portray: an episode of mental instability.

One such scene is that of Charles Ambroise Thomas's (1811-1896) Ophélie in his 1868 *Hamlet*. Thomas is a name little discussed in the operatic world despite the fact that he was considered a very important composer of his time. There is not much scholarship written in the English language on him or on music during the mid-to-late nineteenth century; it is much more *à la mode* to discuss his predecessors, such as Hector Berlioz (1803-1869) and

[1] Content warning: this dissertation discusses women's mental illness, including beliefs surrounding hysteria and other mental illnesses from Ancient Egypt through the nineteenth century.

Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791-1864). Additionally, it is more common to hear French operas from before or after him, such as those by the previously stated composers as well as Georges Bizet (1838-1875), Jules Massenet (1842-1912), and Charles Gounod (1818-1893). However, of his many operas, two have made reappearances in the common repertory—*Mignon* (1866) and *Hamlet*. Thomas's disappearance from the operatic stage makes sense. As we will discover in Chapter 1, he wrote for the present, for his contemporary audience; he did not attempt to create a legacy for future generations of audiences. In fact, in crafting his Ophelia character (called Ophélie from here on to distinguish her from the Shakespearean Ophelia), Thomas and his librettists, Michel Carré (1822-1872) and Jules Barbier (1825-1901), alter the original Shakespearean character tremendously to better fit the expectations of their audience at the Opéra de Paris of 1868. Thomas wrote her music to emulate French grand opera and, for her mad scene in particular, *bel canto*. He expanded upon Ophélie's character, giving her the entirety of Act 4 for her mad and suicide scenes as well as giving her a duet with Hamlet in Act 1, an aria in Act 2, and a trio in Act 3, thus making her a leading lady instead of merely a wisp who enters the stage to fulfill the role of desirable object as she is in the Shakespeare. However, as we will see in Chapter 2, in crafting their Ophélie, Carré, Barbier, and Thomas also altered her mad scene, not just expanding upon it, but also changing the nature of her mental illness to better fit their audiences' understanding of nineteenth-century hysteria. Additionally, these changes fit in with centuries of modifications to better fit the audiences' evolving views of the ideal woman and women's mental illness as well as expectations of the actors, actresses, and prima donnas who played the character. These alterations show that Thomas, Carré, and Barbier were trying to create a character that their audience would empathetically connect with and understand.

I was originally introduced to the character of Ophelia in high school, when I was assigned the Shakespearean play my sophomore year. Because I was young, I could not understand why she became mad, and, therefore, I could not understand her or her plight. However, about six years later when I entered graduate school, I encountered Jake Heggie's (b. 1961) song cycle, *Songs and Sonnets to Ophelia* (1999). I was fortunate that one of the professors (and now, one of the advisors on my doctoral committee), Isabel Bayrakdarian, had premiered this cycle with Heggie at the piano and was therefore able to coach me on the intricacies of the music, specifically on acting the role of Ophelia. This sparked my intrigue in Ophelia's character and her gradual descent into madness. Professor Bayrakdarian said that Ophelia does not suddenly become mad, but begins the cycle just a "little off," as shown by the rhythmic syncopations (emphasized off beats) found in her first song. After this experience, I fervently sought out other musical depictions of Ophelia, and happened upon Ophélie's mad scene from Thomas's *Hamlet*. I instantaneously fell in love but knew my voice and acting skills were not developed enough to perform this aria in all its complexities and melismatic difficulties. As a result, I tried to find other musical examples of women such as Mary, Queen of Scots and the wives of Henry VIII, who were also driven to the edge of their mental capacity, often by the men in their lives.

Ultimately, I was always drawn back to my original character, Ophelia, and once again attempted to sing the Thomas. I began listening to and watching the best coloratura sopranos—Natalie Dessay, Lisette Oropesa, Maria Callas, Marlis Petersen, Joan Sutherland, Sabine Devielhe—perform, "*À vos jeux, mes amis...Pâle et blonde*," her mad scene. I then began observing these artists and others perform various operatic mad scenes, such as Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835) and Bellini's *I puritani* (1835). While each soprano

sang these mad scenes with gorgeous finesse, nearly flawless technique, and engaged acting, something was missing—the connections to historical performances and to contemporary views on mental illness. While many productions include sets and costumes meant to emulate the eras in which these stories took place, there was an absence of the historical knowledge that made these mad scenes so popular to nineteenth-century audiences. Additionally, there was a gap between what was occurring on stage and modern audiences' understanding (or, at least, my understanding) of an episode of psychosis. The discrepancy between contemporary staging, history, and an understanding of mental illness, along with my interest in singing, acting, and psychology, is what ultimately led me to research Thomas's Ophélie, the music that influenced his work, hysteria throughout history, and Ophelias throughout history. While not the most popular operatic mad scene, Ophélie was the ideal case study, primarily because of the long history of the character—originally written in 1600. This history displays a wealth of examples showing how impresarios created different versions of Ophelia to better cater to their contemporary audiences. What I discovered is that Thomas's Ophélie brings together the histories of *bel canto* and French grand opera and mid-nineteenth-century views on women's mental illness. Thomas uses these histories to alter Shakespeare's Ophelia and creates an Ophélie who is more relatable to his mid-nineteenth-century audience. Because Thomas's character was created to better fit the conventions of his time, I believe it is important that we, as scholars, directors, singing actors, voice teachers, and vocal coaches, should strive to make this role believable for our modern audiences. We must begin with the part that is least like our own modern beliefs: the mad scene.

Chapter 1

In Chapter 1, I will discuss how Thomas used musical tropes from early-to-mid-nineteenth-century Italy and France—especially elements of *bel canto*, French grand opera, and exoticism—to shape not only his opera, but the characterization of Ophélie and her descent into madness. While Thomas and Ophélie are not frequently discussed by scholars, research on *bel canto* mad scenes, French grand opera, and exoticism are quite prominent in scholarly literature. *Bel canto* opera, meaning "beautiful singing" in Italian, was a style of composition and of singing from the early-to-mid nineteenth century, usually applied to composers such as Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868), Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848), Vincenzo Bellini (1801-1835), and their contemporaries (but also sometimes their predecessors such as Mozart and Haydn).[2] This compositional style was actualized by "opera composers and star singers" who "collaborated to create compelling new vocal styles," including legato and difficult "lyrical melodies" as well as melismatic vocal ""fireworks.""[3] One of the most common practices of the *bel canto* tradition was to have two-part arias broken up by an interruption (sometimes recitative, chorus, a duet, large ensembles of prominent characters, etc), which changed the character's emotional viewpoint of what they had previously sung, thus creating a reason for the shift.[4] The two segments of the aria are called the *cavatina*—usually the more legato, "expressive melodious slow movement"—which is "followed usually by a fiery allegro (called the *cabaletta*) with virtuoso vocal effects and a climactic close."[5]

[2] Frisch, *Music in the Nineteenth Century*, 58.
[3] ibid., 58.
[4] Grout, *A Short History of Opera*, 356.
[5] ibid., 356.

Most important for this dissertation is that *bel canto* operas, and specifically those by Donizetti and Bellini, had several examples of mad scenes (*scena di pazzia*), which, like many other arias of the day, often consisted of multiple segments (usually the *cavatina-cabaletta* combination with embellishments and cadenzas). It was upon these mad scenes, and primarily that of Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, that Thomas based Ophélie's mad scene. He included three main sections in this mad scene—a recitative/arioso followed by a quick, flourishing waltz, finishing with a ballade section. Instead, this ballade ends with an extensive coda containing fast, melismatic vocal fireworks. Sound familiar? In the mad scene, we see what appears to be a double *cavatina-cabaletta*—a slow recitative/arioso section, followed by a faster waltz section, and then a slower ballade section, followed by a coda with faster melismatic material.

Chapter 1 will also explore how Thomas derived his overarching compositional style from French grand opera, specifically from Meyerbeer, and exoticism. French grand opera took place at the Opéra de Paris during the early-to-mid nineteenth century and consisted of five acts, grandiose choruses (sometimes featuring double choruses), ensembles, orchestras, and extravagant sets and costumes; yes, it was very grand indeed.[6] Additionally, grand operas were dramatic and tended to have politically inclined settings, such as stories of oppressors versus the oppressed. To distinguish operas at the Opéra de Paris from the competing Opéra-Comique, grand operas used recitatives in lieu of dialogues between the numbers.[7] Similar to the Shakespearean play and grand opera, Thomas's *Hamlet* is composed of five acts and contains recitative. Thomas also incorporated large ensembles, such as the Act 2 finale, and

[6] ibid., 315.
[7] ibid., 315.

grandiose arias to appease the Opéra audience's expectations. Also similar is the subject matter—a serious, historical, and, in some ways, a political subject.

Chapter 1 will go into further details about how Thomas borrowed from grand opera conventions and especially from Meyerbeer. One major part of nineteenth-century French opera that Thomas used specifically in Ophélie's mad scene is exoticism. According to music scholar, Ralph Locke,

> Musical exoticism is the process of evoking in or through music – whether that music is "exotic-sounding" or not – a place, people, or social milieu that is not entirely imaginary and that differs profoundly from the home country or culture in attitudes, customs, and morals…. More precisely, it is the process of evoking a place (people, social milieu) that is perceived as different from home by the people who created the exoticist cultural product and by the people who receive it.[8]

In French operatic conventions, exoticism focuses on non-Western, non-European people, and especially women, of color. Often, these women of color were overtly sexualized through their narrative as well as their music. By exoticizing Ophélie, who is a Scandinavian woman, Thomas others her—makes her seem different from the other characters on stage—during her mental crisis and ties her mental illness (her hysteria) to her sexuality.

Chapter 2

Views on women's mental illness and hysteria have also been researched by many scholars—especially by feminist scholars in the fields of literature and psychology. In Chapter 2, I will discuss these changing views on women's mental illness— particularly hysteria. I will preface this chapter by discussing the first known studies about hysteria in Ancient Egypt, Ancient Greece, and Ancient Rome, and will then continue with how hysteria morphed into witchcraft in the Middle Ages due to the turn from science to religion during

[8] Locke, *Musical Exoticism*, 47.

this period and, thus, the emphasis on virtue and abstinence. I will then examine the changes to views on women's mental illness, including hysteria and love melancholy—the disease with which many scholars believe Shakespeare's Ophelia was afflicted—during the Renaissance period, and specifically the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries.[9]

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was about sixteen years old when burning witches at the stake was outlawed in England and wrote his *Hamlet* more than twenty years later.[10] Although he lived well into the Renaissance period, his works are on the cusp between the Medieval beliefs that hysteria and women's mental illness are caused by the supernatural and the Renaissance views that the etiologies were believed to be more somatic and, eventually, neurologic. From here, I describe eighteenth-century views on women's mental illness, transitioning to France and how the Revolution of 1789 affected these beliefs, and concluding with nineteenth-century analyses of women's mental illness, especially in France. Although eighteenth-century studies on women's mental illness unquestionably affected versions of the play that were produced during that time, the nineteenth-century beliefs are the ones that affected Barbier, Carré, and Thomas's rendition of Ophélie the most. Of note, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition (also known as DSM-V) from the American Psychiatric Association (APA), which is the most recent version of the lists of psychiatric disorders, does not include hysteria as a mental illness anymore.[11] In the original DSM, hysteria's name was changed to Briquet's syndrome, and it was defined as a predominantly female disease, where women afflicted with it had "a plethora of complaints

[9] Showalter, "Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism," 81.
[10] Beizer, "Introduction," 5.
[11] American Psychiatric Association, American Psychiatric Association, and DSM-5 Task Force, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.*

lacking medical explanation or physiological basis. Their medical histories are often dramatic and complicated."[12] In the DSM-3 and -4, Briquet's syndrome's name was changed to somatization disorder, and the number of symptoms required to be diagnosed with it changed.[13] In the DSM-5, somatization disorder was removed completely.[14] As the DSM-5 was written in 2013, it is fair to say that hysteria is no longer a disease a contemporary audience would understand, as hysteria itself as well as the illnesses the APA had derived from it, are no longer diagnosable or a part of our lives.

Chapter 3

In Chapter 3, I cover the history of performances of Ophelia. I begin by discussing Ophélie's character as a basis upon which the others can be compared, then return to the beginning—the Shakespeare—proceeded by various versions of Ophelia from different centuries. This not only covers the changes to the character, which are quite vital, but also the changes in expectations of the people who performed the role. First, I will examine Christine Nilsson, the soprano who premiered the role at both the Opéra de Paris and eventually at Covent Garden in London, along with what made her Ophélie such a monumental success for Parisian audiences. Following will be a segment on the boy actors who played Ophelia during Shakespeare's time, continuing with the women actresses who were finally permitted to take the stage toward the end of the seventeenth century; the change from boy actors to women was very significant in the development of the role, as expectations surrounding the actresses created a very different dynamic with Ophelia's character than the boys. Finally, I

[12] North, "The Classification of Hysteria and Related Disorders."
[13] ibid.
[14] ibid.

consider the famous 1827 Parisian production of *Hamlet*, starring Berlioz's future wife, Harriet Smithson. Smithson was iconic, and Paris became obsessed with *Hamlet*, especially with Ophelia, even leading to changes in Parisian fashion; dressing like Smithson's Ophelia became a major trend in Paris. Smithson's Ophelia undoubtedly influenced Thomas, both because the popularity of the character possibly encouraged him to expand upon the Shakespearean Ophelia (especially her mad scene), and in how he chose Nilsson (who was not as well-known as Jean-Baptiste Fauré, the baritone he cast as the title role) to play Ophélie. However, in expanding Ophélie's role, Thomas also ensured his success with the Opéra's audiences because they demanded expansive and virtuosic prima donna roles. Finally, Chapter 3 discusses the relationship between the alterations made to Ophelias throughout the centuries and the evolving views regarding hysteria and women's mental illness, thus tying Chapters 2 and 3 together. In all, Thomas focused on aspects of *bel canto* and French grand opera to create an Ophélie who better fit the expectations of the Opéra audiences. He strove to please them via a more important prima donna role while still maintaining the authenticity of the original Shakespearean Ophelia. In doing so, he, Barbier, and Carré created their own nineteenth-century-appropriate version of Ophelia, thus falling in line with past impresarios who altered the Shakespearean Ophelia to better fit the demands of their ticket-buyers.

Chapter 4

Finally, Chapter 4 will merge the first three chapters by discussing how Thomas's goal of creating a mid-to-late-nineteenth-century Ophélie requires us as the performers of his music to make her believable and truthful to a twenty-first century audience. However, parts of Thomas's original Ophélie—such as the connection between her sexuality and her mental

illness, especially via exoticism—do not quite suit contemporary views on mental illness, therefore making them difficult to communicate with the audience. In other words, while a nineteenth-century audience may have associated Ophelia's character with exoticism, hysteria, and sexuality, twenty-first-century audiences would not make the same association. While it is important to understand that Thomas included these elements in Ophélie's mad scene, it does not help staging the character in this way because it won't necessarily make sense to the director, singing actor, or audience.

I will start by discussing acting techniques—or ways to truthfully embody and perform a character on stage—especially methods from acting teachers and scholars who have written about singing actors, such as David Ostwald and Westley Balk. These acting teachers (and many others) have written down some of the most commonly used exercises to train young actors for the stage. The greatest difference between singing actors (specifically, opera singers) and those actors who do not have to sing is we need to remember that, in most cases, singing comes first; therefore, we cannot compromise our instruments by crying, screaming out of tune, etc. while embodying a character. In the Shakespearean mad scene, it may make sense to cry, scream, or sing off key, but for the Thomas, the music comes first. While we must adhere to the music, opera singers are still primarily story-tellers, so we must explore ways to give the impression of an episode of mental illness while still adhering to the music. To continue this exploration, I will also discuss how to identify symptoms in the text and music of Ophélie and then how to play those symptoms on stage in a truthful and believable way. In using both Carré and Barbier's text and Thomas's music to find symptoms, we use the historical elements of the opera as a starting point from which we can forge a more

believable production for a modern audience.[15] Finally, as a singing actress who prefers to have a fuller character arc (meaning a fuller backstory and progression), I will discuss how I used these symptoms to diagnose Ophélie with brief psychotic disorder. While I am in no way a psychiatrist or psychologist, I find that knowing what theoretical mental illness may be plausible given the character's portrayed symptoms allows me to find more connections to this earlier in her story. This allows for a character arc that makes more sense to me regarding her full story and the reason for her mad and suicide scenes. The next section of the chapter is where I provide musical analyses of Ophélie's mad and suicide scenes. Here, I will correlate the symptoms with the text and music and give my own possible interpretations to humanize Ophélie during these scenes.

Many conservative teachers, coaches, conductors, and directors will argue that we should strive for authenticity pertaining to the period and should act a role as the composer and librettist would have wanted. However, in knowing the history of how and why the opera was written—especially knowing that Thomas, Barbier, and Carré so willfully changed and recreated Ophélie to allow their audience to understand and empathize with her—why would a director and singing actor of this opera choose this? Thomas, Barbier and Carré, created a realistic mad scene informed by nuances specific to their contemporary audience; their interpretation is characterized by the use of specific tropes distinct to other opera genres, expectations surrounding the evolving concept of hysteria, and past iterations of Shakespeare's Ophelia. Their version of Ophélie's mad scene falls in line with impresarios of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries who all altered Ophelia's character to better fit the beliefs and ideals of the audience during their eras—including expectations

[15] All translations of the text of *Hamlet* are by Nico Castel, with modifications by the author.

regarding the ideal woman and views on women's mental illness. As a result, we see a very tailored mid-to-late-nineteenth-century Ophélie. I argue that it is our job, as performers and directors of opera, to communicate with our audiences via more updated performances of her mad scene.

Chapter 1: *Bel canto*, French grand opera, and Thomas

Introduction

Operas respond to the social systems, political currents, and cultural values of the time and place in which they were composed. Thomas's *Hamlet* is no exception. This chapter will discuss the musical conventions from which Ambroise Thomas (1811-1896) drew upon when composing his 1868 *Hamlet*, particularly concentrating on the origin of the mad scene—emphasizing the *bel canto* tropes—and French grand opera. Thomas's goal in composing an operatic version of *Hamlet*, which is a combination of Shakespeare's original story and a product of its time, was to create a populist opera for his debut at the *Opéra de Paris*, where impresarios put on grand operas. Unlike composers such as Beethoven and Brahms who strove for enduring musical masterpieces, Thomas was not so concerned with writing long-lasting masterpieces that would be a part of the so-called musical museum.[16] Like most composers writing for the Paris opera, he wanted to compose an opera that current audiences and critics would thoroughly enjoy, understand, and want to play over and over again. As demonstrated by both *Hamlet* and Thomas's previous compositions, Thomas often wrote and rewrote operas depending on the tastes of the audience and even changed his operas to better suit different audiences. Thus, Thomas worked with his librettists—Jules Barbier and Michel Carré—to create a *Hamlet* that would best suit their audience at the *Opéra* by using the popular conventions of grand opera, especially those of Giacomo Meyerbeer, and by creating a mad scene for his Ophelia (Ophélie) using the conventions from the height of the mad scene—the *bel canto* period.

[16] Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, 8.

This chapter will begin by discussing Thomas and his compositions before his 1868 *Hamlet*. In the operas preceding *Hamlet,* Thomas had mostly composed for the *Opéra-Comique,* a competing opera house in Paris, which featured comedic opera with codified theatrical and musical expectations. To better fit the expectations of the *Opéra*, Thomas chose *Hamlet,* a seemingly irrefutable subject due to its popularity in Paris in the mid-1800s. The next part of this chapter will include a brief overview of the opera, particularly discussing changes Carré and Barbier made to the original Shakespearean work to better fit the expectations of their grand opera audience, including the use of large choruses including the enormous Act 2 finale and major changes to the content of the play. These changes include altering Shakespeare's original tragic ending into a *lieto fine,* or happy ending, modernizing the dialogue/recitative, changing personifications of the main characters, and, most importantly for this dissertation, composing a more substantial role for Ophélie. Thomas borrowed heavily from *bel canto* in several of his operas, including *Hamlet,* drawing inspiration from *bel canto* conventions to frame Ophélie's tragic demise. The term *bel canto,* meaning "beautiful singing" in Italian, has come to describe the vocal and dramatic practices of Italian opera of the early nineteenth century (about 1810-1840), particularly referring to operas by Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868) as well as composers who followed him, such as Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848) and Vincenzo Bellini (1801-1835).[17] In addition, Thomas, especially influenced by Meyerbeer, adopted French grand opera tropes in his composition of *Hamlet*—an attempt to create a sure-fire success for both his first grand opera composition and his *Opéra de Paris* debut. While the operatic mad scene had its origins in the seventeenth century, it reached the height of its form as a fully developed convention in the nineteenth

[17] Frisch, *Music in the Nineteenth Century*, 57–58.

century because of an obsession with mental illness, and especially hysteria, in Europe during this time (this will be discussed further in Chapters 2 and 3). My discussion of the *bel canto* traditions surrounding the mad scene will culminate in an explanation of how Thomas used these scenes as the basis of his mad scene for Ophélie.

In addition to *bel canto,* Thomas uses several features of French grand opera in his *Hamlet* to compose a piece he believed would be successful at the *Opéra*. The next section of this chapter will discuss the conventions of grand opera, focusing particularly on Meyerbeer and his use of the *bel canto* form in his music, including some mad scenes. It will also discuss the use of the ballade as a feature and a convention of grand opera. The ballade is particularly important in the context of Thomas's operatic mad scene, since he used it as a continuation of multiple conventions—those from Meyerbeer and grand opera and those in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. This section will then briefly discuss exoticism in European music, particularly in French opera during the nineteenth century. Exoticism is when European composers try to represent non-European (and often non-white) people, cultures, and places in music and art; I will discuss this in more detail later in this chapter, especially as it pertains to French opera and Thomas. As we will see in upcoming chapters, Ophélie is, in many ways, an archetype for the ideal woman as well as for the madwoman during Thomas's time. Part of what fulfills the latter archetype is Thomas's use of exotic-sounding music as part of her mad scene to other her and make her sound different both from what she sounded like earlier in the opera (before she was mad) and from the conventions used by the other characters.

Thomas's compositional history, as well as *Hamlet's* pronounced operatic conventions, demonstrate the composer's willingness to create operas that audiences would

understand and appreciate instead of creating something new or avant-garde, as was popular among his contemporaries. However, as we will see later in this thesis, he did not just use the music but also more contemporary beliefs on female mental illness and hysteria to create a more believable mad scene for a nineteenth-century Ophélie. Thus, in writing Ophélie's mad scene, Thomas used the *bel canto* and grand opera tropes to play into audience expectations both via the music and the text, ensuring that his contemporary audience connected with and understood her plight.

Ambroise Thomas

Charles Ambroise Thomas came from a musical family: his father played in the theatre orchestras of Metz, while his mother was an accomplished singer and music teacher.[18] Thus, it was not surprising that Thomas excelled at music. When he was younger, he played violin and piano, but in 1828, at the age of 17, Thomas went to Paris to enter the conservatoire where his brother was playing in the orchestra of the *Opéra de Paris*.[19] Thomas studied piano, harmony, and counterpoint and later became a composition student at the conservatoire.[20] In 1832, Thomas won the *Prix de Rome* on his second attempt at the competition.[21] Before winning the *Prix de Rome*, Thomas was mostly interested in Mozart and Beethoven's music, but, after he visited Rome, "he was overwhelmed by the Italian cantilena and its melodic traditions; [which] made such a profound impact and impression on him that he reflected that style in his subsequent compositions."[22] In 1835, he returned to

[18] Smith, "Thomas, (Charles) Ambroise."
[19] ibid.
[20] ibid.
[21] ibid.
[22] Fisher, 15-end. This is possibly due to his conservatory training. For more information on the impact of the musical museum, see Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*.

Paris and began composing operas. Between 1837 and 1843, he had eight operas performed, and all except two of them were *opéras comiques*.[23] In 1851, Thomas was elected to the *Académie des Beaux-Arts* and was chosen over such composers as Félicien David, Clapisson, Niedermeyer, and Hector Berlioz.[24] In the late 1850s, Thomas became a professor of composition at the Paris Conservatoire and oversaw its regional branches.[25] While Thomas is often eclipsed by Meyerbeer, Bizet, and Massenet today, he was a well-respected and popular composer during his time. Thomas wrote in an older style, but was also well known for the characters he created through his music and for his innovation in opera.[26]

Le Caïd, Thomas's second-most-performed opera, was written in 1849.[27] It had been staged an incredible three-hundred and sixty-two times at the *Opéra-Comique* by his death in 1896.[28] *Le Caïd* took place in French-colonial Algeria, which French colonists saw as a fascinating, highly exotic area to conquer and explore.[29] As a result of this French colonialist influence, Thomas also included some dramatic and musical exoticism in this piece, especially when representing Algerian characters. Exoticism, which was extremely popular in nineteenth-century French music and art due to their colonialist pursuits, is "a quality that links a work to some especially fascinating, attractive, or fearsome place: to an Elsewhere and, usually, to its inhabitants and their supposed inclinations and ways."[30] In using exoticism in his *Le Caïd,* Thomas continues the French operatic tradition but also

[23] Smith, "Thomas, (Charles) Ambroise."
[24] ibid.
[25] ibid.
[26] Fisher, 15-end.
[27] Smith, "Thomas, (Charles) Ambroise." and Fisher, *Thomas's Hamlet.* 15-end.
[28] ibid.
[29] ibid.
[30] Locke, *Musical Exoticism*, 1.

foreshadows his use of exoticism in his later operas, including *Mignon* and *Hamlet.*[31] Additionally, *Le Caïd* was heavily influenced by Italian *bel canto* style and, in particular, by Rossini.[32] Like Meyerbeer, Thomas's work was also shaped by Rossini and the *bel canto* style, which we will see later in his use of the *bel canto*-like mad scene he developed for Ophélie.

In 1866, Thomas wrote his most popular and most highly performed opera, *Mignon*, an *opéra comique*, which was based on Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*.[33] His co-librettists for this production were Michel Carré and Jules Barbier—the two librettists in charge of *Hamlet* as well as Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*. Together, Barbier, Carré, and Thomas changed Goethe's story to emphasize Mignon and intensify the love theme in their operatic version.[34] In Thomas's first iteration of the score, Mignon dies at the end of the opera. However, this was very unpopular with the audience, leading Thomas, Carré, and Barbier to change the ending after the first performance. In their version, instead of dying, Mignon realizes she is no longer a child, is reunited with her long-lost father, Lothario, and marries Wilhelm, all of which is contrary to Goethe's original.[35] Additionally, Thomas altered the score to give the coloratura soprano playing Philine a virtuosic aria at the beginning of Act 2.[36] When he took the opera to London for its premiere in 1870, he changed the dialogue, which he wrote to fulfill the expectations of the audiences at the *Opéra-*

[31] Smith, "Thomas, (Charles) Ambroise."
[32] Fisher, *Thomas's Hamlet.* 15-end.
For more information on the influence of Rossini and other *bel canto* composers on French opera of the nineteenth century, see Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera*.
[33] Smith, "Thomas, (Charles) Ambroise."
[34] Fisher, *Thomas's Hamlet.* 15-end and Smith, "Thomas, (Charles) Ambroise."
[35] Smith, "Thomas, (Charles) Ambroise."
[36] ibid.

Comique, to recitatives, which were more popular at Covent Garden.[37] He made similar changes (dialogue to recitatives) when he wrote an Italian version.[38] In total, there are four different versions of this opera, and, as we can see, Thomas made each change to please his new audience. Thomas's changes to popular stories harkens back to how Meyerbeer would alter his grand operas, including changing historical occurrences, based on the expectations of the *Opéra* audience.[39] We will also see this again in Thomas's *Hamlet*.

Additionally, *Mignon* includes Shakespearean references: Philine's virtuosic coloratura aria from Act 2 is "Je suis Titania," and, as the title suggests, she is pretending to be Titania, the Fairy Queen from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. To further the Shakespearean homages, Philine's acting troupe is preparing to put on a production of the above Shakespearean play in Act 1. This is not Thomas's only Shakespearean reference in his operatic repertoire; the most obvious is his *Hamlet*, but Thomas also wrote the *opéra-comique*, *Le songe d'une nuit d'été*.[40] While the name means *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, it is not an interpretation of this work but acts more as a combination of several of Shakespeare's plays.[41] Musicologist Richard Langham Smith explains that this opera in particular shows Thomas's ability to fuse several operatic styles of the day into one opera, including vocalise and melodrama, as well as his improvements in orchestration.[42]

Mignon also contains another important part of Thomas's writing: exoticism. Specifically, because Mignon is an orphan, does not know where her home is, and is a

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[37] ibid.
[38] Edwards, *The Lyrical Drama. Essays on Subjects, Composers, & Executants of Modern Opera.*, II:49.
[39] Cruz, "Laughing at History: The Third Act of Meyerbeer's 'L'Africaine,'" 31.
[40] Smith, "Thomas, (Charles) Ambroise."
[41] ibid.
[42] ibid.

vagabond, he uses what Smith calls "confectioned 'gypsy' music" to represent her as *other*, meaning different from Western culture—creating an "us" versus "them" complex.[43] Part of how Thomas did this was via voice type of the title role. Originally, Mignon, like many other exotic French heroines (such as Bizet's Carmen and Meyerbeer's Sélika), was written for a mezzo-soprano. Later in the nineteenth century, Thomas composed an alternate version of the role to suit the soprano, Christine Nilsson (1843-1921), as he was so pleased with her premiere of Ophélie.[44] In comparing the characterizations of two singing actors who performed Mignon—Nilsson and Madame Galli-Marié—nineteenth-century critic H. Sutherland Edwards says that "Mdme. Nilsson gives new beauty to the part by her wonderful singing, which was the one thing wanting in Mdme. Galli-Marié's very dramatic and picturesque performance at the *Opéra-Comique*."[45] However, Nilsson's performance "whether instinctively, or as the result of study, … reproduces the gaiety and the passion, tinged by a certain appropriate savagery, as well as the grace and sentiment of Mignon," thus making her performance more like the original Mignon in Goethe's Wilhelm-Meister than that of Galli-Marié's.[46] The use of the term "savage" to describe what Edwards calls a more "veritable" Mignon within itself shows how composers portrayed these "exotic" characters in their works; Mignon is not viewed as similar to other girls because of where she comes from. Additionally, to fit the more idealized exotic sound that French audiences expected, Thomas composed very simple and straightforward music for Mignon, both rhythmically and

[43] ibid.
[44] Edwards, *The Lyrical Drama. Essays on Subjects, Composers, & Executants of Modern Opera.*, II:46.
[45] ibid., 48.
[46] ibid.

melodically.[47] This is in direct contrast with the other, white leading lady—Philine's—music, which is written for coloratura soprano and is well known for its melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic complexity as well as its virtuosity and ornamentation.[48] In other words, because Mignon is a nomadic girl, Thomas likens her to the Romani musically and uses musically-exoticized stereotypes to portray her as Roma-like, thus making her other, different, and, as Edwards puts it, more savage. Exoticism was extremely popular in French opera, including grand opera, during this time. Meyerbeer exoticized several characters—usually women—in his grand operas, including two main characters—Sélika and Nelusko—in *L'Africaine*, and Thomas follows suit in the title role of his *Mignon*.[49] Thomas further uses exoticism to other Ophélie during her mad scene in *Hamlet*.

Both *Le songe d'une nuit d'été* and especially *Mignon* show several important components to Thomas's composition. First, he is clearly fascinated with Shakespeare and with important Romantic writers such as Goethe, both of whom were quite popular in France during this period.[50] Second, Thomas was known for changing his operas to please his singers and the audience. When he was moving his production to London, he changed the dialogue to recitative. When the audience didn't like a tragic ending, and wanted their *lieto fine*, he changed the opera's (and the original story's) ending to appease the audience. Third, Thomas purposefully *othered* the leading female character, Mignon, showing precedence for *othering* additional leading female characters in later productions, such as Ophélie in his *Hamlet*. Finally, he worked with his librettists to include a strong love theme and an

[47] Pasler, "Theorizing Race in Nineteenth-Century France," 487.
[48] ibid., 487.
[49] Locke, *Musical Exoticism*, 182–84; Cruz, "Laughing at History: The Third Act of Meyerbeer's 'L'Africaine,'" 47–48.
[50] Smith, "Thomas, (Charles) Ambroise."

important lead female character, not just to show off his singers, but also to appease his audiences who enjoyed the romance and expected the emphasis to be on leading ladies.[51]

Thomas's *Hamlet*

During Thomas's lifetime, *Hamlet* was viewed by contemporary critics and audiences as an extremely important opera. *Hamlet* was considered to be an *opéra lyrique*—a combination of French grand opera and *opéra-comique*. The blended genre provided more lyrical opera alongside a more serious subject matter than would be seen at the *Opéra-Comique*.[52] *Hamlet,* with a libretto by the dynamic duo, Jules Barbier (1825-1901)[53] and Michel Carré (1822-1872),[54] was first performed at the *Opéra de Paris* in 1868, two years after Thomas's spectacular success, *Mignon,* appeared at the *Opéra-Comique*.[55] After several successes at the *Opéra-Comique,* Thomas believed he was ready to try his quill at the *Opéra*.[56] To please the *Opéra* audience, Thomas followed Meyerbeer's grand opera formula: *Hamlet* had five acts, recitatives in lieu of *Opéra-Comique* dialogues, large ensemble numbers, preludes and entr'actes for scene changes, and a ballet divertissement in Act 4.[57] Thomas specifically chose *Hamlet* as the subject for his debut at the *Opéra* because of the popularity of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* since the 1827 version in Paris starring Harriet Smithson, thus making this story "beyond reproach."[58] However, he also changed the story to better fit the operatic tastes of the day as was common in French grand opera—especially

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[51] For more information on Ambroise Thomas, see: Masson, *Ambroise Thomas*.
[52] Kantack, "Romantic Musical Characterizations of Ophelia," 84.
[53] Smith, "Barbier, Jules."
[54] Smith, "Carré, Michel."
[55] Smith, "Thomas, (Charles) Ambroise."
[56] ibid.
[57] Kantack, "Romantic Musical Characterizations of Ophelia." 85.
[58] Smith, "Thomas, (Charles) Ambroise."

with Scribe and Meyerbeer.[59] Music critic Andrew Porter describes Thomas's version of *Hamlet* as "not exactly Shakespearean in spirit."[60] In fact, a critical response to *Hamlet* from the *Revue musicale* called the librettists "complacent" in creating a *Hamlet* so unlike Shakespeare's.[61] This critic said the artists had "'created their own Hamlet reduced to rhymes' to which Thomas had merely added a 'glou-glou bachique' ('Bacchich gurgling of liquor pouring from a bottle'), and that he had pandered to the current operatic taste for songs accompanied by the guitar or harp."[62] However, *Hamlet* was also considered to be an important opera during its time and was "the most popular piece premièred there [at the *Opéra*] in the second half of the nineteenth century."[63] What made the opera so popular were the singing actors who took on the roles of Ophélie—beginning with Christine Nilsson but also including several other important singers of the time, like Nellie Melba.[64]

To further ensure the opera's success, Thomas was very careful in his choices regarding casting. In lieu of the traditional tenor lead, Thomas opted for a very famous baritone—Jean-Baptiste Fauré (1830-1914)—for whom he composed the titular role.[65] Fauré was famous for such roles as Nélusko in Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine* and Méphisophélès in Gounod's *Faust*.[66] Additionally, as was Italian *bel canto* tradition (and, often, French grand opera tradition), Thomas wrote Ophélie as a virtuosic coloratura role for the rising Swedish

[59] Forbes, "Hamlet."
[60] Porter, "Translating Shakespeare Operas 2: Thomas's 'Hamlet,'" 642.
[61] Smith, "Thomas, (Charles) Ambroise."
[62] ibid.
[63] Charlton, *The Cambridge Companion to Grand Opera*, 307.
[64] Edwards, *The Lyrical Drama. Essays on Subjects, Composers, & Executants of Modern Opera.*, II:307–8.
[65] Forbes, "Faure, Jean-Baptiste."
[66] Porter, "Translating Shakespeare Operas 2: Thomas's 'Hamlet,'" 640.

soprano Christine Nilsson,[67] who had just made her *Théâtre-Lyrique* debut as Violetta in Verdi's *La traviata* in 1864.[68] In addition to Violetta, Nilsson had sung Pamina from Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* at the *Théâtre-Lyrique* in 1865; she made her Paris *Opéra* debut with Ophélie and went on to perform Marguerite in Gounod's *Faust* in 1869.[69] After her supreme successes as Ophélie and Marguerite, Nilsson left the *Opéra* and became an international superstar.[70] Because Nilsson was known for her coloratura, this gave Thomas a chance to write an "emotionally charged line, and high register display" into her mad scene to help create her musical madness on stage.[71] The use of coloratura as a representation of madness is very clearly derived from the *bel canto* style of mad scene.

The voice types for other characters in *Hamlet* were as follows: Gertrude was played by a mezzo-soprano (a tour-de-force role with an Act 2 arioso, a duet with Claudius, Act 3 trio with Ophélie and Hamlet, and Act 3 duet with Hamlet via the closet scene) played by famous mezzo-soprano Christine Guyemard, who sang Eboli in Verdi's *Don Carlo* (1867);[72] King Claudius was a bass (another enormous role, including an Act 3 aria and a substantial presence in the Act 2 finale); Hamlet a baritone (4 arias in total, huge role in the Act 2 finale, multiple duets and trios); Ophélie a coloratura soprano (an act 1 duet with Hamlet, an aria in Act 2, a trio with Hamlet and Gertrude in Act 3, and the entirety of Act 4 comprising the mad scene and suicide); Polonius a bass (smaller role); Laerte a tenor (including an aria much like that of Valentin from Gounod's *Faust* in Act 1 and then the duel with Hamlet in Act 5 when

[67] Forbes, "Nilsson, Christine (Opera) [Kristina]."
[68] Porter, "Translating Shakespeare Operas 2: Thomas's 'Hamlet,'" 640.
[69] ibid.
[70] ibid.
[71] Smith, "Thomas, (Charles) Ambroise."
[72] Porter, "Translating Shakespeare Operas 2: Thomas's 'Hamlet,'" 640.

he tries to avenge his sister's death); and the old King Hamlet, a bass (smaller role but with very eerie music in Act 1). Compared to her Shakespearean role, the operatic Ophélie has significantly more stage time, including her Act 2 aria, which acts as a monologue outside of her mad scene. Musically speaking, each main character was given at least one aria and a chance to shine in either a duet or a trio. Additionally, as music scholar Jerri Lamar Kantack points out, "the entire opera, especially "Ophélie's Mad Scene," contains lilting, repetitious rhythms in compound meters, French declamatory recitative, and Scandinavian motifs."[73] These Scandinavian motifs include Ophélie's ballade, "*Pâle et blonde*," in her mad scene, which was based on Nilsson's favorite Nordic song.[74] Nineteenth-century audiences appreciated this mad scene most of any part of the opera and even suggested the opera should have been titled "Ophélie" instead of "Hamlet" because of the importance of Ophélie's role.[75]

Regarding the libretto, Barbier and Carré made several major changes to the original Shakespearean text, partially because they needed to condense the enormous, five-act play to create a three-hour opera but also based on expectations of the nineteenth century. First and foremost, as was done with *Mignon,* the librettists and composer changed Hamlet's ending to a *lieto fine*. This transition is significant as the *lieto fine* was no longer a common practice of the *Opéra* during this era. In this version (which follows the translation by Alexandre Dumas of 1847), the Ghost of the old King Hamlet appears, becomes visible to everyone, and proclaims Claudius guilty. Hamlet then kills King Claudius and is crowned king to the

[73] Kantack, "Romantic Musical Characterizations of Ophelia," 85.
[74] Duersten-Pettit, "Madness and Rage: Coloraturas on the Edge," 34.
[75] Edwards, *The Lyrical Drama. Essays on Subjects, Composers, & Executants of Modern Opera.*, II:50; Hartnoll, *Shakespeare in Music*, 168.

chorus singing "*Vive Hamlet! notre roi!*" [Long live Hamlet, our king!][76] Parisian audiences and critics who went to see Thomas's *Hamlet* accepted the happy ending, especially because they came to see the famous Jean-Baptiste Fauré in the titular role in which he had spectacular success. There were at least 100 performances of *Hamlet* at the *Opéra* alone in Thomas's lifetime, showing its popularity.[77]Again, as they did with *Mignon*, Barbier, Carré, and Thomas created another version of *Hamlet* for a different audience at Covent Garden, including the more Shakespearean tragic ending, where Hamlet dies in the end.[78] This shows how they were very aware of their audiences as well as local preferences, knew what the audiences expected and wanted, and worked to avoid criticism of their opera.

In fact, we also see this in Barbier and Carré's choice to remove the bawdiness of the play, especially in reference to Hamlet and Ophélie.[79] Music critic Andrew Porter even describes the changes to the relationship between Hamlet and Ophélie in the following way: "The French adaptors [Barbier and Carré] stressed the love interest; at the heart of their work lie Hamlet's deep and true love for Ophelia, her all-consuming love for him, and his and her despair when circumstances end the idyll and drive them apart."[80] In other words, as Carré, Barbier, and Thomas changed *Mignon* to emphasize the romantic aspects, they removed the bawdiness in *Hamlet* to create a stronger love story between Hamlet and Ophélie, thus giving

[76] Forbes, "Hamlet."
[77] ibid.
[78] However, this version of the opera was never seen at Covent Garden and has never been found in the Metropolitan Opera scores. Some scholars speculate that it was used in Germany, but many are unsure as to where this version was used—Porter, "Translating Shakespeare Operas 2: Thomas's 'Hamlet.'"
In their 2010 production, the Metropolitan Opera decided to use this tragic ending—Claurier and Leiser, *Hamlet*.
[79] Lamb, "And Then There's Ambroise Thomas."
[80] Porter, "Translating Shakespeare Operas 2: Thomas's 'Hamlet,'" 642.

the audience of the *Opéra* more of what they wanted to see. This is particularly relevant to Ophélie's mad scene, where, instead of her mental breakdown being due to her father's death, which was removed from the opera, "Ophélie's mind and heart are broken by Hamlet's rejection of her."[81] In addition, Thomas's librettists completely changed the Shakespearean songs for Ophélie's mad scene because they considered them to be "unsuited" to the opera and to the nineteenth-century audience—especially regarding the bawdy songs.[82] They decided upon an extended scena, including a waltz and a ballade for Ophélie "in which her madness and suicide are portrayed by increasing coloratura excursions."[83] As we will see later in this chapter and again in Chapter 4, the ballade is quite meaningful, both in terms of the Shakespearean Ophelia and in terms of French grand opera. Thus, the use of a ballade communicates core meaning to nineteenth-century audiences, especially those attending the *Opéra*.

The melody of Ophélie's ballade returns in her suicide scene, where it is first hummed by an offstage chorus, representing the Wilis from the story she sings in her ballade. Wilis are Siren-like spirits of women who die of heartbreak before they can be married; in the legends, Wilis would rise out of their graves and lure men into the woods, where they would make them dance themselves to death.[84] In her suicide scene, Ophélie then completes the melody that the off-stage chorus begins, thus sealing her fate. She concludes the scene singing Hamlet's and her love duet from Act 1. As we can see, Ophélie's mad scene is rife with Thomas's borrowing techniques from previous successful composers—especially

[81] Kantack, "Romantic Musical Characterizations of Ophelia," 86.
[82] Smith, "Thomas, (Charles) Ambroise."
[83] ibid.
[84] Forbes, "Hamlet"; Castel et al., *French Opera Libretti*, 430.

Donizetti and Meyerbeer. This again shows his devotion to past composers and current audiences' tastes when writing his opera. Musicologist Elizabeth Forbes states that "it was undoubtedly the mad scene that ensured the opera's popularity during the 19th century" because of the interest in madness that pervaded nineteenth-century audiences.[85]

In comparison to grand opera, Porter describes *Hamlet* as a "surprisingly intimate," albeit still very grand, opera.[86] While Barbier and Carré included some large-crowd choral spectacles, the *Opéra* was known for demanding massive spectacle, such as the coronation scene in Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète*, to fulfill its audiences' expectations.[87] Thus, following in Meyerbeer's and Scribe's footsteps, Barbier, Carré, and Thomas included several enormous chorus scenes, including the very beginning of Act 1—Claudius' and Gertrude's wedding and coronation, which is similar in grandiosity to the coronations of *Le Prophète* and Verdi's *Don Carlo*—and the Act 2 finale's massive chorus and septet after the Gonzago play scene. The end of Act 5 is also an enormous ensemble scene. The Ghost of the Old King Hamlet reappears and orders Gertrude to go to a nunnery; then, Hamlet kills Claudius, and the Ghost declares Hamlet the rightful king.[88] The opera closes with the chorus singing "*Vive Hamlet! notre Roi!*" in another large ensemble number.[89] Thomas also included an off-stage chorus singing Ophélie's ballade on a vocalise during Ophélie's suicide scene, acting as the Wilis welcoming her to the world of the dead.[90] In addition, as was the expectation in France, Act 4, which encompasses Ophélie's mad and suicide scenes, also includes an extended ballet via

[85] Forbes, "Hamlet."
[86] Porter, "Translating Shakespeare Operas 2: Thomas's 'Hamlet,'" 642.
[87] ibid.
[88] ibid.
[89] ibid.
[90] See Chapter 4 for more details.

an Entr'acte at the beginning of the act before her mad scene and another shorter ballet between her mad and suicide scenes.[91] While Thomas made sure to include massive choruses and ballets, he did not include any Meyerbeerian multiple choruses, and Act 3 has no choruses at all, which is unusual for the *Opéra* and grand opera in general.[92]

In the next sections of this chapter, I will discuss the development of the mad scene, focusing on its use in *bel canto* operas to show how Thomas used the *bel canto* style and mad scene tropes to form Ophélie's mad scene in his *Hamlet*. After, I will explain French grand opera, focusing on the pinnacle of the genre—Meyerbeer—and will discuss how Thomas borrowed from Meyerbeer and grand opera traditions to create what he believed would be a certain success for his *Opéra* debut.

Bel canto and the origin of mad scenes

The epitome of mad scenes in opera are those of the *bel canto* period of the early 1800s, and, more specifically, the famous mad scene for the title character in Gaetano Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835). Music historian Stephen Willier defines mad scenes as when a character, usually a soprano heroine, portrays a mental collapse on stage.[93] Symptoms found in mad scenes include hallucinations, delusions, amnesia, somnambulism (sleep-walking), and generally irrational behavior. While the most well-known mad scenes are those from the *bel canto* period, Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643) was the first composer to write a mad scene, his first being "La finta pazza Licori," or "The Feigned Madwoman

[91] Porter, "Translating Shakespare Operas 2: Thomas's 'Hamlet.'" 642.
[92] ibid.
[93] Willier, "Mad Scene (Fr. Scène de Folie; Ger. Wahnsinnszene; It. Scena Di Pazzia)."

Licoris."[94] In the early modern era, like in the *bel canto* period, mad scenes were written for women, indicating that madness or hysteria was a woman's disease and would be shown as such even in the 1620s.[95] However, unlike in the *bel canto* period, early modern composers like Monteverdi wrote mad scenes as recitatives rather than arias. Music scholar Martha M. Duersten-Pettit explained how in 1627, Monteverdi wrote letters to his librettist Giulio Strozzi, "describing how he wanted the poetry to be written and his plan to create music that would imitate the madness of the text. This included the expression of rapidly changing moods and ideas that could translate into strong and frequent musical contrasts suggesting instability."[96]

Additionally, during Monteverdi's time, mad scenes were often regarded as comedic, unlike their tragic *bel canto* counterparts, and were, thus, featured in comic operas.[97] These mad scenes for women in comic operas contrasted with the lament—a favorite device composers used for a heroine in distress during the early modern era. Laments often featured a descending tetrachord and were associated with the tragedy of losing a lover, which is more similar to the *bel canto* mad scene trope.[98] The shift from lament to mad scene portrays male views on how they believed women reacted to losing their lovers; these views follow the trajectory of theories of women's mental illness from the seventeenth into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—from love-melancholy (laments and Shakespeare's Ophelia) to hysteria

[94] The opera itself was lost and possibly never finished. Carter and Chew, "Monteverdi [Monteverde], Claudio." and Duersten-Pettit, "Madness and Rage: Coloraturas on the Edge," 4.
[95] In Chapter 2, I will discuss the associations between hysteria and femininity in different eras.
[96] Duersten-Pettit, 4–5.
[97] Willier.
[98] ibid.

(Thomas's Ophélie). Two of the most famous examples of a lament are "Lamento d'Arianna" from *Arianna* by Monteverdi (1608)[99] and "Dido's Lament" from Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* (1689).[100] Both featured the descending tetrachord in the bassline, an aural cue for the audience that the singer was about to perform a lament, as well as long legato lines for the singer. Lament texts focused on a woman mourning abandonment by her lover (such as a man of whom her father does not approve). Additionally, the texts emphasize the heroine's shame of losing her virginity to this lover, only to be left by him in the end. For example, in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, Dido is the queen of Carthage who has sworn never to marry, especially not an outsider, in order to protect her people from outside influence. However, she then falls in love with Aeneas (a Trojan warrior), and they have an affair, thus allowing her to break her vow of chastity. Aeneas is then called by the gods to go protect his homeland, thus leaving Dido alone. At the end of the opera, after Dido and Aeneas have consummated their love and he has abandoned her, Dido sings her lament, asking to be remembered but for everyone to forget her fate (her shame), and then she kills herself. We will see a common thread in the *bel canto* period because mad scenes are often caused by a lost lover; abandonment leads to the woman's insanity in lieu of her grief.

During the eighteenth century, there was a decrease in mad scenes, with some exceptions such as Elettra's mad scene in Mozart's *Idomeneo* (1781). Like earlier laments, Elettra's mad scene occurs because she has lost hope of marrying Idamante, the man whom she loves, because Idamante has chosen to marry Ilia, and Idamante's father has approved. The loss of her chosen love interest sends Elettra into an emotional spiral, including feats of

[99] Carter and Chew, "Monteverdi [Monteverde], Claudio."
[100] Price, "Dido and Aeneas."

coloratura. Mozart also included two mad scenes in his opera *La finta giardiniera* (1775), which he used to get the characters out of "an unmanageable dramatic situation."[101] The use of a lost lover as the main cause for a woman's madness becomes a repeatedly used trope in the nineteenth century, when the female mad scene becomes much more popular. Specifically, the use of coloratura as part of mad scenes as a representation of madness and feminine excess became more strongly correlated in the nineteenth century.[102]

Mad scenes decreased in popularity during the eighteenth century only to resurge in the *bel canto* period—a trend that Stephen Willier attributes to the fact that composers started depicting women to be more sensible in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[103] To make women's reactions more "sensible," late eighteenth-century librettists and composers crafted mad scenes with the following pattern; a young woman's father prevents her from choosing her own husband, and she either believes him to be dead, lost, or unfaithful to her, causing her to become mad or hysterical (or, as Willier says, "unhinged").[104] This is first seen in the Nina story with operatic interpretations by Dalayrac from 1786 and a more popular version by Paisiello from 1789.[105] The most famous and notorious version of this pattern is that of Lucia di Lammermoor—both in Walter Scott's novel and in Donizetti's opera. Ophelia's own story is quite similar to this one, especially in the play, since Polonius does not approve of Hamlet as Ophelia's future husband in the original Shakespeare, and Hamlet's rejection

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[101] Willier, "Mad Scene (Fr. Scène de Folie; Ger. Wahnsinnszene; It. Scena Di Pazzia)."
[102] In Chapter 3, we will see how the eighteenth century was particularly concerned with the *gallante* and with the portrayal of the ideal woman on stage via their treatment of Ophelia on stage. We will also see the connection between this idea of the ideal woman and the changing tone regarding beliefs in hysteria start coming to a head in the eighteenth century in Chapter 2.
[103] Willier, "Mad Scene (Fr. Scène de Folie; Ger. Wahnsinnszene; It. Scena Di Pazzia)."
[104] ibid.
[105] ibid.

and her humiliation result in her madness. This trend will be explored further in Chapters 2 and 3, which will show the strong correlation between both the theories of hysteria during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Chapter 2), the depictions of Ophelia during this same time period (Chapter 3), and ultimately Thomas's mad scene in his 1868 *Hamlet* (Chapter 4).

In the early 1800s, there was a surfeit of mad scenes, especially those composed for women and especially in Italy and France. Some famous mad scenes of the *bel canto* era include those of the title role in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835), Elvira in Vincenzo Bellini's *I puritani* (1835 at the *Théâtre-Italien* in Paris),[106] and the title role in Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* (1830).[107] Composers of *bel canto* focused on long legato lines as well as long, difficult, melismatic passages. This period, which starts about twenty years after the beginning of the French Revolution in 1789, was wrought with fear of uprising, which resulted in government censorship. Thus, keeping citizens afraid of and loyal to the government and women in a subservient role to the patriarchy were quite prominent during this period.[108] Rebellious mad women like Walter Scott's and Donizetti's Lucia, who went against her brother's wishes and was in a relationship with her brother's sworn enemy, were terrifying, both to men and to the state who wanted to control these defiant women.[109]

Beyond stage representations, what we would call mental illness itself today was also a form of entertainment in Europe beginning in the seventeenth century and extending well into the nineteenth century.[110] According to musicologist Mary Ann Smart, "it is of course

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[106] Maguire, Forbes, and Budden, "Puritani, I."
[107] Grout, *A Short History of Opera*, 356.
[108] We will see this feature quite prominently in Chapters 2 and 3 when discussing nineteenth-century views on hysteria and depictions of Ophelia and other madwomen.
[109] Smart, "The Silencing of Lucia," 120-121.
[110] Parr, "Melismatic Madness: Coloratura and Female Vocality in Mid Nineteenth-Century French and Italian Opera," 169.

hardly surprising that, in a period when visits to insane asylums were a popular entertainment, artistic representations of madness proliferated; or that, in keeping with their function as entertainment, such representations accentuated the aesthetic qualities of the affliction."[111] In other words, it was common for people who lived in the 1820s to go to insane asylums like people now go to the zoo or to the movies: it was a source of entertainment to see people who were mentally ill. The most famous example of this was London's Bedlam, where visitors beginning in the 1670s and through the nineteenth century would pay a small entrance fee to go into the asylum and watch the patients, who were put on display for the paying viewers' entertainment.[112] This also occurred in the Salpêtrière, the public asylum for female patients in Paris. At the Salpêtrière, there "was a regular haunt of bourgeois looking for entertainment on Sunday afternoons. As at Bedlam, patients were on display for visitors."[113] In each case, the male and female patients were treated as objects of the gaze and not as subjects, leading to an almost voyeuristic approach to viewing the women in particular, which was heightened by hysteria's association with female sexuality. In fact, visual artists of the time imitated their perceived reality and often depicted a male audience viewing scantily clad madwomen, strengthening the male gaze, and taking power from the sexually threatening madwoman, thus celebrating madness while containing its threat.[114]

Nineteenth-century mad scenes were not all that different from reality and visual art in the case of voyeuristic audiences. In fact, audiences were drawn to mad scenes because they longed to see beautiful women, such as Christine Nilsson, perform mad scenes on stage,

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[111] Smart, "The Silencing of Lucia," 121.
[112] Parr, "Melismatic Madness: Coloratura and Female Vocality in Mid Nineteenth-Century French and Italian Opera," 170.
[113] ibid., 171.
[114] Smart, "The Silencing of Lucia," 121.

partially due to the unbelievable feats of vocal and emotional drama the singer accomplished.[115] Part of what made mad scenes so popular was the use of melismatic singing, or coloratura. Coloratura and mad scenes were so strongly connected because of the history of this type of singing. In fact, coloratura was used by composers and singers throughout history for two main reasons — it required "the highest vocal prowess," including "athletic vocalizing, range extensions, pristine intonation, articulatory precision, and superb breath control."[116] More importantly for this dissertation, it was also associated with "pure, intense emotion. Wordless vocalises can imbue one syllable with a variety of affects: joyful abandon, intense rage, and perhaps most famously, madness."[117] Using coloratura to portray madness allowed for singers and actors to show off great talent and virtuosity, which can be seen through feats of extended coloratura and high tessituras beginning in the early nineteenth century. Viewing mad women on stage was a part of the entertainment business; madness sold tickets both because of the intrigue surrounding it in the nineteenth century and because of the intensity of how composers wrote these scenes. In Chapter 3, we will see how the interest in madness came to a head with the Ophelia craze in Paris in the 1820s. In the 1827 Abbot production of *Hamlet* at the Odéon theatre in Paris, Harriet Smithson made her mark as Ophelia in the Shakespearean play, and she was especially famous for her mad scene.[118] Because of the intrigue around madness, the Ophelia craze, and the theatrical and vocal virtuosity allowed by the freedom of a mad scene, mad scenes sold tickets for operas, thus making them what composers wrote and what impresarios put on stage.

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[115] Parr, "Melismatic Madness: Coloratura and Female Vocality in Mid Nineteenth-Century French and Italian Opera," 141.
[116] ibid., 22.
[117] ibid.
[118] Wechsler, "Performing Ophelia," 202.

Unsurprisingly, the "great age of the mad scene began in the 1820s"—around the same time as when Harriet Smithson made her iconic Ophelia debut in Paris.[119] There were two common tropes of madness—sleepwalking and hysteria.[120] The former, also known as somnambulism, was used by multiple composers to create several mad heroines. Two of the most famous are Amina from Bellini's *La sonnambula* (1831) and Lady Macbeth from Verdi's *Macbeth* (1847).[121] Each of these characters presented with wandering in both mind and body (resulting in the somnambulism).[122] For Amina, the somnambulism was caused by distress from losing her lover, while for Lady Macbeth it was caused by guilt over the murder of the old king. Each somnambulism was presented slightly differently musically; Bellini painted Amina's somnambulism and disturbed state through "the abandonment of melodic periodicity," while Verdi created "unfocussed tonalities" for Lady Macbeth's disturbed mind.[123] In other words, Bellini created Amina's somnambulism through disturbances in musical form, while Verdi coaxed Lady Macbeth's out of blurred tonality within her sleepwalking scene. Both loss of form and unclear tonality create a sense of unease and unearthliness, representing disturbances of the mind and distance from consciousness. Additionally, the coloratura they both sing during their sleepwalking scenes "take (sic) on a dramatic-psychological quality, its range and speed suggesting vulnerability and instability."[124]

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[119] Willier, "Mad Scene (Fr. Scène de Folie; Ger. Wahnsinnszene; It. Scena Di Pazzia)."
[120] ibid.
[121] Grout, *A Short History of Opera*, 357; Hartnoll, *Shakespeare in Music*, 158.
[122] Willier, "Mad Scene (Fr. Scène de Folie; Ger. Wahnsinnszene; It. Scena Di Pazzia)."
[123] ibid.
[124] ibid.

Extremes in range for high coloratura sopranos—specifically, notes above C6—were not often used before the mid-nineteenth century.[125] However, beginning in the early- to mid-nineteenth century with new developments in vocal techniques, singers began including notes from the whistle, or flageolet, register into their ornaments of the *bel canto* repertory.[126] As a result, "In the nineteenth century, particularly in Paris, audiences flocked to hear sopranos with supersonic high notes," thus making high tessituras very popular in *bel canto*-style compositions for coloratura.[127] Because of this popularity, composers portrayed madness via extremely high tessituras for their soprano heroines, both because it was popular with the audience, and because it represents screaming and loss of control, thus acting as the opposite of the lower voices of men. Instead of being within normal speaking range, mad scenes are set extremely high, made even more striking when interrupted by male voices, which are much lower. Most mad scenes in the *bel canto* repertory contain D6 or E flat 6; Ophélie's extends further with an E6 at the end of the scene.

In both France and Italy, this change in the definition of coloratura soprano was accompanied by a split "between singers who specialize in coloratura and those who specialize in volume," also known as light or coloratura sopranos versus dramatic or spinto sopranos.[128] Until the mid-nineteenth-century, there was no "distinction between "light soprano" and "dramatic soprano.""[129] Thus, most sopranos before this era, and even well into

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[125] Parr, "Melismatic Madness: Coloratura and Female Vocality in Mid Nineteenth-Century French and Italian Opera," 51.
There are exceptions to this rule, such as Mozart's Königin der Nacht from his 1791 *Die Zauberflöte*, who famously sings up to an F6.
[126] ibid., 52–53.
[127] ibid., 54.
[128] ibid., 22.
[129] Edwards, *The Lyrical Drama*, I:250.

the *bel canto* periods and Thomas's time, sang all roles equally and did not choose roles depending on *fach* or voice type. However, the distinction between light (coloratura) and loud (dramatic) singers led to certain singers being cast in and performing certain roles later. For example, Ophélie is now considered to be a light, high coloratura role. Christine Nilsson, who originated the role, also sang Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte* (considered a lyric soprano role), the title role in Thomas's *Mignon* (a mezzo-soprano role), and even Elsa in Wagner's *Lohengrin* (a dramatic soprano role).[130] Today, while there may be some overlap between Pamina and Ophélie, the idea of singing Elsa and Ophélie in the same career would be almost unthinkable because of the distinction between the more dramatic sound required to sing Wagner and the high *tessitura* and agility required by Ophélie.

Willier points out that mad scenes also typically involved quite a bit of coloratura and melismatic writing and were commonly accompanied by an obbligato wind instrument, usually the flute or English horn.[131] Additionally, the use of vocalises—defined as a "textless vocal exercise or concert piece to be sung to one or more vowels" (often on "ah")—the lack of words, and the extended coloratura embody the inability for the victim of this madness to speak in the language of the patriarchy.[132] The high, wordless screams are part of what denotes madness, and they help the audience understand what is happening on stage.

Furthermore, singing acts as a liberation of femininity and feminine sexuality, especially when it is placed in the context of speech. The use of the extremes of singing (very high *tessitura* and melismatic passages on vocalises) seem even further from speech, more

[130] Driscoll, "Another View: Christine Nilsson."
[131] ibid.
[132] Jander, "Vocalise."

excessive and, thus, Leslie Dunn argues, more "feminine."[133] For example, Bellini wrote a mad scene for Imogene in his opera *Il pirata* from 1827, where her outbreaks of coloratura were used during the worst episodes of her mental illness, thus showing the tie between vocalises, melismas, and madness.[134] While Thomas's *Hamlet* was written about forty years after both the explosion of the mad scene in Italy and Smithson's iconic Paris debut, his Ophélie is related to features of both of these popular productions. In fact, he utilizes quite a few of these *bel canto* techniques, including the extremely high *tessitura*, the vocalises, and melismas. However, Ophélie's mad scene is most similar to that of Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

In Lucia's mad scene, like in other *bel canto* mad scenes, Lucia's coloratura is the highest, longest, and most difficult as compared to the rest of her role.[135] Coloratura acts outside of the limits of periodic structure and the regularity of tonal harmonies (everything leading to the tonic), thus allowing for the illusion of spontaneity.[136] Form and tonality were extremely important to the construction of *bel canto* operas and were, therefore, used strictly by their composers, like Donizetti, to create the ambience expected by their critics and paying audience members.[137] As a result, the breakdown of form and tonality imply a breakaway from societal structure and in *bel canto* operas, this often alluded to madness.[138] Thus, when the form of Amina's somnambulist scene begins feeling off and tumbles apart, and when the form of Lucia's mad scene goes against the norm, their respective composers

[133] Dunn, "Ophelia's Songs in Hamlet: Music, Madness, and the Feminine."
[134] Willier, "Mad Scene (Fr. Scène de Folie; Ger. Wahnsinnszene; It. Scena Di Pazzia)."
[135] Smart, "The Silencing of Lucia," 128.
[136] ibid.
[137] ibid. 124–25.
[138] ibid., 131.

are using the breakdown of form—what the audience is used to hearing when listening to opera—to represent the breakdown of the mind.

Lucia di Lammermoor is based on Walter Scott's novel, *The Bride of Lammermoor*, which was the source of many operatic mad scenes, beginning with Carafa's 1829 *Le nozze di Lammermoor*.[139] Unlike in the remainder of Lucia's role, Donizetti utilized the extremes of vocal virtuosity via extended coloratura, an exceptionally high *tessitura*, and an obbligato glass harmonica—an instrument that creates eerie sounds like that of playing wine glasses—in Lucia's mad scene. During the nineteenth century, it was a common belief that playing the glass harmonica supposedly made the listener and player go insane, thus making it an ideal instrument to represent the soprano's mind in a mad scene.[140] However, because the glass harmonica is more difficult to find, Donizetti also wrote an obbligato line for flute for Lucia's mad scene. While the flute is not as eerie as the glass harmonica, it continues the tradition of the high-lying woodwind instrument representing the madwoman's turbulent mind.[141] The use of the obbligato instrument not only symbolizes the mind separated from the body but often also symbolizes aural hallucinations in addition to other symptoms presented by the librettist, composer, and actor.[142] Indeed, Smart argues that in the case of Lucia, the flute acts as "the uncanny presence of a hallucinated voice, perhaps taking the place of Edgardo in a duet texture."[143]

Thomas made his mad scene for Ophélie quite similar in form and style to that of Lucia. As I mentioned earlier, he used the high *tessitura* and extended coloratura in his mad

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[139] Willier, "Mad Scene (Fr. Scène de Folie; Ger. Wahnsinnszene; It. Scena Di Pazzia)."
[140] ibid.
[141] ibid.
[142] For more information on this, see Chapters 4 and 5.
[143] Smart, "The Silencing of Lucia," 129.

scene as was common in many *bel canto*-style mad scenes, but he also created multiple distinct sections of Ophélie's mad scene, which clearly referenced the sections of Lucia's, including a French stylized version of the cavatina leading into the cabaletta. While Thomas did not necessarily include an obbligato instrument and made no use of the glass harmonica, he featured the flute and other high woodwind instruments quite frequently in Ophélie's mad scene. These instruments often foreshadow what Ophélie is about to sing or repeat Ophélie, creating a call and response or an echo between Ophélie and the instruments. In so constructing this, Thomas, like his *bel canto* predecessors, creates a distinction between Ophélie's mind (the instruments), and her actions and words (what she sings), thus creating aural hallucinations.

In addition to the *tessitura*, coloratura, and obbligato instrument, Donizetti also quoted Edgardo and Lucia's love duet in a different key during Lucia's mad scene, thus showing the tie between her madness and the loss of her lover.[144] Also of note is Donizetti's use of the onstage chorus as well as Lucia's brother, Enrico, and family Chaplain, Raimondo, physically viewing and commenting on Lucia's mad scene. This parallels the visual art of the nineteenth century in using the male gaze upon a female mad subject. The chorus encircles Lucia's mad scene, thus subjecting her to their gaze and to the audience's gaze through them.[145] As a result, the mad scene becomes less of a threat to the men in the audience, as they take the power as the gaze, while Lucia becomes the object of their gaze.

While Ophélie's love duet with Hamlet is not quoted in her mad scene, she does sing it toward the end of her suicide scene, again, in a different key from the original duet (and in

[144] Duersten-Pettit, "Madness and Rage: Coloraturas on the Edge," 42
[145] Smart, "The Silencing of Lucia," 125; Castel et al., *French Opera Libretti*, 429.

the key of her mad scene). Thus, Thomas again copies Donizetti via creating a strong connection between the love duet and the loss her lover and her madness and ultimate suicide. Additionally, Ophélie's mad scene, like Lucia's, is framed by the male chorus from the opening of the scene, thus controlling the threat of her madness and making her the object of the male gaze. This male chorus sings about seeing her and wondering who she is before she starts singing, and they observe most of the mad scene. In fact, Ophélie speaks to them during all three sections of her mad scene. At the beginning of the scene, Ophélie asks these courtiers outside the palace if she can join their games ("*À vos jeux, mes amis, permettez-moi de grace de prendre part*" [At your games, my friends, please let me take part]) via accompanied recitative.[146] Later, she addresses the onstage chorus via a waltz, "*Partagez-vous mes fleurs*" [Let me share my flowers with you], where she gives away her flowers—first wild rosemary, then periwinkle—to the courtiers, a sign of her promiscuity as we will see in Chapter 3.[147] Finally, in the third section, Ophélie sings a ballad, "*Pâle et blonde, dort sous l'eau profonde*" [Pale and blonde, there underneath the deep water] about the Wilis.[148] Right before she performs her ballad, she again speaks to the onstage chorus, saying "*Et maintenant, ecoutez ma chanson*" [And now, listen to my song].[149]

There is one last major similarity between Lucia and Ophélie; the actresses who play them do so without acting hysterical or mad. In fact, Edwards explains how these performers sang the mad scene of Donizetti's Lucia:

> Lucia, as represented by Mdme. Patti, Mdme. Nilsson, and Mdme. Albani, does not rave, is not insanely eccentric, is scarcely ever flighty. She takes leave of her senses

[146] Forbes, "Hamlet"; Castel et al., *French Opera Libretti*, 429.
[147] Castel et al., *French Opera Libretti*, 430.
[148] ibid.
[149] ibid.

> in a regretful, melancholy, moonstruck sort of manner, which has a poetry of its own not unlike that of certain *nocturnes* by Chopin and by Stephen Heller.[150]

Parr also describes this phenomenon, saying "the sopranos creating the mad heroine were praised for their calm grace in performance, not for their hysterical poses."[151] In other words, instead of playing the hysteric known to nineteenth-century audiences, these actresses chose to play into the feminine ideal of madness—beautiful both because of and despite their sorrow, misery, and pain.[152] In this way, Lucia and Ophélie become what society expects of them, and they become less of a threat.

However, according to Edwards, some portrayers of Lucia played her as more erratic and "impulsive" such as Mademoiselle de Murska.[153] In describing de Murska's Lucia, Edwards explains "instead of suffering from depression, [she] is agitated by excitement. Her brain is full of the wildest fancies, and she flies from one idea to another like a lunatic who, actually harmless, might at any moment become dangerous."[154] Edwards finds this quite an exciting interpretation of the role, unlike some earlier critics who much preferred Nilsson's and others' interpretations, which were more confined. However, de Murska's Lucia can easily become a threat to those around her, thus making her quite dangerous, so much so that Edwards describes this Lucia as "actually harmless" and de Murska's singing as "admirably sane as regards delivery. It is only in the tones of the voice that madness seems to lurk" to

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[150] Edwards, *The Lyrical Drama. Essays on Subjects, Composers, & Executants of Modern Opera.*, II:31.
[151] Parr, "Melismatic Madness: Coloratura and Female Vocality in Mid Nineteenth-Century French and Italian Opera," 165.
[152] ibid., 168.
[153] Edwards, *The Lyrical Drama. Essays on Subjects, Composers, & Executants of Modern Opera.*, II:31.
[154] ibid., 32.

downplay the danger she impresses.[155] In acting calmly with melancholy, Lucia and Ophélie become pitiable. However, in treating these characters as true hysterics of the nineteenth century—as impulsive, as mercurial—they become very threatening to the audience.

Donizetti wrote several other mad scenes for soprano, including for the title role in *Anna Bolena* (1830). Right before she is beheaded at the end of the opera, Donizetti uses "external military sounds" to keep the audience oriented regarding her looming doom, while Anne sings about an imagined wedding. During her mad scene, she slips in and out of reality in the final moments before her death.[156] In addition, Donizetti included a mad scene in *Maria Padilla* (1841), including an English horn solo over harp arpeggios—again, showing the importance of the instrument representing the turbulent mind. Finally, he also included a mad scene in *Linda di Chamounix* (1842), where Linda's repeated song becomes the cure for her madness.[157] As we can see from these examples, during the *bel canto* period, characters with mad scenes were almost always women.

The first mad scenes were written by Monteverdi; however, they were quite different from the *bel canto* mad scenes we know so well in that they were usually comic in nature, were recitatives, and did not fulfill the same function as their *bel canto* descendants. In fact, laments acted more like the *bel canto* mad scene than the early modern mad scenes. As we approach the eighteenth century, mad scenes become all but obsolete, included in very few operas, but they become more similar in approach to their famous *bel canto* counterparts. The early nineteenth century is where we see a dramatic rise in the number of mad scenes included in operas, as the interest in madness increases. During the *bel canto* period in Italy,

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[155] ibid.
[156] Willier, "Mad Scene (Fr. Scène de Folie; Ger. Wahnsinnszene; It. Scena Di Pazzia)."
[157] ibid.

we begin to see several major patterns emerging, including the use of the woodwind obbligato instrument, the high-lying *tessitura* and coloratura, and, of course, the connection between madness and the loss of a lover. Thomas made sure to include each of these tropes in his own mad scene for Ophélie, particularly emulating Donizetti's iconic mad scene in his *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

In composing *Hamlet*, Thomas wanted to create something that would be a sure-fire success, not necessarily something original. Part of the reason why Thomas borrowed from the *bel canto* composers for his premiere work for the *Opéra* was due to the success of the works of Rossini—a major *bel canto* composer—in French grand opera as well as Meyerbeer's emulations of Rossini's and Bellini's *bel canto* styles within his own grand operas. Thus, I will now move to the French customs from which Thomas borrowed to create his popular opera: French grand opera and, specifically Giacomo Meyerbeer. As he did with *bel canto* style, Thomas used the tropes of grand opera to help him compose what he believed would be a very successful version of *Hamlet*, including in his mad scene for Ophélie.

French Grand Opera—Meyerbeer, his legacy, imitation of *bel canto*

In the early to mid 1800s in Paris, there were four main opera houses—the *Opéra-Comique*, the *Opéra*, *Théâtre-Italian*, and the *Comédie-Française*.[158] In post-revolutionary Paris, politics and opera were very closely intertwined, especially when it came to finances, administration, and, importantly for this paper, topic.[159] We see the rise of political operas where a daring hero (or heroine) must rescue a political prisoner, such as the libretto on

[158] Frisch, "French Opera," 62.
[159] ibid.

which Beethoven's *Fidelio* is based.[160] French Grand Opera specifically took place at the *Opéra de Paris* and was defined by its large-scale production in four or five acts. It was most known for its large-scale sets, choruses, and costumes as well as large and important subject matters.[161] Some other patterns include the use of "medieval or Renaissance setting" (such as that of Meyerbeer's 1836 *Les Huguenots*), "tragic endings," *ballet divertissements*, "melodramatic situations," "large scene complexes with embedded numbers; techniques and vocal styles influenced by French, Italian and German opera."[162] There was also an obsession with visual spectacle, which was due to the director of the *Opéra*, Louis Veron (1798-1867), who believed that people needed to visualize the plot through sets, costumes, and even ballet as much as they needed to hear it through the music.[163]

Additionally, French grand opera librettists were known for including politics and history in their operas, and these stories were often highly allegorical in nature.[164] The music of grand operas similarly spared no extravagance, and the operas included leading roles, secondary roles, enormous choruses and ballets, as well as massive ensemble numbers (often with chorus) and a very expansive orchestration.[165] In his discussion on Meyerbeer's works after *Robert le Diable*, Edwards explains that while *Le Prophète* lacks some punch in the story, it "is worth seeing for the coronation scene alone. The well-known march, one of Meyerbeer's most famous instrumental pieces ; the religious choruses, accompanied alternately by the organ and by the orchestra, or by the organ and orchestra combined ; the

[160] This libretto was by Jean-Nicolas Bouilly. ibid.
[161] Cooper, "Nineteenth-Century Spectacle," 19.
[162] Hibberd, *French Grand Opera and the Historical Imagination*, 2.
[163] Grout, *A Short History of Opera*, 316; Charlton, *The Cambridge Companion to Grand Opera*, 44.
[164] Hibberd, *French Grand Opera and the Historical Imagination*, 19.
[165] Grout, *A Short History of Opera*, 316.

highly ecclesiastical, purely melodic phrase sung in unison by the choir of officiating boys in their cardinal-like vestments of red—all the details of this musical picture, so complete and so impressive as a whole, are perfectly brought out."[166] Edwards's critique of this scene shows how extravagant grand operas could be but also demonstrates the equal importance of the onstage visuals and the sounds; aural and visual work together to create the enormous spectacle. Unlike its competitor, the *opéra comique*, grand operas were sung throughout, meaning they contained recitatives and no spoken dialogues.[167] The plots of grand operas were often serious (again, in contrast to *opéra comique*) and were about people standing up to their oppressors, such as in Rossini's *Guillaume Tell* (1829) but also seen in Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine*.[168] These plots often contained layers of meaning within the stories, both to allow audiences a chance to interpret the plot and to subvert the censorship of Parisian politics during the time.[169]

When studying French grand opera, two names stand out: composer Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791-1864) and librettist Eugène Scribe (1791-1861).[170] Eugène Scribe was the main librettist for the *Opéra de Paris*, and he often worked with Giacomo Meyerbeer.[171] Meyerbeer was from a wealthy, German-Jewish family, and he worked in Italy for some time to learn about opera. Because of this exploration, there are traces of Bellini's and the *bel canto* era's influence in much of his music. However, conditions in Paris were far less censored than other parts of Europe during the early part of the nineteenth century, and so he

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[166] Edwards, *The Lyrical Drama*, I:259.
[167] Grout, *A Short History of Opera*, 315.
[168] Gossett, "Rossini, Gioachino"; Cruz, "Laughing at History: The Third Act of Meyerbeer's 'L'Africaine,'" 31.
[169] Hibberd, *French Grand Opera and the Historical Imagination*, 7.
[170] ibid., 2–3.
[171] ibid., 2.

moved to Paris in 1827 to compose more freely.[172] Meyerbeer was not the only composer to move to Paris to avoid such harsh censorship. Other composers, including *bel canto* superstar composer Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868) immigrated there as well. While Meyerbeer is considered the epitome of grand opera, it is worth noting that Rossini composed grand opera for the *Opéra de Paris*.[173] In 1829, the *Opéra* produced Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*, which later greatly influenced Meyerbeer, who began writing grand operas just two years later.

Meyerbeer used Rossini's vocal writing technique (influenced by *bel canto*) and melodic structure, German harmonic language, and "French declamatory style" and then elevated each to create his genre of grand opera.[174] In fact, Bellini and Rossini's *bel canto* and grand opera styles influenced several of his operas, including the mad scene in his *opéra comique Le pardon de Ploërmel* (1859)—since mad scenes were extremely common in *bel canto* music as we saw earlier in this chapter. However, Bellini also influenced the story and music of *Les Huguenots*.[175] While he was composing this opera, Meyerbeer saw Bellini's *Norma* (1831) and made revisions based on what he saw Bellini do with staging an aria and a chorus.[176] *Les Huguenots*'s story is quite like that of Bellini's *I puritani* in its political intrigue and in the romantic relationship between a man and a woman from opposite sides of a war. In *I puritani*, the female romantic lead, Elvira, is a Puritan, and her father is a leader of this movement; he promises her hand in marriage to another Puritan leader. However, Elvira is in love with Arturo, who is a Royalist and is on the opposite side of the war as her family. Elvira even has a famous mad scene due to her distress over being forced to marry a man she

[172] Frisch, "French Opera," 64.
[173] Gossett, "Rossini, Gioachino."
[174] Grout, *A Short History of Opera*, 320.
[175] Brzoska, "Meyerbeer [Beer], Giacomo."
[176] Sprigge, "French Grand Opera."

does not love. On the other hand, in *Les Huguenots*, the female lead, Valentine, is the daughter of the Catholic nobleman who plans to attack the Huguenots, while the male romantic lead (and her lover), Raoul, is a Huguenot. While *I puritani* ends with the lovers reunited and Arturo's pardon, *Les Huguenots* ends with the massacre of the Huguenots (French Protestants) by the Catholics on the night before Saint Bartholomew's feast day in 1572, including the implied death of both Valentine and Raoul.[177]

However, the French authorities were not too happy with the politically liberal upheaval in this opera and forced Meyerbeer and Scribe to change the ending so that the monarchy was not solely blamed for the massacre.[178] While this incident makes plain the correlation between politics and opera in real life, it also shows how Meyerbeer adapted historical events to better fit the world views and politics of his own time, which was expected in French grand opera. As we saw earlier, Barbier, Carré, and Thomas changed Shakespeare's *Hamlet* text, both making the opera better fit audience expectations at the *Opéra* but also the audience's views on the ideal woman and female mental illness via changes to Ophélie and her mad scene.

Regarding the music of grand operas, much of it was very large with multiple parts, enormous orchestra parts, and large choruses. However, ballades (or ballads) were also very popular in both comic and grand opera during the nineteenth century.[179] In fact, in Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable*, Raimbaud's ballade became an important model for the use of the genre throughout the nineteenth century. According to musicologist Gabriela Cruz, during the nineteenth century, the genre of the ballad in opera represented a certain "mode of

[177] Frisch, "French Opera," 64-65.
[178] ibid., 65.
[179] Cruz, "Laughing at History: The Third Act of Meyerbeer's 'L'Africaine,'" 50, 53.

story-telling," which introduced a mythical or legendary story, often from the Greeks or Romans.[180] The ballad acts as a diegetic piece of music within the plot and was used as a foreshadowing of what was to come. From the onstage characters' point of view, the ballad seems to tell a tale that has absolutely nothing to do with the plot of the opera itself. However, the nineteenth-century audience knew that later in the opera, what is sung in the ballad will come to pass later on stage, to the surprise of the characters on stage. In particular, female characters were "the unselfconscious protagonists of the stories they tell, as their own performance magically conjures the intrusion of their fictional narratives into the real world of drama."[181] In this way, like other parts of the plot in grand operas, ballades contained multiple layers of meaning—including at least the sung story and the fate foretold by the storyteller.

Raimbaud's ballade in *Robert le Diable* is the first of several ballads that fit into this context; Nélusko also has a ballade in act three of Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine*. In this opera, Nélusko is a Malagasy slave, and he and his mistress, Sélika (the queen of their kingdom), are on a ship with other characters during Act 3. While on the ship, Nélusko spots a storm and starts steering the ship in its direction unbeknownst to the crew so that he can kill all his oppressors on board. To distract the crew, Nélusko sings his ballad about the giant of storms, Adamaster, and later in the act, they sail into the storm. Nélusko jumps overboard and swims to freedom, but the rest of the ship and crew are killed because of the storm; they are shipwrecked on a reef and then slaughtered by Malagasy warriors.

[180] ibid., 51.
[181] ibid.

Thomas continues Meyerbeer's custom of the ballade through Ophélie's Act 2 aria and her mad scene. He first uses the trope less formally, as it is not called a ballad in the score. In her Air d'Ophélie, part of the aria has Ophélie reading a book that foreshadows the downfall of her love affair with Hamlet. This section of the aria is a simpler, more modal-sounding song within the larger aria, thus making it more similar to the ballade in her Act 4 mad scene than the rest of her more complicated, French romantic style, which characterizes the remainder of her music. The words of the book she reads are from the perspective of a woman whose lover has abandoned her and will never love her again; in the end, the woman determines that death is her only escape. Thus, the ensuing Act 3 trio where Hamlet tells Ophélie to "get thee to a nunnery" and abandons her is foreshadowed in the book she sings aloud in Act 2, and her ultimate suicide is prophesized by the protagonist of the book. In other words, Ophélie becomes this protagonist later in the opera. Thomas continues this tradition more openly in Ophélie's mad scene, where he uses a ballade section, which is labeled as such, both in the score and by Ophélie when she says to the onstage chorus, "And now, listen to my song." Within the larger context of the scena, this ballade is used both to other Ophélie in her madness and to tell the story of her heartbreak and untimely death right before it happens. In her suicide scene, she joins the Wilis, via suicide by drowning, as another heartbroken victim of men, thus bringing the ballade from the fictional realm into the real one on stage.

French grand opera often included exoticizing and othering people of color using racial stereotypes, as can be seen in Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine*, especially in the roles of Nélusko and Sélika. As defined by Ralph Locke, exoticism is "a quality that links a work to some especially fascinating, attractive, or fearsome place: to an Elsewhere and, usually, to its

inhabitants and their supposed inclinations and ways."[182] In other words, exoticism in music—a term which can be applied to the composer, the audience, and to the piece of music itself—occurs when a composer tries to evoke a sense of place (usually non-Western) different in some way from whence the listener and composer hail. A composer writing exotic music, especially in French operas, often makes minimal to no effort to study the culture from which they borrow and wants to portray this music as "other" from their own culture. To create a sense of otherness or exoticism, some composers change instrumentation, alter (often simplifying) the harmonies, melodies, and rhythms to less recognizable ones for western ears, adding dance rhythms when associated with a cultural stereotype of dancing, and including diegetic music, or music that occurs as part of the story. It is also common to see non-European people—usually people of color—being exoticized by and compared to their European counterparts on stage; many of the exoticized people are women of color who are overtly sexualized in their music and text.[183] For example, in *L'Africaine,* the music of the ingénue, Inès, is written for "the light soprano heroine, the heroine with roulades" or a coloratura soprano, while Sélika's music is more intense, heavier, and more ardent—for a mezzo-soprano or dramatic soprano.[184] In fact, Locke explains that it was quite common to have women of color played by mezzo-sopranos, as they vocally have what people in the industry call "darker" (meaning richer, lower, and fuller) tones, thus relating their lower voices to their skin color in comparison to the European characters on stage (with higher voices).[185] We even see this in Nélusko's voice, as this role was written for baritone in

[182] Locke, *Musical Exoticism*, 1.
[183] ibid., 186.
[184] Edwards, *The Lyrical Drama*, I:262.
[185] Locke, *Musical Exoticism*, 182.

contrast with the leading tenor, Vasco da Gamba, who is European.[186] This contrast of musical expression between a white ingénue and non-white love interest shows how Meyerbeer musically attempted to other Sélika, to make her different from the sopranos with whom the tenor (and the audience) fall in love. Additionally, the title of the opera is named for Sélika, who isn't even African but is actually from Madagascar—which is the epitome of exoticizing and othering her.

The use of exoticized music was very popular in France in the late 1800s and early 1900s and can be seen in such famous operas as *L'Africaine* by Meyerbeer (1864, grand opera), *Les pêcheurs des perles* (1863, performed at the *Théâtre-Lyrique*), and *Carmen* (1875, performed at the *Opéra-Comique*). [187] It was also a popular trope in Italian operas, especially those of the early twentieth century, such as *Madame Butterfly* (1904) and *Turandot* (1924) by Giacomo Puccini. In these examples, especially in the French versions, we see a constant of a lead woman of color being cast as the exotic subject. Often, she is the object of (usually white) men's desires, such as Don José in *Carmen* and his obsession with Carmen, the Roma. Composers often created their exoticized female subjects as either very strong—such as Turandot and Liù from China in *Turandot* and the titular role in *Carmen*—making them brash femmes fatales, or weaker—such as Leïla, a priestess of Brahma from India in *Les pêcheurs de perles* and Cio-Cio San from Japan in *Madame Butterfly*. Additionally, most of these women end up dying at the end of the opera, three of them by suicide—Sélika, the titular role in *L'Africaine*, inhales poison from blossoms of the manchineel tree to kill herself; Cio-Cio San stabs herself via seppuku, which is a ritual

[186] Cruz, "Laughing at History: The Third Act of Meyerbeer's 'L'Africaine,'" 70. Locke, *Musical Exoticism*, 183.
[187] Macdonald, "Bizet, Georges."

suicide; and Liu stabs herself.[188] Carmen, on the other hand, is murdered by Don José. *Les pêcheurs de perles* has two endings, one where the lovers do not die and one where they are sacrificed at the end of the opera to save the village from the disaster caused by their love. While only one of these women died by the hands of a man, the others are killed or kill themselves for or because of men they loved. Sélika and Cio-Cio San were scorned by the men they loved, while Liu tried to protect Calaf from Turandot, and Leïla is punished for forsaking her vows as a priestess for Nadir.

While all characters in Thomas's *Hamlet* are seemingly white characters (Danish), including Ophélie, Thomas utilizes exoticism in Ophélie's mad scene to make her seem like an "other" in comparison to her past self and to the other characters in the opera. In other words, while Ophélie is not the stereotypical exoticized other of nineteenth-century opera, because her hysteria and madness are tied to her sexuality and femininity, Thomas employs an exoticized style during the ballade section of her mad scene to call attention to her sexuality, tie it to her madness, and other her as a result. As I discussed earlier, Thomas used a ballade within her larger mad scene, which acts as a continuation of the grand opera traditions surrounding this genre, but it also makes this part of her mad scene diegetic; diegetic music was used by such composers as Bizet to exoticize and sexualize their characters like the title role in *Carmen*. Additionally, within this section, Thomas uses two exotic-sounding percussion instruments—the tambourine and the triangle. When looking at this combination, we see similarities to the instrumentation and exoticizing elements used by Bizet for the title role of his 1875 *Carmen*. In making her music diegetic and exotic-

[188] For more information on the death of women (and particularly non-European women) in opera, see Clément, *Opera, or, The Undoing of Women*.

sounding, Thomas uses a very popular and current French operatic trope to other Ophélie, to make her seem different from everyone else and connect her to her sexuality via her exoticized music, especially in the throes of her madness. I will explore this further in Chapter 4.

Conclusion

In his version of *Hamlet*, Thomas followed the models of *bel canto* and Meyerbeer's French grand opera, especially in his creation of Ophélie. In trying to please the audiences of grand operas, Thomas made sure to include large ensembles and created impressive spectacles through elaborate sets, ensembles, ballets, and grandiose music. Additionally, his use of the ballade within the larger mad scene shows his dedication to grand opera tradition. Like the ballades in Meyerbeer's grand operas, Thomas made sure this scene had multiple layers of meaning—first, Ophélie's madness, second, the story she told of the legend of the Wilis, and third, the foreshadowing of her death by drowning as told through this story. Most importantly, Carré, Barbier, and Thomas were people pleasers; everything they did was to ensure success with their audience and critics. We will see this play out later in how he approaches Ophélie's overall character and mad scene in Chapter 4, as he works to fulfill audience expectations regarding this character, her madness, and her suicide on stage.

Chapter 2: Hysteria throughout (His)tory

Introduction[189]

When looking at the history of performances of Ophelia beginning with Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* we see some significant adjustments made to her mad scene through the centuries—especially in Thomas's mad scene for Ophélie. I hypothesize that many of these changes follow two major topics—what European society viewed as the "ideal woman" and shifts in European society's beliefs on women's mental illness and hysteria. Thus, this chapter works through the history of views on women's mental illness and, specifically, the symptoms and treatment of hysteria and other female-specific mental illnesses from Ancient Egypt through the mid-nineteenth century, until around 1870. During Shakespeare's era (the late sixteenth through early seventeenth centuries), "medical knowledge was much more widely diffused among laymen" than it was in the twentieth century.[190] Shakespeare was also friends with many intellectuals of his time and, as of 1607, became the father-in-law of the Stratford physician, any of whom could have given him contemporary and earlier medical theories.[191] However, most importantly for this paper, "Shakespeare's father was judge, bailiff and jailer of Stratford at one time" and thus, "it is reasonable to suppose that the youth, William, might have had direct contact with the insane."[192] This is because "The insane in Shakespeare's day were not confined to asylums. Except in the case of those that became dangerously maniacal the insane were allowed to mix in with society. Some however

[189] Content warning: This chapter discusses historical views on women's mental illness and has some graphic details about how these women were treated.
[190] Edgar, "The Acquisition of Shakespeare's Medical and Psycho-Pathological Knowledge," 319.
[191] ibid., 320–21.
[192] ibid., 321.

were kept in jail."[193] With a father in charge of the jails, where the mentally ill were held during this time, Shakespeare at the very least would have heard about mentally ill inmates from his father, but it was also very likely that he had personal contact with these inmates during this time.[194]

Similarly, between the 1850s and 1870s (when Thomas was working on his *Hamlet*), psychologists and physicians would lead double lives as writers and novelists, thus bringing their work on hysteria into their novels.[195] Additionally, Jean-Martin Charcot held *salons* for the intellectuals of Paris, including literati; these novelists were there to learn how best to portray accurate hysterical characters in their books.[196] In these *salons*, Charcot would put his hysterical patients on display, having them perform their hysterical stages in front of his captive audience.[197] Because Thomas's opera was premiered in 1868 and Charcot's work at the Salpêtrière only began in the 1850s, Charcot's work probably was not quite as much of an influence on Carré's, Barbier's, or Thomas's ideas on hysteria.[198] But it did start to have some influence in Paris around this time, and reflects a fascination with the topic of hysteria among certain parts of the public that would have made up Parisian audiences. This Parisian nineteenth-century fascination with female-centered mental illness is part of a longer history of hysteria—one in which both Thomas and the author of his source material for *Hamlet* (Shakespeare) participated. Because of the knowledge playwrights, novelists, librettists, and

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193 ibid.
194 ibid., 322.
195 Mimran, "Introduction: Hysteria and the Salpêtrière of Jean-Martin Charcot: Nineteenth-Century Literary Diagnosis and Modern Medical Literariness," 4.
196 ibid., 7–8.
197 Parr, "Melismatic Madness: Coloratura and Female Vocality in Mid Nineteenth-Century French and Italian Opera," 172.
198 ibid., 171.

even composers had during these eras, it is probable that both Shakespeare and Thomas were influenced by the medical knowledge of their eras and possibly even medical history surrounding hysteria. Thus, I will concentrate the most on the medieval and Renaissance periods—before and during Shakespeare's time writing *Hamlet*—the eighteenth century, and the early- to mid-nineteenth century—before Thomas composed his *Hamlet*.

In her book, *Hysteria: The History of a Disease*, medical historian Ilza Veith traces hysteria from its beginnings in Ancient Egypt through what was then modern times—the twentieth century. In her chapter on the beliefs regarding hysteria in the Victorian era (the beginning through middle of the nineteenth century), she observes:

> It must be apparent from this brief chronological review of hysteria that the manifestations of this disease tended to change from era to era quite as much as did the beliefs as to the etiology and the method of treatment. The symptoms, it seems, were conditioned by social expectancy, tastes, mores, and religion, and were further shaped by the state of medicine in general and the knowledge of the public about medical matters. The more detailed such knowledge became the greater was the variety of symptoms…. Furthermore, throughout history the symptoms were modified by the prevailing concept of the feminine ideal.[199]

Here, Veith explains that in tracing hysteria—its causes, physicians' treatment methods, and symptoms associated with the disease—one can chart several things. First, we can use hysteria to understand what was happening in medicine during this time. Is this a time of learning, of progress, or of either plateau or regression in the state of medicine? We see this part very clearly particularly in the discussions of the Medieval period, where physicians (and priests, in this case) changed from the belief that hysteria was a somatic disease to the belief that it was caused by witchcraft. The second pattern Veith mentions is knowledge of the public. We will see this in action particularly in the nineteenth century, where we see an

[199] Veith, *Hysteria*. 209.

overall interest, if not obsession, with hysteria during this period, especially after Harriet Smithson's performance of Ophelia in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in Paris in 1827. Finally, the third pattern to expect is that the symptoms and etiology (causes) of hysteria changed based on views of the "ideal woman" during each period. For example, in the Medieval period, pleasure during sex, even within a marriage, was viewed as sinful for both men and women. Thus, any resulting pleasure had to be the devil's work and was, therefore, witchcraft, which meant that the woman was usually to blame. While all three patterns are interesting and relevant, the second and third are the most important for my study because as the female ideal and views on women's mental illness change throughout European society, so too do portrayals of Ophelia.

Tracing Hysteria

In the introduction to her book, *Ventriloquized Bodies: Narratives of Hysteria in Nineteenth-Century France*, literary scholar Janet Beizer says that hysteria has been around by that name for approximately 2,000 years—since the ancient Greeks, specifically coined by Hippocrates—while the disease itself and the symptoms with which it is associated have been around for more than 4,000 years (since Ancient Egypt).[200] She also argues that, while there were some aspects of hysteria that changed over time, from Ancient Egypt through the seventeenth century, its symptoms and causes remained the same for 3,800 of those 4,000 years.[201] During these thirty-eight centuries, hysteria was a disorder of the uterus and was, thus, a female disease.[202]

[200] Beizer, "Introduction," 3.
[201] ibid., 4.
[202] ibid., 3.

Ancient Hysteria—Egypt, Greece, and Rome

The idea of hysteria began in Ancient Egypt, where Ancient Egyptians believed that women would have bouts of hysterical attacks due to a "wandering womb," where the uterus supposedly moved to different parts of the body.[203] The earliest record found describing the disease in this manner was the Egyptian *Kahun Papyrus* from 1900 BCE.[204] Thus, the physician's goal in treating the disease was to somehow lure the uterus back to its natural place.[205] They would do this by either giving the patient something foul-smelling to eat (to draw the uterus away from that part of the body) or by putting something nice-smelling by her genitalia (to draw the uterus back in this direction).[206] According to this Ancient Egyptian theory, sneezing could also help in healing this disease in that it could help move the uterus back into place.[207]

The ancient Greeks and Romans took their ideas on hysteria from Ancient Egypt. According to Veith, the Greeks and Romans first used this idea of the wandering uterus and connected it to hysteria in the thirty-fifth Hippocratic aphorism.[208] Hippocrates (460-377 BCE) was the first physician to use the term "hysteria," which was derived from the Greek word "*hystera*," meaning uterus.[209] Beizer points out that the cause (abstinence) and symptoms of the Greco-Roman hysteria was the same as those found in Ancient Egypt, but the Greeks and Romans changed some other details.[210] According to the Greeks and Romans, this disease occurred primarily in women who already had their menses who had been

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[203] Veith, *Hysteria*, 3.
[204] Beizer, "Introduction," 4.
[205] ibid.
[206] ibid.
[207] Veith, *Hysteria*, 10.
[208] ibid.
[209] Beizer, "Introduction," 4.
[210] ibid.

"deprived of sexual relations; prolonged continence was believed to be the result in demonstrable organic changes in the womb."[211]

Veith explained that the Greeks and Romans also believed that the uterus became dry, thus making it lighter, and, in seeking moisture elsewhere, the uterus's new mobility allowed it to travel up toward the soft tissue right below the ribs called the hypochondrium.[212] This would then "impede (sic) the flow of the breath," since we use our diaphragms to breathe.[213] Additionally, the pressure the misplaced uterus put on other organs would cause the different symptoms such as hyperventilation and others, depending on the organ in question.[214] According to Hippocrates (and many physicians all the way through the nineteenth century), the remedy for such a disease was marrying women off to a husband who was a good match for her and then pregnancy soon after.[215] Galen, who lived from 130-201 AD, was the first physician to discover that the uterus does not, in fact, move.[216] However, he still insisted that the uterus was the cause of hysteria, saying that sexual abstinence "caused retention of the seminal humor" or "retention of the menses" "in the womb, and…this in turn corrupted the blood and irritated the nerves," thus, causing hysteria.[217] Therefore, from the conception of this disease and even when the wandering of the womb was discovered to be physically impossible, there was a connection between women, and particularly women's sexuality, and hysteria.

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[211] Veith, *Hysteria*, 10.
[212] ibid.
[213] ibid.
[214] Beizer, "Introduction," 4.
[215] ibid.
[216] ibid.
[217] ibid., 5.

Medieval Hysteria and Witchcraft

Scholars have noted a regression in the development of medicine during the Middle Ages, from about the fifth century to the thirteenth century.[218] There was also a trend toward religion, specifically the Catholic church, over all other forms of study (science and medicine included), thus creating a duality of theories during this time. While physicians maintained the Greco-Roman beliefs on hysteria (that it was the result of a woman's abstinence and "uterine theory"), the Church came up with a more insidious version that pervaded beliefs for hundreds of years and killed somewhere between thousands and millions of women: witchcraft.[219] This change in ideology began because the Church insisted that sexual continence was a virtue; thus, it could not cause hysteria.[220] As a result, the Church turned hysteria on its head and made it so that hysteria was an indication of sexuality (which was a sin), not lack thereof, and, therefore, hysterics were sinners.[221]

In the late fifteenth century, Pope Innocent VIII sent two Dominican monks, Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, as inquisitors to hunt down, adjudicate, and kill witches, especially in territories the pope said were particularly "afflicted" by witchcraft and its evils.[222] In 1494, Kramer and Sprenger coauthored the *Malleus Maleficarum*, a "textbook of persecution" also known as *The Witches Hammer*, which was used to help identify witches in communities.[223] The book was a huge success throughout many kingdoms and fiefdoms in Europe and was even mass-produced, and, so, the witch hunt began—mostly against

[218] Veith, *Hysteria*, 55.
[219] ibid., 56.
[220] Beizer, "Introduction," 5.
[221] ibid.
[222] Veith, *Hysteria*, 60.
[223] ibid.

women.[224] The main belief was that witchcraft was a voluntary choice, and that the participant in witchcraft had been seduced by the devil.[225] Thus, witches were hunted and killed, but were often tortured first because, according to the *Malleus Maleficarum*, if a witch confessed and died, her harm against others would be unraveled.[226] Of particular note was the idea that hysteria was no longer considered a disease but was instead

> the visual token of bewitchment and thus fell within the domain of the Church, the Inquisition, and even the temporal powers, since penalties were inflicted by the lay arm. With the exception of the few who were fortunate enough to come into medical hands, hysterics became victims of the witch craze, that long and dreadful mass delusion that held Europe in its sway for many centuries and constituted one of the darkest chapters in history.[227]

In other words, the *Malleus Maleficarum* held that hysteria was caused by witchcraft, whether that be because the hysteric herself was a witch or whether she was cursed by one.

The *Malleus Maleficarum* based most of its content on the texts of Saint Augustine, saying that illness came from witchcraft and was, therefore, from the mind, not the body.[228] This also means that this book blamed almost all ills—plagues, male impotence, miscarriages, regular sicknesses, female barrenness, etc.—on witches.[229] According to the *Malleus Maleficarum*, women were more inclined to fall for the devil's tricks (as proven in the biblical Adam and Eve story) and to sin and, therefore, would make up the majority of witches found.[230] Additionally, the *Malleus* made a particular point in saying that "any kind of sexual relations, even within the bond of matrimony, that evoked pleasure, were assumed

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[224] Ussher, *Women's Madness*, 44.
[225] Veith, *Hysteria*, 56.
[226] ibid., 58.
[227] ibid., 56.
[228] ibid., 61.
[229] ibid., 60; Ussher, *Women's Madness*, 45.
[230] Veith, *Hysteria*, 63; Ussher, *Women's Madness*, 44, 50.

to be the devil's doing."[231] This would also particularly be pointed at women, since male orgasm is necessary for conception, while female orgasm is not. In fact, the *Malleus* explained that pleasure during sex for any gender came directly from women copulating with Satan, thus forcing the blame for lust from either partner to fall upon the female.[232] Again, coming from celibate monks, who could not have sex and, thus, may have resented those who could, and who wanted to blame women for their sinful desires, it made sense to say that any people who derived pleasure from sex were affected by the devil's work. And, of course, because women were (possibly) the objects of their desires and the cause of their resentment, women were the ones who sinned, who had sex with the devil and, thus, brought evil pleasure into their beds.

Because the etiology of hysteria was newly defined as sexuality and not sexual abstinence, hysterics were blamed for being overly sexual because they signed a pact with the devil.[233] Female pleasure during sex was from the devil himself, and male pleasure during sex was a sign that his wife had made a pact with the devil.[234] Thus, the woman was always to blame for sexual pleasure and the sins associated with it, and she was the one who was burned as a witch.[235] This change in causality of hysteria from sexual abstinence to heightened sexuality became a huge part of beliefs on hysteria even through the nineteenth century. While physicians no longer considered witchcraft and the devil to be the cause of the sexual drive and desire of hysterics and they circled back to the idea that abstinence was, in fact, a part of the etiology, physicians' views on hysteria were colored by the Medieval

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[231] Veith, *Hysteria*, 62.
[232] ibid.; Ussher, *Women's Madness*, 51.
[233] Beizer, "Introduction," 5.
[234] ibid.
[235] ibid.

theory of heightened sexuality in hysterical patients in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Renaissance Hysteria

During the Renaissance, with its new ways of thinking (humanism) and departure from the Church, a few physicians attempted to break associations between hysteria (and other mental illnesses) and witchcraft.[236] Toward the end of the Medieval period and in the early part of the Renaissance (around the sixteenth century), physicians, like many other Renaissance thinkers, began looking back at Ancient Greek and Roman studies and beliefs regarding diseases of the soul—such as mental illness, melancholy, and hysteria—specifically those written by Hippocrates and Galen. These studies, which particularly looked at melancholy, discussed the balance and imbalance of the body's four humors—blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile.[237] According to Galen, each of these humors was correlated with "a particular emotional temperament, and it was believed that those with a preponderance of black bile were inclined towards melancholy and despondency."[238] Borrowing from the physicians and philosophers of the past, Renaissance physicians concluded that "disease of the soul was, whether of psychic or physical origin, always an organic alteration…. This material alteration of the organism was translated into a disturbance of the rational faculties, with the resulting incomprehensible or detrimental actions."[239] In other words, while mental illnesses, such as melancholy or hysteria, affected

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[236] ibid.
[237] Sullivan, "The Art of Medicine: Melancholy, Medicine, and the Arts," 884.
[238] ibid.
[239] De Pablo and Evans, "The Medicine of the Soul. The Origin and Development of Thought on the Soul, Diseases of the Soul and Their Treatment, in Medieval and Renaissance Medicine," 503.

the soul and/or the mind, their origins were in fact bodily or somatic, coming from an imbalance in one of the four humors. This is the beginning of seeing a separation between the mind and the body, thus showing that while physicians believed that causes were somatic, the end result was a change in the soul or the brain. However, symptoms of melancholy, while including sadness and lethargy (which is now associated with depression), also included several somatic symptoms, both in Galen's time and in the Renaissance period.[240] In his writings, Galen described symptoms such as "Fits, frenzies, sores, stomach-aches, haemorrhoids, torpor, despondency, and fear," which featured a combination of somatic (seizures, stomach-aches, hemorrhoids) and psychological (despondency, fear, possibly frenzies) symptoms.[241] On the other hand, Renaissance physicians described such symptoms as "noxious vapours" and "haemorrhoidal veins," for which treatments such as blood-letting and leeches (to relieve the blood of the excess black bile) as well as putting radishes on the patient's feet were used.[242]

It was not until 1580 that burning witches was no longer legal, so the association was not broken until approximately twenty years before William Shakespeare (1564-1616) wrote *Hamlet* and about sixteen years after he was born.[243] In 1603, right after Shakespeare supposedly wrote *Hamlet*, Edward Jorden (1578-1632) wrote a book called *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease called the Suffocation of the Mother*.[244] Jorden, a physician, wrote *A*

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[240] Sullivan, "The Art of Medicine: Melancholy, Medicine, and the Arts," 884.
[241] ibid.
[242] ibid., 885.
[243] Beizer, "Introduction," 5; Bloom, *Shakespeare*, xiii.
[244] Veith, *Hysteria*, 120.
The full title is as follows: *A Brief Discourse of a Disease called the Suffocation of the Mother. Written upon occasion which hath beene of late taken thereby, to suspect possession of an evill spirit, or some such like supernaturall power. Wherein is declared that divers*

Briefe Discourse as a case study about two women—his patient, fourteen-year-old Mary Glover, and Elizabeth Jackson who was charged with witchcraft for bewitching her.[245] This case study was an attempt to dismiss witchcraft from the etiology of hysteria; he explained that the signs of witchcraft others claimed were associated with the disease—such as not being able to feel a finger prick or burning, convulsions, fits, choking when attempting to eat, and fits at the sight of a particular person—were, in fact, not real.[246]

While this case study was written after *Hamlet* was first performed, it shows a shift in the theory behind the etiology of hysteria. Instead of believing that hysteria was the result of witchcraft and pacts with the devil—thus making its treatment related to the Church—hysteria was, instead, viewed as a physical disease, one that should be treated by physicians.[247] Notably, Jorden called hysteria the "suffocation of the mother," which clearly genders the disease despite the fact that Renaissance physicians argued that hysteria could be found in both male and female patients.[248] The remainder of the treatise discussed the origin and nature of hysteria and returned to "womb theory" as the most prominent cause. However, unlike his predecessors, Jorden included other organs as the main source of the illness, in addition to the uterus.[249] Jorden discussed "some noxious substance, such as "vapors," … from the afflicted womb" affecting other organs in the body, such as the liver or the brain,

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strange actions and passions of the body of man, which in the common opinion, are imputed to the Divell, have their true natural causes, and do accompany this disease (Veith 120).
[245] ibid., 121.
[246] ibid.
[247] ibid., 121–22.
[248] Campbell, "Sad Generations Seeking Water: The Social Construction of Madness in O(Phelia) and Q(Uentin Compson)," 54–55.
[249] Veith, *Hysteria*, 120–22.

which in turn led to symptoms of the disease.[250] This is the first time we see a connection between hysteria and the brain, even as a secondary organ.

However, Jorden's theory did not gain much momentum, and physicians still battled "between the uterine and the cerebral or neurological schools of thought…for more than three centuries," even into the beginning of the nineteenth century.[251] According to English professor Erin Campbell, womb theory still existed and was quite prominent in Shakespeare's Renaissance England.[252] Renaissance physicians believed that "a proposed cause of the wandering womb is the cessation of menstruation, due to sexual inactivity. Renaissance physicians believe menstrual fluid is a by-product of sexual intercourse and that lack of sex causes the body to retain rather than release such blood."[253] Campbell also explained that, like the Ancient Greeks, marriage was the prescribed medication for the hysteric, since it allowed for "regular sexual intercourse" in a "socially sanctioned marital institution," meaning it both cured the disease and did so in a way that was socially acceptable during the time.[254] Shakespeare's Ophelia falls into this theory in that she became mad after she lost her father and her prospects of marriage to Hamlet. Thus, with the loss of her father and her prospect of marriage, as an adolescent female, she loses her identity, her social status, and is forced into abstinence, which Renaissance physicians argued caused hysteria.

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[250] ibid., 122.
[251] Beizer, "Introduction," 5.
[252] Campbell, "Sad Generations Seeking Water: The Social Construction of Madness in O(Phelia) and Q(Uentin Compson)," 53.
[253] ibid., 54.
[254] ibid.

When looking at Shakespeare's body of work, we can see that he was influenced by both the earlier, Medieval beliefs in witchcraft and the more modern return to uterine theories via two of his most famous heroines—Lady Macbeth from his 1606 *Macbeth* and Ophelia from his 1600-1601 *Hamlet.*[255] First, *Macbeth* also has witches in the play who predict Macbeth's fate and, in some ways, set him on his path of destruction. Additionally, in *Macbeth,* Shakespeare gave Lady Macbeth a form of somnambulism or sleepwalking in the famous "Out, damned spot" scene. However, unlike most somnambulists (including Amina in Bellini's *La sonnambula*), there is no evidence that Lady Macbeth was a serial sleepwalker or that she had ever had such an event before her husband murdered the king.[256] Additionally, there is a Scottish physician who observes Lady Macbeth's somnambulism to try and figure out what is wrong with her and possibly help find a cure. This physician outright says of Lady Macbeth's affliction: "This disease is beyond my practice: yet I have known those which have walked in their sleep who have died holily in their beds" and a little later in the scene, "unnatural deeds/ Do breed unnatural troubles: infected minds/ To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets:/ More needs she the divine than the physician."[257] In other words, Lady Macbeth's somnambulism (which is considered a mad scene of sorts during the bel canto period, as seen also in Bellini's *La sonnambula*) is not medical, physical, or mental but is instead a form of her own evil deeds haunting her. The doctor says he cannot fix her; only God can. Thus, in Shakespeare's 1606 *Macbeth,* we see evidence of witchcraft and the supernatural, both in the form of actual witches but also in Lady Macbeth's

[255] Bloom, *Shakespeare,* xv.
[256] Finger, Sironi, and Riva, "Somnambulism in Verdi's Macbeth and Bellini's La Sonnambula," 367.
[257] ibid., 368–69.

sleepwalking scene. Lady Macbeth's madness (or, at the very least, disturbance of her mind) is divinely or supernaturally made and not physically driven.[258]

On the other hand, in *Hamlet*, Shakespeare gave Ophelia a scene of love melancholy or hysteria. Even though her character was written and first performed before Jorden's treatise was published (whereas *Macbeth* was written between 1603 and 1606—around the time when Jorden's treatise came out), we see that Ophelia's mad scene is in no way associated with witchcraft.[259] Instead, her madness is associated with her sexuality and with her mind, which is similar to both the ancient forms of hysteria and to Jorden's theory. In fact, as we will see in Chapter 3, Ophelia's hysterical onset is caused by her rejection by Hamlet (her only suitor) and the death of her father (the patriarch in her life on whom she depended to make decisions). Thus, loss of all male authority and her identity as a person in society is what seems to lead to her mental break. Ophelia's mad scene is also rife with sexuality (loss of Hamlet and the promise of a husband) as well as grief (loss of her father but also Hamlet). Shakespeare's Ophelia sings bawdy songs, gives away flowers to those surrounding her during the scene, which in itself symbolizes being deflowered or losing her virginity willingly, but also sings funeral dirges and songs of sorrow. In this way, unlike Lady Macbeth, whose mental state appears to be more related to the supernatural and to her guilty conscience, Ophelia's hysteria is related to her trauma due to the loss of her father and her betrothed, thus making her mad scene more similar to what Jorden described in his

[258] This is important in comparison to the somnambulist scene of the nineteenth-century opera, *La sonnambula* by Vincenzo Bellini (1831). In this version, Amina has a history of sleepwalking and is not made out to be dangerous, a witch, supernatural, etc. See Finger et al "Somnambulism in Verdi's *Macbeth* and Bellini's *La Sonnambula*" for further investigation.
[259] Finger, Sironi, and Riva, "Somnambulism in Verdi's Macbeth and Bellini's La Sonnambula," 366.

treatises than Lady Macbeth's somnambulist scene. This is partly why the hysteria of Thomas's Ophélie (who is a descendent of Shakespeare's Ophelia) is not related to witchcraft but is instead based on nineteenth-century views on mental illness. While the circumstances surrounding Ophélie's madness (and the mad scene itself) are quite different from that of Shakespeare's Ophelia, the core of her madness remains a mental instability due to the loss of Hamlet's love. On the other hand, Verdi's *Macbeth* (1847) maintains the more supernatural, guilt-driven form of Lady Macbeth's somnambulism. Through these two women, Shakespeare straddles the line between the Medieval belief in supernatural causes (particularly witchcraft) and the more ancient as well as current physical causes of mental illness.

Hysteria and Mental Illness in the Eighteenth Century

The eighteenth century saw multiple forms of growth in the world of science and medicine; the foundation for modern and scientific medicine was built, and both wisdom from antiquity (Greeks and Romans) and scientific discoveries of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were used to help broaden the scope of medicine.[260] With these medical discoveries came a change in views on hysteria from uterine toward neurologic causes, which in this case actually means affecting the nerves, "sensation and motor functions."[261] Additionally, because hysteria was no longer believed to stem from the uterus, there was speculation that the disease affected all genders, not just women, but it was still strongly associated with femininity and women.[262] The change in etiology from uterine to neurologic

[260] Veith, *Hysteria*, 156.
[261] ibid., 155; Faber, "Hysteria in the Eighteenth Century," 323.
[262] Beizer, "Introduction," 5.

also generated different symptoms associated with the disease; there was a movement from "the hysterical fit and its physical symptoms to a wide range of nervous symptoms, including emotional responses but also behavioral traits such as capriciousness and exaggeration (features of the sort that were to dominate nineteenth-century diagnoses of the malady)."[263] In other words, previous centuries explained that symptoms of the disease included seizure-like fits (especially seen in the Medieval period with the belief that the enchantress who put a spell on the hysteric would cause fits in the hysteric), stomach-aches, and hemorrhoids due to an increase in black bile setting the four humors out of balance (particularly in the Renaissance period). However, in the eighteenth century, there was a new trend toward symptoms of instability, volatility, and hyperbole—changes in the mind (mental), in behavior, and in the nerves (neurotic, usually associated with the brain during this time). These "affective" etiologies were called "moral causes, or passions," and they pointed to a change in types of symptoms associated with hysteria from physical (somatic) to mental and neurotic.[264]

This brings us back to the association between femininity and hysteria. While both men and women of the eighteenth century could potentially have the disease because it was no longer associated with the uterus, according to eighteenth-century physicians such as Robert Whytt (1714-1766), these etiologies "meant that women were more prone to hysteria than men were, for their nature was more delicate and impressionable, their responses more emotional—and necessarily so, for their maternal destiny so commanded."[265] While the uterus wasn't literally involved in the etiology any longer, the fact that women were thought

[263] ibid.
[264] ibid.
[265] ibid., 5–6; Faber, "Hysteria in the Eighteenth Century," 323.

of as more emotional than men because they had to be mothers made it so that the womb was still involved with hysteria, albeit symbolically.[266] Thus, hysteria became an emotion- and desire-driven disease, not a bodily disease, and the symptoms concerned the patient's mental state and the actions surrounding her mental state. It was a disease caused by morals and by sexuality. Even with the shift in theories from somatic to neurologic etiologies, scientists who believed the "neurological theory" still kept parts of the uterine theory in their explanations of hysteria.[267] They believed that abstinence and missed periods not related to pregnancy created issues that affected the patient's nerves, which in turn caused the hysteria.[268] In other words, while it may seem that this century left the sexual associations with hysteria in the dust with their new neurologic approach to the disease, physicians still clung to women's sexuality as the main cause behind their suffering and madness. In fact, Beizer mentions that physicians of the time claimed that men who had lazy or "studious" lifestyles were more likely to be hysterical than their more active counterparts, since their behavior was viewed as more woman-like.[269]

The late eighteenth century marked a time of great change in views on madness in many parts of Europe, but especially in England and France, where alienists (the term for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century psychologists) became early leaders in the field of psychology during this time due to politics. Great Britain had the "mad king," King George III, who had a bout of insanity between 1788 and 1789.[270] Dr. Francis Willis was the physician who treated him, and his writings on psychiatry were approved by the great

[266] Beizer, "Introduction," 6.
[267] ibid.
[268] ibid.
[269] ibid.
[270] Harsin, "Gender, Class, and Madness in Nineteenth-Century France," 1094.

Philippe Pinel, a renowned psychologist of France. In France, however, it was the French Revolution that caused such interest in insanity, leading to great changes in the treatment of the mentally ill.[271] Because such a large part of the French Revolution was about freeing the bourgeoisie from the oppression of the royals and the nobility, "dramatic steps were taken—namely, breaking the chains that had traditionally bound insane persons and restoring them to the status of human beings."[272]

Toward the end of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century, Philippe Pinel (1745-1826) pursued more humane treatment for mentally ill patients, and his efforts resulted in the creation of psychiatry as a new form of medicine.[273] Before Pinel, asylums were "atrocious" places to put human beings; they were not cleaned; there was no therapy for the patients; and physicians and attendants chained their patients and treated patients without kindness or sympathy (more with fear of violence).[274] In 1793, Pinel was appointed to the Bicêtre (the public asylum for male patients in Paris), and a year later he was also put in charge of the Salpêtrière (the public asylum for female patients).[275] Pinel wrote two treatises in 1798 and 1801, which detailed new psychiatric reforms he was using at the Bicêtre and Salpêtrière and their effects on patients.[276] His research included the use of "observation and analysis" of each patient individually over collecting large amounts of data, and he only included symptoms that could be seen in his patients.[277] Pinel described different etiologies and types of symptoms in his treatises. For the most part, etiologies fell under one of two

[271] ibid., 1050.
[272] Veith, *Hysteria*, 175.
[273] ibid.
[274] Woods and Carlson, "The Psychiatry of Philippe Pinel," 17-18.
[275] Veith, *Hysteria*, 176.
[276] ibid.
[277] Woods and Carlson, "The Psychiatry of Philippe Pinel," 15–16.

categories—predisposed and occasional causes.[278] Predisposed causalities included "heredity, an extremely irregular mode of life, and what he termed the spasmodic, oppressive, and expansive passions."[279] On the other hand, occasional causes included specific events leading up to the mental illnesses, such as alcoholism, hypochondria "produced by excesses,… after-effects of various fevers, gout, and a violent blow on the head."[280] The symptoms and signs of mental illness were "disordered speech, unusual actions, expression of bizarre emotions, and various somatic changes."[281] Like more modern psychologists, Pinel interviewed each patient at the Bicêtre to learn about their symptoms and personalities, and he worked not just to treat their somatic symptoms but also their psychological symptoms using therapeutic techniques.[282] In particular, Pinel emphasized kindness, sympathy, and humaneness in his treatment of the mentally ill patients at the Bicêtre and Salpêtrière.[283]

The measures he put in place were extremely novel for the time and changed his and other physicians' perspectives on chronic psychiatric patients. Before Pinel's work, physicians believed chronic patients were incurable, but Pinel's treatments proved that these patients could improve and heal from their mental illnesses.[284] In 1800, along with several other alienists in different parts of Europe, including Italy, France, and England, Pinel started a movement that changed views on the mentally ill from incurable threats to society to

[278] ibid., 21.
[279] ibid.
[280] ibid.
[281] ibid., 20.
[282] ibid., 17; Faber, "Hysteria in the Eighteenth Century," 328.
[283] Woods and Carlson, "The Psychiatry of Philippe Pinel," 18; Faber, "Hysteria in the Eighteenth Century," 328.
[284] Veith, *Hysteria*, 177.

patients whose disease could be cured with proper kindness and therapeutic help from those working at asylums. Before this revolution, many patients were kept in chains; however, in freeing the patients of the Salpêtrière, Pinel began treating his patients as human beings, only using the much less severe straight jacket on more "agitated and potentially dangerous" patients in contrast to the previous chains, which were painful and dehumanizing.[285] Unlike his contemporaries, however, Pinel's actions were particularly potent in that they acted as a major part of the French revolution—a continuation of liberating those in chains from their restraints.[286] Pinel also made note that when patients were not treated humanely (if they were chained, if they were treated unkindly or without sympathy, if they were given no freedom within the hospital), they responded poorly to treatment and often became incurable.[287] As a result of Pinel's work, between 1790 and 1800, a new belief that "therapy should be aimed at the healthy part of the person in order to struggle against the sick part" began in France, and doctors' healthier qualities were aimed to help fill the ill gaps in their patients.[288] Thus, we see a shift in views on mentally ill patients from physically dangerous and animal-like to people who could be healed through therapy.

We also see a change in the artistic depiction of insanity in the eighteenth century. Male artists tried to put post-Revolution women in their place by changing their depictions of insanity from lunatic men to lovestruck, "sexually and physically aggressive madwomen of the revolution."[289] For the most part, before the eighteenth century, madness was depicted in

[285] Fee and Brown, "Freeing the Insane," 1743.
[286] ibid.
[287] Woods and Carlson, "The Psychiatry of Philippe Pinel," 23.
[288] Ripa, *Women and Madness*, 5.
[289] Kromm, "The Feminization of Madness in Visual Representation," 525.

art as the physically violent and threatening male lunatic.[290] In fact, before 1780, very few artists are depicting female madness in art (visual or literary).[291] However, around 1735, there is a change from the brutish madman and the "lovelorn melancholic" man to the "pathetic elements of weakness and defenselessness" of madness.[292] Art historian Jane E. Kromm says that this change shifts views on madness toward creative "geniuses" and scheming "projectors" and also makes madness a "flaw in reason and human agency."[293] This is the beginning of a move from male-centered to female-centered artistic depictions of madness. What is particularly interesting is how male and female madness is portrayed. Male insanity is shown as "aggressive" and "combative," while female madness is increasingly portrayed as "sexually provocative" and usually "self-abusing."[294] This led to the belief that sexuality was the most prominent part of a woman's nature; however, to be considered proper and worthy of society, women had to both hide their sexuality (make it "inaccessible"), but traces of it had to be perceptible (make it "visual") to the outside world.[295]

With the rise of the more humane treatment of patients and Pinel's revolution of the treatment of the mentally ill came sympathy for the mentally ill and less fear of their violence. However, in France (because of the French Revolution), women wanted a part of the freedom allowed to the male bourgeoisie, but men did not want to include women as part of their newly liberated state. Thus, any political actions led by women were diagnosed as

[290] ibid., 508.
[291] ibid., 510.
[292] ibid., 508.
[293] ibid., 510.
[294] ibid., 507.
[295] ibid., 524.

insanity, forcing political women into asylums—treating them as other, as against nature.[296] The result of this was the change in artistic depiction of the mentally ill from the violent, savage male patient to the more sexually aggressive but less physically threatening female patient. Finally, with this move toward illustrating female madness came depictions of Ophelia, especially in eighteenth-century British art, literature, and stage representations, and, thus, we see her as a sensual Siren in several of these portrayals.[297]

Nineteenth-Century Mental Illness

Before I start my discussion on nineteenth-century beliefs in women's mental illness and hysteria, I will give a brief discussion regarding Thomas's *Hamlet*. *Hamlet* was premiered at the Opéra de Paris in 1868, thus making this a solid mid-to-late-nineteenth-century production. When looking at how Thomas framed his Ophélie and her mad scene, especially in comparison to Shakespeare's original Renaissance Ophelia and eighteenth-century staged versions of the Shakespearean *Hamlet*, there are direct ties to nineteenth-century views on women's mental illness, and especially hysteria.[298] In Shakespeare's original mad scene, Ophelia sings a series of both bawdy and grief-stricken songs to express her madness. This Ophelia's mental instability is due both to her rejection by Hamlet (her lover and only option for marriage) and the death of her father, Polonius, who was murdered by Hamlet unbeknownst to Ophelia. However, in Thomas, Carré, and Barbier's version, Ophélie's madness comes only after rejection by Hamlet in the closet scene, consisting of a trio with Gertrude, Hamlet, and Ophélie (Get thee to a nunnery). In fact, her father does not

[296] Ripa, *Women and Madness*, 23.
[297] Kromm, "The Feminization of Madness in Visual Representation," 510.
[298] See Chapter 3 for more details on this.

die in this operatic version, thus taking away this reason and clearly setting all blame for her loss of reason and hysteria on Hamlet's rejection.

Additionally, Thomas, Carré, and Barbier completely remove all bawdiness from her mad scene, creating a more dramatic scena for their version of Ophélie, as would be expected by operatic audiences who came to see a *bel canto*-like mad scene on stage. Like other *bel canto* mad scenes preceding this one (especially that of Donizetti's *Anna Bolena*), in her mad scene, Ophélie's mind wanders in and out of her madness as the scene progresses; sometimes she hallucinates, while other times, she speaks to those around her. Sometimes, she knows Hamlet rejected her, while at other times, she is convinced they are married, and he is cheating on her (delusions). The end of her mad scene shows Ophélie in a hysterical but still lucid (non-hallucinational or -delusional) state. After several pages of broken speech patterns interrupted by vocalises on "ah," at the end of the coda, Ophélie desperately sings, "Pour toi je meurs," meaning "For you I die." In her suicide scene, she addresses the Wilis from her ballade, asking them to hide her amongst the reeds, marking her return to madness, and ends by singing the lines of Hamlet's and her duet. This shows her devotion to Hamlet but also shows that she made a choice to remain in her madness (the delusion that Hamlet still loves her and they are still together) and ultimately decides suicide is her best option because her difficulties—potential loss of worth via loss of a husband—are completely unbearable.

Nineteenth-Century Medical Practices Regarding Hysteria

The nineteenth century is where we see some of the most dramatic changes to hysteria theory.[299] Already in the eighteenth century, there were large steps toward neurology and away from somatic symptoms; however, the womb still plays a large part, and the uterine

[299] Beizer, "Introduction," 6.

theory itself persists through the 1880s.[300] In the nineteenth century, there was another major change—to "construct and convey an image of woman" through hysteria and through the language surrounding hysteria.[301]

Veith discusses multiple physicians who tried to explain hysteria, its etiologies, and its symptoms during the Victorian era. The first was British physician Robert Brudenell Carter (1828-1918), who believed that the three main causes of hysteria were, in fact, psychological in nature.[302] Carter believed that the most common etiology was sexual passion and that the higher the sex drive, the more susceptible the person would be to hysteria.[303] While sexuality was correlated, sex itself was not the cause of hysteria; Carter also said that dysfunction of the "reproductive organs" (the uterus and the ovaries) was not the cause of hysteria.[304] He pointed out that "because women were by nature more sensitive in their emotional structure than men and being compelled by convention to repress their sexual needs, they were therefore far more susceptible to hysteria."[305] What is most interesting about Carter is that he, like his French predecessor Pinel, believed in "moral treatment" (psychotherapy).[306] Carter furthered this theory; he thought it was important to investigate the patient's repressed emotions, such as lust, love, or jealousy, but he also believed that he could not help the patient unless she were ready and willing to work through her disease and change these emotions.[307] Thus, in the early- to mid-nineteenth century,

[300] ibid., 7.
[301] ibid., 7–8.
[302] Veith, *Hysteria*, 199–203.
[303] ibid., 201.
[304] ibid., 202.
[305] ibid., 201.
[306] ibid., 205.
[307] ibid., 206.

hysteria remained a mostly feminine disease caused by over-sexuality but not by the uterus or by sex itself. Additionally, there were changes in perception of the symptoms; they were of the mind and were partially due to repressed, deeper, more taboo emotions.

Beginning in the 1830s, the English, the Americans, the French, and German-speaking physicians began exchanging ideas on psychology; in fact, psychologists from each area visited each other's asylums and read each other's publications in the hopes of learning more about their field from different areas of Europe.[308] However, by the end of the nineteenth century, stances and procedures towards psychology and mentally ill patients became quite different in each nation; they were separated by moral, medical, and mental boundaries surrounding insanity.[309] In particular, while these four nations shared similar characteristics regarding views on mental illness, in each state, we see different attitudes toward femininity and different interpretations of sexuality, which highly affected ideas surrounding hysteria and treatment of mentally ill (specifically female) patients.[310] For example, in Germany, there were multiple schools of thought on hysteria, including that of Alfred Hagar (1830-1914), who would surgically remove hysterical women's ovaries when he believed their hysteria was incurable.[311] Additionally, Nikolaus Friedrich (1825-1882), would perform female circumcision on female patients "whose sexual needs and demands" he believed were too high.[312] On the other hand, between 1830 and 1870, there were changes in English society's thoughts on madness and on femininity, and these changes led to "The Lunatics Act" of 1845, which forced all counties in England to create public asylums to take

[308] Showalter, "Introduction," 6.
[309] ibid.
[310] ibid.
[311] Veith, *Hysteria*, 210.
[312] ibid.

care of the insane.[313] By the 1850s, a majority of the residents of the asylums were women.[314] Thus, madness became a "female malady" in that "madness [was] one of the wrongs of woman" and was "the essential feminine nature unveiling itself before scientific male rationality."[315] From this thought, asylums came up with a new idea on the treatment of insanity, one that was more ideally feminine in its approach; insanity could be "domesticated" away. Since women were supposed to be domestic, a new assumption that creating a "home-like" environment and making a familial structure of the asylum workers would help to cure, or rather, "tame" female insanity.[316]

In France, Jules Falret of the Salpêtrière wrote essays claiming hysterical patients, above all else, were deceitful, almost pathological liars.[317] According to French historian Yannick Ripa, French physicians believed women's mental illness to be both physical and mental, and they returned to uterine theory—stating that hysteria originated from the uterus.[318] She also explains how in nineteenth-century France (and most of Europe) madness was extremely common in literature as well as in society, saying that it "was part of the range of misfortunes visited upon the innocent heroine" and that it was meant to make the audience feel something, usually either pity for the afflicted woman or fear of her.[319] In 1838, it was decreed that "each department in France" had "to provide an asylum."[320] While alienists said that these asylums were meant to help patients with their recovery, they were more there

[313] Showalter, "Introduction," 17.
[314] ibid.
[315] ibid., 3–4.
[316] ibid., 17.
[317] Veith, *Hysteria*, 210–11.
[318] Ripa, *Women and Madness*, 1.
[319] ibid., 2.
[320] Harsin, "Gender, Class, and Madness in Nineteenth-Century France," 1050.

to protect the social order.[321] Physicians of the time squabbled over the definition of madness, thus creating a very broad spectrum of what was deemed insanity, and leaving a very narrow margin for what was deemed normal.[322] Thus, between 1830 and 1860, asylums had the highest numbers of new patients and were at full or overfull occupancy.[323] In fact, between 1845 and 1849, over nine thousand French women were incarcerated in asylums—a number that rose to almost twenty thousand by 1871.[324]

In France, there were four types of disorders alienists used to commit women to an asylum. These included personality disorders, such as "indifference, jealous, fear, anger, vanity, ambition, and excessive sensitivity;" behavioral disorders, which consisted of "eccentricity," getting drunk, suicidal thoughts and actions, "debauched lifestyle," refusing to work, and rebelling against men; intellectual disorders, which were described as "reduced intelligence, hallucinations, and various types of exalted behavior;" and physical disorders, including "senility, puerperal fever, and anorexia, as well as amenorrhea and vaginal discharge."[325] Each of these disorders' definitions was extremely opaque, fluid, and inconsistent among alienists, thus making it easy to have women admitted to mental institutions.[326] When looking at Thomas's mad scene, Ophélie's illness seems to fall somewhere between the intellectual and personality disorders; both textually and musically, Carré, Barbier, and Thomas indicate that she has hallucinations and delusions (which were considered to be a part of the intellectual disorders), but she also shows symptoms including

[321] Ripa, *Women and Madness*, 3–4.
[322] ibid., 4–5.
[323] ibid., 5.
[324] ibid., 1.
[325] ibid., 32.
[326] ibid.

jealousy, anger, and fear in the text, which fall into the personality disorder category.[327] However, the definitions of what women's mental illness looked like were often in relation to expectations of femininity of the time and in relation to men's mental illness and the expectations around the masculine.[328]

Ties Between Nineteenth Century Literature and Art and Hysteria

Women's madness, and particularly hysteria, was a popular subject in medical literature during the nineteenth century, but it also became increasingly popular in art and in literary works and, as we saw in chapter one, in stage productions, especially in *bel canto* operas. Authors, librettists, playwrights, and artists took to portraying the ideal struggling female heroine as mentally fragile in their works, thus making mentally ill and hysterical women very popular depictions in art, literature, and music of the nineteenth century. French literary scholar Janet L. Beizer even said that hysteria was "seductive for nineteenth-century literati."[329] She claims that illness was not the central issue surrounding hysteria. Instead, she found "a discourse made in the image of all that was feared, desired, and repudiated by nineteenth-century rational men."[330] In other words, nineteenth-century European men exploited the disease for their own creative literary outputs. Because hysterical women couldn't tell their own tales, male authors of the nineteenth century became obsessed with telling these women's stories for them.[331] Thus, she calls hysterical women "ventriloquist dolls" whose puppeteers were the men telling their stories from the patriarchal perspective.[332]

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[327] See Chapter 4 for further musical analysis regarding Ophélie's symptoms.
[328] Ripa, *Women and Madness*, 78.
[329] Beizer, "Introduction," 2.
[330] ibid., 3.
[331] ibid., 9.
[332] ibid.

This explains the obsession with mad scenes and telling the stories of madwomen on the operatic stage (especially in Italy and France), including (but not limited to) Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Anna Bolena*, and *Linda di Chamounix*, Bellini's Elvira in *I puritani*, Meyerbeer's Dinorah in *Le pardon de Ploërmel*, and, of course, Thomas's Ophélie in *Hamlet*. Each of these composers and their librettists were male, and they worked together to create great scenas surrounding their leading ladies' mental deteriorations—a spectacle of madness put into women's mouths by men to be viewed safely by a patriarchal audience.

In her dissertation, *The Poetics of Pathology: Hysteria from Neurology to Psychology*, Masha Mimran also discusses the connection between hysteria and literature but from a slightly different angle. She explains how there is a very clear crossing of boundaries between fictive literature and medicine, especially in Charcot's era of psychological study.[333] In fact, some psychologists and doctors led lives both as physicians as well as creative writers, using an alias to do so, and they would use their knowledge and studies of hysteria to create "realistic" hysterical characters.[334] Some non-medical literary figures of the late 1800s would even attend Charcot's *salons* to learn more about hysteria so that they could write more medically accurate versions of the disease into their novels.[335]

Additionally, "artistic media such as photography, painting, and drawing used at the Salpêtrière helped the sciences construe an image of the hysteric for the medical and literary worlds that often emerged from both perspectives of the illness."[336] In fact, alienist Etienne Esquirol commissioned artists to represent his patients in his publications, including *Des*

[333] Mimran, "Introduction: Hysteria and the Salpêtrière of Jean-Martin Charcot: Nineteenth-Century Literary Diagnosis and Modern Medical Literariness," 4.
[334] ibid.
[335] ibid., 7–8.
[336] ibid., 8.

Maladies mentales (1838)—a work that included twenty-four illustrations of his patients, seventeen of which depicted women.[337] These and other paintings of madwomen, including the depiction of Pinel freeing them, showed the stereotypes of madwomen during the nineteenth century; artists depicted them as dangerous, sexually unrestrained, and threatening femme-fatale figures, thus showing their viewers that these women needed to be contained and were a threat to the male-dominated population.[338] Because of this, we see a huge influx of Ophelia-obsession in both visual and performance art, especially Ophelias who were seductive in their madness and death. Charcot and his predecessors (and his students, such as Freud) not only used photographs and drawings of their hysterical patients to help people better understand and to learn more about the disease. They also used fictional literature and art (often from authors who attended their salons) as perfect examples of hysteria to reinforce their beliefs on women's mental illness, as proof that this is what the typical hysteric should look like. Thus, by the nineteenth century, women were statistically represented more as "mad" than men were, and there was an obsession with viewing madwomen as part of entertainment, especially in opera.[339]

Nineteenth-Century Sociocultural Views on Women's Mental Illness and Hysteria

The obsession with the artistic depictions of Ophelia and other mentally ill women was not only affected by the medical world but also by sociocultural views on women's mental illness as well as definitions of ideal femininity during the nineteenth century. Veith claims that "young women and girls were expected to be delicate and vulnerable both physically and emotionally, and this image was reflected in their disposition to hysteria and

[337] Kromm, "The Feminization of Madness in Visual Representation," 521.
[338] ibid., 530.
[339] Showalter, "Introduction," 3.

the nature of its symptoms. The delicacy was enhanced by their illness and as a result, the incidence of overt manifestations was further increased."[340] In other words, the expectations of the ideal woman in nineteenth-century European society—that she be fragile physically and mentally—made her susceptible to hysteria more than men, who were supposed to be intellectually and physically stronger and, thus, less prone to a moral meltdown resulting in hysteria.

To make matters worse, the list of what makes a "normal" woman was unending and nigh impossible to fulfill but also very specific, thus making it easy for a large number of women to be called "mad" and placed in an asylum. Women were expected to be "generous, self-effacing, tidy, clean, submissive, charitable, devoted, modest," and even the smallest change from the norm could be construed as madness and could end with the woman being sent to an asylum.[341] Additionally, during the nineteenth century, women were only considered as people in relation to the men in their lives; she is the daughter or wife of so-and-so.[342] And while men were allowed (and even encouraged) to drink, go out dancing, have lovers before (and sometimes while) being married, go horseback riding, smoke, gamble, go hunting, read, or even dislike people, these activities were forbidden for women, and attempting to do any of these activities would potentially get her locked away.[343] Thus, we see a tremendously larger number of women than men being committed to asylums. A woman who did not fit into society or who may have been a burden to her husband or family was almost sure to be put into an asylum.[344]

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[340] Veith, *Hysteria*, 209.
[341] Ripa, *Women and Madness*, 32.
[342] ibid., 32.
[343] ibid., 32–33.
[344] ibid., 48.

Because it was so easy for women to be seen as misfits or abnormal and for these women to immediately be claimed as mad or hysterical, "in spite of assertions to the contrary, mental illness remained a special sort of disease. It was still characterized in terms of its opposite," what was then deemed normalcy, "and still led to the patient being rejected by society."[345] In other words, the mentally ill were viewed as other compared with everyone else in society; even the name of psychologists at the time—alienists, which comes from the term alien, meaning foreign—shows that these psychologists treated their patients as something not quite like them, something lacking, something to be fixed. This is also evident through alienists' therapeutic techniques, which were supposed to replace the sick part of the patient's mind with the healthy mind of the physicians and staff of asylums.[346] In her discussion on the connection between literature and hysteria, Beizer also describes an othering of the mentally ill, and especially hysterical women. She explains how she "recognized its [hysteria's] form in a great number of male-authored nineteenth-century texts, which seemed to exist in a tense relationship with the assiduously demarcated hysterical Other upon whom they depended for their very lives."[347] In other words, even fictional stories about hysterical or mentally ill women depicted them as different, as other, or even as exotic.

The result of these beliefs that the mentally ill were other or different from everyone else is evident in Carré, Barbier, and Thomas's treatment of Ophélie. In their version, they include a ballade in the middle of the mad scene. This ballade echoes both the Shakespearean mad scene and follows the Meyerbeerian use of the ballade. However, it also

[345] ibid., 5.
[346] ibid.
[347] Beizer, "Introduction," 2.

contains another layer—othering Ophélie in her madness. As we will see in Chapters 3 and 4, the remainder of Ophélie's music is like everyone else's in the opera in that it is in a French romantic style. Ophélie's ballade, on the other hand, uses a Nordic folk melody, which, when compared with the French style of the rest of the opera, makes her seem musically different from the other characters during this scene. Additionally, Ophélie sings diegetically in this scene, meaning that she is singing as part of the plot of the opera, which is often reserved for exotic characters such as the title role in Bizet's *Carmen*. Thomas furthers this theme by also including two instruments associated with Romani nomads during the nineteenth century in her ballade and specifically when she sings completely on vocalises with no words: the tambourine and the triangle. These musical devices work to exoticize and other Ophélie only in her mad scene, thus showing the audience that she is no longer like them in her mental state while also reflecting Ripa's views that mental illness was viewed as something other or different from normal during this time. This connection between Ophélie's madness and exoticizing her also shows another tie, one the nineteenth-century medical world strongly believed regarding madwomen—the connection between madness, especially hysteria, and female sexuality. Romani and other exoticized characters like Carmen were often femme fatales (beautiful, dangerous women who tear men down and make them meet their ends). They used their feminine wiles and sexuality to seduce moral men and make them immoral, like Carmen does with Don José. By associating Ophélie with this exotic music, Thomas not only others her but also likens her to the femme fatale and cues the audience into her new connection with her sexuality during her mad scene. Thus, Ophélie's madness becomes a tie to her femininity, sexuality, and dangerous demeanor all due to her exotic music and othering at the hands of Thomas.

One of the most common tropes of female asylum inmates during the nineteenth century was the prevalence of spinsters, or unmarried women—another group that was also viewed as other during this time. They made up around fifty percent of patients at the Salpêtrière in 1841.[348] Spinsters were sometimes reported to allegedly attack their younger female relatives who were getting married, especially to men whom they believed would marry them.[349] This shows another consistency—that the etiology of madness in women was sexual, and that insane women were viewed as sexually dangerous and violent in nature. But why would these spinsters be so violent; why would marriage (or lack thereof) make women mad? According to Ripa, people in nineteenth-century France denied the existence of unmarried women, thus making finding a good match a race against the clock.[350] In fact, women were told tales that if they did not marry young, as they aged, their bodies, especially their uteruses, would dry up, which is quite like uterine theory from the Renaissance period and earlier.[351] On top of this, "marriage was viewed as the natural goal of all women" in early nineteenth-century France.[352] Thus, losing chances of marriage would bring extreme stress to anyone, including Thomas's Ophélie because she loses the hope of having a husband when Hamlet rejects and abandons her.

Additionally, neither the Church nor family members would help unmarried women who were not nuns. They were given no income, no way to join the workforce (since women were supposed to depend on men financially), and they were, thus, denied a way to live.[353]

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[348] Ripa, *Women and Madness*, 54.
[349] ibid., 56.
[350] ibid., 58.
[351] ibid., 58.
[352] White, "Female Singers and the Maladie Morale in Parisian Lyric Theaters, 1830-1850," 62.
[353] Ripa, *Women and Madness*, 59.

Even the Church "only celebrated celibacy within its own confines…. Outside the Church unmarried women were outsiders who were not carrying out the divine plan."[354] As a result, spinsterhood was traumatic for those women who wanted to marry, especially for those who would never have fortunes and whose families would abandon them, as there was no institution to help them as they aged. To add to this, women who weren't mothers were not even considered fully grown women; they were still considered children, since they had not moved from being the property of their father to the property of their husband and were virgins.[355] On the other hand, married middle- and upper-class women were legally (under the French Civil Code of 1804) subordinate to their husbands and had to obey them.[356] However, for a prima donna on tour, it was a good exchange to have a husband rather than have rumors spread that she was, in fact, a woman of ill repute.[357] While a prima donna had an income of her own and could choose whether or not to marry, middle- and upper-class women did not have such a luxury.[358] Thus, these women's identities—including both their finances and their status as a human being—depended upon the men in their lives. This brings an entirely new perspective to Thomas's Ophélie and her mad scene. As a girl abandoned by her lover, Hamlet, she believes that she is about to lose her promise of marriage, and, thus, her place in society.

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[354] ibid.
[355] ibid., 60.
[356] White, "Female Singers and the Maladie Morale in Parisian Lyric Theaters, 1830-1850," 61.
[357] ibid., 66.
[358] Out of 66 total female singers at the Opéra and Opéra Comique between 1830 and 1850, 32 were married, and 34 were not, showing that it was almost 50-50 in terms of married and unmarried singers. White, 64.

Politically inclined women also became a target of insanity claims during this time, since women in politics (like insanity) was seen as dangerous to the men in charge and, thus, needed to be dealt with.[359] Additionally, a political nature certainly did not fit into the generous, kind, and calm demeanor of the nineteenth-century ideal woman. In fact, alienists even came up with a theory called "political insanity," which helped those in power define politically rebellious women as mad, therefore, allowing scientific reasons to lock them up in asylums.[360] Ripa states:

> Any political rebellion by a woman, even if it was an isolated act, even if it was mumbled in the shadows, was an act of madness. In order to silence these outbursts the police leaned on the psychiatric profession, and the latter did more than just ratify official committals and thus tacitly aid repression. The alienists did not want to remain in the wings; they thought out a theory of political insanity, thereby giving those in power scientific backing.[361]

However, the alienists could not come to a consensus on the symptoms of political insanity; the only thing they could agree upon was that the "political ravings" of these women were never thought out or planned and were always spontaneous in nature.[362] According to these psychiatrists, women were inherently not political, and, thus, just the act of being rebellious or speaking out in terms of politics was in and of itself proof of insanity.[363]

In opera, there are two very powerful and important examples of politically inclined, or, maybe more accurately, rebellious women who are othered and called mad. The first is the title role in Bizet's *Carmen* (1875). Carmen's acts of rebellion are uncountable in this opera, but the Act 2 finale draws to a close with her singing "*Vive la liberté*" [Long live

[359] Ripa, *Women and Madness*, 22.
[360] ibid., 23.
[361] ibid.
[362] ibid.
[363] ibid., 25.

liberty!] at the top of her voice, backed by the other smugglers—her companions and the entire chorus. From the beginning of the opera, Carmen talks about how she will take lovers as she chooses them, depending on her heart that day, showing that she will never settle down with just one man and will always be a free spirit—something that was quite frowned upon for women of the nineteenth century. However, Carmen's most incredible form of rebellion is when she makes good on this promise, uses, rejects, and ruins Don José, and chooses Escamillo as her new lover instead of him. As Catherine Clément describes her, Carmen is "The most feminist, the most stubborn of these dead women…Carmen the damned."[364] This Carmen would rather die than be forced into something she does not want, than to be with someone whom she no longer desires; "Just the same, this woman who says no will die too."[365] In other words, Carmen's rebellious act is her saying "no" to men and to the society that tries to tell her who and what she should be. Carmen never has a mad scene. Instead, her role is defined by her race; Carmen is a Roma woman. Thus, Bizet, to make her rebelliousness make sense and more acceptable to his late-nineteenth-century audience, Carmen "will be set apart through musical and other means as Them, the Other," while the Spanish characters like her lover Don José are treated as "Us."[366] Thus, Carmen's rebelliousness is only acceptable because she is exotic, an other, not like the women of European society, and because, in the end, her rebellion is punished via her death at the hands of the man whom she rejects.

We see something similar with Lucia in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835). From the beginning of the opera, Lucia defies her brother's (Enrico) wishes for her to quietly

[364] Clément, *Opera, or, The Undoing of Women*, 48.
[365] ibid.
[366] Locke, *Musical Exoticism*, 161–62.

marry the man he has chosen for her (Arturo) and instead has chosen as a lover her family's—and particularly her brother's—enemy, Edgardo.[367] However, Enrico along with the help of the family's chaplain eventually tricks Lucia into agreeing to the marriage; the chaplain particularly cites her family's need as a reason to sacrifice her happiness, her love, and her honor to marry Arturo despite her promises to Edgardo.[368] The story, as we know, does not end there; the sight of Edgardo after being married to Arturo and knowing that she will have to consummate this marriage sends Lucia into a spiral, and, in another moment of extreme rebellion, Lucia kills Arturo offstage—an act of extreme violence, showing the onset of her madness directly relating to her rebellion. After this, the chaplain finds Lucia standing over Arturo's body covered in his blood and holding a knife and announces to the onstage crowd that Lucia has gone mad and is coming back to the party. Lucia's murderous act is, in fact, a political one as well as an obvious rebellion against her brother—the patriarch of her family. While she signed the marriage contract to help her family, she ultimately chooses to kill rather than be forced into an unwanted marriage, thus showing how her rebellion, her violence, and her murderousness ultimately were symptoms of her madness.

Political inclinations were not the only thing considered unnatural in a woman. Violence was viewed as unladylike during the nineteenth century, and was, thus, seen more in male mental illness than female.[369] Thus, suicide was much more common in mentally ill men than women, since suicide was a violent sin and, thus, was not feminine.[370] However, when women did commit suicide, scientists believed them to be "more discreet and passive

[367] Smart, "The Silencing of Lucia," 123.
[368] ibid.
[369] Ripa, *Women and Madness*, 78.
[370] ibid., 77.

methods of suicide than the violent methods men used – firearms or hanging."[371] Women were passive in their madness, in their lives, and in their deaths.[372] Again, while Ophélie's suicide would have been seen as abnormal because women's mental illness was viewed as nonviolent, the fact that she killed herself via drowning and not in a more violent way sustains the image of a less violent suicide than one a man would perform, such as Werther who shot himself in Massenet's *Werther* from 1892.

While before the nineteenth century audiences may have expected to see a happy ending or *lieto fine*, onstage deaths became prevalent and prominent in operas, especially in Italy during the era.[373] This is partially because theatre patrons and impresarios alike found it important for people to view death on stage, thus facing their own mortality.[374] It also allowed the audience to connect their own suffering with that of the character on stage.[375] However, as of the 1820s, we also see the rise of certain ideals of onstage deaths, including that they should not appear too painful, bloody, or dire but should instead portray pleasant, peaceful closure, like going to sleep or the setting of the sun.[376] Instead, a singing actor must "transcend the physical realities of dying—the indignities of spasm, the loss of bodily control, the pain-filled gasps—with which the spectator was almost certainly familiar, and create a gestural realization of what death might represent in spiritual terms."[377] Thus, operatic deaths would consist of a swift, painless death, such as a single stab wound for a murder and very often poison for a suicide (e.g. Sélika's death at the end of Meyerbeer's

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[371] ibid., 78.
[372] ibid., 78.
[373] Greenwald, "Ars Moriendi: Reflections on the Death of Mimì," 173.
[374] ibid.
[375] ibid.
[376] Rutherford, "'Non Voglio Morir': Manon's Death," 43.
[377] ibid.

L'Africaine or the title role's death in Puccini's *Suor Angelica*), and the death of a major character would often be followed by a swift curtain drop.[378] Instead of creating fear, operatic death scenes, especially ones involving a female character, were supposed to bring peace and comfort to the audience as well as a sense of pity and sadness for the character, thus representing the Christian belief and hope in a better afterlife after the sufferings of the earthly one.[379] The music also often worked together with the swift death; before the character's death, there would sometimes be a "thrumming," allowing the audience to prepare for the death.[380] For example, in Puccini's *La Bohème*, Mimì's death is so quiet that it is not even noticed by the others on stage until after she dies, and her death isn't even marked in the score.[381] The death is then proceeded by Rudolfo's final cries of "Mimì! Mimi," thus emphasizing Rudolfo's misery before the curtain falls. The music leading up to Ophélie's death, a suicide by drowning (alone on stage), is eerie and calm, emulating the sounds of her ballade from her mad scene and the sounds of the water. Additionally, we do not see her thrash as she drowns on stage, but she just walks into the water, and the curtain closes, thus relieving the audience of viewing her violent end. Finally, even her words emit calm and peaceful closure; she sings "*Ah, cachez-moi parmi vos roseaux*," [Ah, hide me amongst your reeds,] telling the audience she is ready for her life to be over.[382] She ends the scene by singing Hamlet's part of their love duet, assuring herself and the audience that he did, in fact, love her once and bringing herself and the audience to a happier place and time before the curtain closes on her song and on her life.

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[378] ibid., 44.
[379] ibid.
[380] ibid.
[381] Greenwald, "Ars Moriendi: Reflections on the Death of Mimì," 167.
[382] Castel et al., *French Opera Libretti,* 432.

Finally, Ripa discusses how mental illness was one of women's only ways of "escape from a reality they found unbearable," which forced them to "use [sic] all the mental escape routes which the psyche could provide."[383] Trauma after trauma, oppression after oppression: these women had no rights, no self-identity, no way to help themselves, and no one to help them. Thus, "the illnesses were cultural rather than natural;" women chose madness and the inside of their minds rather than the outside world that put them down over and over again.[384] The alienists believed that madness was an essential part of a woman's nature, which could show up and take over at any time with any slight push.[385] However, Ripa writes that

> For the more sensitive or less pliant women, madness was the only escape from a world of pent-up frustrations and unrealizable longings. The 'acceptable' ways of life denied women the right to fulfilment, whether emotional, physical or intellectual, and allowed them no possible compensations for enduring the rigours of daily life. Many women's mental health gave way under the weight of domestic, emotional and socio-economic problems.[386]

Ophélie's mad and suicide scenes are the perfect examples of this; her life becomes utterly unbearable because of Hamlet's rejection, and so her mind has nowhere to go except to madness. Madness and hysteria are the only escape for her from the loss of her future husband and, thus, of her identity and place in society.

Conclusion

Medical and societal views on women's mental illness changed significantly from Ancient Egypt through the 1870s. These changes reflect shifting ideas of femininity and female sexuality during the eras. Ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome accepted female

[383] Ripa, *Women and Madness*, 72.
[384] ibid., 160.
[385] ibid., 160.
[386] ibid., 159–60.

sexuality, thus saying the disease was caused by abstinence from sex. However, the Medieval period—with its strong religious connotations and backwards views on medicine in general—emphasized that female sexuality and pleasure during sex were sins, thus making abstinence a holy and good thing, and it could not be the cause of a disease such as hysteria. Instead, witchcraft became the source of hysteria, and any pleasure in sex was due to the woman having made a deal with the devil and being a witch. The views change again in the Renaissance, where physicians finally realized that the uterus does not, in fact, move, but still believed abstinence (and the womb drying up) was the source of hysteria.

The eighteenth century saw many changes in the disease, but most importantly, a movement toward psychological, "moral" causes, and no longer somatic ones. Additionally, hysteria changed to fit the fears of men regarding female autonomy; thus, the ideal docile woman became the norm, and everything outside of this could be construed as madness. In France in the nineteenth century, this trend continues, including political insanity because women could not possibly be political, autonomous, or rebellious in any way; it was against their nature. Thus, political moves in women were spontaneous forms of insanity and were the only proof needed to throw women in the asylum.

In the nineteenth century, we also see a huge interest in madness throughout Europe, which can be seen in the many operatic works including female mad scenes in Italy and France but also in the fact that people visited asylums as sources of entertainment. Women were supposed to be inherently sexual in nature but had to control their sexuality and give small hints of it while mostly hiding it to be considered proper, and, thus, their insanity was depicted as sexually free and threatening to men. Finally, Ripa points out the correlations between 1) female insanity and spinsterhood because women without a husband lost their

identities in European culture and 2) societal views on femininity and masculinity and the violence surrounding their madness and possible suicides.

Additionally, because women were supposed to be more docile and less violent than men, their suicides tended to be less violent than men's both when depicted onstage and in real life—drowning or exsanguination instead of shooting themselves, asphyxiations, or hanging themselves. Regarding female versus male suicides in life, recent scientific research has only somewhat found it to be true that female suicides tended to be less violent than male suicides. In a 2006 article, Kposowa and McElvain found that "the proposition that women use less lethal methods of committing suicide than men was only partially supported by the data. It appears that the situation is more complex than a simple dichotomy between more lethal and less lethal methods."[387] While it is true that women are much less likely to use firearms than men, as of 2006 it was still the second most used type of suicide by women.[388] Additionally, men and women use hanging equally as often, which researchers consider to be very lethal because "it has a high probability of effecting death."[389] The fact that this was being studied in 2006 shows the bias regarding expectations surrounding women even in their deaths.

However, more importantly, many stereotypes surrounding female sexuality, fragility, and their place in society remains surprisingly constant. From Ancient Egypt through the nineteenth century, women's mental illness, and especially hysteria, was associated with women's sexuality, especially with the uterus. While nineteenth-century doctors and society alike did not believe that the womb moved, they still believed that women's mental illness

[387] Kposowa and McElvain, "Gender, Place, and Method of Suicide," 435.
[388] ibid., 438.
[389] ibid., 440.

revolved around the uterus and that madness was most common in girls right after puberty, in postpartum women, and in women during and right after menopause.[390] Additionally, depictions of women's mental illness during the nineteenth century often showed them in an eroticized way—whether they were scantily clad or in sensual positions with male onlookers. This continues the belief from the medieval period that hysteria stemmed from women's sexuality and was dangerous to and could affect men, thus making women's mental illness a direct sexual threat toward men. As we will see in Chapters 3 and 4, changes to Ophelia's character from her conception by Shakespeare through the mid- to late-nineteenth centuries follow the patterns of both the ideal woman and the beliefs regarding hysteria. As these patterns develop and change, so do the depictions of Ophelia both on stage and in art, culminating with the drastic changes Carré, Barbier, and Thomas made to the original Shakespearean text to create an Ophélie who was more appropriate and relevant to expectations of their time.

[390] Ripa, *Women and Madness*, 49.

Chapter 3: Tracing Ophelia

Introduction

In this chapter, I will trace onstage and visual artistic depictions of Ophelia, beginning with a brief discussion of Thomas's Ophélie in his 1868 *Hamlet.*[391] I will then continue with stage and artistic versions of Ophelia starting with her creation by Shakespeare (1600-1601) through nineteenth-century depictions. Representations of Ophelia changed through these two-hundred and fifty years in line with cultural shifts about feminine ideals. We see these shifts influencing cuts or changes made to Shakespeare's original play, expectations surrounding the boy actors and moreover the actresses (or, in the case of Thomas, the prima donnas) who played the role, as well as how Ophelia was interpreted by actors or actresses on stage. However, depictions of Ophelia's mad scene also changed depending on societal beliefs regarding hysteria, which, as I discussed in Chapter 2, changed drastically over these centuries. In particular, Thomas's Ophélie is quite different from Shakespeare's Ophelia, partly due to the expectations surrounding operatic ingenues/leading ladies and the prima donnas who played them during the nineteenth century.[392] Ophélie has a

[391] I will discuss the music she performs in this scene in the next chapter.

[392] In 1806, Emperor Napoleon ordered his brother Joseph to make it illegal for castrati (castrated boys) to join conservatories and schools in France, thus summoning the end of the era of castrati. Following this decree, Napoleon went further, working to have the surgical procedure banned in the formation of castrati. Finally, "in 1848, Francis I of Lombardy-Venetia exiled castrati from the stage." This following Pope Pius VI's 1798 decree that women were allowed to perform on stage in the Papal States (which had not been legal until this point) brought about the era of the prima donna—or the female leading lady—in lieu of the castrato, who had been the most powerful, prominent, and sought-after opera singers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially in Italy (Parr, "Melismatic Madness: Coloratura and Female Vocality in Mid Nineteenth-Century French and Italian Opera," 24–26). As a result, we see extremely high demands for prima donnas vocally during the nineteenth century, as they take over the female roles once played by castrati in Rome and the vocal expectations (coloratura and melismatic passages, high *tessitura*, etc.) that were required of castrati during the previous centuries. These feats of vocal prowess performed by

much larger role in the opera than she does in the play, and her mad scene is drastically different in content, length, and themes. Of note, in his composition of Ophélie's mad scene, Thomas creates allusions to previous works (such as Dido from the Dido and Aeneas story) as well as more general broader conventions (including grand opera and *bel canto*) to ensure that Ophélie fits into the expectations of Opéra audiences of the day.

After discussing Thomas's Ophélie, I will examine portrayals of Shakespeare's Ophelia during the Renaissance (particularly in the early seventeenth century), examining the use of boys and men dressed as women during this period as well as Shakespeare's original bawdy mad scene. From here, I will discuss the change from boy actors to female actresses at the turn of the eighteenth century as well as the changes in presentations of Shakespeare's original play, especially surrounding sensuality and Ophelia's mad scene. Finally, I will consider nineteenth-century versions of Ophelia, both on stage and in visual art, showing the changes leading up to Thomas's Ophélie. These Ophelias will demonstrate a few important aspects regarding this dissertation. The first is showing how Ophelia developed, beginning with the Shakespeare, and how changes to her character, lines, and portrayal are connected to feminine ideals and beliefs on hysteria in their respective centuries. It will also show the development of who could play Ophelia and what expectations were in different societies during these eras regarding these actors, actresses, and/or singers. This also helps us better understand feminine ideals, how Ophelia fit into or defied these ideals, and how the women

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certain prima donnas drew audiences to opera houses, thus making it so that composers were expected to give their prima donnas virtuosic and challenging arias to fit the expectations of the impresarios and audiences. This would create a demand for more extensive female roles with a significant amount of onstage time and music, such as Thomas created for Ophélie despite the lack of stage time for and insignificance of the role of Shakespeare's Ophelia in his *Hamlet*.

playing Ophelia fit into or defied these ideals during each century. Finally, tracing Ophelias shows how impresarios and other interpreters of *Hamlet* changed the play to better fit the demands of their audiences during their respective centuries. Thus, in looking at Thomas's Ophélie, we can see how Carré, Barbier, and Thomas fit into a larger pattern of altering the original Shakespeare to better fit the times. The changes they made to Ophélie's character in their libretto and music were to help their nineteenth-century audience understand Ophélie in terms of her character and her madness.

Thomas's Ophélie

Thomas composed his Ophélie for the up-and-coming Swedish soprano Christine Nilsson.[393] Like many leading soprano roles—especially those with mad scenes—Ophélie was composed for a lyric coloratura voice (in this case, for a full lyric coloratura, which better fits the ingenue qualities of Ophelia than a more dramatic voice would), meaning her role contains fast movement, vocalises (singing on a syllable instead of on words), and a high *tessitura*.[394] Ophélie was Nilsson's debut at the *Opéra de Paris* and was one of only a few roles she premiered.[395] Before 1868, Nilsson had sung Violetta in Verdi's *La Traviata* (in 1864) and Pamina in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* (in 1865) at the *Théâtre-Lyrique*, a rival theatre to the *Opéra* in Paris.[396] Nilsson absolutely triumphed in the extremely difficult role of Ophélie, both in her *Opéra de Paris* premiere and when she premiered the role at Covent Garden in London.[397]

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[393] Smith, "Thomas, (Charles) Ambroise."
[394] Edwards, *The Lyrical Drama. Essays on Subjects, Composers, & Executants of Modern Opera.*, II:51.
[395] Porter, "Translating Shakespare Operas 2: Thomas's 'Hamlet.'"
[396] Ibid.
[397] Forbes, "Hamlet."

Nilsson's performances of Ophélie received some praise for her singing; in a description of operas and performers from 1881, H Sutherland Edwards describes her voice as having a "fresh quality" which was "quite in harmony with the rest of the personage."[398] Above all, however, Nilsson was lauded for her looks and her acting. In particular, her Swedish appearance (tall, blonde, and pale) was seen as part of what made her so successful in and was considered an important part of the believability of her characterization of Ophélie—a Scandinavian (but, in this case, Danish) character. During her mad scene, it is noted that she has "blonde disheveled hair, pale skin, and white dress," which is very similar to the description of Harriet Smithson's extremely popular portrayal of Ophelia in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in 1827 in Paris.[399] In a journal entry dated March 14, 1868, Reyer describes Nilsson's entrance as Ophélie in the mad scene as "wearing a white dress, and vines and flowers are intertwined in her disheveled hair. Ophélie is insane," then continues describing "The great success of the evening was for the blonde Nilsson. … Nilsson has neither the marvelous throat of Patti, nor the purity of style of Carvalho … and the true reason for her success in Hamlet is that she is, more than any other artist in Paris, the realization of the type created by the poet"—in other words, she is tall, blonde, and Scandinavian unlike other opera singers in Paris.[400] He continues, "It is not Nilsson in the guise of Ophélie, it is Ophélie in the guise of Nilsson."[401] Nilsson's appearance is brought up

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[398] Edwards, *The Lyrical Drama. Essays on Subjects, Composers, & Executants of Modern Opera.*, II:51.
[399] Parr, "Melismatic Madness: Coloratura and Female Vocality in Mid Nineteenth-Century French and Italian Opera," 168.
[400] ibid., 166.
The Ernest Reyer quotes come from Parr's translation of his journal.
[401] ibid., 166.

yet again by Edwards, who describes Nilsson as a "fair-haired, soft-voiced, Swedish soprano" and further says that she is

> in every way an admirable representative of Shakespear's Scandinavian heroine; and so indeed she has proved. Mdme. Nilsson has deeper qualifications for the part than purely external ones, which, nevertheless, may be said to suggest others. All the sentiment of the character seems to belong to her naturally; so that as an actress alone, if she had not a note to sing, she would still be an admirable Ophelia.[402]

While Edwards praised Nilsson's voice as well as her appearance, it is particularly interesting that for Reyer, the more important fact was that Nilsson looked and acted the part even though he did not think her voice or her technique were as good as other singers in Paris. However, even Edwards agrees that Nilsson's Scandinavian looks and acting skills override her voice and her singing, especially in her mad scene, showing that the performance and believability of the mad scene was possibly more important than how it was sung.

Regarding her acting during her mad scene, audiences loved Nilsson not for her hysterical ravings but instead for her "air of poetic distance in her characterization of the role," which audiences thought made her more of a "haunting" and believable Ophélie.[403] The press "focused on her believably naïve, innocent characterization of Ophélie's hysteria," and Reyer wrote, "she has in her talent a poetic charm, a naïve grace which penetrates you."[404] The fact that what made her performance believable was her poise shows that the late-nineteenth-century audiences preferred an idealized form of a madwoman in lieu of what they would expect to see in an asylum. And Nilsson was not the only prima donna praised for this characterization of mad women on stage. Other sopranos, such as Marie-Josèphe Cabel

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[402] Edwards, *The Lyrical Drama. Essays on Subjects, Composers, & Executants of Modern Opera.*, II:50–51.
[403] Parr, "Melismatic Madness: Coloratura and Female Vocality in Mid Nineteenth-Century French and Italian Opera," 166.
[404] ibid., 166–68.

who premiered as Meyerbeer's Dinorah in *Le Pardon de Ploërmel* (1859) were also commended for their more poised and centered portrayals of their characters' mad scenes.[405] This shows that prima donnas performed mad scenes this way because it is what audiences expected and wanted—feminine fragility even in distress and madness—but also because "madness as a female malady had become stylized on the operatic stage. The extreme aestheticization of madness in these two examples … obscures the fact that the tradition of watching mad bodies perform on the operatic stage was an echo of a more troubling tradition: the voyeuristic viewing of mad bodies locked away in asylums."[406] I discussed this in Chapter 2, explaining how people would go to asylums such as Bedlam and even the Salpêtrière in Paris for entertainment value in seeing and watching the mentally ill. This fascination with mental illness drove people to want to see more and more mad scenes on stage, thus leading to their popularity in France and Italy in the nineteenth century. However, in this case, people wanted to see a romanticized woman, an actress, play the part of "madwoman" as an ideal and not necessarily as what would be seen in an asylum. Thus, Nilsson's Scandinavian looks and the way she portrayed Ophélie as poised while mad and as an innocent, naïve girl who was a victim of unrequited love was what made Nilsson such a success with the audiences—not necessarily her singing but her believability and idealistic nature in the role.

When looking at this "believability factor" being connected to calm, innocence, and naïveté surrounding Ophélie's hysteria, it seems contrary to beliefs in hysteria during the nineteenth century. However, there are two main reasons why Nilsson's portrayal still

[405] ibid., 168.
[406] ibid., 168.

actually fits into various cultural norms of the time. First, it fits into the feminine ideals of the nineteenth century; she is "demure," calm, collected, and perfect even in her madness—the biggest outburst of femininity of the nineteenth century as we know from Chapter 2—thus making her less of a threat to patriarchal society and more desirable and pitiable to the audience watching her.[407] Additionally, it fit into Charcot's displays of hysteria, both in his *salons* and in the depictions he commissioned of the women in his Salpêtrière. Charcot believed that women suffering from hysteria went through different stages of the disease, each of which had various symptoms and behaviors associated with them.[408] His depictions often presented them in erotic stances, and he showed off these women at his *salons*, having them perform (almost literally) exact symptoms associated with each stage of hysteria for his audiences.[409] This shows an obsession with controlling the bodies and outbursts of hysterical women via the tastes of powerful men. Nilsson's portrayal also reflects ideas of onstage deaths during the nineteenth century; they were meant to be beautiful, quick, and representative of a hopeful afterlife, not painful and drawn out as it was in real life.[410] Thus, seeing a hysterical woman on stage in control of her outbursts (or, at least, visually) fits into the expectations surrounding nineteenth-century views of hysterical women on stage as portrayed by singing actresses and viewed by live audiences.

Regarding the role of Ophélie, several parts of Carré, Barbier, and Thomas's characterizations remain the same as Shakespeare's Ophelia. She is in love with Hamlet. She is the daughter of Polonius and sister of Laertes. She is used by Gertrude (Hamlet's mother)

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[407] ibid.,168.
[408] Veith, *Hysteria*, 233.
[409] Showalter, "Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism," 86.
[410] Rutherford, "'Non Voglio Morir': Manon's Death," 43.

to see if her son is truly mad or if he suspects anything of Gertrude and Claudius. Hamlet eventually rejects Ophélie's love, saying that any woman who thinks Hamlet could love her is mad, and, of course, she goes insane. However, Carré and Barbier made changes to the libretto, which make her character differ drastically from the original Shakespearean version. First, Ophélie's role is much larger than that of Shakespeare's Ophelia. In fact, Edwards says that many people believed that Thomas's version should be called *Ophelia* instead of *Hamlet* both because of Ophélie's central part of the plot as well as to stop the comparisons between this version and the Shakespearean play, especially regarding Carré and Barbier's changes.[411] In the Thomas, Ophélie has several large and important musical numbers, including a love duet with Hamlet in act 1, "*Doute de la lumière*," in which she and Hamlet speak the words of Hamlet's love letters, which he denied having written in the play. She then has a lengthy and difficult air (aria), which contains significant character development. She has a small part in the massive Act 2 finale. Then, after intermission in act 3, Ophélie and Gertrude try to convince Hamlet that he and Ophélie should marry, and they have a trio in which Hamlet tells Ophélie to "Get thee to a nunnery"—"*Allez dans un cloitre*"—just as he does in the play.[412] However, it is act 4 where Ophélie truly gets her moment of glory. Act 4, as written by Thomas, consists solely of an entr'acte complete with a ballet, Ophélie's ten-minute mad scene, followed by a second ballet, and finishing with Ophélie's suicide scene where she drowns herself.

Ophélie's mad scene is quite different from that of the original Shakespearean version. While both versions include singing, multiple sections of different songs, the use of

[411] Edwards, *The Lyrical Drama. Essays on Subjects, Composers, & Executants of Modern Opera.*, II:50.
[412] Castel et al., *French Opera Libretti*, 415.

ballads, as well as Ophelia giving away flowers to those around her, that is where their similarities cease. Carré, Barbier, and Thomas created an enormous three-part mad scene, consisting of a recitative/arioso, a waltz, and a ballad section, concluding with an extremely difficult coda. Like the Shakespearean version, these sections denote different emotions and realities for Ophélie. The recitative shows her talking to the villagers in the town, telling them how she snuck out of the castle, asking if she can join in their games, and eventually identifying herself as Hamlet's Ophélie. During the arioso, she tells them about her relationship with Hamlet, their love, and says that they should not believe he rejected her; no! Hamlet is her husband, she says, "and me, and me, I am Ophélie."[413] She concludes this section by saying that if he ever rejected her, she would lose her mind.

This leads into the waltz section, where she gives away flowers, as she does in the Shakespearean version, as a symbol of her own deflowering. However, unlike in the Shakespeare, she does not speak to other main characters in the plot—not to Gertrude and King Claudius—but instead to the villagers. Thus, the flowers she gives away have very different meanings than they do in the plot of the Shakespeare, since they do not show how she feels about the characters who tried to manipulate her.[414] The use of villagers viewing her mad scene instead of the main characters also maintains Ophélie's idealism as a nineteenth-century woman; she is not insulting the other characters by giving them flowers representing adultery or even abortion but is instead giving beautiful flowers to members of the chorus. The first flower she gives away is "*romarin sauvage*," or [wild rosemary,] which is "for remembrance" and was also used in the original Shakespearean text ("There's rosemary,

[413] Thomas, "Hamlet."
[414] Kantack, "Romantic Musical Characterizations of Ophelia," 7–8.

that's for remembrance.").[415] There are two main meanings behind this; first, there is Carré and Barbier's nod to the Shakespeare. However, there is also a Dido-like moment in that Ophélie wants to be remembered before she kills herself for the man who has abandoned her ("Remember me, but, ah, forget my fate" in Dido's Lament from Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*). In giving away the rosemary, Ophélie has asked that her onstage audience (the villagers) and the audience of the opera remember her and the love she had with Hamlet. The second flower was *pervenche,* or periwinkle, which was not in the original Shakespeare and is not as clearly defined as rosemary with regard to symbolism.[416] However, according to Romantic poets scholar Michael Ferber, "the literary existence of purple (or red) flowers" are "signs of mourning as regular features of the pastoral elegy."[417] In other words, it is possible that periwinkle (a light purple flower) could represent mourning and death and would be particularly meaningful in that they were given to villagers (pastoral) instead of to noble or royal characters. While Ophélie's father, Polonius, is not murdered by Hamlet in Carré, Barbier, and Thomas's version of *Hamlet*, Ophélie could be mourning the loss of Hamlet's love and, thus, the loss of her identity in society, which is symbolized by her giving away the periwinkle.

Additionally, unlike Shakespeare's Ophelia—some of whose songs were extremely lewd—Carré, Barbier, and Thomas's Ophélie is pure, innocent, and musically beautiful, even in this section where she gives away her flowers. Other than the deflowering reference, she makes no references to sexuality in the least, whereas Shakespeare's Ophelia sings about a robin (Elizabethan slang for a penis). Thus, while there is still a slight connection between

[415] Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*, 76; Castel et al., *French Opera Libretti*, 430.
[416] Castel et al., *French Opera Libretti*, 430.
[417] Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*, 54.

Ophélie's sexuality and her madness—which fits into nineteenth-century audiences' beliefs regarding hysteria—this romantic Ophélie maintains most of her innocence, naïveté, and idealism. To make her madness more obvious, about half of the waltz section is a vocalise, meaning there are no words to her melody, but instead just coloratura on "ah."

Ophélie's ballad section is both most similar to and different from the mad scene of Shakespeare's Ophelia. Ophelia sings ballads mourning the death of her father as part of the Shakespearean mad scene, and Ophélie sings a ballad, detailing the story of the Wilis (spirits of women who died before they had a chance to get married and who then seduce men and force them to dance themselves to death) before she joins their ranks via her suicide in the next scene.[418] In this way, both the Shakespearean and the Thomas, Carré, and Barbier versions of the ballad surround mourning and death. However, the latter version also utilizes techniques and tropes from French grand opera, specifically from Meyerbeer. Carré and Barbier's ballad contains multiple layers of meaning, including foreshadowing Ophélie's death by drowning due to losing Hamlet. Additionally, as we saw in Chapter 1, Thomas included ample amounts of vocalises, melismatic passages, and an extremely high *tessitura* (especially during the coda) to fit into the *bel canto* traditions of mad scenes. Finally, after a short ballet, there is also an onstage suicide scene, which is extremely different from Gertrude's announcement of Ophelia's death in the Shakespeare. In Ophélie's suicide scene, a backstage chorus (representing the Wilis) sings the melody from Ophélie's ballad, luring her to the world of the dead. In the end, Ophélie chooses death, and the last thing she sings is Hamlet's text and melody from their Act 1 duet, but this time in the key of her madness and

[418] Parr, "Melismatic Madness: Coloratura and Female Vocality in Mid Nineteenth-Century French and Italian Opera," 148.

suicide. Like many onstage deaths during this time, Ophélie's is calm, welcoming, and idealized, and her last note fades into the water like a sunset. The inclusion of an extended mad scene and an onstage suicide scene (in contrast to the Shakespearean version) would have been expected by nineteenth-century opera audiences, especially those who came to the *Opéra* with high expectations regarding *bel canto* and French grand opera traditions.

Ophelia throughout History

Shakespeare's Ophelia

Elaine Showalter says, "we could provide a manual of female insanity by chronicling the illustrations of Ophelia; this is so because the illustrations of Ophelia have played a major role in the theoretical construction of female insanity."[419] In other words, the ways Ophelia is depicted on stage in productions of Shakespeare's plays, in visual art, and in opera help viewers gauge the ideas behind women's mental illness at this time, both because depictions of Ophelia were used to help define mental illness and because these definitions were then put on stage and in portraits of her in each era.

During Shakespeare's time, Ophelia would have been diagnosed clinically as having "female lovemelancholy, or erotomania."[420] Melancholy was associated with intellectual men of the Elizabethan era beginning around 1580, and it was associated with the archetype of a melancholy hero, like Hamlet.[421] However, women's love melancholy supposedly stemmed from their biology; it was associated with their form, nature, and—most obviously from the

[419] Showalter, "Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism," 79.
[420] ibid., 81.
[421] ibid., 82.

word "hysteria"—from their womb.[422] In other words, while men's melancholy was associated with heroism and intellect—the brain, the emotions, the psyche, and the four humors—women's love melancholy came from their femininity, their weakness, and their bodies—especially the parts that men did not have (the uterus) associated with their sexuality.

Throughout most of Shakespeare's play, Ophelia is the ideal Renaissance woman; she is docile and dutiful as a daughter, sister, and future wife. She is "expected to conform to her father's wishes regardless of her own, thus embodying the ideals of female propriety in her silence, chastity, and obedience."[423] This in addition to Renaissance culture's obsession with chastity set expectations for her as a good daughter, then as a good wife, making her an overall good woman. Renaissance views of female sexuality were also very political, which can be seen in Polonius's and Laertes's discussions of Ophelia's virginity in the play.[424] Shakespeare was quite aware of the political nature of her sexuality and her womb. Thus, his Hamlet is not such a noble prince; he does not want to marry Ophelia but instead is trying to sleep with her. So, on the one hand, she has the very powerful man trying to get her into bed, trying to influence her to his will. On the other hand, however, are Ophelia's father and brother. These men are also quite powerful and are very influential in her life, since they are the men to whom she belongs as an unmarried woman. Polonius and Laertes see Hamlet for who he is and try to warn Ophelia against sleeping with the Danish prince but not necessarily to protect her; they know if she does, Hamlet will be less likely to marry her because she

[422] ibid., 82.
[423] Campbell, "Sad Generations Seeking Water: The Social Construction of Madness in O(Phelia) and Q(Uentin Compson)," 56.
[424] Floyd-Wilson, "Ophelia and Femininity in the Eighteenth Century: 'Dangerous Conjectures in Ill-Breeding Minds,'" 400–401.

isn't a virgin, thus making her a less valuable asset to them politically.[425] Therefore, when her father tells her not to give in to Hamlet or to agree to marry him (her only suitor), she agrees. While Polonius is alive, Ophelia has no will of her own; she is torn between the man who wants to sleep with her and the men who tell her not to sleep with Hamlet, each man for his own gain.

In fact, music scholar Jerri Kantack states

> Throughout Hamlet Ophelia is presented as a weak, dependent, and repressed young lady who is dominated by the males in her life. Consequently, as Ophelia descends into madness, she slips into a fantasy world, or in modern psychiatric terms, a hysterical psychosis. In the state of the hysterical psychosis, Ophelia displays uncharacteristic behavior. She is neurotic, passive, sexually confused, and moody. Ophelia, unable to tolerate her reality, thus retreats into a fantasy world, occasionally intruded upon by tormenting thoughts of her dead father and Hamlet.[426]

Before her mad scene, Ophelia's weakness, portrayed as much by her silence and non-presence as it is by what she says when she is actually on stage, is an advantage to the men surrounding her. Her father and brother can easily influence her to do what they want, and Hamlet easily manipulates her at least into trusting him, if not into actually sleeping with him. However, after Laertes leaves, Hamlet rejects and humiliates her, and Polonius is murdered (by Hamlet unbeknownst to Ophelia); Ophelia no longer has a male authority figure in her life.[427] In fact, Polonius's murder is what sets her on her spiral into the love melancholy of her Act 4, scene 5 mad scene more than Hamlet's rejection, which points to the idea that her madness comes not just from loss but from freedom from male restrictions and a plunge into the only thing that is left without those restrictions—her femininity.[428]

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[425] ibid., 400–401.
[426] Kantack, "Romantic Musical Characterizations of Ophelia," 10.
[427] ibid., 10.
[428] ibid., 4.

Campbell describes: "Testified by her mad songs, uniting the double threats of music and language, Ophelia becomes exactly what her father, brother, and Renaissance society fear she will be after breaking the shackles of control over feminine overflow: blatantly sexual, excessively noisy, and socially subversive."[429] When she falls into madness, she becomes a person in her own right, uncontrolled by her father, brother, or husband, making her a sexually uninhibited woman—someone who has her own thoughts, her own desires, and an ability to speak them, even to sing them, without fear of retribution. She is a threat to all the men (and the society) who surround her.

This is quite different from Thomas's Ophélie. In his version, Polonius is never murdered, thus leaving Ophélie with a remaining authority figure, a pull toward polite society and what she should be. While this may make it seem like she chooses to rebel against the remaining male figure in her life, Polonius has a very limited role in Thomas's *Hamlet* and never advises his daughter against Hamlet's advances, thus making this a less viable way of looking at Ophélie's madness. In fact, before he leaves, Laertes has an aria in Act 1 where he advises Hamlet to take care of his sister while he is away (à la Valentin in Gounod's *Faust*), showing that he trusts the prince with Ophélie's virtue. Additionally, this Ophélie is not as bawdy and, therefore, isn't as sexually open and aggressive as Shakespeare's Ophelia, thus making her madness less about loss of the authority figures in her life and more about the loss of her love, her chances at marriage, and, therefore, her worth as a woman in nineteenth-century society. This also makes her a more idyllic madwoman and less of a threatening one. Finally, because she talks about or alludes to

[429] Campbell, "Sad Generations Seeking Water: The Social Construction of Madness in O(Phelia) and Q(Uentin Compson)," 59.

Hamlet throughout most of her mad scene, it is most likely Hamlet's rejection of Ophélie that Carré and Barbier wanted their audiences to believe was the cause of her madness.

In Shakespeare's Ophelia, her "neurotic, passive, sexually confused, and moody" nature fall in line with definitions of hysteria during the Renaissance period.[430] As discussed in Chapter 2, Renaissance physicians turned away from the Medieval belief that hysteria was caused by witchcraft and moved back toward uterine theory. Shakespeare teetered on the line between the Medieval belief that mental illness was caused by witchcraft or more spiritual parts of life and the Renaissance return to uterine theory and a more somatic cause of hysteria. This can be seen in Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking scene versus Ophelia's mad scene. Shakespeare's *Macbeth* contained actual witches in the play who foretold Macbeth's future of becoming king and his eventual death. Additionally, Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking appears to come from her guilt from helping her husband murder the previous king, thus fitting better with witchcraft and spirituality more than somatic or even neurological causes. On the other hand, Ophelia's symptoms in *Hamlet* fit well into Renaissance theory; her madness is caused by trauma (the death of her father) but also by the loss of Hamlet as a possible husband. The latter fits well into the Renaissance uterine theory because physicians believed that the etiology of hysteria was sexual inactivity, which caused the womb to dry up. The best solution to this was marriage, which was no longer an option for Ophelia, thus making her madness tied to this belief. However, her symptoms were more neurological and behavioral than somatic, which fits well into Jorden's belief that hysteria affected other organs, including the brain.

[430] Kantack, "Romantic Musical Characterizations of Ophelia," 10.

Again, this is very different from Thomas's Ophélie. While Ophélie sings about the mythological Wilis, there is no hint in Carré and Barbier's libretto that they are anything but symbolic, unlike Shakespeare's witches in *Macbeth*. The Wilis were used to fit into French grand opera mold of the ballad, which told a story—usually a mythological one—to foreshadow an event that would happen later in the opera. In this case, the Wilis represent Ophélie's death before she can marry Hamlet. When comparing Renaissance and nineteenth-century ideas on hysteria, Ophélie's insanity fits much better with nineteenth-century beliefs. First, the theatricality of her disease works with Charcot's theatricality in demonstrating hysteria. Ophélie's madness is not caused by the trauma of the loss of her father but solely by Hamlet's rejection. However, it appears to be more love-driven than that of Shakespeare's Ophelia, thus connecting them to her sexuality via the etiology (Hamlet's rejection) but still remaining more neurological for nineteenth-century audiences.

During her staged mad scene, Ophelia "wanders incoherently and sings old ballads. In her madness, Ophelia speaks freely, no longer bound by conventions" of patriarchal society, since her father is dead, her brother gone, and she no longer has any prospects of marriage.[431] Thomas Davies (1785) says Ophelia

> rather resembles that to which she compares Hamlet's madness, ' sweet bells out of tune:' the sound is still preserved in them, though irregularly played upon. It is rather, I think, sensibility deranged, and deserted by reason. She seems, at times, to recollect her scattered senses ; and throws out, though disorderly, truths, solemn and affecting, in the most pathetic expression.[432]

[431] ibid., 4–5.
[432] Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies: Consisting of Critical Observations on Several Plays of Shakespeare: ... As Represented by Mr. Garrick, ... With Anecdotes of Dramatic Poets, ... By Thomas Davies, ... In Three Volumes.*, 3:132.

She becomes the ultimate hysteric and as Laertes says, a "document in madness;" through her lewd songs and laments, Ophelia becomes Renaissance men's worst nightmare—a sexual threat to them all.[433] She sang five songs in total—the first, a traditional ballad, which contained dialogue between the lover who has lost his love and a pilgrim whom he meets.[434] The third main section of Ophélie's ballade scene harkens back to this first song. The second was sung to King Claudius ("To morrow is St. Valentine's Day"), and it usually has dialogue interspersed in between.[435] Her third and fifth songs are funeral dirges, representing her father's death and his unceremonious burial.[436] While the third and fifth songs are funeral dirges and are, therefore, less relevant to Carré, Barbier, and Thomas's Ophélie and her mad scene, they were laments, which, as we know from Chapter 1, are associated with women and female grief during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially in opera.[437] In fact, laments were far more popular than mad scenes in Baroque opera when showing a woman in distress.[438]

The fact that Ophelia sings is, within itself, an act of female rebellion because singing is an excess of speech; it requires more air, a larger embouchure, each syllable is held longer, and the diaphragm is required to work harder to support the sound.[439] In fact, Davies says, "In her madness, the innocent Ophelia chants scraps of such songs as would not have entered into her mind when in her perfect senses" showing that these songs are caused by and

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[433] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Rokison-Woodall, 4.5.173-174.
[434] Kantack, "Romantic Musical Characterizations of Ophelia," 5–6.
[435] ibid., 6.
[436] ibid., 7–9.
[437] Dunn, "Ophelia's Songs in Hamlet: Music, Madness, and the Feminine," 61.
[438] Cusick, "Re-Voicing Arianna," 438.
[439] Dunn, "Ophelia's Songs in Hamlet: Music, Madness, and the Feminine," 52.

particularly indicate Ophelia's madness to the audience.[440] And Ophelia's songs are particularly rebellious because they are loud, rowdy, profuse, and intrusive.[441] Thus, in using music during Ophelia's madness, Shakespeare equates this excess with her femininity and with her madness, which can only be expressed by something as active, free, and big as song.[442] English Renaissance lyric poetry and music scholar Leslie C. Dunn explains how "Renaissance humanists saw music as the earthly embodiment of divine order, and believed that its expressive powers could be a positive ethical force…. In post-Reformation England, however, this humanist idealism was qualified by the longstanding Christian distrust of music's sensuousness, its unmediated appeal to the body and the emotions."[443] She then proceeds to quote Richard Mulcaster (1581), who discusses music and compares it to a siren song, showing the association between music and what sirens represent—women's power, especially regarding their sensuality, leading to male lust and uncontrollable desire.[444] This feminine power to create overpowering lust was seen as a major threat to patriarchal society. Dunn also points out additional Renaissance associations between music and femininity as defined by patriarchal society. Music is "hard to define and to control" and is changeable (fickle) in nature—again stereotypical, threatening female attributes.

However, it is in her fourth song that we see Ophelia give away her flowers to Laertes, King Claudius, and Queen Gertrude. To a Renaissance viewer, her flowers represent female sexuality, and in trying to give away her flowers, she "symbolically "deflowers"

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[440] Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies: Consisting of Critical Observations on Several Plays of Shakespeare: ... As Represented by Mr. Garrick, ... With Anecdotes of Dramatic Poets, ... By Thomas Davies, ... In Three Volumes.*, 3:93.
[441] Dunn, "Ophelia's Songs in Hamlet: Music, Madness, and the Feminine," 50.
[442] ibid., 54.
[443] ibid., 55.
[444] ibid., 55.

herself."[445] To Claudius, she offers the fennel, which represents "adultery, foolishness, and flattery," while to Gertrude, she gives rue, which also represents adultery, partially because it was a known herb used for abortions.[446] The fourth song is also where Ophelia claims her sexuality; it contains the line "For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy," allowing her to assert that her sexuality is her own. [447] Dunn explains how this "phallic pun recalls other women characters, many of them Siren figures in the moralized Renaissance sense… who use song to proclaim their own desires and assert their sexual power over men. But Ophelia's performance dislocates this stereotype: she sings not *as* a seducer but *about* one…."[448] In other words, in singing this song about "Robins," she does several things; the most obvious is that she claims her sexuality. However, she also harkens back to other female characters who sang as Siren figures—mythological female creatures who seduce men by singing and then drown them. But what is most interesting about Ophelia is that she is not the Siren in her relationship; Hamlet seduces her earlier in the play, which helps lead to her demise.

In giving away and adorning herself with her flowers and in singing about the joy of "Robins," she both symbolically deflowers herself and claims her sexuality as her own and not as something to be used for political gain, thus making herself a threat to the men trying to control her and use her sexuality for their own advancement in society. In particular, Ophelia's delivery of rue to Gertrude is quite important in that she also gives it to herself and tells Gertrude, "You may wear your rue/ with a difference."[449] Additionally, audiences would have known exactly what she was saying because "Ophelia's quotes are from common

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[445] Showalter, "Introduction," 11.
[446] Leonard, "Ophelia," 36.
[447] Kantack, "Romantic Musical Characterizations of Ophelia," 8.
[448] Dunn, "Ophelia's Songs in Hamlet: Music, Madness, and the Feminine," 60.
[449] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Rokison-Woodall, 4.5.177-178.

knowledge that would have been well-known to contemporary audiences," and thus "the meaning of her spoken lines would have been plain to modern theater-goers."[450] Thus, Ophelia's line about rue in combination with saying that she couldn't give away her daisy (representative of virginity) would have told the Renaissance audience that Ophelia's virginity was no longer intact.[451] More interestingly still, the implications of Ophelia's and Gertrude's different needs regarding the rue—the idea that Gertrude needs it symbolically so that she can admit her guilt as an adulterer, while Ophelia needs its abortion-inducing properties literally—show that Ophelia may have been pregnant during this scene in the play.[452] Because of the missing daisy, fennel, and especially rue, Ophélie's tale is much different from Ophelia's (there are no hints that she could be pregnant or that she had indeed lost her virginity), and her madness and death have extremely different causes and consequences.

To resolve the threat of her madness, Shakespeare wrote in Ophelia's offstage death by drowning, which is quite ambiguous regarding whether it was in fact a suicide or an accident.[453] As we know from earlier, this in itself is very different from Thomas's Ophélie, since her suicide scene occurs on stage and is written to be an intentional suicide. Not only is Shakespeare's Ophelia silenced after her mad scene via her death, but she is further silenced because Gertrude—whom she insults in her mad scene and who is a woman contentedly living under patriarchal rule—is the one who informs the other characters about Ophelia's death.[454] Gertrude does not just tell everyone Ophelia is dead. She basically erases Ophelia's

[450] Leonard, "Ophelia," 36.
[451] ibid., 36.
[452] ibid., 36.
[453] Kantack, "Romantic Musical Characterizations of Ophelia," 9–10.
[454] Dunn, "Ophelia's Songs in Hamlet: Music, Madness, and the Feminine," 62–63.

freedom in her mad scene by beautifying Ophelia's death, describing her death as serenely as possible. She even calls Ophelia's ballads and laments "lauds," meaning old hymns, thus turning her songs into something of the past and making them a less immediate threat than her ballads actually are on stage.[455] This takes away Ophelia's threatening madness, working to make her into the patriarchal ideal that men wanted to see her as (an innocent, pretty virgin) and something from which her madness previously allows her to depart.[456] Thomas's mad and suicide scenes act similarly; first, she is not talking about anything sensual in her mad scene, so in this way, her sensuality is less immediately dangerous. Second, the ballad is actually more of a genre from the past during the nineteenth century, and, with regard to French grand opera, it acts as a story-telling device that foreshadows the future and not as something working in the present. Third, she is a spectacle for both the onstage (the chorus) and off-stage audiences (specifically the male gaze) to watch, and her singing is entertainment for them written by two male librettists and a male composer and sung by a female opera singer. The threat of Ophelia's madness and her femininity is only neutralized when she drowns, both in the play and in the opera. Only when the threat is gone can the other characters eulogize poor, sweet Ophelia who lost her mind and died and who is, therefore, no longer a threat to them or their society.[457]

The Elizabethan Ophelia was depicted on stage dressed in white with her hair loose and strewn with wildflowers during her mad scene.[458] Showalter describes this Ophelia: "She sings wistful and bawdy ballads; her speech is marked by extravagant metaphors, lyrical free

[455] ibid., 62–63.
[456] ibid., 63.
[457] ibid., 64.
[458] Showalter, "Introduction," 11.

associations, and explicit sexual references."[459] Her appearance falls under the expectations of female madness from this time; having her hair down was against societal decorum and was viewed as improper, thus showing that she was not in her right mind. Finally, her death by drowning itself was seen as a feminine death; women were seen as more fluid than men; they are made of tears, amniotic fluid, blood (menstruation), and milk (breast milk).[460] Therefore, Ophelia's madness and death were associated with her femininity during this period.

With this emphasis on her femininity, it is particularly interesting that Ophelia could not be played by a woman during Shakespeare's time because women were not allowed on stage. Instead, all roles—including Ophelia—were played by men, and female characters in particular were played by boys or men "with effeminate countenances."[461] Ophelia would have been portrayed by a boy or young man in women's clothing, and this boy/young man would sing and accompany himself on the lute while singing her songs during the mad scene.[462] Shakespeare was a part of an acting troupe called the Lord Chamberlain's Men (the King's Men as of 1603 with the ascension of King James I to the throne) as both a playwright and an actor, which was not a part of the London Guild.[463] This troupe usually had around four or five boy actors at a time who, because the troupe was not part of the Guild, could not legally be apprentices of the actors.[464] These boy actors had very short careers playing

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[459] ibid., 11.
[460] ibid., 11.
[461] Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies: Consisting of Critical Observations on Several Plays of Shakespeare: ... As Represented by Mr. Garrick, ... With Anecdotes of Dramatic Poets, ... By Thomas Davies, ... In Three Volumes.*, 3:52.
[462] Leonard, "Ophelia," 38.
[463] Bevington, *This Wide and Universal Theater*, 17.
[464] ibid., 18–20.

women in their troupes because as soon as their voices changed, they were no longer viable for female roles.[465] Shakespeare had to know how many leading boy actors he could count on at a time; for example, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *As You Like It* required two leading ladies, one of whom was "taller than the other."[466] In *Hamlet*, we have two female characters as well, an ingenue and a mother, showing that two different boys were needed for this play as well.

The original depiction of Ophelia (via Shakespeare) created strong ties between the character, views on womanhood, and views on female madness during the time. As described in the previous chapter, Renaissance thinkers held the view that, while hysteria could be found in both men and women, it was often associated with women and was sometimes called the "suffering of the mother." This indicates that, while Renaissance physicians no longer believed that the uterus moved, it was still involved in the etiology of the disease, both in the uterine and the neurological schools of thought. Physicians believed that abstinence would cause the uterus to dry up, causing loss of periods and other more neurological symptoms. Because of this, marriage to a man who was a good match was seen as one of the best cures for women who supposedly were hysterical during this time, since it allowed for sex within the bounds of what society allowed, thus making it appropriate while still being a good fix for the problem. However, Ophelia does not believe marriage is an option for her, since her father, Polonius, has deemed her "only suitor," Hamlet, "unsuitable; thus she resorts to a violent and permanent cure for her suffering of the mother."[467] Ophelia's

[465] ibid., 20.
[466] ibid., 20.
[467] Campbell, "Sad Generations Seeking Water: The Social Construction of Madness in O(Phelia) and Q(Uentin Compson)," 54.Campbell, 54.

subsequent drowning becomes more of a metaphor for her hysteria, her dried-up uterus, and her loss of sexuality. She literally seeks water for her desiccated womb, and then she dies from choking, a supposed symptom of hysteria at the time, while drowning. While alienists and physicians no longer believed that the uterus itself directly caused hysteria in 1868, there were still urban legends that women would dry up and age faster if they did not marry early. Thus, Ophélie's death remains the same as that of Ophelia; after her only suitor, Hamlet's, rejection of her, she seeks water to fill her dried up womb and drowns herself because it is a better option than losing her identity in society.

Eighteenth-Century Ophelias

In the eighteenth century, to deal with current societal sensitivities, we see a shift toward beautifying and censoring Ophelia's mad scene. In fact, it was quite common to hire a singer to perform Ophelia instead of an actor to make the scene more about the loveliness of the songs and less about Ophelia's mental decline; some productions even cut the scene entirely.[468] However, Ophelia's depictions both on stage and in visual art were still very sensual to show that her madness is caused by her sexuality.[469] Art historian Jane E. Kromm says,

> Portrayals of Ophelia as a sufferer from love melancholy include elements ranging from naive to knowledgeable—the innocent flower girl to the close-to-nature erotomaniac. The seemingly contradictory yet always sexualized elements within this range … and the subsequent performance tradition place a particular emphasis on her hair as the crowning mark of her derangement. Loose, tumbledown locks of hair, haphazardly "dressed" with flowers, weeds, and straw, serve as tropes of sexual availability, lapsed social decorum, vanity, and madness.[470]

[468] Showalter, "Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism," 82–83.
[469] Kromm, "The Feminization of Madness in Visual Representation," 511.
[470] ibid., 513.

In other words, while these impresarios may have attempted to censor or beautify Ophelia's mad scene, there is still an air of sexuality surrounding her, specifically via her singing (Siren song) and the flowers decorating her hair (showing both madness and representing female sexuality). Early modern English literature scholar Mary Floyd-Wilson discusses this in her article on Ophelia in the eighteenth century, saying "While eighteenth-century theater may have deemphasized certain aspects of Ophelia's character, it also invested her with a mixture of "ideal" femininity and veiled sexuality, promoting the ambiguous nature of her appeal."[471] This is partly because of who began playing Ophelia in the eighteenth century.

During the early seventeenth century, women were viewed as subordinate to men, but as we approach the beginning of the eighteenth century, women were seen as different, even as an opposite to men.[472] Thus, we see a change from female characters such as Ophelia being played by boys as part of an all-male cast during Shakespeare's time (because women weren't seen as good enough to be on stage with men, and it was deemed inappropriate) to women playing female characters on stage. The first woman to perform on stage in England was "probably Mistress Hughes" who "appeared at Killigrew's playhouse about Dec. 8, 1660, as Desdemona in a perversion of "Othello" called "The Moor of Venice. The fashion thus set was soon followed, and the male impersonators of women were gradually driven from the stage."[473] Women were finally allowed to play Ophelia shortly after this. Actress Mary Betterton (née Saunderson) was the first female Ophelia and one of the first women to play acting roles on stages in London. She took on Ophelia beginning in 1661, playing

[471] Floyd-Wilson, "Ophelia and Femininity in the Eighteenth Century: 'Dangerous Conjectures in Ill-Breeding Minds,'" 397.
[472] ibid., 398. I would like to point out that at this point in history, gender was seen as a binary and not as the spectrum we now see it as.
[473] Lowe, "The Restoration Stage.: Thomas Betterton.," 19.

opposite her soon-to-be off-stage husband Thomas Betterton, who played Hamlet between 1660 and 1709.[474] Mary Betterton supposedly learned the craft of playing Ophelia from "the tradition of the boy-Ophelias through William Davenant's recollection of the Blackfriars company's performance."[475] She was a "much celebrated" actress "for her action in Shakespeare's plays," such as Ophelia, Lady Macbeth (the role for which she was best known), and Juliet.[476] Of Betterton's Lady Macbeth, Colley Cibber (1740) says, "Mrs. *Betterton*, tho' far advanc'd in Years, was so great a Mistress of Nature" because she acted with "those quick and careless Strokes of Terror from the Disorder of a guilty Mind, which" she "gave us with a Facility in her Manner that render'd them at once tremendous and delightful. Time could not impair her Skill, tho' he had brought her Person to decay."[477] In other words, Cibber explains that Betterton's Lady Macbeth was a force to be reckoned with even as she began to age, and she was an excellent actress until her death despite the struggles she faced at the end of her life.[478] Of note is how Cibber discusses Betterton's portrayal of Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking scene and how her representation of such was terrifying, disordered, and full of guilt, which was very striking to her audiences.

After Thomas Betterton died, Mary Betterton supposedly lost her senses and went mad for a short period of time and then began to decline in physical health as well, thus showing that she was seen as an Ophelia- (or even Lady Macbeth-) like figure during this

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[474] Floyd-Wilson, "Ophelia and Femininity in the Eighteenth Century: 'Dangerous Conjectures in Ill-Breeding Minds,'" 398.
[475] ibid., 399.
[476] Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies: Consisting of Critical Observations on Several Plays of Shakespeare: ... As Represented by Mr. Garrick, ... With Anecdotes of Dramatic Poets, ... By Thomas Davies, ... In Three Volumes.*, 3:131.
[477] Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Volume 1 (of 2) Written by Himself. A New Edition with Notes and Supplement*, 1:162.
[478] ibid., 1:162.

time[479]. While grief is normal for anyone when they lose a spouse, the fact that the public clung to her as the mad Ophelia and Lady Macbeth says a lot about public views of actresses and the roles they play on stage; instead of seeing grief, they saw the madness of her old roles, the same madness they saw her play when she lost Hamlet's love and when she played Lady Macbeth's guilty sub-conscious on stage.

During the mid-eighteenth century, we see several powerful actresses play the role of Ophelia, but arguably the most iconic and critically acclaimed was Susannah Cibber,[480] who worked with David Garrick in the title role at theatres in London between 1742 and 1776.[481] Cibber was born around 1715 and was the sister of Thomas Arne, an English composer.[482] She started out as a singer before she became a dramatic actress and actually performed in Handel's original *Messiah* in 1741.[483] Both Garrick and Cibber were known for creating strong characters and for making audiences (and critics) cry.[484] While Garrick emphasized "pathos" and "heightened emotionality," Cibber was known for her portrayal of "love, grief, and tenderness, … jealous love and frantic rage."[485] Additionally, her role was made even more pathetic by Garrick's violent Hamlet, especially toward Ophelia.[486] Cibber was overall known as a great actress but felt particularly connected with the role of Ophelia.[487] According to English literature scholar Mary Floyd-Wilson, "Susannah Cibber's

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[479] Floyd-Wilson, "Ophelia and Femininity in the Eighteenth Century: 'Dangerous Conjectures in Ill-Breeding Minds,'" 399.
[480] ibid., 403.
[481] ibid., 405.
[482] *An Account of the Life of That Celebrated Actress Mrs Susannah Maria Cibber*, 3.
[483] ibid., 3, 9.
[484] Floyd-Wilson, "Ophelia and Femininity in the Eighteenth Century: 'Dangerous Conjectures in Ill-Breeding Minds,'" 405.
[485] ibid., 403, 405.
[486] ibid., 405.
[487] ibid., 405.

interpretation of Ophelia both reflected *and* shaped the eighteenth century's notion of a feminine ideal as it relates to the heightened sensibility of the "fair sex.""[488] Thomas Davies (1785) describes Cibber's performance of her mad scene, saying that Cibber particularly accentuated the word "rue" when giving this flower to Gertrude, thus emphasizing the flower (an abortion agent and representing adultery), which was very effective.[489] Betterton's and Cibber's acting as Ophelia is very different from that of the singers who played Ophelia and other mad scenes during the nineteenth century. Unlike Betterton and Cibber, Nilsson and other prima donnas of the nineteenth century were expected to underplay their mad scenes and act more naïve and ideal, which was then considered more believable.

The change from male actors to female was a substantial revolution on stage, possibly made more so by the fact that pornography also debuted in London around the late seventeenth-, early eighteenth-century. The timing of these two developments created a connection between actresses, theatre, and sexuality.[490] These actresses were very powerful; they had demands, insisted on playing certain roles during each season, or not playing roles with which they could not connect. But they were also viewed as extremely sexual.[491] This created a contrast between worldly actresses (sexuality) and Ophelia as an innocent, naïve, mad, and pretty—both physically and as an archetype of femininity and beauty—character, thus creating a dichotomy within audience views of the character.[492]

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[488] ibid., 406.
[489] Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies: Consisting of Critical Observations on Several Plays of Shakespeare: ... As Represented by Mr. Garrick, ... With Anecdotes of Dramatic Poets, ... By Thomas Davies, ... In Three Volumes.*, 3:130.
[490] Floyd-Wilson, "Ophelia and Femininity in the Eighteenth Century: 'Dangerous Conjectures in Ill-Breeding Minds,'" 403.
[491] ibid., 404.
[492] ibid., 405.

It is not until the mid to late eighteenth century when we start to see Ophelias who are truly hysterical in nature and who have "heightened sensibility."[493] Floyd-Wilson argues that sexuality is a historical construct, and the people – especially the patriarchy – helped create this construct by saturating women's bodies with sexuality through hysteria, a disease with roots in uterine theory and with supposed etiology of female sexuality, in a process she called the "hysterization of women's bodies."[494] Thus, "the chaste Ophelia who feels too much, encompasses these quivering incongruities. She is pure, yet physically susceptible. She is an innocent character, though played by a worldly actress. And her name connotes a well-known history of denied and silenced "sexuality," even to an eighteenth-century audience."[495] We see Ophelia as a prototype for eighteenth-century beliefs on the feminine ideal, especially in hysterical women; through the censorship of her lines (and lines about her and Hamlet's lust), Ophelia becomes a character who is seen and not heard, an object of desire with no ability to reciprocate, a powerless entity, which defined what men saw as the ideal during the time—an innocent woman oozing with secret sexuality who in no way threatened them, their sexuality, or their patriarchal society. But she also represents eighteenth-century views on hysteria. This new Ophelia is still tied to sexuality, but it is not overt, representing how the beliefs on the disease changed from a physical disease to a neurological one. No longer was it just caused by the uterus and sexuality, but hysteria was now an emotion- and desire-driven disease. Thus, in taking out the blatant sexuality, eighteenth-century theatres not only created the ideal woman of the time but also showed and helped shape the views on hysteria; Ophelia's madness was caused by her grief over her

[493] ibid.
[494] ibid., 406.
[495] ibid., 406.

father's death, the loss of a potential suitor and love, and the loss of herself. It was not just her uterus leading the charge but her emotions.

This was not the only change made to Ophelia's character during this period. Eighteenth-century France had several different versions of Ophelias in various staged versions of *Hamlet*, which showed several different beliefs regarding her as the ideal woman and as the quintessential madwoman. There were two sides of Ophelia to choose from—the Madonna and the whore. French authors of the eighteenth century, like LeBlanc, Voltaire, and Riccoboni, created pitiful Ophelias, showing a more ideal version of the character; LaPlace instead made her into the cause of Hamlet's madness, depicting her as a dangerous Siren.[496] These different versions show the two sides of the Ophelia coin—virgin and whore—that permeated forms of Ophelia during the eighteenth century. In 1769, Jean-Francois Ducis produced a *Hamlet* where Ophelia was Claudius's daughter instead of Polonius's, thus promoting her to Hamlet's station, and making their relationship more equal and less political while also making her more desirable to Hamlet.[497] Additionally, Ducis completely changed Ophelia's (and Hamlet's) fates, discarding Ophelia's madness and death and marrying her to an alive Hamlet at the end of the play; this works to keep Ophelia as the beautiful, virginal, ideal object of Hamlet's love.[498]

LeTourneur created a "line by line" translation of *Hamlet* into French in 1779.[499] He worked to make his Ophelia the ideal eighteenth-century woman by emphasizing her fidelity and generosity to the point of martyrdom, while also making her out to be a victim by

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[496] Kantack, "Romantic Musical Characterizations of Ophelia," 16.
[497] ibid., 16–17; Vanderhoof and Ducis, "Hamlet: A Tragedy Adapted from Shakespeare (1770) by Jean François Ducis. A Critical Edition," 89.
[498] Kantack, "Romantic Musical Characterizations of Ophelia," 17.
[499] ibid.

showing how Hamlet manipulated and then spurned her; but he made her a stronger character by accentuating her animated, capable, and confident behavior.[500] Unlike many of his eighteenth-century French predecessors and contemporaries, LeTourneur kept Ophelia's madness and death by drowning. However, to keep her idealistic state, he changed her death from the Shakespearean ambiguous suicide or accident to a defined accidental death.[501] Like many of his predecessors and contemporaries, LeTourneur also highlighted Ophelia and Hamlet's love and emotional connection, which linked her madness and death to her broken heart.[502] Keeping the mad scene and death emphasizes the virgin-whore dichotomy, especially since her death became an unambiguous accident and not a suicide—treating her like a victim—while still maintaining her sexually threatening madness, including the deflowering scene. However, even this more scandalous eighteenth-century version of the play sees the virgin side as the more important of the two. In taking away Ophelia's choice by forcing her death to be an accident, LeTourner eliminates Ophelia's voice and autonomy once again, thus making her less of a threat to patriarchal society. Some of LeTourner's choices regarding his Ophelia are very similar to Carré, Barbier, and Thomas's treatment of her character. Unlike the Shakespeare and in line with LeTourner, they emphasize the love between Hamlet and Ophelia (and they even get rid of Polonius' death), thus making her madness about her love for Hamlet and not about the loss of male authority figures, which makes her madness less physically threatening. Unlike LeTourner, however, Carré, Barbier, and Thomas moved to the opposite side of the spectrum with Ophélie's death and made it a

[500] ibid.
[501] ibid.
[502] ibid.

clear onstage suicide, which gives her more of a voice both literally (she has more singing and onstage time) and metaphorically (she chooses her form of death and isn't just a victim).

Nineteenth-Century Ophelias

The nineteenth century saw a great increase in the use of madwomen throughout art and literature, including major authors and Gothic novelists.[503] According to literary and gynocritic Elaine Showalter, this began with a *Hamlet* revival in Paris by an English theatre troupe in 1827, where Harriet Smithson played Ophelia. This version of *Hamlet* included some small changes to Shakespeare's original play, including cuts to "most of the sexual innuendo directed by Hamlet toward Ophelia, all references of incest; the question of Ophelia's suicide became more ambivalent, Gertrude less blameworthy, Claudius more so."[504] Additionally, Claudius and Gertrude were demoted from King and Queen to Duke and Duchess, and the role of the Priest was cut when dealing with the burial process of the characters who killed themselves (Ophelia included) due to censorship.[505] In other words, the women in the play, and especially Ophelia, were made into victims of their circumstances, and Ophelia was less sexualized than she was in the original Shakespeare, which falls in line with the eighteenth-century (and nineteenth-century) ideals of femininity. However, unlike most eighteenth-century versions, this Ophelia's mad scene was not only part of the play but was one of the most remembered and influential scenes.

Smithson's performance of Ophelia's mad scene was iconic. She apparently ran onto the scene singing the first song of her mad scene, wearing

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[503] Showalter, "Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism," 83.
[504] Raby, *Fair Ophelia*, 59.
[505] ibid., 59.

> a long black veil, suggesting the standard imagery of female sexual mystery in the gothic novel, with scattered bedlamish wisps of straw in her hair. Spreading the veil on the ground as she sang, she spread flowers upon it in the shape of a cross, as if to make her father's grave, and mimed a burial, a piece of stage business which remained in vogue for the rest of the century.[506]

Apparently, Smithson played the spreading of her black veil as confusion with her father's burial shroud, and so she spread flowers over it as if mourning his loss.[507] French audiences were absolutely "stunned" by this performance, so much so that Hector Berlioz—who went to opening night—fell madly (pun intended) in love with Harriet Smithson and eventually married her.[508] According to theatre scholar Peter Raby, Smithson

> unleashed an almost overwhelming emotional force. This was achieved partly by using her extensive command of mime to depict in precise detail the state of Ophelia's confused mind; partly, as she had so often observed in Kean [her Hamlet], by conveying the impression of an absolute identification with the role which was totally at variance with French classical acting.
>
> Harriet's voice seemed to reach out and address each spectator individually. Instead of treating the songs as a sweetly pleasing musical interlude, she used the broken snatches to express Ophelia's distress in a far more realistic manner….[509]

In other words, what made Smithson such an incredibly believable and popular Ophelia was her spontaneity and the truthful emotional upheaval she was able to portray while singing and playing her mad scenes. She used her voice, her movements, and her facial expressions in addition to the songs themselves to create as emotionally charged and tragic a mad scene as she could. This resulted in her going from a woman playing a seemingly unimportant character to a preeminent tragic actress. Additionally, this theatricality is reminiscent of Charcot's hysterics later in the century with their mimed expressions of hysteria. Smithson's

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[506] ibid., 63; Showalter, "Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism," 83.
[507] Raby, *Fair Ophelia*, 63.
[508] Showalter, "Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism," 83; Brittan, "Berlioz and the Pathological Fantastic."
[509] Raby, *Fair Ophelia*, 63–66.

extreme acting in Ophelia's mad scene is quite different from Christine Nilsson's acting in Thomas's operatic mad scene. While Parisian audiences loved Smithson for her portrayal of an emotionally wrought and more hysterical Ophelia, they appreciated the believability associated with Nilsson's more understated Ophélie, with much less physical movement than how Smithson performed the role. The main similarity is the obsession with both of these women's looks as part of their credibility for the role; both women were described as beautiful and blonde, and Nilsson was, in fact, Scandinavian. This also shows the difference between expectations of actresses and prima donnas during the nineteenth century; while both are onstage characters, actresses had success in going to the extremes with their physical movement. On the other hand, prima donnas needed to sing with beauty of tone and act with beauty of body; extremes were not believable for a singing actress.

After Smithson's spectacular success as Ophelia, it became *à la mode* to dress like Ophelia in Paris; women would wear black veils with "wisps of straw tastefully interwoven" in their hair to copy this popular image.[510] This "romantic Ophelia—a young girl passionately and visibly driven to picturesque madness—became the dominant international acting style for the next 150 years" on stage in Shakespeare's play.[511] This version of Ophelia, in contrast to her Hamlet, who was an over-thinker, had too much feeling to handle and who, thus, "drowns in her feeling."[512] While their acting styles were different, both Nilsson's and Smithson's renditions of Ophelia showed an excess of emotion as part of their madness. Additionally, "an increasing interest in dementia among writers, artists, and

[510] Showalter, "Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism," 83.
[511] ibid., 83.
[512] ibid., 83.

composers, together with Harriet Smithson's realistic portrayal, made Ophelia a permanent resident of France."[513] With the Romantic obsession with the "other" and, especially, with female madness and hysteria (remember from Chapter 2 that people who lived in the nineteenth century would visit asylums for entertainment), Harriet Smithson's Ophelia brings the Ophelia-obsession of the nineteenth century to a head through her extremely realistic portrayal of Ophelia's mad scene. Forty-one years later, Carré, Barbier, and Thomas pick up from where Smithson and her acting troupe stopped, bringing their Ophélie to life, knowing that she was very popular in Paris at this time. And, as music scholar Jerri Lamar Kantack has argued, they continued in the line of a woman who was idealistically beautiful and believable even in the throes of madness.

According to Kantack, the nineteenth-century European audience was obsessed with historicism, especially in seeing old masterworks from previous eras being reinterpreted for their time, thus leading to theatres putting on quite a few different Shakespearean productions.[514] Like eighteenth-century impresarios, nineteenth-century writers and visual artists were drawn to Ophelia's relationship with Hamlet, often creating a more in-depth love story between them, as well as Ophelia's madness and death, all of which were considered very romantic and fitting of the era.[515] Unlike the previous century, however, this period saw a major turn toward including Ophelia's mad and death scenes, particularly emphasizing her madness as a form of curiosity and entertainment. For example, François Guizot (who worked to update LeTourneur's translation by reinstating passages LeTourneur had cut)

[513] Kantack, "Romantic Musical Characterizations of Ophelia," 20; Burkholder, "Museum Pieces: The Historicist Mainstream in Music of the Last Hundred Years," 116.
[514] Kantack, "Romantic Musical Characterizations of Ophelia," 11.
[515] ibid., 15.

included Ophelia's mad songs and, unlike many eighteenth-century-authors who tried to take away the bawdiness of the play, included Hamlet's salacious comments to her as part of his version.[516] Guizot also argued that Ophelia's madness and death "were not only acceptable but essential" to Ophelia's character, which is particularly interesting. [517] In comparison to the eighteenth-century prudish versions of Ophelia, nineteenth-century impresarios and audiences were obsessed with Ophelia's sexuality, especially in relation to her madness and death. Kantack continues discussing this issue, saying how the Romantic movement "encouraged non-conformity," especially when it came to stagecraft and madness.[518] This is where we see the turn from censoring Ophelia's madness to a fascination with it;

> Therefore, Ophelia's madness came to be viewed as an inherent part of her character, appropriate for her circumstances, and immensely appealing. Furthermore, the French began to recognize similarities between Shakespeare's characterization of Ophelia's madness and characterizations of general madness used by early French writers such as Belleforest, Rabelais, Marot, and Villon.[519]

As we know from Chapter 1, Thomas continues this trend in his musical interpretation of Ophélie's mad scene in that he not only gave her a mad scene but expanded upon the original significantly. Through her mad scene, he also othered and exoticized Ophélie to show that she was different from the other characters on stage. He created a ballade for Ophélie, which was diegetic (meaning the music was actually occurring in the story and not just as part of the opera) and contained instruments—the tambourine and the triangle—associated with othering and exoticism during the time. Both of these musical forms of othering Ophélie during her mad scene were especially connected to the stereotypical music used by French

[516] ibid., 17.
[517] ibid., 17.
[518] ibid., 18.
[519] ibid., 18.

exoticist composers to represent Romani characters such as Bizet's *Carmen*. As we can see, this fits in not only via musical expectations in the nineteenth century but also in treatment of the onstage Shakespearean Ophelia during this time.

According to Showalter, we also see a surge of representations of Ophelia in visual art after this time, especially showing her drowning.[520] In particular, Harriet Smithson's Ophelia was popular to depict in art because of the appeal of "the conjunction of beauty, forlorn love, madness, and premature death."[521] Delacroix painted a series of extremely sensual paintings of Harriet Smithson as Ophelia.[522] Additionally, Devéria and Boulanger, Ducarme, de Valmont, and Dubufe all created lithographs of Smithson's Ophelia.[523] The way Harriet Smithson was depicted in these lithographs shows the two sides of Ophelia—the innocent and the madwoman. In most representations of her, she is shown as a virtuous, innocent feminine ideal—the "sweet shy girl" like in Achille Devéria's drawing.[524] However, Dubufe shows a "woman of mystery," giving her a more sensual outfit and a more poised and assured look, showing her confidence in her beauty and acting skills—and, therefore, in her femininity—via her facial expression.[525] This demonstrates opposite sides of Ophelia and of Smithson; confidence is necessary, ideal, and attractive for an actress, but for an upper-class woman like Ophelia, it is threatening. The lithographs of Harriet Smithson's Ophelia "could be seen in all the bookshop and printshop windows" of Paris.[526]

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[520] Showalter, "Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism," 84.
[521] Raby, *Fair Ophelia*, 72.
[522] Showalter, "Introduction," 11.
[523] Raby, *Fair Ophelia*, 72.
[524] ibid., 75.
[525] ibid., 75.
[526] ibid., 72.

Delacroix also created a lithograph of Ophelia called *La Mort d'Ophélie* [*The Death of Ophelia*] in 1843, which was extremely sensual in nature.[527] Showalter describes Delacroix's lithograph as "Ophelia half-suspended in the stream as her dress slips from her body."[528] The use of partial nudity in Delacroix's depictions of Ophelia show the sexuality that audiences of the time would relate to her madness and her death. In other words, the sexuality released by her madness (and that caused her madness), which threatened the men around her as both a source of her freedom and of their temptation is what ultimately caused her untimely death. And yet in death, while she is less of a threat, she is still a temptress and still embodies the sexuality that titillates both the men in the story and those looking at the paintings.

In 1852, the Royal Academy's art show displayed two portraits of Ophelia, including a very famous work by John Everett Millais.[529] This painting is the one we see most often to this day in association with Ophelia's drowning.[530] Millais's painting features Ophelia already drowned in the murky water. She is in heavy attire of a blueish-white color and floats face up with her hair floating freely around her head, neck, and shoulders beautifully in the water. Her face is staunch white, her eyes lifeless, and her lips parted slightly. She is surrounded by green and brown nature—tall grasses, bushes, algae or moss, and branches. But most importantly: in her right hand and floating over her sunken torso are colorful flowers, the ones she tried to give away during her mad scene. Thus, her flowers remain

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[527] Kromm, "The Feminization of Madness in Visual Representation," 513.
[528] Showalter, "Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism," 84.
[529] ibid., 84.
[530] To view the painting, use this link: https://library-artstor-org.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:9443/#/asset/LESSING_ART_1039490534

intact (she was not deflowered in her scene). Showalter describes this Ophelia as a "sensuous siren as well as victim" because Ophelia is beautiful in her death.[531] She is pale, but not bloated as a victim of drowning would be. Her lips are parted as though her song continues, though she is silenced forever. And she still holds her flowers, that which tempts men, thus showing both that her virginity is still intact but that she entices men still. However, the way Millais painted this portrait has a "flattened perspective, and brilliant light," which do not show grief for this loss but instead almost an indifference toward Ophelia's death.[532] Millais's painting is a celebration of her beauty in death, not a mourning for her loss. Thus, through this work, we see what the people of the nineteenth century wanted to see: the conclusion of her madness, what she must suffer due to her madness, and not the madness itself. It also represented what romantic critics wanted of an Ophelia and why so many visual artists depicted her but not as many composers; they wanted an Ophelia who is seen but not heard because "the point was to *look* at her," to appreciate her beauty and get rid of the threat of her madness.[533] This also explains why Nilsson's and Smithson's looks were so important on stage, and, especially with Nilsson, their singing was far less essential than their acting and beauty. What made a believable Ophelia was a beautiful one, a distressed, romantic, idealized, objectified figure.

These renditions of Ophelia tie directly back to nineteenth century ideas on female mental illness, especially those in France. Delacroix's and Millais's paintings (the French painters) bring out the more threatening and sexual side of Ophelia while softening the threat

[531] Showalter, "Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism," 84.
[532] ibid., 85.
[533] ibid., 83.

by depicting her as already drowned. As we know from the previous chapter, according to physicians and alienists (psychiatrists) of the day, a high sex drive, and not the womb itself, was the main cause of hysteria, which can be seen in the use of the sensuality of these depictions. Delacroix's Ophelia has a dress that is barely clinging onto her body, and Millais's Ophelia shows her beauty in a Siren-like way, making her sensual even in her death. Additionally, and more importantly here, the fact that Delacroix and Millais pictured her death as something beautiful and in an unfeeling, unremorseful way shows the romantic obsession with hysteria during this time, particularly by artists and novelists. These depictions act almost as a threat to female autonomy, as they show the beauty in death after the torture and threat of hysteria and the rebellious nature it represented, especially since rebellion was considered a symptom of female insanity in France. This beautiful death could also be interpreted as what physicians viewed as a more "female" suicide—softer deaths such as drowning in lieu of the "masculine" suicide we see in *Werther*, which involved much more violent deaths such as suicide by gun, knife, or hanging.

At the same time, we see a spike in interest in Ophelia by those running the Victorian asylums. The "superintendents of Victorian lunatic asylums" (also known as those working there—doctors, administrators, etc.) said that one could recognize "Ophelias" all over the wards of their mental hospitals.[534] In fact, they made Shakespeare's Ophelia (who is, just to reiterate, a fictional character) into a "case study… that seemed particularly useful as an account of hysteria or mental breakdown in adolescence, a period of sexual instability which the Victorians regarded as risky for women's mental health."[535] Thus, the literary Ophelia,

[534] ibid., 85–86.
[535] ibid., 85.

described by her brother in the play, Laertes, as a "document in madness" became a basis on which doctors would diagnose hysteria in real women.[536] We see this later in the nineteenth century in Charcot's use of literary characters (based off the performances he had of hysterical women in his *salons*) as the ultimate, perfect representations of the different stages of hysteria.[537]

The three main representations of insanity in England during the romantic period (1830-70 approximately) were Ophelia, Crazy Jane, and Lucia.[538] Of the three, Shakespeare's Ophelia was the character upon whom the other two characters were based, and each "embodied one aspect of her character," but each character also represented different aspects of female madness according to the culture of the romantic period; Ophelia was suicidal; Crazy Jane was sentimental; and Lucia (also known as Lucy from Walter Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor*) was violent.[539] The original story of Crazy Jane came from a ballad by the Gothic novelist, Matthew "Monk" Lewis in 1793, and in it, Jane was a poor servant girl who was seduced and then betrayed by a man and went mad as a result.[540] Jane represented the innocent victim part of Ophelia and was considered to be "docile," sweet, and "harmless" and was simply dedicated to her lover.[541] Like Ophelia, Crazy Jane was associated with singing, and she put "willow straw" and wildflowers in her hair, as those were her only comforts since her lover left her.[542]

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[536] Showalter, "Introduction," 10.
[537] Mimran, "Introduction: Hysteria and the Salpêtrière of Jean-Martin Charcot: Nineteenth-Century Literary Diagnosis and Modern Medical Literariness."
[538] Showalter, "Introduction," 10.
[539] ibid., 10–11.
[540] ibid., 13.
[541] ibid., 13.
[542] ibid., 13.

On the other side of the spectrum, we see Lucy or Lucia, the heroine of Walter Scott's 1819 novel, *The Bride of Lammermoor*, who represented the sexual and male-threatening sides of female insanity.[543] In the novel and opera, Lucy is forced to marry a man she does not love (Arthur), and in her distress from this plight, she goes mad and assaults him on their wedding night.[544] In the opera, Lucia succeeds in killing Arthur, comes out of their wedding chamber in her white dress covered in his blood to sing a twenty-minute mad scene in front of the entire chorus as well as two other leading male characters. Thus, we see in Lucy the violent and threatening parts of Ophelia that do not fully display themselves except in Ophelia's suicide scene; while Lucy stabs her husband, Ophelia does not try to harm the men around her. However, when looking more closely, these murderous madwomen never escape male domination. Ophelia, who is far less of a threat than Lucia but more than Crazy Jane, drowns herself, and Lucia dies offstage of a broken heart, effectively silencing her and removing the threat of her madness, and more importantly, the threat of her autonomy and the free will she tries to use against the men in her life.

Additionally, these stories are by men; men are taking women's "maladies" and twisting them into stories of "male culture."[545] The women "escape one specific, intolerable exercise of women's wrongs by assuming an idealized, poetic form of pure femininity as the male culture had construed it: absolutely irrational, absolutely emotional, and, once the single act is accomplished, absolutely passive."[546] In other words, once these women are allowed freedom through their madness, for however long it takes, they immediately lose all will and

[543] ibid., 14.
[544] Smart, "The Silencing of Lucia," 123.
[545] Showalter, "Introduction," 17.
[546] ibid., 17.

become passive objects once again with whom the writer or librettist or composer may do what he wishes. This fits into Ripa's theory of female madness in that only one of these women has suicidal thoughts and actions (Ophelia), while Lucia dies from her weakness. In addition, both Lucia's and Ophelia's rebellious nature against men are in and of themselves proof of their insanity. Lucia's mad scene stems from her political rebellion against her brother, who tricks her into marrying a man she does not love and stops her from marrying his enemy; when she finds out how he deceived her and how she betrayed Edgardo, she kills Arturo in an act of supreme violence and uprising. It is this revolt that had to be put down and that led the librettist to write her death, since, according to Ripa, women were not naturally political in nature and, thus, had to be insane to rebel against the men in their lives. Thomas's Ophélie easily falls into the same pattern in that she has her rebellious mad scene and immediately after sings her suicide scene, which ends with Hamlet's words in their Act 1 duet. In other words, Ophélie rebels and then is immediately silenced not just by her death but by the words of her lover leading her to her suicide.

Thus, in the nineteenth century, Ophelia becomes a symbol and a prime example of women's mental illness, and obsessions with mental illness during the time leads to a rise in depictions of her, both on stage and in art. In fact, her popularity (and the popularity of *Hamlet* in general) is why Thomas chose *Hamlet* as his first opera to be featured at the *Opéra de Paris*.[547] His Ophélie follows the trends of Ophelias of the past; he changes her based on his knowledge of the audiences' expectations to ensure his opera's success via a contemporary, realistic, and believable mad scene written for his nineteenth-century audience.

[547] Smith, "Thomas, (Charles) Ambroise."

Conclusion

When tracing Ophelias (and other madwomen) in history, there is a very clear correlation between these depictions of Ophelia both on stage and in art and the views on hysteria during the time. We see how the views on hysteria relate to beliefs regarding the ideal woman during each period and how each Ophelia takes on the role of this feminine ideal and then breaks that down via her mad scene (or doesn't if the impresario chose to cut it). In the late seventeenth century, the change from a boy Ophelia to a woman adds sexuality and dichotomy to the staged representations of Ophelia, which continues into the eighteenth century. Thus, to make the powerful, worldly actresses less powerful and more in line with what men wanted women to be, Ophelia's most lewd lines were cut, thus reducing her to a submissive object of Hamlet's affections—both those of love and lust. However, the innocence of the character produced by the censorship of the time in combination with worldly actresses and knowledge of Shakespeare's original character created a virgin/whore dichotomy that dominated the eighteenth-century staged versions of Ophelia. Her madness was seen as dangerous, something to be feared and covered up in trying to create the ideal woman on stage. While her madness was still associated with her sexuality, it was also fraught with emotion rather than sensuality, leaning into the ideals of a woman and the beliefs on hysteria of the time. These ideals seem to build on each other, developing into the nineteenth-century idea of a chaste, generous, kind, and, most importantly, submissive woman culminating in Carré, Barbier, and Thomas's Ophélie. While the nineteenth century saw the re-emergence of the more sensual parts of Ophelia and the obsession with madness in general but especially in Ophelia, her madness was still beautified, on stage by Harriet Smithson, by artists depicting her image in visual representations, and by Carré, Barbier,

Thomas, and Christine Nilsson via the operatic mad and suicide scenes. In these nineteenth century mad scenes, we also see the mark of romanticism and its obsession with individuality and otherness, especially in France. Because Ophelia's madness makes her unusual, individual, and other, Europe, and especially the French, became obsessed with her character and with her madness and death in particular. Thus, Ophelia becomes an exotic figure in France, a madwoman who is different from "normal," patriarchal society, an idea which Thomas shapes into his exoticized music for her. Ultimately, Ophélie's mad scene comes from a long line of changing the original Shakespeare to better fit the audience expectations of the time and furthers this trend via her enormous mad scene and included onstage suicide scene.

Chapter 4: How to Perform Ophélie's Mad Scene for a Modern Audience

Introduction[548]

During the nineteenth century, opera composers used female madness to humble, humiliate, and crush rebellious or strong women—such as Lucia, who dared to kill her husband because she loved another man.[549] As early as the Middle Ages, men used "hysteria" and mental illness to lock up strong women, citing madness and even witchcraft.[550] By performing these women as hysterical or generically insane, we, as performers and directors of opera, perpetuate this practice of dehumanizing and silencing rebellious and strong women in operas. However, when we, as performers, find specific symptoms and reasons behind our characters' mental illnesses, we give their voices, their power, and their strength back. Ophélie is not just mad. In the play, Hamlet humiliates Ophelia in front of the entire court by implying that he knew her biblically. He then rejects her and shames her further when he tells her to "Get thee to a nunnery"—a double entendre, meaning a cloister and a whorehouse. Then, he kills her father. While Hamlet does not murder Polonius in the opera, Hamlet, Ophélie, and Gertrude sing a trio, titled "Allez dans un cloitre," [Get thee to a nunnery], where he rejects Ophélie's love, as he does in the play. Because of the nature of spinsterhood and abandonment by men in the nineteenth century, Ophélie's mental illness is defined by psychoses triggered by traumatic events.

[548] Content warning: This chapter discusses women's mental illness and has some information on the treatment of mentally ill women in the nineteenth century. A large part of the chapter includes finding symptoms of psychosis and trauma in Ophélie's mad scene.
[549] Smart, "The Silencing of Lucia," 119, 123; Ripa, *Women and Madness*, 22–23.
[550] Harsin, "Gender, Class, and Madness in Nineteenth-Century France," 1061.

In this culminating chapter of my dissertation, I will use the information from Chapters 1 through 3 to explain how to create a more believable mad scene for contemporary audiences who will attend Thomas's *Hamlet*. While it is important for both directors and singers to know the history of a role, as well as the music and beliefs that affected the librettists and composers during the time, it is also important to think about how a composer would have possibly chosen to alter it had it been written today. Based on Thomas, Barbier, and Carré's efforts to create an opera fit to allow audiences to understand the story, and because they changed the original story as well as their libretto and music when they received negative critiques, I would hypothesize that if they were given the chance to rewrite the role, they would completely alter Ophélie's mad scene to better fit today's societal views. Because these figures are no longer with us, it is our job as directors and performers to reinterpret the role to better fit the beliefs and expectations of our contemporary audiences. I believe the best place to begin is with the mad scene because Thomas, Carré, and Barbier approached Ophélie's illness as a form of entertainment and as a way to other and exoticize her, instead of as a pathology. In the twenty-first century, mental illness and psychology have become very important topics, especially their causes and how these illnesses affect those who suffer from them. In giving Ophélie specific symptoms, an overarching diagnosis, and a more realistic etiology, we humanize her character during her mad scene and work to change how women are treated, viewed, and played in opera. Thus, instead of interpreting Ophélie as just "mad" or "sad" or generally "hysterical," each director and singing actor must analyze the text and music, where we can find specific symptoms of her mental illness, even before the mad scene begins. The symptoms found and chosen should make sense with their vision of the character and music and should be believable to them to ensure they are truthful and

realistic to the audience. Thus, this chapter will begin with a brief discussion of modern and contemporary acting books and treatises, especially those applicable to singing actors.

Because opera blends music and theatre, singing actors must work within the confines of the score. This makes believable acting even more difficult, since music often slows down and sometimes even suspends time.[551] From here, I will discuss how to find symptoms in the text and music—what to look for and how the history of the music can help us find these symptoms when they are less obvious. I will also discuss my overall diagnosis of Ophélie based on the symptoms I found in her text and music.[552] Then, I will begin an in-depth analysis of Ophélie's mad scene, followed by her suicide scene. In each of these pieces, I will discuss the symptoms I find in the text and music and how I would specifically play these symptoms. In explaining how I would play certain symptoms, my goal is to take my analysis of the symptoms found in the music and text and bring it into a more practical sphere—how to humanize Ophélie's mental illness on stage. My symptoms and interpretations are just one example of how this technique can work when trying to perform mad scenes and especially in context with the rest of the opera. After these two scenes, I will briefly discuss an example of symptoms found in Ophélie's earlier music, particularly from her aria in Act 2. In doing so, I aim to make the mad scene function as a continuous arc within her character.

[551] Balk, *The Complete Singer-Actor*, 10.
[552] I would like to note (as I have in the Introduction) that, while I am working toward my doctoral degree, I am not in the medical field. This "diagnosis" is by no means meant to be real but is instead helpful for me in creating a character arc so that the mad scene seems more truthful, realistic, and not as out of place.

Contemporary Acting Expectations

Because opera is comprised of text set to music, the genre lies somewhere between theatre, which focuses on text, and music written for its own sake.[553] However, interpreters of opera are known for letting the theatrical part of the art form fall to the wayside in lieu of perfect vocal technique, adherence to the score, and musicality. This dates back to the nineteenth century. Whereas actress Harriet Smithson was praised for the dramatic skill and truthfulness regarding hysteria in her 1827 portrayal of Shakespeare's Ophelia, singing actress Christine Nilsson was lauded for the stillness and beauty she brought to the role, which was considered more believable for the operatic stage.[554] However, on a twenty-first century stage—and especially with the development of film and television, which allow audiences to see actors up close and, therefore, emphasize realistic acting—the need for more truthful, believable, and realistic operatic characters has come to the forefront. Naturalness or believability in acting signifies "a realistic series of physical and psychological events in a realistic time scheme."[555] Thus, the stereotypical operatic park and bark and overacting are no longer acceptable.

Part of the reason why opera directors, singers, and conductors have shied away from acting technique in the past is due to the major differences between opera and theatre. The largest variance is the use of music, which changes how quickly or slowly time passes in the course of the story.[556] For example, an aria stretches a few moments into several minutes by having the character greatly elaborate on their emotions and thoughts. Additionally,

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[553] Balk, *The Complete Singer-Actor*, 6–7.
[554] Please see my larger comparison between these two performers in Chapter 3 for more information.
[555] Balk, *The Complete Singer-Actor*, 30.
[556] ibid., 9.

interludes, postludes, and other moments without singing further stretch time and make it difficult to gesture, think, or move at a natural pace. Another major difference is that many operatic works, including Thomas's *Hamlet*, often take place in the past, sometimes multiple centuries before the current actors and audiences live, and the singing actor will usually have to perform in a language that is not their own—most commonly Italian, French (the language in which *Hamlet* is written), German, and, in the United States and Great Britain, English. The result is that acting a part in an opera feels unnatural and foreign to a majority of young singing actors; they have to learn the gestures from the different centuries and countries and be able to use them correctly to communicate certain emotions, while still making them look realistic and telling the audience a believable story.[557] And, often, because the music is not written to perfectly represent how a person would say each line, these gestures and emotions must be stretched to fit the music, making them feel even more unnatural. Mad scenes have all of the above complications but to an even higher degree; as with most music, the mad scene stretches time and heightens emotions. Additionally, directors may ask for very unnatural-feeling gestures from the singing actor. The result is a great need for acting technique to create believable characters on the operatic stage, especially those performing mad scenes.[558]

[557] ibid., 31.

[558] I would highly recommend looking at specific techniques and exercises written in the following books—for singing actors who wish to work on their technique specifically for music theatre: Balk, *The Complete Singer-Actor*; Ostwald, *Acting for Singers*. I find some of Sanford Meisner's exercises useful, mainly his word repetition/ping pong game, improvisational exercises, and reading through scripts in a monotone. However, I do not recommend the book because I do not condone some of his methods (including verbal, emotional, and sometimes physical abuse). If you choose to read this book, I give a content warning: groping. His book is: Meisner and Longwell, *Sanford Meisner on Acting*.

One useful technique is what twentieth-century acting teacher Konstantin Stanislavsky called the "magic if."[559] In his article, Stanislavsky used the following example: tell someone to take a drink of water, and then tell them to act as *if* it were poisoned.[560] He argues that this gives the actor an objective (in this case, how to survive being poisoned), while still allowing the actor "to have confidence in a supposed situation" but doesn't "use fear or force, or make the artist do anything."[561] It also "arouses an inner and real activity, and it does this by natural means."[562] In other words, as we learn in creating hypotheses, creating an "if" for the actor allows them to respond with a "then"—the situation leads to a response.

Opera director and acting scholar David Ostwald also discusses the use of "if," this time saying that you should act as if you are the character.[563] Ostwald explains how "in your real life, every situation that arouses your feelings also causes you to act," and so it is useful to "respond *as if* you are in your character's situation, let the appropriate feelings well up, and allow your body to express them in actions."[564] In other words, thinking about the character's situation from *the actor's* point of view will produce an emotion, a guttural feeling, which will then cause the singing actor to act or react in a certain way. This is particularly useful in working on a piece for an audition or a performance where the director gives you overarching guidelines for your movements (for example, places to be at certain times during the music) but does not ask a lot of specific movements and gestures.

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[559] Stanislavsky, Benedetti, and Carnicke, "From "The Actor," 39–40.
[560] ibid., 40.
[561] ibid., 39.
[562] ibid.
[563] Ostwald, *Acting for Singers*, 33.
[564] ibid., 33.

On the other side of the spectrum, stage director and performance theorist Wesley Balk argues that opera needs to be extremely stylized due to its origins from a different century. Thus, singing actors cannot only rely on "spontaneity" or "inner truth."[565] In other words, the acting as "if" of Stanislavsky and Ostwald is not quite enough for singing actors, who need to take the music (stretching time) as well as characters from the past and their set of gestures and movements into account. Balk argues that singing actors "must ask in all situations, "what might the *character* do in that highly unusual situation, how would he or she do it, and how can *I* make that action believable?"" instead of thinking as if they are the character or as if they are in the situation.[566] This could be particularly useful for singing actors working on a mad scene. For many singers, the psychoses and symptoms that the character exhibits in the scene and their subsequent actions are not necessarily natural. Additionally, those who have, have had, or have been affected by mental illnesses may need to separate themselves from their character to protect their own mental health. For this reason, using the technique of thinking about what the character would do in this situation may work better in creating a believable character. Balk also argues that physical actions (movements) can evoke an emotional reaction in lieu of creating a situation in the mind to evoke an emotion, followed by an action. Thus, in trying to create believable characters, "singer-actors must, of course practice" any "action until it *feels* natural as if they had used it all their lives."[567] This and thinking about the character's reactions are helpful for all singing actors who may have a director asking them for specific gestures and movements, which may not feel believable or natural to them.

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[565] Balk, *The Complete Singer-Actor*, 28–29.
[566] ibid., 30.
[567] ibid., 30–31.

Ostwald also says that it is particularly important to research the role to understand the theatrical and musical expectations of the period in which the opera was written, as was the objective of the first three chapters of this dissertation.[568] I believe this is imperative in recreating mad scenes, since the beliefs on women's mental illness and hysteria changed drastically over the centuries, and expectations surrounding mad scenes on the operatic stage were very different from those on the theatrical stage. Additionally, as I have discussed in previous chapters, how the composer and librettists intended the piece to be written should impact a singing actor's acting choices. For example, learning authentic gestures is more important for a piece that takes place in a very specific period, such as Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, especially when performed in a period production.

Thomas, Carré, and Barbier wrote specifically so that their audiences could understand and empathize with the characters. They made changes to their plot and music when they received poor reviews. As a result, while nineteenth-century gestures may be useful in parts of *Hamlet*, because these three were so emphatic about writing operas for their audiences, I argue that it is better to include more contemporary gestures, ones that will seem more natural, believable, and will be more easily understood by contemporary audiences. Thus, while I agree with Ostwald that it is necessary to research the opera, the composer, the librettist(s), the story upon which the libretto is based, and the expectations of the time in which the piece was composed, I think that knowing this history allows the director and actor to choose how best to represent these characters on stage in a way that is true to that history.

I believe that for Ophélie's operatic mad scene (and other mad scenes), we need to use a combination of Stanislavsky's, Ostwald's, and Balk's techniques. Knowing the history

[568] Ostwald, *Acting for Singers*, 154.

behind the mad scene is extremely important in studying the role, finding symptoms in the text and music, and thinking about an overarching diagnosis for the character. For example, in Chapter 2, I discussed historian Yannick Ripa's claim that nineteenth-century women were dependent on men for social and economic survival.[569] Because they had no way of supporting themselves if they did not marry, not being able to find a suitable match acted as a trauma for women who wanted to marry but also made these women a burden to their families. As a result, fifty percent of women at the Salpêtrière were unmarried women (or spinsters).[570] Thus, when Hamlet rejects Ophélie in their trio from Act 3, telling her that he never loved her, that she must have been crazy to think he did, and that he will never marry her, I, the singing actress, can surmise that Ophélie feels not just abandoned but completely cut off from reality because she has been deprived of her place in society as well as her economic security in losing her one suitor for marriage.

Knowing this history allows me to ask myself the question Balk suggests; how would Ophélie respond to this trauma? Ripa gives an answer for this as well: many of the unmarried patients occupying the Salpêtrière would make up (or have delusions of) "a fantasy husband.… getting married was a way for young women to gain access to womanhood and begin to exist in their own right."[571] In looking at the score, a singing actor can see this trauma response in the text and music of her mad scene. One of Ophélie's first symptoms is creating a "fantasy husband" of her own, saying in the first part of her mad scene that Hamlet is her husband, that no one should believe anyone who says otherwise, and that if he ever abandoned her, she would lose her mind. In looking at the history of the Shakespearean

[569] Ripa, *Women and Madness*, 58.
[570] ibid.
[571] ibid., 57–58.

Ophelia, beliefs on women's mental illness, and how Thomas, Carré, and Barbier constructed this scene to help their audience better understand Ophélie and her mental illness, singing actors can find many more symptoms in the text and music. Thus, these symptoms are derived from the history of the mad scene but are also specific enough that a twenty-first century singing actor, director, and audience can reinterpret them to better fit twenty-first-century beliefs on mental illness.

From my musical and textual analysis, I have found three common symptoms in the major episode of Ophélie's mental illness (the mad and suicide scenes): hallucinations, delusions, and disordered or disorganized speech, defined as "frequent derailment or incoherence" in speech patterns.[572] As discussed previously, Ophélie exhibits a delusion when she talks about her "fantasy husband" (Hamlet). I have also found evidence of aural hallucinations both in the text of her suicide scene as well as in the orchestration of both the mad and suicide scenes. Finally, Ophélie exhibits disordered speech in several places during the opera. The most prominent is in the coda of the mad scene, but she also has unfinished sentences followed by vocalises on "ah" in her suicide scene and in her Act 2 "Air d'Ophélie." These three symptoms indicate psychosis and, possibly, schizophrenia, as they are three of the five major symptoms of this illness.[573] However, because Ophélie does not display these behaviors for at least six months (partially because she is a fictional character). In creating an overarching character, I believe it is more helpful to say that Ophélie has brief psychotic disorder due to trauma (or possibly unspecified schizophrenia spectrum and other

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[572] Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, "Table 3.20: DSM-IV to DSM-5 Psychotic Disorders."
I will use the terms "disorganized" and "disordered" speech interchangeably.
[573] American Psychiatric Association, American Psychiatric Association, and DSM-5 Task Force, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.*

psychotic disorder) because Hamlet's rejection is the trauma, which causes the onset of her symptoms.[574] Brief psychotic disorder also includes the symptoms of "delusions," "hallucinations," "disorganized speech," and "grossly disorganized or catatonic behavior," but the disorder lasts between one day, as we see with Ophélie, and one month.[575]

In her Act 1 duet with Hamlet and her Act 2 air (French for "aria"), Ophélie is distrustful of Hamlet, showing anxiousness that he does not love her and that he will leave her, demonstrating that there may have been an altercation before the beginning of the opera where Hamlet neglected her. In her Act 3 trio with Hamlet and Gertrude, when Hamlet finally rejects Ophélie and says he never loved her, he traumatizes her further, leading to her psychoses and the symptoms seen on stage during her mad scene. In taking note of this overarching diagnosis as a singing actor, I would use my own musical analysis as well as Stanislavsky's, Ostwald's, and Balk's techniques to figure out how the nineteenth-century Ophélie may react to this situation and how I, a woman of the twenty-first century, may react if I were in Ophélie's position. Using the text, music, and the historically-informed ideas of how Ophélie would react, I find musical tropes, motives, and themes as well as textual

[574] Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, "Table 3.20: DSM-IV to DSM-5 Psychotic Disorders."

[575] Of note: patients diagnosed with Brief Psychotic Disorder must have at least one of the symptoms I listed above; Ophélie has three. However, in patients who have Brief Psychotic Disorder, it is expected that they have "eventual full return to premorbid level of functioning," which we do not see with Ophélie, as she kills herself at the end of her psychotic episode. Unspecified Schizophrenia Spectrum and Other Psychotic Disorder means the patient has "symptoms characteristic of a schizophrenia spectrum and other psychotic disorder that cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning predominate but do not meet the full criteria for any of the disorders in the schizophrenia spectrum and other psychotic disorders class." In other words, this means that the patient exhibits some symptoms relating to schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders but does not fully fit into any of these disorders (has expected symptoms missing). From: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

evidence that indicate these symptoms. In thinking about my own reactions, I create a more believable and natural character, one who can display Ophélie's symptoms and emotions to a more contemporary audience. In the next section, I will give a musical and textual analysis of Ophélie's mad and suicide scenes. I will indicate where evidence of certain symptoms can be found and how I would possibly interpret these symptoms when acting, showing how to put these acting techniques to use.

The Mad Scene

Act 4 of *Hamlet* opens with an *entr'acte* ballet *divertissement*, followed by Ophélie's mad scene, then another shorter ballet, and ends with her suicide scene. In other words, Act 4 is all about Ophélie. The mad scene is comprised of three major sections. The first section begins with a chorus of men singing, "*Mais quelle est cette belle*" [But who is this beauty] and then shifts into Ophélie's accompanied recitative, "*À vos jeux, mes amis*" [At your games, my friends], which transitions into an arioso.[576] This is followed by the waltz section, "*Partagez-vous mes fleurs*!" [Let me share my flowers with you!].[577] After this, Thomas wrote a short recitative transition, "*Et maintenant, écoutez ma chanson*…" [And now, listen to my song], leading into the ballade section, "*Pâle et blonde*," [Pale and blonde].[578] The ballade ends with an extended coda of vocal fireworks.[579]

[576] Castel et al., *French Opera Libretti,* 429.
[577] ibid., 430.
[578] ibid.
[579] Please see Appendix A.1 for a full score analysis of the mad scene, showing what I discuss in the following sections.

Nineteenth-Century Musical Tropes Representing Symptoms

Carré, Barbier, and Thomas cultivated a nineteenth-century Ophélie with alterations to Shakespeare's Ophelia. In particular, they changed Ophélie's mad scene to better fit the operatic expectations and views on women's mental illness of the time. Below is a brief discussion of some of the techniques they used to show their audiences a more believable hysterical Ophélie.

English Renaissance music and poetry scholar Leslie C. Dunn explains that because singing is an excess of speaking—meaning that singing has higher and lower ranges, has longer durations of syllables, can contain florid movement, requires the mouth be more open, requires more breath control, a better control of the diaphragm, etc.—it is more like femininity and madness than speech, which was associated with masculinity as well as societal expectations and normalcy.[580] Additionally, Renaissance thinkers associated heightened emotionality (another form of excess) with femininity; often, a character on stage will begin to sing because speaking does not have enough emotion to convey what the character is feeling, thus connecting emotionality, excess, singing, and femininity. Because madness itself was seen as an excess of emotion, it was associated with women. Thus, "Ophelia's singing could be construed as reinforcing a gender stereotype, since grief, or any strong emotion, is another form of excess identified as feminine."[581] By having Ophelia sing her mad scene instead of speak or even scream it, Shakespeare made her madness more aggressive and more feminine. Thomas's Ophélie's mad scene is particularly extreme, since it takes up an entire act; contains some of the highest notes in the opera (meaning its *tessitura* is the furthest from speech) and has over a two-octave range; has extremely long notes, thus

[580] Dunn, "Ophelia's Songs in Hamlet: Music, Madness, and the Feminine," 57, 62.
[581] ibid., 61.

extending syllables; and contains fast and high coloratura. All of these feats, which force sopranos to go to the extremes in using their body, are unlike speech and, thus, unlike what is expected of women in society.

Musicologist Mary Ann Smart furthers this claim in her article about the mad scene in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*. While all characters sing in an opera, Smart points out that:

> There seems to be an intuitive connection between madness and coloratura: trills, melismas and high notes suggest hysteria, an unbearable pitch of emotion; they liberate music from text, allow it to escape from the rational, connect it with pre-symbolic modes of communication. In a sense coloratura is free from the confinement of music and of language: a syllable stretched beyond recognition in an escape from signification, the emergence of irrationality and madness.[582]

The extensive coloratura in Lucia's mad scene is not just more difficult and higher than she had sung in other parts of the opera but was longer in the duration of each melisma, thus making it more excessive. Like Lucia, Ophélie has bouts of coloratura earlier in the opera in her Act 1 duet with Hamlet, in her Act 2 air, and in the Act 3 trio with Hamlet and Gertrude. Ophélie's coloratura is also far more excessive—lengthier, higher, more difficult, and often faster—in every part of her mad scene than it is in her other music. In the accompanied recitative and arioso section of the scene, Ophélie sings a melisma, which breaks form and comes directly out of the recitative melody on the words "Planait dans l'air," [was soaring in the air].[583] This melisma alone lasts from bars 26-31, longer than the previously longest line of coloratura in her air, which lasted four measures. The waltz section is a combination of words and melisma, meant to represent Ophélie's first extended episode of disorganized speech. The first melisma lasts from measure 97-105, and then she has six bars of sung

[582] Smart, "The Silencing of Lucia," 128.
[583] Castel et al., *French Opera Libretti*, 429.

speech followed by another melisma lasting from measure 113 through the end of the section, measure 129, a full sixteen bars of coloratura. The coda at the end of the ballade, however, is an extended melisma with some words haphazardly thrown in and is a whopping thirty-four measures of just melismatic material. Each of these shows a feminine excess and emotionality in her mad scene, and each occurs during her most emotional and vulnerable moments.

In the ballade and coda, Thomas uses Ophélie's coloratura to address another set of symptoms—uncontrollable laughter, crying, and raging, for which he wrote directions directly in the score. In the transitions to the B sections of the ballade, Ophélie breaks into "maniacal laughter," represented by repeated notes leading into arpeggiated runs, followed by a descending chromatic scalar pattern.[584] Later in the coda, Thomas writes music that suggests quick alternating sequences of crying and laughing; the laughter is represented by ascending and repeated fioratura and coloratura, while descending patterns (often chromatic) represent her weeping.[585] These sequences of laughter, weeping, and raging show that she is overwhelmed by her excessive emotions and psychoses. Therefore, like Lucia, whose madness is seen through the long flights of coloratura, trills, and melismas in her mad scene, Ophélie's extended coloratura and higher *tessitura* help create the essence of her mental illness. These melismatic passages portray the feeling of hopelessness and desertion that leads to her psychotic episodes, resulting in hallucinations, delusions, disordered speech, and, eventually, the ultimate decision to kill herself. In other words, like his *bel canto* and grand opera predecessors, Thomas used coloratura and a high *tessitura* to represent the excessive

[584] Kantack, "Romantic Musical Characterizations of Ophelia," 95.
[585] ibid., 95.

emotionality that was associated with women's mental illness and hysteria during his time. Ophélie is the only character with extended lines of coloratura and fioratura in the opera, thus making her seem different from the other characters on stage. However, this is not the only part of her music that others her.

Thomas includes an additional symptom in the ballade section of the mad scene—a connection to and a releasing of Ophélie's sexuality, which was very closely associated with hysteria during the nineteenth century. Thomas first does this by writing a four-part chorus into her mad scene; these choristers observe her on stage while she sings. In doing so, he plays into tropes of *bel canto* mad scenes as well as artistic depictions of female asylum patients and hysterical women. As I discussed in Chapter 2, during the nineteenth century, mental illness was viewed as a spectacle, especially with a female subject and a male gaze; the public often paid to visit asylums for entertainment. Women with mental illnesses were also depicted in visual art, where they were often portrayed in suggestive clothing and poses—especially because their hysteria and mental illnesses were associated with their feminine sexuality.[586] Similarly, mad scenes, such as those of Donizetti's Lucia and Bellini's Elvira, often included a male or four-part chorus as well as male leading characters observing and interacting with their scene.[587] In having men witness these terrifying mad women in art and on stage, these voyeurs take their power away by objectifying them. In opera, the freedom these women find in their madness is ultimately shattered either by a miraculous cure, usually a happy marriage, or in death, often as a result of the weakness caused by their madness.

[586] Smart, "The Silencing of Lucia," 121.
[587] ibid., 125.

Thomas includes another, subtler expression of Ophélie's sexuality: exoticism. While Ophélie is European like her male character counterparts, she is musically exoticized by the orchestra in her mad scene. Before the beginning of the ballade section, Thomas composed one line of recitative, "Et maintenant, écoutez ma chanson!" [And now, listen to my song!], telling the audience that the next section of the aria is diegetic, the first cue that what she sings is exoticized.[588]

In the A sections of the ballade that follows, Thomas utilizes a simplistic melody and harmonic progression, which is based on a Scandinavian folk tune.[589] First, Thomas outlines a minor-major seventh chord (E4-G4-B4-D-sharp 5) as the basis of the melody—an odd arpeggiation within the context of French grand opera. This leads to F-sharp 5 followed by an escape tone G 5, which descends back to E4. In all, this single line covers an octave and a minor third, including two of the soprano's *passaggi*. This melody is then repeated but with different words. Thomas then modulates briefly to G major and outlines the G major triad from G4 to D5 to emphasize this change of key. This melody is then repeated, but this time, it ends with a III sharp 3 chord (B major), using this as a pivot chord to modulate back to E minor (becomes V). Finally, he finishes this section with a simple E minor melody.

In the A sections, the words are more important than the melody, as Ophélie sings the tale of the Wilis, spirits of women who die before marrying, find men, and force these men to dance themselves to death.[590] Thus, the use of the folk song allows for a simpler melody,

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[588] Castel et al., *French Opera Libretti*, 430.
[589] Duersten-Pettit, "Madness and Rage: Coloraturas on the Edge," 34.
[590] This definition comes from Heinrich Heine's discourse on the Wilis in *De l'Allemagne*. In his discussion, Heine explains that the tale of the Wilis come from Austrian folklore based on Slavic folklore. In 1841 (twenty-seven years before Thomas's *Hamlet* was produced at the Opéra), the Opéra produced *Giselle*, a very popular ballet where the leading lady is a Wili who also has a mad scene akin to that of Donizetti's Lucia. The popularity of this ballet may

emphasizing the text and making it seem more believable that Ophélie is actually singing on stage; despite the vocal difficulties of this part of the aria, it sounds easy and has a lower *tessitura* compared to the waltz section and the coda. The words in this section are as follows:

Pâle et blonde	Pale and blonde
Dort sous l'eau profonde	Sleeps under the deep water
La Willis au regard de feu!	The Wilis with the gaze of fire!
Que Dieu garde	May God keep
Celui qui s'attarde	The one who lingers
Dans la nuit, au bord du lac bleu!	In the night by the blue lake.
Heureuse l'épouse	Happy is the bride
Aux bras de l'époux!	In the arms of her husband.
Mon âme est jalouse	My soul is jealous
D'un bonheur si doux!	Of such a sweet happiness!
Nymphe au regard de feu	Nymph with eyes of fire,
Hélas! tu dors sous les eaux du lac bleu!	Alas! You sleep under the waters of the blue lake.[591]

In this section, Ophélie not only sings a diegetic song but also tells the tale of a Wilis. However, her version is somewhere between the legend of the Wilis and a Siren (a water nymph who lures men to their watery grave). First, she describes the Wilis and empathizes with the man who will cross her path. Ophélie then brings the story back to her; "Happy is the bride In the arms of her husband. My soul is jealous Of such a sweet happiness!"[592] This is both a part of the story of the Wilis, as this spirit died before she was married, and of Ophélie, whose suitor rejected and abandoned her before their wedding, leaving them both

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have influenced Carré, Barbier, and Thomas's decision to use the Wilis as part of Ophélie's mad scene. Additionally, Act 4 begins with a longer Entr'acte ballet *divertissement*, followed by the mad scene, which precedes another shorter ballet *divertissement*, and ends with the suicide scene. In doing so, Thomas creates a clear association between Ophélie's madness, suicide, and ballet and, through this, a correlation between Thomas's Ophélie and the Wili, Giselle.
Smith, "Chapter Six. Giselle," 167-168, 172.

[591] Castel et al., *French Opera Libretti*, 430–31.

[592] ibid., 431.

jealous of happy marriages. However, Barbier and Carré also included the Siren elements because, in the Shakespeare, Ophelia drowns; thus, as this Wilis sleeps under the water, so too will Ophélie. This is how the ballade becomes both a reflection and a foreshadowing of her own plight.

In the A' section, Ophélie's and the orchestra's music are almost the same as the A section with a very slight but meaningful difference. On the third beats of measures 190 and 194, Thomas adds a B natural into the flute and clarinet parts after Ophélie sings. These B naturals act like echoes and are not in the A section in corresponding measures 140 and 144. They follow the words, "La sirène passe et vous entraîne Sous l'azur du lac endormi!" [The siren passes and drags you under the blue of the sleeping lake!] and "L'air se voile; Adieu blanche étoile! Adieu ciel, adieu doux ami!" [The air mists over, goodbye white stars! Goodbye sky! Goodbye sweet friend!], which describe Ophélie's death and her final goodbyes to the world and to Hamlet.[593] In looking at their placement in the A', these B natural bell tones appear to represent her fate.

In the text of the A' section, she continues the myth of the Wilis, further relating the tale to her own story:

La sirène passe et vous entraîne	The Siren passes and drags you
Sous l'azur du lac endormi!	Under the blue of the sleeping lake!
L'air se voile;	The air becomes veiled;
Adieu blanche étoile!	Goodbye white star!
Adieu ciel, adieu doux ami!	Goodbye sky, goodbye sweet friend!
Heureuse l'épouse	Happy is the bride
Aux bras de l'époux!	In the arms of her husband!
Mon âme est jalouse	My soul is jealous
D'un bonheur si doux!	Of such a sweet happiness.
Sous les flots endormi,	Under the waves asleep,
Ah! pour toujours, adieu, mon doux ami!	Ah! for forever, goodbye my sweet

[593] ibid., 431.

friend![594]

This is where Ophélie really starts to foreshadow her own death. In this verse, she sings about being dragged under the waves and drowning, and she even says goodbye to the man and the world, which have rejected her. However, she is ambiguous about who is drowning whom in this situation; all she says is "The Siren passes and drags you Under the blue of the sleeping lake."[595] Again, it is important to note that she sings this for an onstage audience—the chorus—who do not know about what or whom she is singing. In fact, the use of the words "dragging *you* under" makes it seem as though Ophélie is threatening the chorus, saying this not just to but about them. As a director, if one chooses to have the chorus on stage with Ophélie in this moment, these lines may be a good place to direct the chorus to back away from her, as her lines seem hostile and possibly dangerous toward the chorus. The use of this almost violent song harkens back to nineteenth-century views on women with mental illness. These women, and especially unmarried women with hysteria, were believed to have violent, threatening behavior, which was often related to their abandonment, their inability to obtain husbands, and, thus, their sexuality.[596]

While this is a good tool for a director to use, as a singing actor portraying Ophélie, I would interpret this as if Hamlet were the Siren or the Wilis; he drags Ophélie to her doom by saying he loves her and then abandoning her, even though he knows what that does to a woman's reputation. I would also act as if I hear the B natural bell tones in the A', realize that it is my death knell, and truly say my goodbyes in the next line. This allows me to

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[594] ibid., 431.
[595] ibid., 431.
[596] There were reports that some spinsters would act violently toward their younger female relatives, especially if these relatives were getting married themselves.
Ripa, *Women and Madness*, 56.

empathize with and humanize her character; Ophélie is not dangerous here. She is extremely hurt by Hamlet's abandonment and is simply telling the chorus her story using the second person to describe her own situation. As a progression from feeling hurt about being lured into a trap and then abandoned, I would sing the next lines—which contain the only repeated words from the A section—with an angrier or more resentful tone in singing "Happy is the bride in the arms of her husband! My soul is jealous of such a sweet happiness!"[597] Again, instead of making her a simpering, vulnerable victim, by showing an angrier side, I give Ophélie's character some depth and contrasting emotional reactions to her situation.

Between the A and B sections, there are cadenzas in which Ophélie imitates laughter and crying via repeated notes, arpeggiated lines of melismas, and downward chromatic scales, all of which outline an F-sharp dominant chord to transition from E minor to B minor, the key of the B sections of the ballade. The B sections have no words and are completely sung on vocalises—either "la" or "ah"—and contain a seductive, syncopated melody. During these sections, Ophélie mostly sings in a low-middle or middle range, which contrasts directly with the very high tessituras of the cadenzas preceding them and the coda following them. Thomas also included repeated open fifths (B and F-sharp) in the viola and cello lines in measures 158-169 and 174-182 and again in measures 208-219 and 224-229, which sound open, unclear, and unfinished. He also employed strong rhythmic, dance-like patterns and two exotic-sounding instruments, the triangle and the tambourine in measures 157-167 and 207-217. Paired with the rhythmic gestures, the open fifths sound almost primitive or ancient in comparison to the remainder of the aria. The only thirds Thomas included are passing tones, mostly in Ophélie's vocal part, and both the minor third (D natural) and the major third

[597] Castel et al., *French Opera Libretti*, 431.

(D-sharp) are used, making the modality even more ambiguous. The open fifths and strong, dance-like rhythmic gestures both obscure major and minor, showing the muddiness of Ophélie's mind, and make the music sound more exotic, other, and sensual, especially because dancing and bodily movement are often associated with sexuality. The use of vocalises in lieu of words furthers the sensuality of the scene, as silence and mystery were tied to desirous feminine sexuality during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[598] In addition, this music sounds like she is joining the Wilis of the A sections; her seductive rhythms and simple harmony lure the men on stage with her to dance to her song, thus making her more of a threat to these men.

The use of triangle and tambourine, her diegetic music, the simplistic melody, the repeated fifths, and the strong, dance-like rhythmic patterns also other Ophélie during her mad scene. These musical tropes are stereotypically associated with non-Western music, often exoticized Roma, and especially with Roma women, like Bizet's Carmen.[599] As I have said before, these women are often overtly sexualized. The use of these tropes shows the audience that Ophélie is in some way different from what she should be, acting how no proper noblewoman should act, and that she is no longer like the rest of the characters or the audience. By including this music in Ophélie's mad scene, Thomas connects Ophélie's mental illness with otherness and with her sexuality as well as with violence and untrustworthiness, as these stereotypes were associated with Roma women. While this information is important to know in terms of understanding nineteenth-century views on

[598] Showalter, "Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism," 83; Floyd-Wilson, "Ophelia and Femininity in the Eighteenth Century: 'Dangerous Conjectures in Ill-Breeding Minds,'" 398.
[599] Locke, *Musical Exoticism*, 155, 161.

women's mental illness, overt sexuality does not necessarily fit in with twenty-first-century beliefs on mental illness, or at least, not with my overarching diagnosis. In some cases and with certain diagnoses, promiscuity and overt sexuality certainly are symptoms of the disorder. Additionally, stereotypes of people with mental illnesses (especially those with psychoses) continue to include violence in the twenty-first century.

As a scholar and singing actor, I believe the use of this sensuality, exoticism, and possibly violent nature dehumanizes and others Ophélie, which works against what I believe we need to portray women as in the operatic world. Thus, while I am informed about these associations, I choose to not include any of these symptoms as part of my overarching diagnosis of Ophélie, unless at the behest of a director. However, if a director asked me to portray these symptoms and if there were a chorus on stage with me, I would interact with them as much as I could during this scene to connect her to the other people on stage (which may help to keep her grounded and would make her seem less other). To include her sensuality without being obscene or objectifying the character, I may dance with or sing to the chorus, maybe choosing one or two to give flowers to, or possibly trying to dance with them. These actions allow me to portray the sensual and possibly threatening aspects of Ophélie's mental illness without disrespecting her mental illness or compromising my vision of a more human character with a mental illness based on a twenty-first-century understanding of these diseases.

However, I will use the otherness associated with exoticism in my interpretation of the role, as I believe this would help express certain parts of Ophélie's mental illness, albeit in a slightly different way. I will use the exoticized A sections of the ballade to portray how Ophélie feels isolated from society due to her rejection by Hamlet but also because of this

episode of psychosis. In doing so, I will first ask Balk's question (how would Ophélie respond to this feeling and situation) and then think about the magic *if* of Stanislavsky and Ostwald (what would I do if I were in this situation). In asking these questions, I will give myself an array of actions and emotions to choose from to help me select specific actions.

Twenty-First Century Symptoms

In the following sections, I analyze the text and score of Ophélie's mad scene to find evidence of symptoms within the text and music. From there, I will use the acting techniques I discussed earlier to explain how I would possibly play these symptoms while performing the role. Each of the sections have their own musical and textual symptoms. The most common ways Carré, Barbier, and Thomas included symptoms are: tonal ambiguity (representing her instability via the instability of tonality and key areas) in the accompanied recitative/arioso section and coda at the end of the ballade section; textual delusions and aural hallucinations in the accompanied recitative/arioso and ballade sections; orchestral aural hallucinations in the waltz section; and textual disordered speech found in the accompanied recitative/arioso section, the waltz section, and the coda at the end of the ballade section. E major also represents Ophélie's trauma response to Hamlet's rejection, and modal mixture, especially with an F-sharp-G-G-sharp motive, symbolizes Ophélie's mental illness and instability.

Table 1a: The Music of Ophélie's Mad Scene

Section of Piece	"A vos jeux, mes ami"	"Partagez-vous mes fleurs"	"Et maintenant… Pâle et blonde"	Coda
Type of music	Accompanied recitative Arioso	Waltz	Ballade	Extended cadenza
Measures	1-57	58-129	130-229	229-263
Sections within larger section			Recitative—130-136 A—130-152 Transitional Cadenza—153-156 B—157-181 Retransition—182-186 A'—187-202 Transitional Cadenza—203-206 B'—207-229	
Key areas	Very ambiguous throughout m. 1-9 E Major/minor m. 10-13 D-flat Major m. 14-20 B Major m. 21-35 E Major m. 36-54 F Major m. 55-57 transition to B-flat Major/minor	B-flat Major	**Intro/Recit:** ambiguous **A:** overall E minor m.145-149 G major **Transitional Cadenzas:** Transition to B minor through F-sharp Major cadenza **B:** m. 157-168 B minor m. 169-172 D Major m. 173-181 B Major/minor **A'**: overall E minor m. 195-199 G Major **Retransition:** trans. to E minor **B':** m. 207-218 B minor m. 219-222 D Major m. 223-228 B Major/minor	Unstable tonality m. 229-233 B Major m, 233 E Major m. 234 F-sharp Major m. 235-243 B Major m. 243 A-flat Major m. 244 A Major m. 245-248 transition to B Major m. 249-264 B Major
Musical aspects of note	Accent of D-flat major Cadenza directly from accompanied recitative	Back and forth between Ophélie and orchestra	**A & A' (the A sections):** Diegetic Words In A' only, flute and clarinet "fate" tones (measures 190 and 194) **B & B' (the B sections):** Vocalises Major versus minor mode Repeated open fifths in the orchestra Tambourine & triangle	Play between major and minor Back and forth between Ophélie and the orchestra

Tonal Centers and Form

The first section of the mad scene, "*À vos jeux, mes amis*" [At your games, my friends] is partly in accompanied recitative and partly in arioso form.[600] While recitatives change keys relatively often, they tend to move to closely related keys, even if they eventually need to reach distantly related keys for the next number, in order to maintain musical stability. However, in the accompanied recitative and arioso section, Thomas uses tonal ambiguity and frequent modulations, often between distantly related keys. In fact, it takes twenty measures to establish the tonality of the key signature (E major), and Ophélie does not remain in this key for long. At the beginning of the scene, the first tones the orchestra—specifically the flute and clarinet—plays are G natural, a note not even in the key signature, leading to F-sharp. The repeated descending half-steps blur the tonal center and could imply G major, E minor, or possibly C major or minor (emphasizing the fifth). After repeating this short motif three times, Thomas writes a G leading to an arrival point on G-sharp, indicating that G is, in fact, not in the tonality of this piece. The motif of a struggle between F-sharp, G, and G-sharp—and between major and minor modes—also appears multiple times later in the mad scene, especially at the end of the coda. I will further discuss this motive later in this chapter.

In measure 10, Thomas uses the G-sharp (enharmonic of A-flat) to modulate to D-flat major, a distantly related key to the as of yet unfulfilled tonic of E major. With the introduction of D-flat major, the ear immediately loses any sense of E major or any of the earlier possible keys from the descending G-F-sharp motive. Thomas used ambiguous tonality to represent Ophélie's psychosis; Ophélie is so distressed and separated from reality

[600] Castel et al., *French Opera Libretti*, 429.

at this moment that she cannot establish her own key, leaving the audience to wander tonally with her mind. The transition to D-flat major is also where Ophélie's accompanied recitative begins with her saying, "At your games, my friends, permit me please to take part."[601] Interestingly, this D-flat major is found earlier in the opera; it is the key Ophélie first sings in during her duet with Hamlet in Act 1, "*Doute de la lumière*" [Doubt the light].[602] In this duet, Hamlet expresses his love for Ophélie, using lines from Hamlet's letter to Ophelia in the Shakespearean play. In using D-flat major as Ophélie's entrance key in her mad scene, Thomas reflects upon the happiness Ophélie had when Hamlet professed his love to her. Because D-flat major represents Ophélie and Hamlet's blissful love, Thomas's use of this key represents the beginning of Ophélie's delusion that she is married to Hamlet (her fantasy husband).

In measure 12, Thomas uses the A-flat as a pivot note, writing it as the enharmonic G-sharp in the clarinet, and leading back into an E major/B major section analogous to the beginning. The piece remains in B major for Ophélie's next line, and then finally transitions to a definitive E major in measure 20 where she remains until measure 35. Ophélie's next line in her recitative is "Mais vous, pourquoi vous parler bas? Ne me reconnaissez-vous pas? Hamlet est mon époux et je suis Ophélie." [But you, why do you speak softly? Do you not recognize me? Hamlet is my husband, and I am Ophélie].[603] When Ophélie sings her name in measures 35-36, she modulates up a half step to F major, using B natural (the fifth of E major) as a pivot note (acting as the raised fourth of F major and emphasizing the fifth of the new key). Ophélie does not modulate until she says something true and real; while claiming

[601] ibid., 429.
[602] ibid., 377.
[603] ibid., 429.

that Hamlet is her husband, she remains in the key of E major—the elusive, unstable key of her mental illness. Additionally, in choosing to change the key on her name instead of when talking about Hamlet, Thomas paints Ophélie as the conventional nineteenth-century madwoman. Her trauma affected her connection to reality and her mental stability, but never her love for Hamlet; she remains faithful to him. Ophélie also sings in this key earlier at the end of her Act 2 air, after Hamlet ignores her on stage, and at the end of her suicide scene, when she sings Hamlet's melody from their Act 1 love duet; the use of E major in these parts of her role show the connection between her psychoses and the trauma of Hamlet's rejection.

The ballade is much more tonally stable than the accompanied recitative/arioso section, but the coda at the end of the ballade returns to the tonal instability of that first section. Overall, the coda is in B major. It modulates to E major in measure 233, to F-sharp major in measure 234, then back to B major in 235. In measures 243-244, Thomas modulates downward by thirds in an outline of an E major chord—an arpeggiation of the key of Ophélie's trauma due to Hamlet's abandonment. In measure 243, Ophélie modulates from B major to A-flat major (enharmonic to G-sharp major), and in measure 244 from A-flat major to E major, where it remains until measure 249, at which point Thomas modulates back to B major. Thus, like the accompanied recitative/arioso section, the coda utilizes modulations in quick successions to show the quick changes of emotion in Ophélie's brain. However, whereas the first section was more about tonal ambiguity—which showed Ophélie as confused and delusional, creating the fantasy husband of Hamlet—the coda sets a key, then modulates very quickly, showing that Ophélie is not having the delusions of Hamlet as her husband but is instead displaying disorganized speech. She begins in a key, then moves to the next, then the next without finishing the thought or truly establishing the tonal center. As I

will discuss in the textual analysis, her text also fits this symptom as well, as she often sings phrases, only to start a vocalise, and then move onto another, mostly unrelated phrase.

The Text and the Music

At the beginning of the mad scene, the tenors (associated with male-sounding voices) of the onstage chorus sings, "Mais, qui est cette belle Et jeune damoiselle Qui vers nous accourt?" [But, who is that beautiful and young lady who comes toward us?] Ophélie approaches them and sings her accompanied recitative: "À vos jeux, mes amis, permettez-moi de grâce De prendre part" [At your games, my friends, please permit me to take part].[604] By having the chorus first remark on Ophélie's beauty and youth—even before they know it is her and before she sings anything—Barbier, Carré, and Thomas construct the portrait of a nineteenth-century ideal mad woman. The chorus's emphasis on her youth and beauty is continued in her own line when she asks if they would "please permit" her to join in their games. Her emphasis on being allowed into their world but also, in particular, their games, shows her youthfulness, playfulness, and desire to fit in, especially after being abandoned by Hamlet. In other words, part of her trauma response is naïveté and child-like behavior (taking her back to a time before Hamlet's rejection). This also fits into nineteenth-century beliefs about unmarried women. In losing her only suitor, Ophélie loses all hope of being considered a person in her own right, a fully grown woman, and, therefore, would still be considered a child.[605] As a result, Barbier, Carré, and Thomas made Ophélie seem young, almost child-like at the beginning of her mad scene, so as to fit into this nineteenth-century stereotype. As a singing actor, the playful, almost absent naïveté is another possible symptom to play on stage, as it gives more depth to the character and her response to the trauma. This

[604] ibid, 429.
[605] Ripa, *Women and Madness*, 57–58.

youthfulness contrasts the aural hallucinations of the waltz, the sensuality and aural hallucinations in the ballade, and her anxiety and mania in the coda. By allowing her a wider range of emotions and emotional reactions within her mad scene, the singing actor makes Ophélie seem more human, believable, and realistic to the modern audience.

From here, Ophélie continues by telling the onstage chorus "Nul n'a suivi ma trace, J'ai quitté le palais aux premiers feux du jour," [No one followed my trail, I left the palace at the first light of day].[606] Then, "Des larmes de la nuit la terre était mouillée; Et l'alouette, avant l'aube évaillée, Planait dans l'air" [With the tears of the night (dew) the earth was wet; And the skylark, before dawn had awakened, was soaring in the air] and acts more as a comment about what she saw and felt on her journey from the castle to the town.[607] In this last line, Ophélie breaks nineteenth-century expectations of musical form by starting a line as a recitative and transitioning directly into an extended cadenza (measures 25-30). This cadenza, which occurs first on the word "l'air" [the air] and then just becomes a sung "ah," introduces multiple facets of Ophélie's illness. First, because the structure of arias was strict, *bel canto* composers—including Donizetti in his *Lucia di Lammermoor*—sometimes warped form to signify mental illness and instability during mad scenes, as it showed loss of control and an otherness compared to the rigid structure of the remainder of the musical numbers.[608] Thus, in singing a recitative that directly leads into a cadenza, Ophélie breaks the normal structure of her piece, which would tell the audience that she is in the middle of an episode of mental illness but also may signal to the onstage chorus that something is different or even not quite right about Ophélie in this moment.

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[606] Castel et al., *French Opera Libretti,* 429.
[607] ibid.
[608] Smart, "The Silencing of Lucia," 130.

There is also a change in the range in which she sings during the cadenza. From the beginning of the recitative/arioso section until the cadenza, Ophélie sings in a middle, almost speech-like range (F4 to E5). As the cadenza is preceded directly by the recitative, it begins in this *tessitura* but almost immediately swings into the singer's top register, beginning with a leap from E5 to B5. The alteration to her range and the use of this melismatic material exemplifies the excess I discussed earlier from Dunn's work; Ophélie has to sing from the bottom to the top of her range in this cadenza, again showing both her onstage and off-stage audiences that she is having an episode of mental illness. The leap from E5 to B5 is followed by a descending scale from B5 to A-sharp 4. She then has a tricky passage where she ascends by half step, then by a fifth, descends by step, then descends to an F-double-sharp, repeats this pattern, and then lands on a B4. The use of ascending lines followed by dips of descent repeatedly, especially where the singer ends lower than she began, sounds like the bird she describes was attempting to fly but kept falling. Next, she sings a scale up to an A5, which she repeats eight times in a syncopated rhythm and trills on the final one, imitating bird calls, and then descends in a chromatic scale to D-sharp 4, the lowest note of the mad scene so far. In ascending to the A5, remaining there, and chromatically falling lower than before, Thomas creates the image that the bird flies into the air, plateaus, only to tumble back down again. While these arpeggiated scales, syncopated and trilled A5s, and chromatic downward scales imitate birds, they also imitate more emotional human sounds; the syncopated A5s and trills sound almost like uncontrollable laughter (again, emphasizing her youth and playfulness in this part of her episode), and the downward chromatic scale could be laughter, sighing, or even crying. Thus, in hearing Ophélie describe the bird sonically, the singing actor can ascertain an instability in her mental state; just as the bird tries to rise but continues to fall,

even though flying is natural for it, Ophélie works to join society but, in her abandonment, feels she no longer has a place there and is, thus, made to feel like an outsider.

After the cadenza, the next phrase she sings addresses the male chorus again and is once again in a recitative-like style: "Mais vous, pourquoi vous parler bas? Ne me reconnaissez-vous pas? Hamlet est mon époux et je suis Ophélie," [But you, why do you speak quietly? Don't you recognize me? Hamlet is my husband, and I am Ophélie].[609] Again, there are a few symptoms—both nineteenth- and twenty-first century—in this section. The most obvious is the one I discussed in the acting section of this chapter; Ophélie has created a fantasy Hamlet-husband and is having delusions that she is married to him. Additionally, she asks the onstage chorus why they are whispering. However, between the end of her cadenza and the beginning of this line, the chorus does not sing anything. In fact, since their opening lines asking who was coming toward them, the chorus has not sung at all. It is possible for a stage director to have the chorus play this as feigning whispering to each other. A stronger choice would be to have the chorus just watch her, which would lead her onstage and off-stage audience to believe she is having aural hallucinations.[610] This option allows the singing actor to respond to the aural hallucination, thus showing the audience a believable symptom of her psychosis, which creates a more respectful representation of her mental illness. For example, in playing this symptom, I would act as though I heard something at the very end of

[609] Castel et al., *French Opera Libretti*, 429.

[610] Contemporary opera directors often cut the onstage chorus both visually and musically, thus leaving Ophélie alone on stage for the entirety of her mad scene. This directorial decision takes away the voyeurism of the chorus and the ties to the *bel canto* expectations of mad scenes. However, in having Ophélie address an unseen onstage audience (including the very beginning and the part where she asks why people are whispering about her), the lack of onstage chorus adds visual (or possibly other aural) hallucinations to her symptoms. Claurier and Leiser, *Hamlet*. Langrée and Teste, *Thomas: Hamlet*. Plasson, Joel, and Large, *Hamlet*.

the cadenza, and I would look around and address the onstage chorus directly, as if they had to have said something or at least heard it, too. Having Ophélie talk to her onstage audience creates a reciprocal relationship between them and removes her audiences' ability to objectify her, which, in turn, humanizes her.

In terms of vocalise versus words, the coda is most like the waltz section in that it contains both. Even more similarly to the waltz, in the coda, Ophélie speaks in very short phrases amidst lines of the vocalises on "ah." Additionally, a majority of the section sits near the top of and even above the treble staff, which both increases the difficulty for the singer and points toward screaming in lieu of speech, showing that Ophélie is in a particularly difficult episode where she cannot ignore her situation or the hallucinations her mind has created for her. As I had mentioned earlier, brief psychotic disorder requires at least one of three symptoms: delusions, hallucinations, and disorganized speech. The coda is where Ophélie mostly demonstrates the third. In measures 229-239, Ophélie goes from vocalizing, to saying "Ah! cher époux" [dear husband] back to "ah," then to "cher amant" [dear lover] back to vocalizing for two measures, followed by the words "doux aveu!" [sweet pledge]—harkening back to the promise of love Hamlet gave her in the duet. Then, she returns to vocalizing, then "Tendre serment Bonheur suprême!" [tender vow supreme happiness!].[611] While these phrases make some sense when looked at together in that all concern Hamlet and the love they once had, they are still incomplete fragments with no more than two words per line. Even the last and longest phrase with four words acts more like two smaller phrases thrown together. This pattern continues with short phrases of vocalizes interspersed with short phrases of text, such as in measures 239-253: "cruel je t'aime!" [cruel man I love you!],

[611] Castel et al., *French Opera Libretti*, 431.

which is followed by almost nine full bars of wordless melismas, then "cruel, tu vois mes pleurs!" [cruel one, you see my tears], and the last two phrases surrounding the cadenza leading up to Ophélie's high E, "Pour toi je meurs!" [For you I die!] in measures 255-256 and her last words in the mad scene "I die" in measures 259-260.[612] Again, each of these phrases clearly is an attempt at expressing how she feels, but all she can manage are these two- to four-word phrases, which do not make as much sense by themselves. Pairing this disorganized speech with the long breaks on "ah" and the high *tessitura*, a singing actor can create a very telling version of these symptoms in this part of Ophélie's episode. The desperation to be able to say what she needs to say and the inability to do so comprehensibly all lead to the climax of the piece and her ultimate decision that death is her only solution.

[612] ibid., 432.

The Orchestra as a Character

Table 1b: The Orchestra of the Mad Scene

Section of Piece	Accomp Recit & Arioso	Waltz	Ballade	Coda
Orchestration	Flute Oboe English horn Clarinet Bassoon Horns Violins 1 & 2 Violas Cellos Double basses Male & female chorus.	Flute Clarinet Bassoon Horn Triangle Violins 1 & 2 Violas Cellos Double basses	**Intro/recit:** Flute Oboe Clarinet Bassoon Violins 1 & 2 Violas Cellos **A & A':** Flute Clarinet Violins 1 & 2 Violas Cellos Double Basses **Transition:** Mostly a cappella Clarinet Bassoons Horns Violins 1 & 2 Violas Cellos Double Basses **B & B':** Flute Oboe Triangle Tambourine Clarinet Bassoon Horns Violins 1 & 2 Violas Cellos Double Basses **Retransition:** Flute Oboe Clarinet Violins 1 & 2 Viola Cellos Double Basses	Flutes 1 & 2 Oboe English horn Clarinet Bassoons Horns Trombone 1, 2, & 3 Timpani Violins 1 & 2 Violas Cellos Double basses

The waltz section is the first time where the orchestra plays a leading role in portraying Ophélie's mental illness. First and foremost, it is important to note that this section is written in B-flat major, where it remains for its entirety, with no modal mixture or modulations. The orchestra, active in the beginning with its quick triplet patterns that can be found later in Ophélie's line, represents Ophélie's mind, spinning out of control and often not in conjunction with her actions, representing her aural hallucinations. In particular, the flute, clarinet, and high strings take on this role of her hallucinations—a portion of Ophélie's mind that Thomas composed into the orchestra so that the audience can hear what she hears. On the other side, Ophélie's sung lines are her actions. Sometimes, such as in measures 80-94, her actions do not match her reeling mind but instead accompany it melodically. In these moments, the flute, violins, and violas play the quick, bouncy melody, while Ophélie attempts to sing a more legato counter-melody over the sound of the orchestra. Her actions seem clearer when singing these counter-melodies, since she sings on words. For example, in measures 80-94, she offers flowers to individuals in the onstage chorus: "*Partagez-vous mes fleur*! *A toi cette humble branche De romerin sauvage*!" [Let me share my flowers with you! To you this humble sprig of wild rosemary!].[613] However, in measures 97-105, she takes over the part of the orchestra, singing vocalises that mimic what the flute and first violins have been playing. In this moment, her actions match her reeling mind; she no longer takes part in the reality that she fought to remain a part of but instead gives into the aural hallucinations of her mind.

At several places in the scene, the first violins join her in her hallucinatory melismas. Even in these moments where her mind and actions seem to unite, her mind (the violins)

[613] ibid., 430.

keeps fading out and does not finish the phrases, while her actions (Ophélie's singing line) continue. Sometimes—such as in measures 104 and again in measures 105-106—her actions (her sung line) stop, while her mind (now, both the violins and the flute) keep racing. In other words, she is torn between her hallucinations and her reality, and she fights against the distracting hallucinations to maintain her presence in reality. In fact, in measures 106-111, Ophélie battles the aural hallucination enough to sing words on a somewhat legato line again. Here, she addresses another villager, saying, "à toi, cette pervenche" [to you, this periwinkle] and hands her the flower.[614] In measure 113, she succumbs to her hallucinations and rejoins the flutes, violins, and from 113-114 the clarinet once again, in their mind-reeling melody on a vocalise.

However, the flutes and violins stop playing in the first beat of measure 116, while Ophélie continues the melody through measure 121. Again, her mind appears to stop reeling, and she is just continuing in the hallucination here, echoing and adding to what she has heard. In measure 121, she stops singing, only for the flute, clarinet, and first violins to take over and continue the melody for her through measure 125 (for the flute and clarinet), and 126 for the violins. The flute and clarinet play a continuation of the violin's melody from 126-127, which lead into Ophélie's final rendition of the melody. From measures 122-126, she sings a trilled F natural, again accompanying the orchestra. Finally, in the pick-up to measure 127-129 (the end), Ophélie takes back the melody, and the entire orchestra accompanies her with short notes on beats one of bars 127 and 128 and then join her in the last B-flat major chord in measure 129. Thus, the end of the waltz finishes with Ophélie's actions echoing her hallucinations.

[614] ibid., 430.

What a singing actor can hear in this section is the separation between Ophélie's thoughts and mind (represented by the orchestra) and her actions as seen by the outside world (what she actually sings). Sometimes she is able to remain in reality; when she sings to the villagers who are on stage with her, she is clearly speaking to a particular person and is trying to interact with them, as she does earlier in the recitative section. However, for a majority of this section, she cannot remain in her reality because of the distracting and loud aural hallucinations her mind has produced. Thomas's inclusion of these aural hallucinations indicate that she is in a psychotic episode. In giving her some text thrown haphazardly throughout the waltz, Thomas also includes another symptom of her brief psychotic disorder—disorganized speech. Ophélie tries to sing full, legato sentences, but she often needs to pause and only succeeds at creating one full sentence (albeit, broken apart over different measures) and one phrase throughout the entire section. As a singing actor, I would emphasize both of these symptoms as part of my mad scene to create a more believable diagnosis of brief psychotic disorder. For the aural hallucinations, I would act as though I hear something and would try to sing over it when singing to the chorus on stage. Additionally, when singing this text, I would also try to make it sound effortful by not trying to make it a beautiful, legato line (which is expected in *bel canto*-like styles of singing) and by working to create choppier diction than would be expected in French. Finally, when singing the parts where I echo my aural hallucinations and the orchestra, I may start by singing it as though I were humming it to myself, trying to quiet down the hallucinations like one does with a song that is stuck in one's head. Then, as the orchestra becomes more insistent, I would sing it louder, trying to drown it out. Again, I use these symptoms and

actions portraying the symptoms to work on humanizing Ophélie during this episode of her mental illness.

The orchestra also plays a large role in the ballade section, especially in the B sections and coda. Unlike the waltz section, Ophélie's actions (singing) do not always echo her mind (represented by the orchestra). However, in measures 163-164 and 213-214, the oboe plays Ophélie's melody, and she joins and takes over this melody in measure 165 and 215. In the coda, there are several instances where the orchestra (her mind) precedes and leads Ophélie into her next action. For example, in measures 230 and 232, the flute and clarinet play the melodic line before Ophélie reenters with words, "Ah, cher époux," [Ah, dear husband] and "Ah, cher amant" [Ah, dear lover] in measures 231 and 233.[615] In taking over the line the orchestra began, Ophélie puts to action the line her mind begins. In measure 242, the flute, clarinet, and first violins, and in measure 256, most of the orchestra, including the first flute, oboe, English horn, clarinet, bassoon, horns, timpani, first and second violins, viola, cellos, and double basses, and later in the measure, the cornets and trombones guide her into her final cadenza. Additionally, for short instances, such as in measures 241 and 251-255, the orchestra doubles the voice, allowing for her mind to match her actions in these brief moments. In measure 241, the first flute and first violins double Ophélie's line, and in measures 251-255, the first flute, clarinet, and first violins double her entire line, and the oboe joins in for the last measure from 254-255.

Thomas uses the flute, one of the highest instruments, as a representation of her mind and hallucinations, the voice she seems to follow the most. As I discussed in Chapter 1, the flute is a very common obbligato instrument *bel canto* composers used to represent a

[615] ibid., 431.

soprano's mind during her mad scene. Because this instrument is so high in register (especially how it is written in these instances), the flute represents the screaming hallucinations of her mind, the part that, at this point, she simply cannot ignore anymore, the voice in her head to which she responds through her singing action. As a result, she screams—singing in the highest part of her register— to drown out the noise of her brain as part of her actions in the cadenzas and coda. Thomas adds instruments to the flute to intensify the loudness and disruptiveness of her mind; first it is just the clarinet or the first violins. Then, it is both. Then, after she sings the words, "For you I die," the entire orchestra enters, showing how loud her hallucinations are at this point.[616] Her mind then leads her to her last cadenza, and then to her last statement, "I die," where she finally makes the decision that suicide is her only option.[617] It is particularly important to respect and humanize Ophélie during this part of the scene, as it is one of the more dramatic or hysteria-like moments. The use of the extremely high singing and the words "I die for you" create a picture of a typical nineteenth-century woman who is generally hysterical but remains completely devoted to her lover, which is the type of acting and portrayal we want to avoid. Therefore, in acting this part, I would listen to the orchestral part as Ophélie, hear it getting louder and more insistent as more instruments join the flute. I would then energize my own singing to match and join the orchestra. In making this part of my aural hallucinations, Ophélie becomes less of an idealistic hysterical victim and more of a woman dealing with the trauma of abandonment and psychoses.

[616] ibid., 432.
[617] ibid.

The Ballade Section and the F-sharp, G, G-sharp Motive

The A sections of the ballade include several recurrences of the F-sharp-G motive (usually with the G as an escape tone and, this time, without the G-sharp). During the A sections, Ophélie sings to the onstage chorus, meaning she is somewhat aware of her surroundings and is able to interact with others on stage, unlike when she has her hallucinations, such as in the waltz section and coda. However, as she does in the accompanied recitative/arioso section, she still has her delusions—this time about her own abandonment, death, and joining the mythical world of the Wilis. As a result, these repeated F-sharp-G mini-motives represent her state of delusion but also her lucidity and her connection with the world around her, which appear to be quite fleeting. On the other hand, the F-sharp-G-sharp represents her collapsed mental state (her madness)—her hallucinations, her inability to connect to and spurning of the outside world, as it betrayed and abandoned her—and her ultimate suicide. This also fits Thomas's use of this motive at the beginning of the piece, which begins with G-F-sharp, representing her ties to the world and to Hamlet; she enters the scene somewhat lucid, able to speak to those around her and tell them about her fantasy husband, Hamlet. However, eventually the orchestra plays the G-sharp, which then dominates the harmonic structure of the section, as part of the main melody (which focuses around G-sharp and A-flat), as part of the pivot note to get to and from D-flat major, and as the third of E major. In other words, Thomas's use of tonal ambiguity and modal mixture, especially in the use of G and G-sharp, symbolizes Ophélie's connection with the world around her. When she is more lucid, aware, and able to communicate with others, even if she sings about her delusions, she sings more minor melodies. On the other hand, when she loses her ability to communicate, either due to her hallucinations (in the waltz section) or through

her disordered speech (in the accompanied recitative/arioso cadenza, the waltz section, and in the coda), she sings melodies written in a major key.

In the coda, there is a resurgence of the F-sharp-G-G-sharp conundrum. Toward the beginning of the coda, Thomas has several semi-chromatic and chromatic lines including F-sharp, G, and G-sharp, which are less emphasized than other iterations of this motif earlier and later in the scene. Ophélie's lines contain this motif in measures 229-230 and 231-232 in some of the first vocalises she sings in the coda, then again in measure 239, then 248-249 in the semi-chromatic scales descending from B5 to F-sharp 5. Then, in measures 253-254, Thomas includes another F5 to F-sharp 5 to G5, followed by F-sharp 5-G5-G-sharp 5 in a chromatic scale up to the Neapolitan 6 C6 that is the climax of the piece. This section is doubled first by first flute, clarinet, and first violins, and then, for the second G natural followed by the G-sharp, by the oboe as well, thus emphasizing the G-G-sharp (major-minor conundrum) and chromatic motion up to Ophélie's high C. Finally, the first three notes of Ophélie's final chromatic cadenza leading up to her high E6 are F-sharp 4, G4, and G-sharp 4. Thomas also incorporates the motif in the orchestra, in the flute and first violin parts in a repeat of Ophélie's first vocalise in measures 239-240. Again, while these are not particularly emphasized in the context of the piece, their inclusion in this section shows Ophélie being pulled in different directions—toward society, the man who abandoned her, and the delusion of a happy life with him or toward her liberation in her mental illness, her hallucinations, and away from Hamlet's world.

Regarding the more accentuated versions of this motif, in measures 250-251, there is a clear F-sharp into G-sharp in Ophélie's line, which is doubled by the first flute, the clarinet, and the first violins. In this iteration, the F-sharp acts like a long dissonance, lasting a full

bar, leading into the consonance of G-sharp, almost like the G-sharp (the major mode, her episode of mental illness) is a relief from her struggle. Later, right after the fully orchestrated, climactic cadenza leading to her high C, Ophélie sings the words, "Pour toi je meurs," [For you I die] unaccompanied by orchestra on the notes G4 repeated three times and then F-sharp 4.[618] Not only are these notes emphasized by the fact that they are a cappella after a majority of the coda was accompanied by the entire orchestra, but they are also distinguished in their register as well. This version of the motive is more than an octave lower than the note she just sang and lies about an octave below the *tessitura* of the coda. This line in particular emphasizes Ophélie's dedication to Hamlet but also the connection she has with him; she sings "For you I die" on the minor second—the mode that represents her tie to Hamlet's world, her delusion that she can be with him, and his abandonment of her. In vowing to die for him on these notes, Ophélie ties her choice of suicide to the delusion because it will somehow get his attention, will allow her to be a part of his world, will fulfill her desire to be with him, and will keep her with him.

However, the last notes she sings before again declaring "Je meurs!" [I die], she first sings F-sharp 5 to G5, followed by a rest, then F-sharp 5 to G-sharp 5.[619] For most of this section, there is a great emphasis on the distinction between G and G-sharp as the minor and major modes, similar to the beginning of the accompanied recitative/arioso section. While in the first section, the motive is often seen in the orchestra, in the coda, Ophélie sings most of the passages including the modal mixture, thus making these parts of her actions and not just part of her mind or subconscious. Particularly at the end, Ophélie first sings the F-sharp-G,

[618] ibid., 432.
[619] ibid.

then pause, then chooses the F-sharp-G-sharp instead. In choosing the major mode, Ophélie chooses her hallucinations over her delusion. While she still chooses death, she decides to join the Wilis, to fall into her hallucinations and her mental illness; instead of fighting to remain with Hamlet in his world, she chooses the world of her mind's creation. This is further emphasized by the fact that the last words she says both before and after her highest cadenza are "For you I die," and "I die."[620] She finds it easier to bear the hallucinations of her mind and death than it would be to bear the realities of Hamlet's rejection, an idea that is, unfortunately, continued in her suicide scene.

This part is where it is particularly important to understand the history of nineteenth-century beliefs on women's mental illness. As I have discussed earlier in this chapter, we in the twenty-first century know that break-ups can be devastating. However, twenty-first century women can have jobs. We can have economic independence from men and, thus, are not dependent on the men in our lives for our survival. Additionally, most of us would not lose the possibility of becoming a full person, of being considered an adult, without a proper marriage. On the other hand, the nineteenth-century Ophélie spends the entire opera anxious that Hamlet will leave her, not just because she loves him but because without him, she has nothing for herself. She can make nothing of herself without a husband. If she becomes a spinster and not a nun, it is likely that her family will not help her survive, nor even the Catholic church. Thus, it is imperative that a singing actor know how unmarried women—especially those without financial means—were treated in the nineteenth century and how a young woman would feel when she was rejected and abandoned by her only suitor. The trauma caused by Hamlet's abandonment leads to a legitimate feeling that her only option not

[620] ibid.

to live in shame, in poverty, and without her identity as an individual is her psychosis and her eventual death. A singing actor must take this into consideration when singing the coda section, as first the desperation of finding a solution and then the determination to escape at the end will create a stronger, more believable character for the audience.

The Suicide Scene

Table 2a: Breakdown of Ophélie's Suicide Scene

Section of Piece	Repeat of Ballade	Repeat of Duet
Measure numbers	1-36	37-67 (end)
Key areas	Tonally ambiguous at the beginning. Measures 2-8 feels like C Major or E minor Measures 9-11 transition to E minor Measures 12-22 E minor Measure 23 transition to G major Measures 24-29 G major Measures 30-31 transition back to E minor Measures 32-34 E minor Measures 35-36 transition to next section (in E Major)	E Major
Orchestration	Instruments of note: Flute solo First harp Trumpet in E Other instruments included: Clarinet in A solo Horn in E 2 total harps	Instruments of note: Horn in E 2 Harps Flute Clarinet in A Other instruments included: Trumpet in E Flute Oboe Clarinet Bassoons Horns in B Cornet à piston in A 2 Trombones Timbales Violins Violas Cellos Double basses SATB choir acts as part of the orchestra

Table 2b: Breakdown of Ophélie's Suicide Scene

Section of Piece	Repeat of Ballade	Repeat of Duet
Measure numbers	1-36	37-67 (end)
Musical aspects of note	Flute represents Ophélie's mind Harp represents the water Trumpet and Horn in E represent Ophélie's representation of Hamlet Includes a four-part choir, which hums Ophélie's ballade melody a cappella from backstage in measures 12-33. They represent the Wilis calling Ophélie to join them and are part of Ophélie's aural hallucinations. In measure 33, Ophélie finally sings the melody of the ballade for the last line of this first section.	Measures 37-45 (where Ophélie enters), the Horn in E plays Hamlet's melody in "Doute de la lumière," his and Ophélie's love duet from Act 1. The horn here particularly represents Ophélie's hallucinations of Hamlet and Hamlet's voice. Flute and clarinet take turns in representing Ophélie's mind, particularly in measures 46-57. Harp represents the water In measures 50-54, the Horn in E plays snippets of what sounds like Hamlet's "Doute de la lumière melody," and Ophélie echoes them, but not completely. Ophélie stops singing, and the harp stops playing arpeggiations at the end of measure 62. This is also where the rest of the orchestra joins for the big finish of the scene, of the act, and of Ophélie. The end of singing and of the harp playing is a good place to have Ophélie's death (exit the stage, blackout, etc.).

Ophélie's suicide scene is comprised of two smaller sections. Unlike the mad scene, where Ophélie sings her own words, creates her own melodies, and tells her own stories, the sections of the suicide scene are based on two previously sung melodies that make up a majority of each part; the first part is from Ophélie's ballade. The second is from her Act 1 duet with Hamlet, "*Doute de la lumière*," [Doubt the light], but at the very end, she sings three short vocalises on "ah."[621] In ending her time on stage with Hamlet's words from the

[621] ibid., 377.

duet followed by these vocalises, Thomas effectively silences and beautifies the freedom Ophélie had obtained in her mad scene. In viewing this historically, the threat of Ophélie's madness had to be put down, like Shakespeare's Ophelia, Lucia, and other violent and threatening madwomen who came before her. As we know from Chapter 3, the Shakespearean Ophelia's death occurs offstage and is more ambiguous regarding accident versus suicide, and Gertrude tells the other characters that Ophelia drowned. In doing so, Gertrude beautifies Ophelia in her madness and death, takes away her presentness in the previous scenes, and ultimately forces her newfound freedom back into the confines of the patriarchy. Donizetti's Lucia also dies offstage soon after her mad scene. Instead of seeing her death, we only hear her death knell. Again, this takes away her presence, her voice, and, therefore, the threat of her madness, violence, and the liberation from patriarchal expectations she found in her rebellion and her madness.

Unlike both of these characters upon whom Carré, Barbier, and Thomas based their Ophélie, Ophélie's suicide is on stage, seemingly allowing her to have more of a say in her own ending. Ophélie's is a clear suicide, unlike the play, and she continues singing until she dies, again showing that she continues to have a will of her own. This is partially due to audience expectations regarding onstage deaths during the mid-nineteenth century, especially with rebellious women, as we see in operas such as Bizet's *Carmen*, and Massenet's and Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*, thus making it less about Ophélie maintaining her rebellion, her threat, and her liberation, and more about following operatic expectations for audiences.[622] If anything, the peacefulness of her death and the fact that she dies to protect her reputation from the humiliation of Hamlet's rejection crushes the rebellion of her madness from the

[622] Rutherford, "'Non Voglio Morir': Manon's Death," 43.

previous scene. Before her death at the very end of the suicide scene, Carré, Barbier, and Thomas use Hamlet's words as the last text she sings on stage. This final section of the suicide scene is reminiscent of Lucia's mad scene, where Lucia sings part of Edgardo's and her love duet in a cadenza. This again indicates that Thomas composed this ending both to silence Ophélie and to fulfill operatic expectations, using the most famous *bel canto*-style mad scene as a template. In taking away her ability to speak her own mind, Ophélie becomes a victim of her hysteria; she loses her sense of self and her feeling of belonging to society because Hamlet abandoned her. As an actress trying to perform this for a contemporary audience, I believe it would be very difficult for an audience to understand and empathize with Ophélie's nineteenth-century hysterical plight. To make this part understandable for our audience, a singing actor can choose a variety of methods. Below, I discuss how I would perform this scene—to make it a continuation of the episode of her mental illness comprised in the mad scene.

Between the larger mad scene and the following suicide by drowning, Thomas composed a short ballet *divertissement*, which both fulfilled expectations of Opéra audiences and was also possibly used to change scenery. However, in most productions I have seen, this and the larger entr'acte ballet *divertissement* from before the mad scene have been cut. Ophélie's suicide scene is a very brief yet powerful piece of music, which concludes Act 4. It is slow and quiet, making it very difficult to sing, especially right after the excitement of the mad scene and even more so without the *divertissement* to give the singing actor a break. The first part of the suicide scene begins with tonal ambiguity; while E minor becomes the clear tonic later, the scene opens with arpeggiations of a C major chord. First, a trumpet and horn

play C naturals, followed by two harps playing arpeggiations of C major, and then a flute playing thirty-second notes in a descending third of G6 and E6 (see Figure 1).

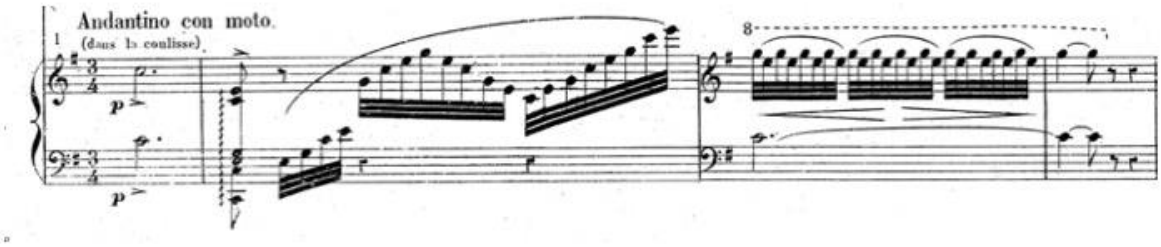

Figure 1 measures 1-4 from the vocal score of Ophélie's Suicide Scene; measure 3 includes the descending thirds of the flute

Like in the mad scene, the use of tonal ambiguity shows the audience that Ophélie remains mentally unstable. To add to this volatility, these four instruments, which comprise a majority of the orchestration of the first part of the suicide scene (as can be seen in Table 2a above), symbolize three facets of Ophélie's mental instability. The trumpet and horn represent Ophélie's aural hallucinations of Hamlet and the love they once shared. The harp denotes the water in which Ophélie will drown herself at the end of this scene, and the flute (as before) represents Ophélie's mind and mental instability. While the harps play their flowing arpeggiations, the flute plays the more intriguing and chromatic scalar patterns, which are similar to what Ophélie sings in her previous mad scene. These three instruments—and particularly the harp and flute—are the primary ones Thomas uses throughout this scene in lieu of the typical string instruments, and they help set the eerie tone of this scene.

To complete Ophélie's accompaniment, Thomas includes a four-part off-stage choir. While they never sing a word, their hummed song represents the Wilis who draw Ophélie to her death, beckoning her to join them. The tenors enter in measure 3, singing a C, only to be joined by the altos in measure 6. In measure 12, their part becomes more significant, partially

because this is where E minor becomes the clear, established key. More importantly still, from measures 12 through 15, the chorus begins humming an a cappella, choral version of the melody from Ophélie's ballade ("*Pâle et blonde*"), as seen in Figure 2.

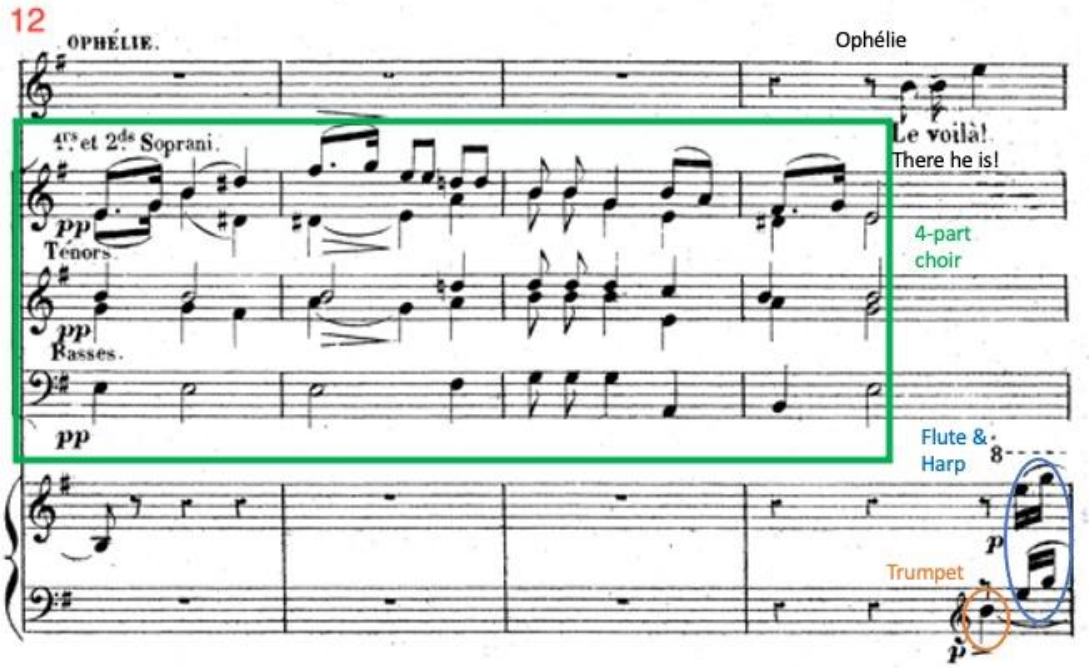

Figure 2 measures 12-15, featuring the four-part backstage choir singing Ophélie's ballade melody, Ophélie's first line, the trumpet B natural, and the re-entrance of the flute and harp.

This melody, which Ophélie acknowledges hearing, acts both as Ophélie's aural hallucination and as the Wilis from her ballade summoning her to join them via her death. When they finish the first line of her old melody, Ophélie sings "*Le voilà*!" [There he is!] on a B4 ascending to an E5, showing that she heard the chorus and believes it is Hamlet.[623] Right after Ophélie sings, the trumpet plays a B4, followed by the re-entrance of the flute and clarinet and then the harp (see Figure 2). To portray this aural hallucination, I would make sure to look up when I first hear the chorus and look around, as though searching for the source of the sound; in not being able to see the source of the voice, this choice shows the

[623] Castel et al., *French Opera Libretti*, 432.

audience that what Ophélie hears is not real. For her line, "*Le voilà*," I would turn my focus outward, toward something far away, but would attempt to keep my gaze unfocused and my expression more blank.

From here, the chorus continues with the second line of her ballade melody, and Ophélie outright says "*Je crois l'entendre*!" [I believe I hear him!] showing that she thinks her aural hallucination of the Wilis are, in fact, Hamlet beckoning her to him.[624] She sings this line on E5 descending to B4 again on the last note of the phrase (see Figure 3).

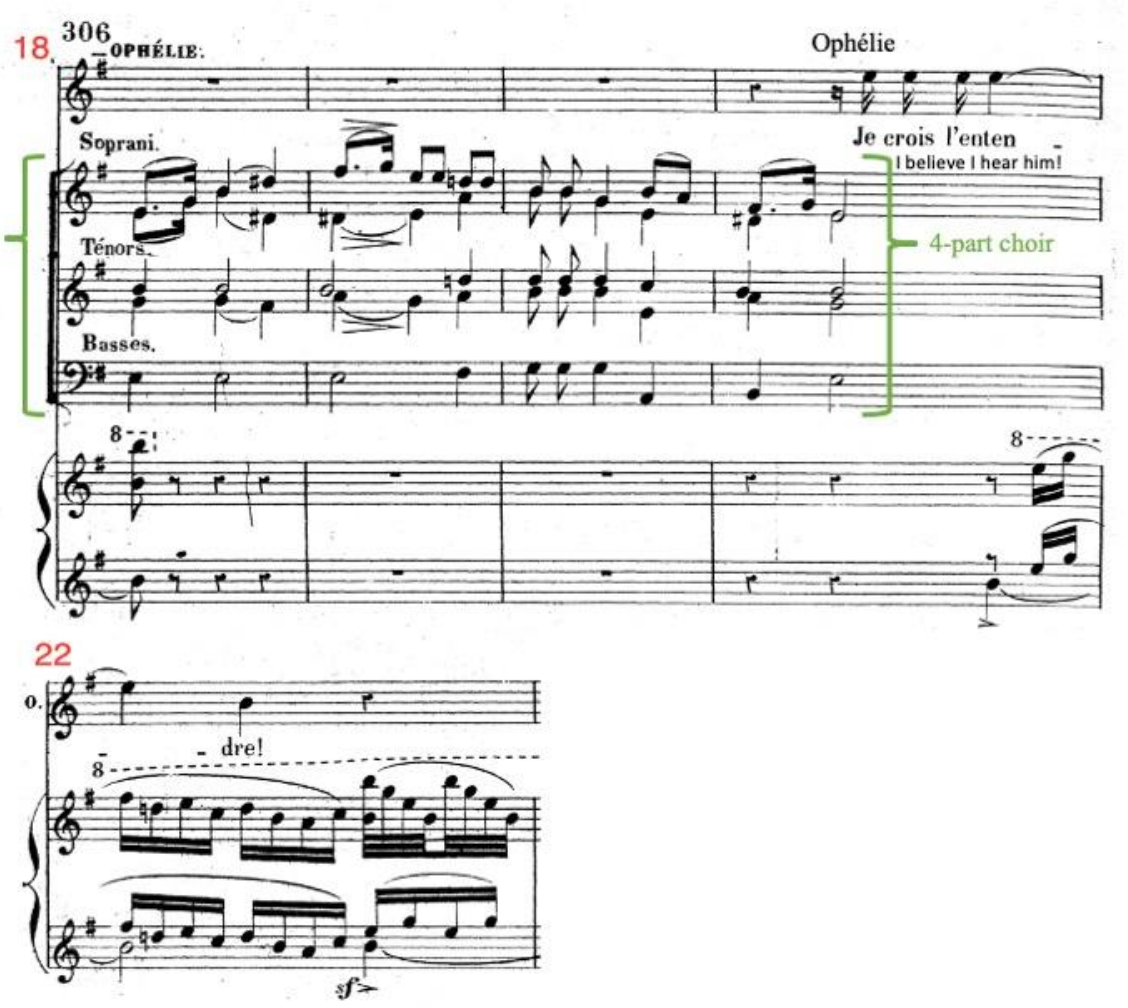

Figure 3 measures 18-22, including the choir singing part of Ophélie's ballade melody and Ophélie's second line

[624] ibid.

In these first two lines, Ophélie outlines the fifth and tonal center of the E minor but avoids the third, leaving her major-minor complex ambiguous while she sings. This represents the instability of her mind. As before, the trumpet, flute, clarinet, and harp play, which is followed by the choir humming the third line from the ballade, which modulates from E minor to G major. Ophélie then sings "*Pour le punir de s'être fait attendre*." [In order to punish him for having made me wait] on the notes D5 ascending to G5 on the word "*punir*" [punish], followed by G4 and B4, echoing the tonal center of what the offstage chorus sings. However, she never finishes this sentence.[625] In other words, as in the mad scene, Ophélie presents with the symptom of disordered speech, thus further emphasizing the continuation of the episode of her mental illness. To portray this symptom, I would include a way to seem like I drift off after saying this line—possibly by slowly looking to the side, as though interrupted.

Finally, after the offstage chorus sings the next line of her ballade melody, Ophélie sings "*Blanches Willis, nymphes des eaux,*" [White Wilis, nymphs of the water] on the note D-sharp 5, then moves to F-sharp 5 on the final syllable of "Wilis," then descends to B4 for the remainder of the line, this time outlining a B major chord, the dominant of E minor, as seen in Figure 4.[626] By outlining the B major chord instead of echoing the key of the Wilis, Ophélie sets up the modulation back to E minor; she also creates an authentic cadence in her music, representing her conviction that her only option is to take her own life.

[625] ibid.
[626] ibid.

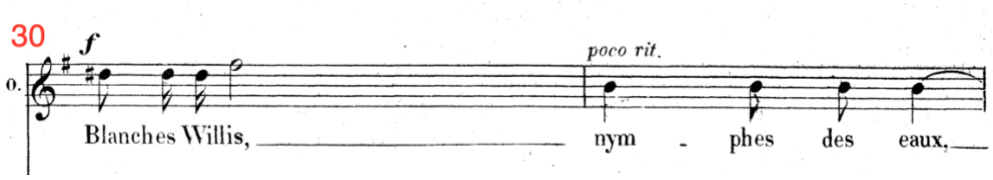

Figure 4 measures 30-31, featuring Ophélie's line, which outlines B major. Translation: White Wilis, nymphs of the water.

The chorus then begins the last melody of Ophélie's ballade. However, unlike earlier, when Ophélie only sings arpeggiations, her final line in this section, "*Ah! Cachez-moi parmi vos roseaux!*" [Ah! Hide me amongst your reeds!], is different. In it, she both takes back and concludes her ballade melody, and addresses the Wilis directly (see Figure 5).[627]

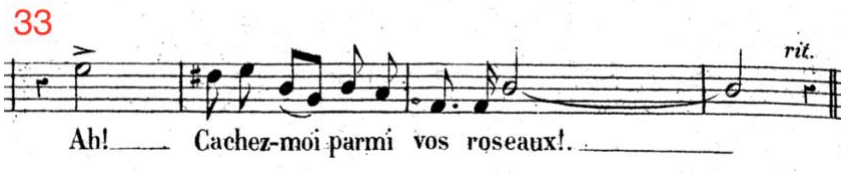

Figure 5 measures 33-36, featuring Ophélie's last line in the first section of the suicide scene. Here, she takes her melody back from the Wilis. Translation: Ah! Hide me amongst your reeds!

In other words, it is here that Ophélie realizes that the offstage chorus are the Wilis, beckoning her to join them in her death before marriage. In taking their melody, she chooses to die and become a part of their world. However, because the melody is not originally sung by the Wilis but by Ophélie herself in her mad scene, Thomas makes two things clear; first, this is a hallucination. Second, he is fulfilling the French expectation surrounding the ballade; what she sang about in her mad scene will come to pass via her suicide and drowning. In acting this part, I would choose to focus more clearly because Ophélie has acknowledged her hallucination and has chosen to drown herself to join said hallucination. I would also make these lines sound hopeful; unlike her ballade melody, which ends with F-sharp4 G4 E4 (a

[627] ibid.

more perfect cadence), this last melody has two repeated F-sharp 4s followed by a B4, making the cadence less final, showing that she is not quite finished. Since Hamlet's abandonment, she desperately has wanted to be a part of something, to have some worth, but also to see and hear him profess his love for her again.

As an actress, I would "diagnose" Ophélie with brief psychotic disorder due to the symptoms of hallucinations, delusions, disorganized speech patterns, and the extreme excitement seen in her mad scene. As I have hinted at in my above analysis, despite its slower and softer music, this scene appears to have delusions (that she will join the Wilis), hallucinations (of the Wilis singing), and disordered speech, showing that it is a continuation of the previous episode. The aural hallucinations are apparent because of the a cappella offstage chorus, the fact that Ophélie says she hears Hamlet, and she blatantly addresses the Wilis. For this interpretation, I would sing this like an energized, excited whisper and would work to show myself hearing the different hallucinations. Creating a more energized, excited version of this scene also helps vocally, as soft singing is sometimes under-supported, thus making it flat in pitch and difficult to hear over the orchestra.

Before the "*Doute de la lumière*" [Doubt the light] part of the suicide scene begins, there is a small transition, consisting of a V7 chord followed by a trumpet playing a half note B natural, both of which act as pivots to the parallel major, E major, where the next section begins.[628] E major is both the ending key of Ophélie's second act air and the beginning key of her mad scene, thus continuing the key of her mental instability. In both of these sections, Ophélie's symptoms are about Hamlet, thus bringing us back to the key of the man who abandoned her and who caused all of her misery. The harp continues playing the thirty-

[628] Castel et al., 432.

second note arpeggios in this new key. However, as seen in Figure 6, in this section, the horn in E takes over the role of hallucination and plays Hamlet's melody from "*Doute de la lumière*."

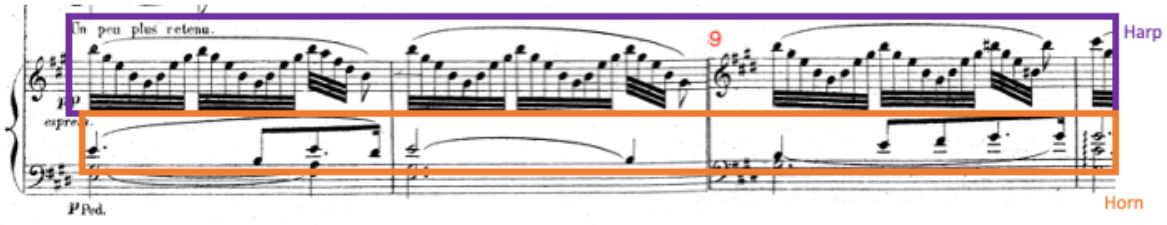

Figure 6 measures 37-40, featuring the horn (in orange) playing Hamlet's melody from his and Ophélie's Act 1 duet, "Doute de la lumière." The harp is playing arpeggiations of E flat major.

While this can be interpreted in many ways by various performers, I argue that this is Ophélie's final hallucination—the one for which she has been waiting. She hears Hamlet sing his love melody to her once again, as he did in Act 1. Because of the continuous harp arpeggiations, I believe Ophélie should be in the water at this point. During the first section, the harp has moments of rest, meaning that the idea of water and drowning may be forming in her mind, but I don't think she is quite there yet. However, the harp plays for a majority of the second section, showing that the water is closer, and she is ready to drown.

The horn, representing Hamlet often symbolizes the hunter and is associated with masculinity in western music.[629] As a result, having the horn play his duet melody makes it sound more like Hamlet's voice (a baritone) than, say, a clarinet or a flute, the latter of which we see representing Ophélie's voice and thoughts during both her mad and suicide scenes. In terms of acting this part, I would react to hearing this melody and Hamlet's "voice," as this would continue Ophélie's symptoms. I would focus on something far away, maybe above the audience, and I would act mutedly excited and hopeful about hearing Hamlet sing these lines

[629] Lippman, "SYMBOLISM IN MUSIC," 557.

to me again. From here, the scene continues with Ophélie adopting Hamlet's melody from the duet; she does not sing her own melody or the harmonies she sang in the duet. She sings his first line, "*Doute de la lumière*," [Doubt the light] and part of his second, "*Doute du soleil*" [Doubt the sun]—a line derived directly from the original Shakespeare.[630] However, she then skips part of the second line "*et du jour*" [and the daylight] as well as his third line "*Doute des cieux et de la terre*," [doubt the heavens and the earth].[631] Then, she changes his last line slightly, as the last words she sings are "*Mais jamais de mon amour, jamais,*" while he sings "*mais ne doute jamais de mon amour!*" The meanings of these lines are practically the same—"but never doubt my love" versus "but do not ever doubt my love."[632] However, she also changes the melody of this last line slightly (see Figure 7).

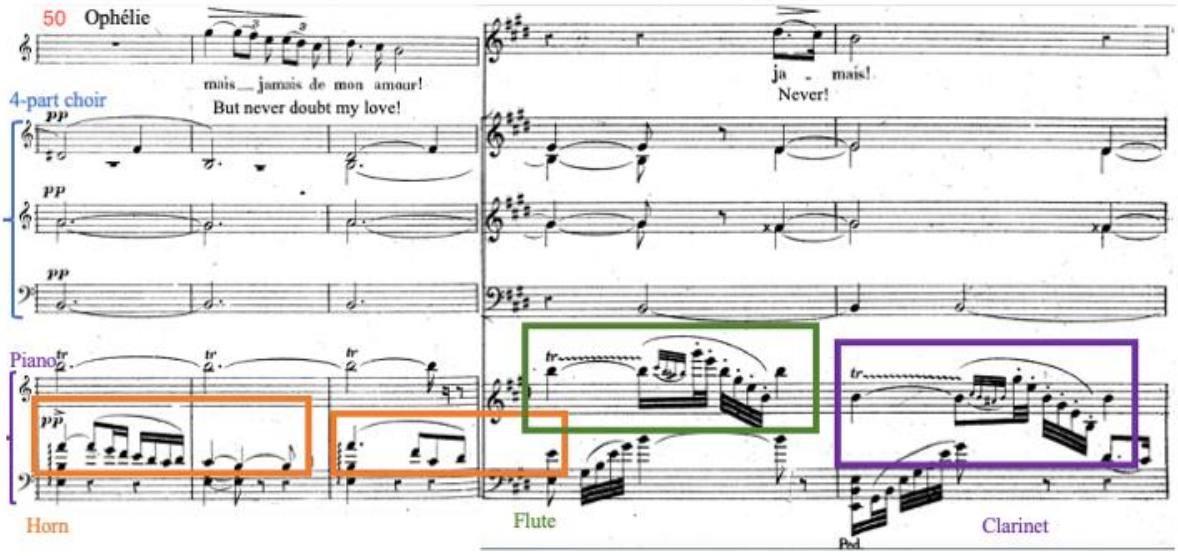

Figure 7 measures 50-54, featuring the horn playing Hamlet's melody, which Ophélie echoes and responds to in her last lines of text, and the flute and clarinet figures representing Ophélie's mind.

These modifications to his melody and text show two aspects of Ophélie's character; first, it again displays her mental instability in that she does not completely remember what he said

[630] Castel et al., *French Opera Libretti*, 432.
[631] ibid., 377.
[632] ibid., 377, 432.

to her, pointing to slightly disordered speech and memory patterns. Additionally, in changing the last line, Ophélie brings the emphasis from "but" and "love" to "never," emphasizing the unending nature of her love for Hamlet.

Underneath Ophélie's singing are a flute trilling on a B5 and a harp and clarinet playing arpeggios of E major. However, before "*mais jamais de mon amour*" and again before her last "*jamais*," the horn plays Hamlet's melody briefly, and she echoes and continues these lines, showing that she hears Hamlet's voice and then responds to it, as seen in Figure 7. As before, I would make sure to show that I, as Ophélie, hear these lines and would react to them before singing my next lines. After this, as pictured in Figure 7, the flute and clarinet play a series of trills and notes in succession, representing her mind's fleeting thoughts—the last ones she has before she drowns herself. In emphasizing the Shakespearean Hamlet text as the final words Ophélie sings, she recalls the lines Hamlet used to seduce her and to make her love him in both the play and the opera. In this way, she is doubly silenced and doubly gaslit, as Hamlet denies having said these words to her in the play and denies ever having loved her in the opera. Finally, the last notes she sings are three sets of two-note vocalises on "ah," the first A4 to F-sharp 5, then G-sharp 4 to G-sharp 5, which is followed by the flute playing a descending C-sharp 6 to G-sharp 5—the first two notes of the "*Doute de la lumière*" melody—her last hallucination of her happiness in love. Then, she sings a pianissimo B4 to B5, which is sustained for two measures. This last note is only accompanied by the harp, symbolizing the water taking her in as she dies. After she and the harp finish, the piece ends with the full orchestra entering to play arpeggiations of E major in a crescendo to the end of the act.

Ophélie's Music Before the Mad Scene

Once a singer has found the symptoms in the text and music of the mad and suicide scenes, it can be useful to go back earlier in the opera to see if there are what I will call mini episodes of her mental illness earlier in the opera. For example, in Bellini's *La sonnambula*, Amina has her main sleepwalking scene (a version of the mad scene), but earlier in the opera has an encounter with a character where he finds her sleepwalking. Additionally, in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Lucia's mad scene has clear evidence of visual hallucinations. In her first act aria, "Regnava nel silenzio," she discusses seeing the shade of a woman near the fountain where she meets Edgardo, thus showing another possible hallucination. In the case of Ophélie, her most common symptoms are aural hallucinations, delusions, and disorganized speech. In the example below from her first aria, I will show how a singer can find evidence of possible foreshadowing of these symptoms earlier in her music.

Air d'Ophélie

In this air, Ophélie reads from a novel; this novel is similar to the ballade of her Act 4 mad scene in that it foreshadows her madness and death. Two lines from the novel are particularly predictive—"*triste folie*," [sad madness"], foretelling her madness, and "*Adieu! mieux vaut mourir… hélas*!" [Farewell! better to die… alas!], foretelling her suicide.[633] As described in Chapter 2, nineteenth-century novelists often wrote about hysteria, sometimes learning directly from the physicians of the time, and some novelists even were physicians of the time.[634] Thus, readers would learn about hysteria from these novels in addition to

[633] Castel et al., 393.
[634] Mimran, "Introduction: Hysteria and the Salpêtrière of Jean-Martin Charcot: Nineteenth-Century Literary Diagnosis and Modern Medical Literariness."

physician's journals. In reading this novel as part of her air, Thomas, Carré, and Barbier create an Ophélie who is suggestable to the similarity between her story and that of the character's. After reading, Ophélie looks up only to find Hamlet trying to escape her by running quickly offstage. Ophélie then says, "Ah! ce livre a dit vrai!" [Ah! this book speaks true!] and launches into a chromatic upward vocalise leading into the next section of the aria, her first mini mad scene—the Allegro moderato.[635] While not fully indicative of disordered speech, the use of the chromatic scale leading into the more unstable and anxious section of the aria shows a difficulty in finding words, thus hinting at the disorganized speech patterns we will see in the coda of her mad scene. The chromaticism modulates from the recitative's key of A minor to E major—a prominent key in her mad and suicide scenes.

The Allegro moderato section begins:

Les serments ont des ailes!	Oaths have wings
Dans le coeur des infidels	In the hearts of unfaithful men
Rien ne peut les rappeler!	Nothing can recall them
Ils passent avec l'aurore!	They pass with the dawn!
Le même jour qui les voit éclore	The day that sees them blossom
Les voit aussi s'envoler.	Also sees them fly away.[636]

The above theme—both musically and textually—returns at the end of the aria. Its fast-paced, wordy motion and text show Ophélie's anxiety rising to panic, as she realizes that Hamlet is, in fact, avoiding her. In the next part of this section, Ophélie modulates from E major to C-sharp minor to A-flat major, changing to A-flat on "*Astres éternels*" [Eternal stars].[637] A-flat major is also the parallel major of the key in which she read the novel, showing her connection to the main character in how she views her fate. This section also

[635] Castel et al., *French Opera Libretti*, 393.
[636] ibid., 393–94.
[637] ibid., 394.

harkens back to Hamlet's promises during the duet, both textually and sonically. In "*Doute de la lumière*," Hamlet particularly discussed the sun, while Ophélie sang about the stars, and they both made eternal vows of love. Additionally, Hamlet sang his part of the duet in B-flat major, while she sang hers in D-flat major, the latter of which is a closely related key to A-flat. Again, Thomas uses the keys and Carré and Barbier the text to connect her current state to previous and future ones. As seen in Figure 8, in the lines "*Ce n'est pas de vous qu'il fallait douter*!" [It wasn't you that I should have doubted], Thomas emphasizes C-flat, harkening back to A-flat minor, the sonority of the book, again showing its influence over Ophélie but also foreshadowing its relevance later in their Act 3 trio and her Act 4 mad scene.[638]

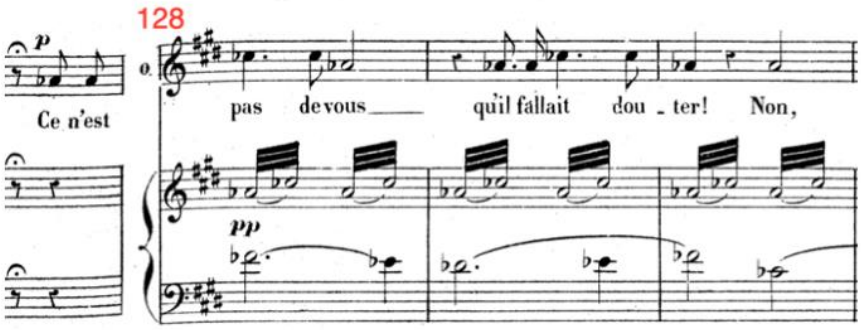

Figure 8 from the pickup of measure 128-130, emphasizing C flat. Translation: It wasn't you that I should have doubted.

The ending of this aria is also where we see the beginning of Ophélie's coloratura passages, such as in the return of the "*Les serments*" section. Coloratura, and especially coloratura on vocalises, resembles screaming and disordered speech. Most of the melismas

[638] ibid., 394.

she sings accompany her words. As seen in Figure 9, one example of this is toward the end of the aria, where she sings, “ils passent!” [they pass].[639]

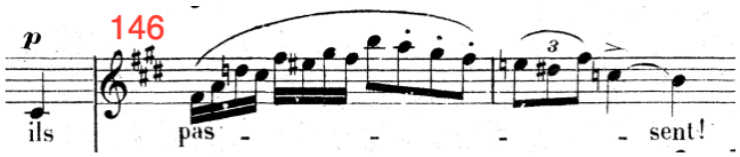

Figure 9 Ophélie’s line from pickup to measure 146 through measure 147, showing melismatic material on text. Translation: they pass.

This is a short, two-measure melismatic passage, featuring fast arpeggios and downward staccati from the singer’s top register (B5 down to E5). However, there are only two places where the coloratura takes place on a vocalise instead of as part of the words, including one toward the beginning of the aria (shown in Figure 10) and one toward the end of the aria (shown in Figure 11).

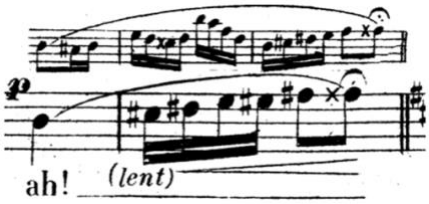

Figure 10, measures 93-94, featuring Ophélie's first cadenza on a vocalise. Above, there is an optional cadenza written.

Figure 11 measures 154-158, featuring Ophélie's longest cadenza until her mad scene. She sings it on a vocalise.

In the latter, she sings an ascending chromatic passage on a vocalise, which is the longest form of coloratura from her entrance until this point, lasting about four bars. This line also features the highest note Ophélie has sung yet—C-sharp 6. The use of the more extended

[639] ibid., 393.

coloratura and extremely high notes both foreshadow Ophélie's mad scene and show that Ophélie is in mental and emotional distress by the end of this aria. In particular, these passages, which are chromatic, lengthy, and high-lying vocalises, resemble her disordered speech patterns, thus acting as a mini-episode, which can be used by singing actors to lead up to her larger episode in Act 4.

The keys of Air d'Ophélie are also important to her characterization and symptoms; she begins in E-flat Major, makes her way to A-flat with modal mixture, transitions to A minor, and ends in E Major, a half step up from where she started and, more importantly, the key in which her mad scene begins. E Major appears to be Ophélie's key of distress and mental health concerns relating to Hamlet, as she concludes this scene, begins her mad scene, and concludes her suicide scene in E Major. Additionally, as seen in Figure 12, the measures leading up to the last cadence include G-sharp 5 descending to F-sharp 5 on the words "Hélas! Les voit s'envoler!" [Alas! They see them fly away!].[640]

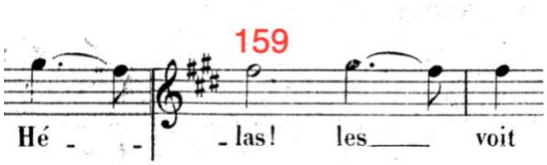

Figure 12 measures 158-160, showing Ophélie's G-sharp-F-sharp motive leading to the conclusion of her Act 2 air. Translation: Alas! They see them

This G-sharp to F-sharp motion on the words "Alas! They see them" is very similar to the F-sharp to G-sharp motion that we see as a representation of Ophélie's mental health in the mad scene and is, in fact, the reverse of her madness. This can be interpreted a few ways; however, one way to include it is to show the extreme stress and duress Ophélie is under because she believes Hamlet has abandoned her, particularly during this sigh-like pattern in

[640] ibid., 394.

the mid-upper part of her range. Additionally, this line comes from a longer, fuller line from a few measures earlier: "Le jour qui les voit éclore Les voit aussi, hélas! s'envoler!" [The day that sees them hatch sees them, alas, fly away!].[641] This longer version of the line directly precedes the longer melisma, which is then followed by the shorter version of the line. In looking at this as Ophélie struggling to say this sentence, this can be interpreted as an early warning sign of her psychoses to come. It is her disorganized speech. Thus, as a singing actor, I would try to play this part of the aria as being under such stress due to Hamlet's possible abandonment that I cannot quite find the correct words. In showing this anxiety and disordered speech earlier in the opera, her psychoses in Act 4 seem less detached from the remainder of her character.

Conclusion

Using the acting techniques of Stanislavsky, Ostwald, and Balk, a singing actor can work to create a well-developed, true, believable Ophélie to whom a twenty-first century audience can relate, even though she was written in the nineteenth century for a nineteenth-century audience. This is especially important in working on Ophélie's mad and suicide scenes. The first step in this process, as Ostwald recommends, is researching the history behind the character, including the music that Thomas drew upon when creating her character—French grand opera and *bel canto*—and the expectations and tropes of their respective audiences. Additionally, while knowing the full history of hysteria and beliefs on women's mental illness may be a little past the scope of performing a singular opera, learning about the views people had right before and during the time when *Hamlet* was written is

[641] ibid., 393–94.

imperative in learning about why Carré, Barbier, and Thomas altered the mad scene so drastically from the original Shakespearean version. Knowledge about nineteenth-century beliefs on hysteria and women's mental illness—including the symptoms, what was considered "abnormal" behavior for women at the time—as well as what people thought the ideal woman looked like also allow singing actors to understand what kinds of symptoms to look for in the music and text when interpreting the role. From here, it is crucial to research Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, especially looking at Ophelia, and how performances changed in the two-and-a-half centuries between Shakespeare's and Thomas's versions. Knowing who played the role, what made an actress successful acting as Ophelia, and the alterations made to the role to better fit beliefs on the ideal woman and on women's mental illness during the time allows the singing actor to better understand where Ophélie comes from, how she is like Ophelia, how she is different, and why these changes are important in performing the role.

Finally, before putting the role on stage, a singing actor and/or a director must dig into the score and find evidence of the symptoms in the text and the music that can be acted out on stage. This final step is crucial in creating a believable mad scene, especially for a twenty-first-century audience, as well as for the director and the singing actor themself. From here, a singing actor may choose to find an overarching diagnosis for the character, as I have. Please note that there are many possible interpretations of the role, and mine is just that—my own interpretation, which is neither correct, nor incorrect. However, creating the overarching diagnosis will help the singing actor in making the role seem more cohesive and natural in her progression. Through this work, Ophélie becomes a person with realistic reasons for and symptoms within the episode of her mental illness, and not just another unrelatable, dated, and crazy hysterical woman.

Conclusion

Carré, Barbier, and Thomas based their Ophélie on Shakespeare's Ophelia. However, in crafting her character, they also altered many of her characteristics, including the size of her role and how her mental illness manifested itself, to better fit current views on women's mental illness, the ideal woman, and, of course, the Opéra audiences' expectations. These changes fit into a long line of alterations made by impresarios of previous decades and centuries who worked to make Ophelia's character better fit the female ideals of their eras. In all, Thomas, Barbier, and Carré created an Ophélie written for their audience; she was created in the image of the ideal woman and was a true "document in madness" for nineteenth-century audiences' understanding of women's mental illness.[642] Thus, I think that we, as scholars but in particular as performers, directors, voice teachers, and vocal coaches of this role, should work to create a character who conforms to contemporary views on women's mental illness, in which hysteria and love-melancholy do not exist. In doing so, we should use our scholarship and knowledge of history, the text, and the score to find possible symptoms that the singing actor can believably execute on stage. In some instances, finding a plausible, theoretical overarching diagnosis for the character may help singing actors prepare the role and stage directors, the staging. Teachers, coaches, and directors assigning this role and singers who believe they are ready to perform it should consider the following subjects: the complex subject matter, the difficult task of creating a historically-informed mad scene that is acceptable to a twenty-first-century audience, and the extreme vocal demands of the role.

[642] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Rokison-Woodall, 4.5.173-174.

Vocal and Acting Challenges

Before I begin discussing Ophélie's specific vocal challenges, I will define a few terms that are relevant to this section. The German term *Fach*, meaning "subject," refers to a "system of voice classification" particularly used by opera houses to define voice types according to a voice's ability to meet the "demands of the score."[643] Thus, *Fach* describes more specific voice types than soprano, mezzo-soprano, contralto, countertenor, tenor, baritone, bass-baritone, and bass; some examples include soubrette, spinto soprano, dramatic mezzo-soprano, *leggiero* tenor, and *basso buffo*. Each of these *Fächer* has specific roles that best fit their voices, based on their "range, timbre," *tessitura*, size or weight (which determines the orchestra size and instrument types over which the voice can successfully sing), agility (how easily the voice moves quickly), flexibility (ability of a voice to change dynamic range and color), the strengths and weaknesses of vocal registers, *passaggi*, and even appearance and acting ability.[644] *Tessitura*, meaning "texture" in Italian, is the median note range of a piece or role, as well as the "part of the range in which the voice performs best, both as to sound and as to ease," which varies depending on *Fach* but also from person to person.[645] *Tessitura* "tends to be associated with the distribution of pitches, measured in frequency of occurrence and duration of each occurrence."[646] In this case, I refer to *tessitura* particularly as the average pitches of pieces and roles, particularly in Ophélie's mad and suicide scenes. This differs from the range of a piece, which encompasses all notes within the

[643] Cotton, "Fach vs. Voice Type: A Call for Critical Discussion," 154, abstract.
[644] Cotton, 154–55; Boldrey, *Guide to Operatic Roles & Arias*, 8.
[645] Titze, "Voice Research and Technology: Quantifying Tessitura in Song," 59; Vennard, *Singing*, 79.
[646] Titze, "Voice Research and Technology: Quantifying Tessitura in Song," 59.

piece from the lowest note to the highest note and not just the average.[647] A vocal *passaggio*, meaning "passage" in Italian, is a break or transition between different registers of the voice (such as chest, mixed, and head voice).[648] The mixed voice, or *voce media* is the blend between head and chest voices.[649] There are two main *passaggi* for sopranos I will discuss—the first or lower *passaggio*, between the lower chest voice and the *voce media* into head voice, and the second or upper *passaggio*, between the *voce media* and head voice. [650]

Due to its high *tessitura* and its long melismatic passages above the staff, the role of Ophélie is best suited to what we would call a full lyric coloratura soprano today.[651] Full lyric coloraturas are known for their ease in the higher part of their range (great higher register), "slender, warm" timbre, medium size and weight to the voice, and their vocal agility.[652] Because of the larger range (particularly in the mad scene, which spans more than two octaves), the difficult melismatic passages as well as the long legato lines, the required legato lines between different registers of the voice, and the dramatic difficulties of performing a mad scene, I would recommend this piece be assigned to Masters, Doctoral, or post-graduate students—or, at the very least, singers who are no younger than twenty-two. Some highly developed undergraduate seniors could perform parts of the role, but because most of the pieces Ophélie sings are vocally taxing and require excellent acting chops, younger students should work only on single pieces from the role, such as an ensemble or possibly her first

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[647] Adams, "Three Views on Range and Tessitura of Adolescent Voices," 44; Rastall, "Vocal Range and Tessitura in Music from York Play 45," 181; Vennard, *Singing*, 234.
[648] Miller, *Solutions for Singers*, 22; Vennard, *Singing*, 248.
[649] Miller, *Training Soprano Voices*, 23.
[650] ibid., 25.
[651] Boldrey, *Guide to Operatic Roles & Arias*, 112.
For all descriptions of the music in the mad scene, please see Appendix A.1—an analyzed score.
[652] Boldrey, 17.

aria. The mad and suicide scenes should be reserved for singers who have very secure singing and acting techniques, as well as excellent musicianship and scholarly skills. Additionally, the mad scene is lengthy and requires multiple styles of singing, which is extremely difficult for most undergraduates. Finally, the emotional and psychological energy required for the mad and suicide scenes—including performing symptoms and eventually killing oneself on stage—require the skills of older, more experienced singer-actors. With its vocal and acting demands, younger students, and especially those who have been affected by mental illness, will have more difficulty performing this role as a complete performance.

As I have done in this dissertation, anyone who sings, teaches, coaches, conducts, or directs the role of Ophélie must also research the history of mad scenes and hysteria and analyze the text and music to find evidence of her specific symptoms. While I fully expect other singing actors and stage directors to come up with different symptoms, diagnoses, and ways to portray them on stage, I believe that using the research found in this dissertation will help singers better understand Ophélie as a character and will allow them to analyze the text and music more successfully, both in scholarship and in performance practice. However, singing actors and stage directors should not be the only ones responsible for studying this material. I also highly encourage voice teachers, vocal coaches, and acting coaches to discuss the following with their students and/or singing actors: 1) beliefs on women's mental illness in the nineteenth century and how this ended up with the creation of many "mad scenes" in the operatic repertory, 2) how this piece fits into the "mad scene" mold, 3) mental illness and how to treat such a subject in the twenty-first century, 4) the student's own mental health to avoid triggering, and 5) the vocal difficulties of the piece. In discussing these subjects with

students and singing actors, we can teach the new generation of singing actors how to represent women and mental illness better for ourselves and for our audiences.

Because this dissertation concentrates on Ophélie's mad and suicide scenes, I will discuss these scenes the most in terms of their vocal difficulties. One vocal challenge of this role is that the other roles in *Hamlet* are written for larger voices; the title role, with whom Ophélie sings the most, is best suited for a dramatic or full lyric baritone, and Gertrude, with whom Ophélie performs the trio, is written for a high dramatic mezzo-soprano.[653] Because Ophélie's *tessitura* is often significantly higher than her more dramatic-voiced counterparts—where a full lyric coloratura's voice blooms the most—this is only a concern when she is in the middle and lower parts of her range. However, it is important to note that students and singing actors learning this role should not over-exert in the middle and lower parts of the voice or when all three roles are singing together. It is the conductor's job to make sure the three voices blend well and no one voice overshadows another.

Ophélie is a very difficult role, partially because she contains a wide range of expectations from the singer-actor. First, while the majority of the role sits in a high, comfortable place for the lyric coloratura, there are multiple passages—including the reading section of "Air d'Ophélie" and the ballade section of her mad scene—which are quite low and stretch through the first *passaggio* of the lyric coloratura's range. For example, the A sections of the ballade are deceptively difficult. First, they begin on the dreaded note E4, which is around the first *passaggio* for the soprano voice. The melody then ascends via a

[653] ibid., 75, 81.

minor-major arpeggiated seventh chord into the upper part of the second *passaggio*, which is around a G5 for most sopranos (Figure 13).[654]

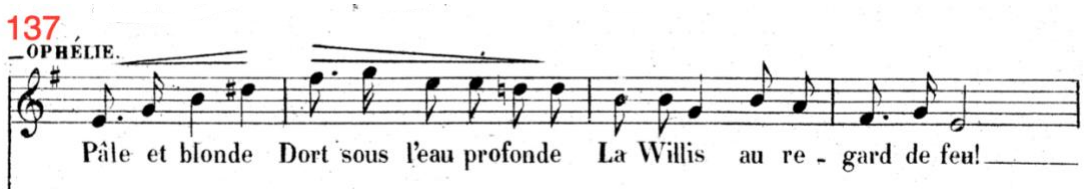

Figure 13, measures 137-140, showing the first line of the legato, slow A section of the ballade, which outlines a minor-major seventh, beginning on E4. This line stretches through the first and second soprano passaggi. Translation: Pale and blonde, sleeps under the deep water the Wilis with a gaze of fire!

This passage in itself needs to be performed as a seamless legato line, while it spans over an octave of range, including both the lower and upper *passaggi*, and has arpeggiated jumps. Similarly, the first section of the mad scene—the accompanied recitative and arioso—also contains long legato lines. Both of these sections, thus, require excellent breath support to perform the longer lines in a single breath.

While these two sections necessitate a slow, legato, and controlled style, the waltz, the B sections, and the coda of the ballade contain long, high, and fast melismatic passages. Overall, I have a few recommendations for working on these lines of coloratura. One of the best ways to ensure pitch accuracy is to slow down these passages and learn them from the back to the front in small sections. Then, once the smaller chunks are comfortable at the slowest tempo, the singer can gradually add speed (by maybe five metronome markings at a time), making sure to use a metronome to maintain tempo in each iteration. For example, if the melismatic passage is four bars, the singer should slowly learn the last four notes of the fourth bar, and then gradually speed that up until they reach their desired tempo. Next, going back to the slowest tempo, the singer should add the penultimate four notes to the last four

[654] ibid., 25.

notes, again, gradually increasing tempo markings. The singer should continue doing this until they feel comfortable singing the entire passage front to back at the desired tempo at least ten times without mistakes.[655] With this method, a singer allows the coloratura to become part of their muscle memory, thus making it easier and easier to perform.[656] For shorter lines of coloratura, gradating the tempo from a slower one for accuracy up to the goal tempo is useful, but working from the end of the line may not be necessary.

Other difficulties found in these melismatic movements include repeated high notes (which require great control to remain in tune) and trills. For repeated notes above the second *passaggio*, a singer should work on onset-release exercises, especially in the second *passaggio*, upper range, and flageolet (the highest extension of the voice). There are many excellent ways to work on a trill; one of my favorites is the W. Stephen Smith "wobble," where the singer slowly sings a fourth twice followed by singing it quickly four times consecutively, all in the same breath.[657] This helps loosen the larynx and allow for the freedom needed in the larynx to trill. Another excellent trill exercise is beginning the trill slowly and then speeding it up little by little (breathing where the singer has to); once the trill is at its fastest point, the singer should concentrate on the upper note of the trill (usually, a half or whole step above the main note).[658] This allows the trill to sound more like two notes in quick repeated succession and less like a large vibrato.

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[655] A note: one longer line of coloratura may take an entire hour to hour-and-a-half practice session or even multiple practice sessions to secure.
[656] The singer needs to do this while still singing on the breath and utilizing support so that they don't use the muscles of the larynx, throat, jaw, or tongue to manipulate the melismatic passages. If these articulators replace the support, a singer will develop habits that are difficult to break as part of the coloratura, and the sound will not be as full nor the singing as comfortable, thus making it much more difficult.
[657] Smith and Chipman, *The Naked Voice*, 93.
[658] DiDonato, Kelly, and Wong, *Joyce DiDonato Vocal Masterclass (The Royal Opera)*.

In the waltz section, there are sets of intricate smaller flights of coloratura in the form of triplets. However, the most difficult coloratura are the string of 32nd-16th-note doublets that skip around toward the end of the section. These require both agility in the voice in and above the second *passaggio* as well as extreme accuracy to keep the notes in tune. The coloratura in the B sections begins in the forms of cadenzas, which the singer can alter to better fit their voice. The examples given by the composer and by Schirmer contain the following: trills, melismatic passages that contain arpeggios, linear melismatic passages, chromatic linear descending melismatic passages, and quickly repeated C-sharp 6s. Each of these has its own set of difficulties. In particular, the arpeggiated coloratura, the chromatic linear coloratura, and the repeated C-sharp 6s can be very difficult. The former two require pitch accuracy as well as fast movement. The repeated C-sharp 6s, on the other hand, are most difficult in terms of vocal onset. Thus, I would recommend working on onset-release exercises, especially in this flageolet (vocal extension) part of the voice.

Of the entire mad scene, the coda is the most difficult section vocally. Making up the last three pages of the sixteen-page mad scene, this section is fraught with vocally technical difficulties, including a high *tessitura* (a majority of the section sits above the soprano second *passaggio*), large leaps (sometimes greater than an octave), anomalous melismatic scales (where the whole and half steps are not where they are expected to be), staccato leaps, chromatic melismatic passages, and finally, the chromatic melismatic line leading up to the (almost) screamed high E6—a note that is very high, even for most coloratura sopranos. I would recommend learning the coda piece by piece and circling the most difficult spots for the individual singer; these are the sections to concentrate on the most. Learning each piece slowly will also help with accuracy, especially with the chromatic sections, the stranger

scalar patterns, and staccato leaps. Additionally, while most students will learn the piece with piano, it is important to note that the end of the coda is accompanied by a larger portion of the orchestra than a majority of the scene (and of the remaining parts of the role). When working on the piece oneself or with a student, it is imperative not to over-exert or to try and get over the orchestra. First, because of the extremely high *tessitura*, most sopranos will not have too much difficulty singing over the orchestra even though it is very full and loud, and second, it is the conductor's job to make sure the orchestra does not cover the singer.

One of the trickiest melismatic sections occurs in the accompanied recitative/arioso section at the beginning of the mad scene. What makes this round of coloratura so difficult is that it is a cadenza that is borne from the accompanied recitative, which is stylistically unexpected and very challenging. This melisma contains difficult descending scalar patterns (which start as chromatic and then become scalar) as well as large, fast leaps within the melisma. The cadenza then has an ascending melismatic scalar pattern, followed by repeated A5s (first syncopated eighth notes, then sixteenths), then a trill on an A5, and then descends via a chromatic scalar melismatic passage to a D-sharp 4. Make sure to practice the trilled A on its own, especially because it also requires a decrescendo from forte to piano. This decrescendo should be practiced to ensure that it is supported and isn't just a subito piano. Like other parts of the piece, the chromatic descent spans an octave and a half, including the second *passaggio* and ending at the first *passaggio* for sopranos, D-sharp 4. Finally, this cadenza ends with an optional additional cadenza, stretching over two octaves, or a simpler perfect authentic cadence (PAC). Depending on the soprano's voice, this final cadenza can be included, altered to better fit the voice, or cut, only to use the simpler PAC.

Regarding the suicide scene, the most difficult vocal technicalities are the fact that it is at a very soft dynamic and sits lower in the voice after a long stretch of high, loud singing. While there is supposed to be a short ballet *divertissement* between the mad and suicide scenes, it is often cut in modern productions, thus giving the singer no time to recover after the mad scene. Additionally, like some of the early sections of the mad scene, the ending of the suicide scene is slow with long, legato, and very *piano* lines and light orchestration beneath—meaning it is very exposed. The last difficult part is the pianissimo and sustained high B5 (which is preceded by a B4, meaning a large leap to it) required as the very last thing Ophélie sings on stage in the opera. After the huge climax at the end of the mad scene and without the *divertissement* breaking up the scenes, it requires a lot of control to sing this piece more quietly and with legato lines.

As seen in the content of Chapter 4, another major difficulty in the mad and suicide scenes is the acting. The singing in itself is already extremely challenging, and on top of this, the coloratura soprano performing this role needs to act the mad and suicide scenes (as well as the rest of the role) in a well-prepared, yet spontaneous and believable manner. This is particularly difficult both because of the nature of a mad scene and because of the emotional toll mad and suicide scenes can take on a singer-actor. While the suicide scene is the last piece of music Ophélie sings in the role, the singing actor needs to have the openness and emotional capacity of an advanced actor to fully realize the mad and suicide scenes. They must also be able to convincingly portray any emotions (the psychological energy), as well as symptoms and outward physical actions (physical energy) that the director asks of them and/or that they themselves want to perform (if in line with the director's vision).[659]

[659] Balk, *The Complete Singer-Actor*, 51–52.

Simultaneously, singing actors must also sing at the highest technical level and perform all vocal, tempo, and other markings given in the score as well as directions given by the conductor (vocal energy).[660]

Final Thoughts

In writing this dissertation, I hope to increase opera's accessibility for modern audiences. In trying to be more inclusive in opera, it is imperative that we, as actors, singers, directors, and especially as voice teachers and vocal coaches, discuss difficult topics that are at the heart of these older works, including (in *Hamlet*), mental illness, gaslighting, the objectification of women, self-harm, and many others. By bringing attention to these issues, we can consider how singing actors are trained to act as women, and then we, as pedagogues, can work to change how opera depicts women, and particularly women with mental illness, on stage. This kind of open dialogue allows for a more believable and inclusive staging of Ophélie but also helps young singing actors learn how to portray such difficult subjects on stage in a way that is more fitting of twenty-first-century views on women's rights and mental illness.

I hope to continue expanding upon this research, and to incorporate other operatic mad scenes, beginning with those in the French grand opera and *bel canto* repertory (as those would be the most closely related to Ophélie and *Hamlet*), such as Dinorah in *Le pardon de Ploërmel* by Giacomo Meyerbeer (1859), Elvira from *I puritani* by Vincenzo Bellini (1835), the title role of *Anna Bolena* (1830, based on a real woman, who, to my knowledge, never went mad), and the title role of *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835, the most iconic mad scene) by

[660] ibid., 51.

Gaetano Donizetti. Each of these roles could be part of a single case study, but together they show the operatic obsession with mentally ill characters. We, as a musical community, must study these roles, learn the history behind their music, their disorders, and audience expectations of the time, and work to update them for our own singing actors and audiences so that they, too, may better connect with and understand these characters.

Appendices

Appendix A: Ophélie's Music

Appendix A.1: Act 4 Mad Scene

Below is an annotated vocal score of Ophélie's mad scene. I have highlighted the components of my annotations in the legend below. There are measure numbers that correlate with the measure numbers used earlier in this document. I have included descriptions and textual annotations, whose colors also correlate with the legend and with the other annotations in the score.

Legend

2me TABLEAU.

N°18.

E Major key signature

SCÈNE ET AIR D'OPHÉLIE.

—FINAL—

1

Tonal ambiguity

Andante.

OPHÉLIE.

(1) SOPRANI.

TÉNORS. CHŒUR.

BASSES.

Andante.

G-F-sharp-G sharp

PIANO.

Onstage chorus

4

Ténors. But who is that beautiful & young woman who comes near us?

Mais quelle est cette belle Et jeu - ne damoisel - le Qui vers nous ac -

6

- court?

cresc.

8

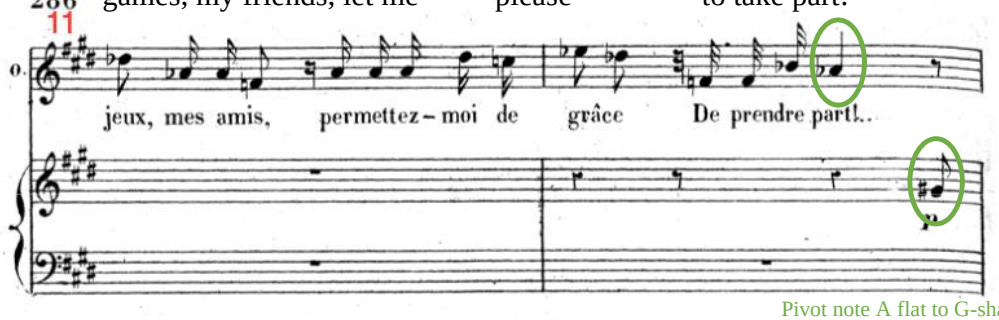
OPHÉLIE.

recitative → Récit. At your

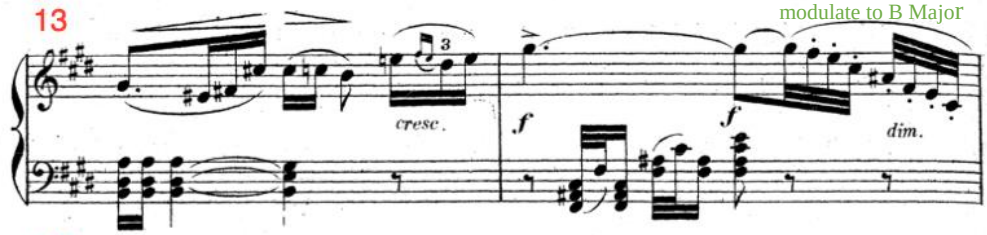
D flat Major, hearkens back to "Doute de la lumière" A vos

(1) Chœur *ad libitum*, à défaut du Ballet.

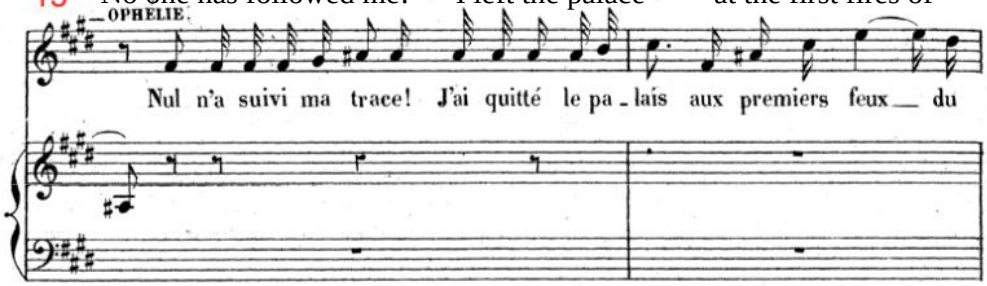
286 games, my friends, let me please to take part!



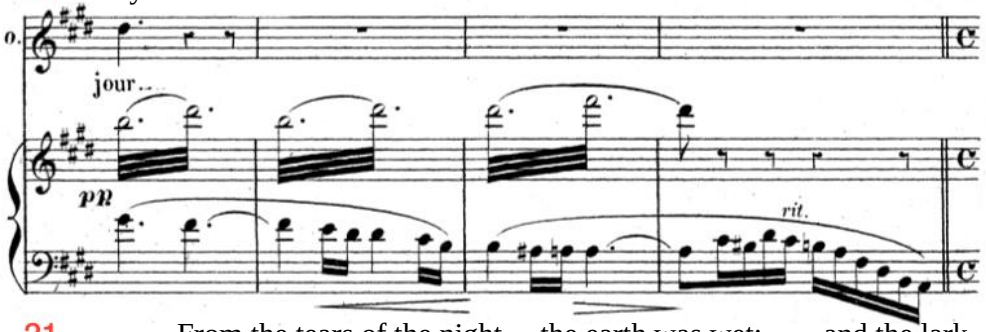
Pivot note A flat to G-sharp, modulate to B Major



15 No one has followed me! I left the palace at the first fires of

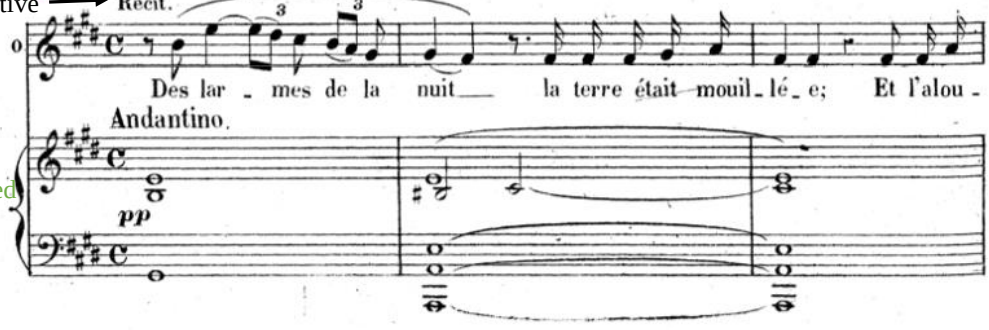


17 day

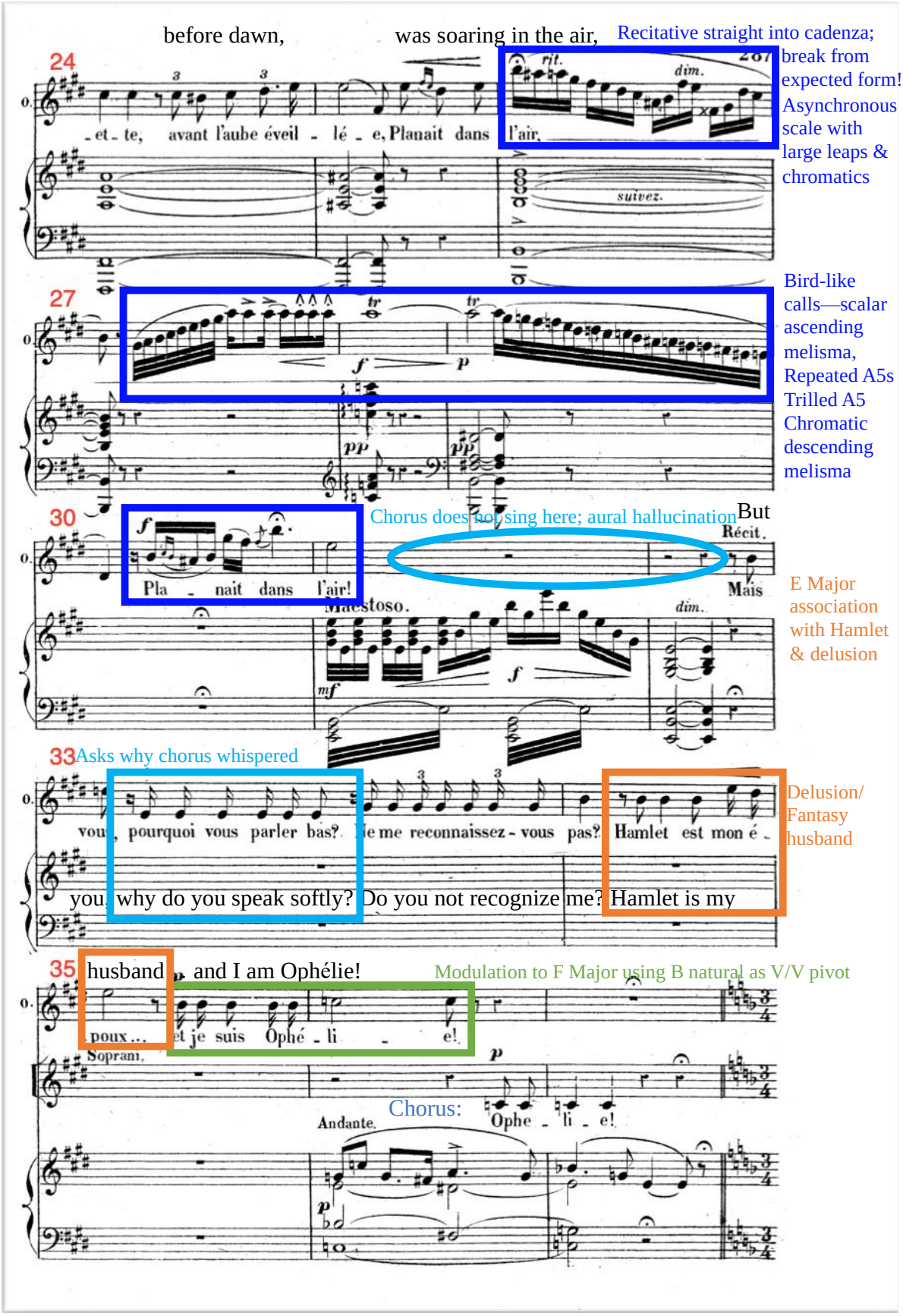


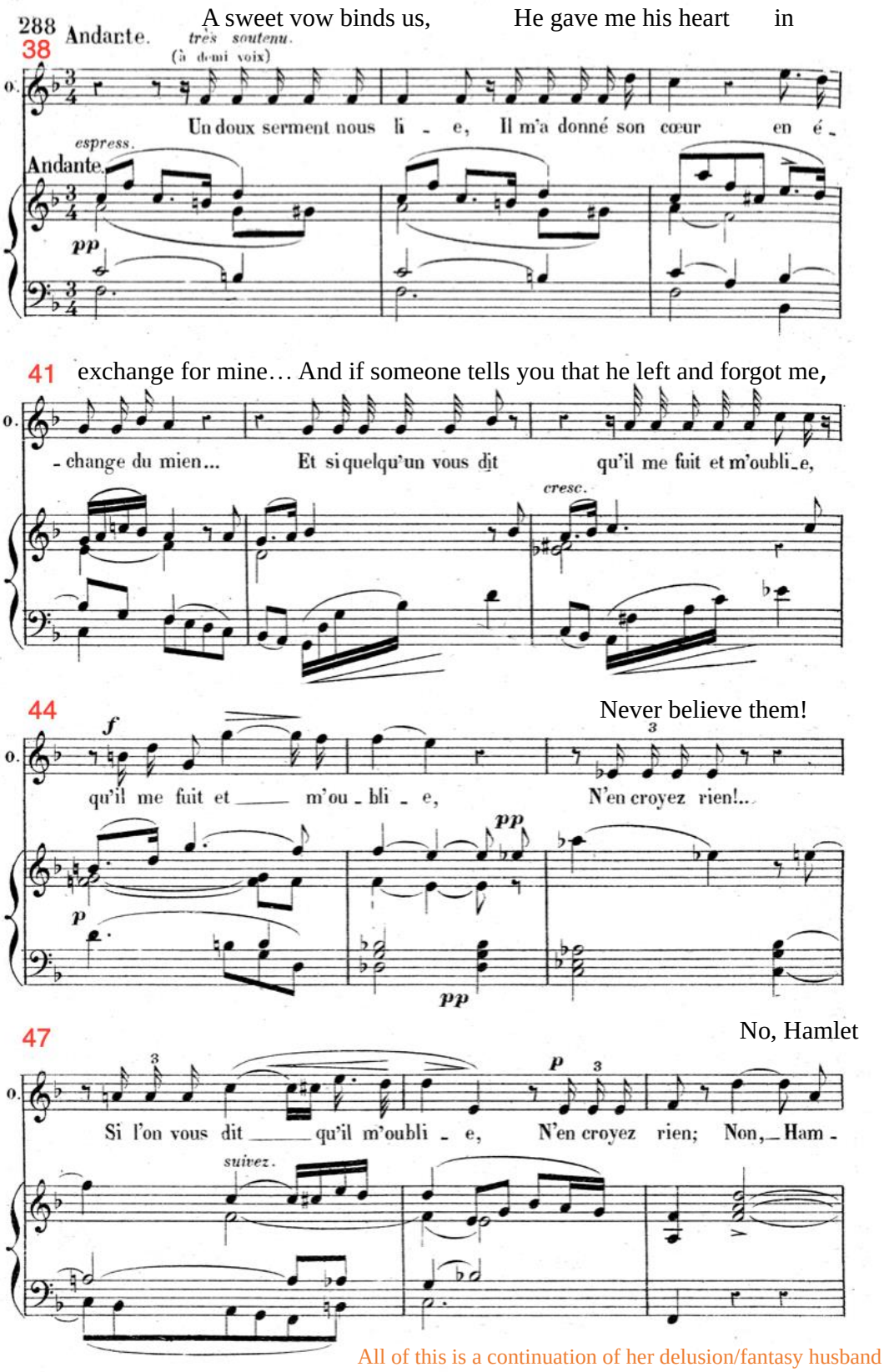
21 From the tears of the night the earth was wet; and the lark

recitative →



E Major finally established


before dawn,
was soaring in the air,
Recitative straight into cadenza; break from expected form!
Asynchronous scale with large leaps & chromatics
24
rit.
dim.
l'air.
suivez.
Bird-like calls—scalar ascending melisma, Repeated A5s Trilled A5 Chromatic descending melisma
27
Chorus does not sing here; aural hallucination
But
30
Pla - nait dans l'air!
Récit.
Mais
Maestoso.
E Major association with Hamlet & delusion
33
Asks why chorus whispered
vous, pourquoi vous parler bas? Ne me reconnaissez-vous pas? Hamlet est mon é -
you, why do you speak softly? Do you not recognize me? Hamlet is my
Delusion/ Fantasy husband
35
husband ... and I am Ophélie!
Modulation to F Major using B natural as V/V pivot
poux ... et je suis Ophé - li - e!
Soprani.
Chorus:
Andante.
Ophe - li - e!



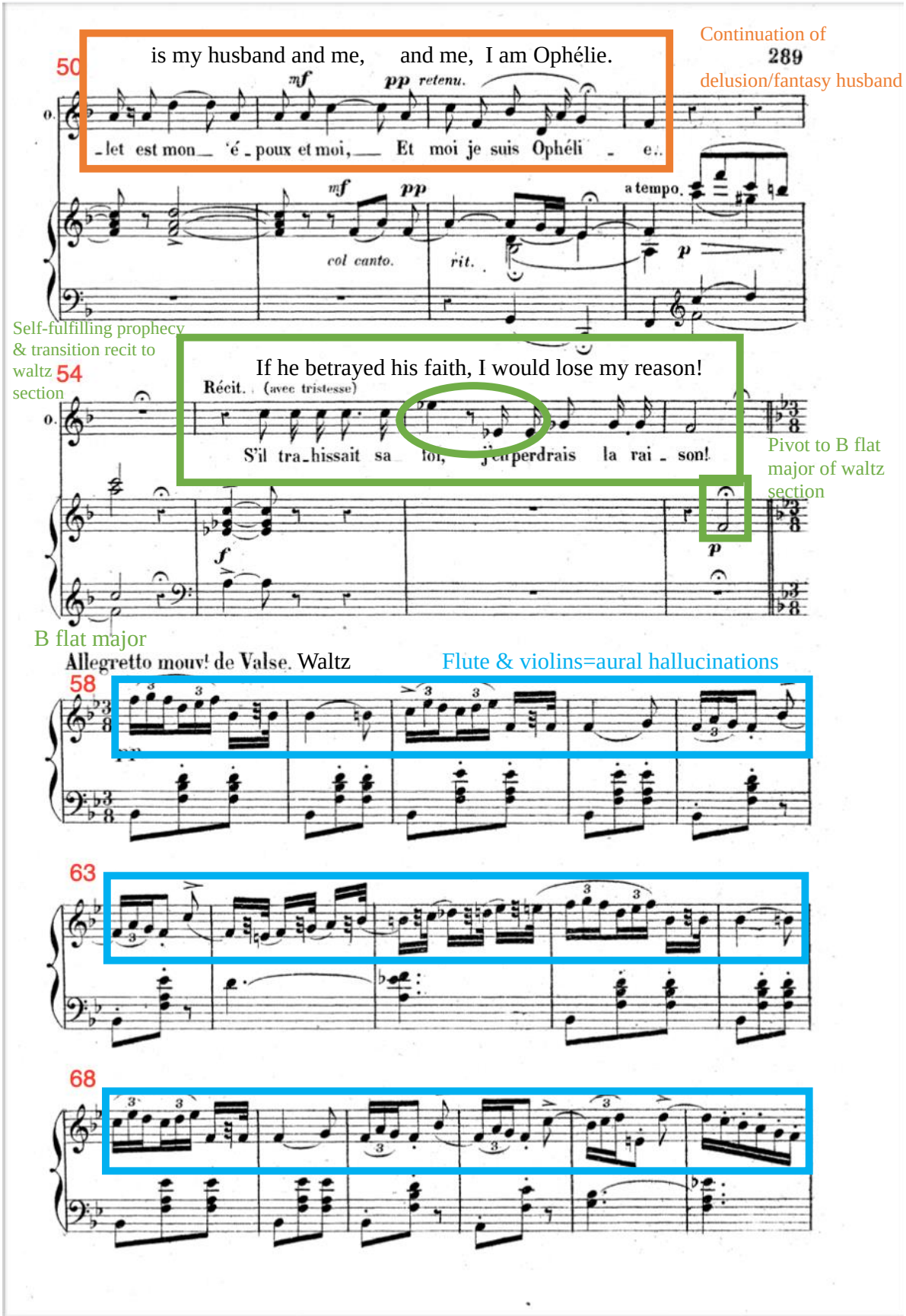
A sweet vow binds us, He gave me his heart in

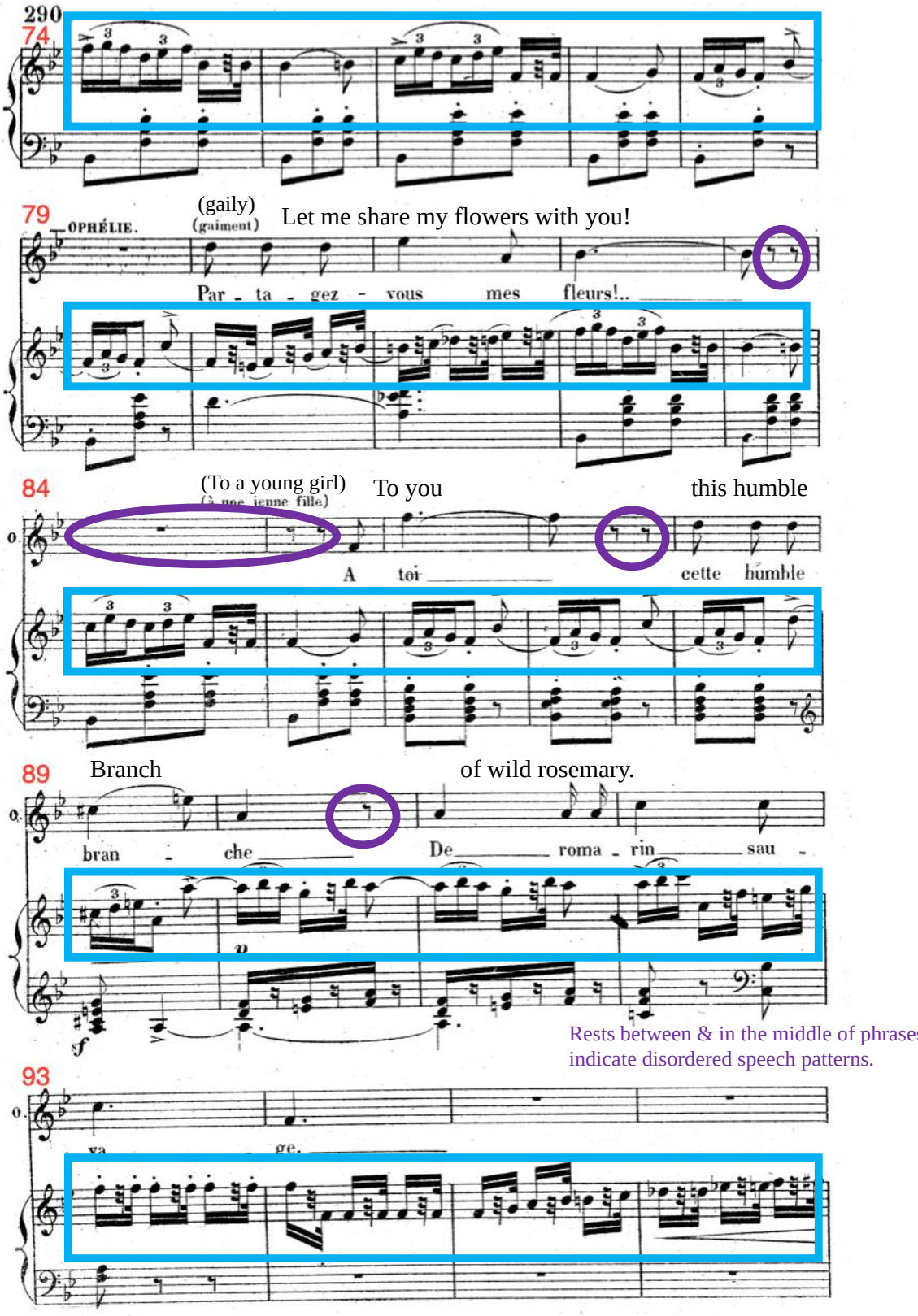
exchange for mine… And if someone tells you that he left and forgot me,

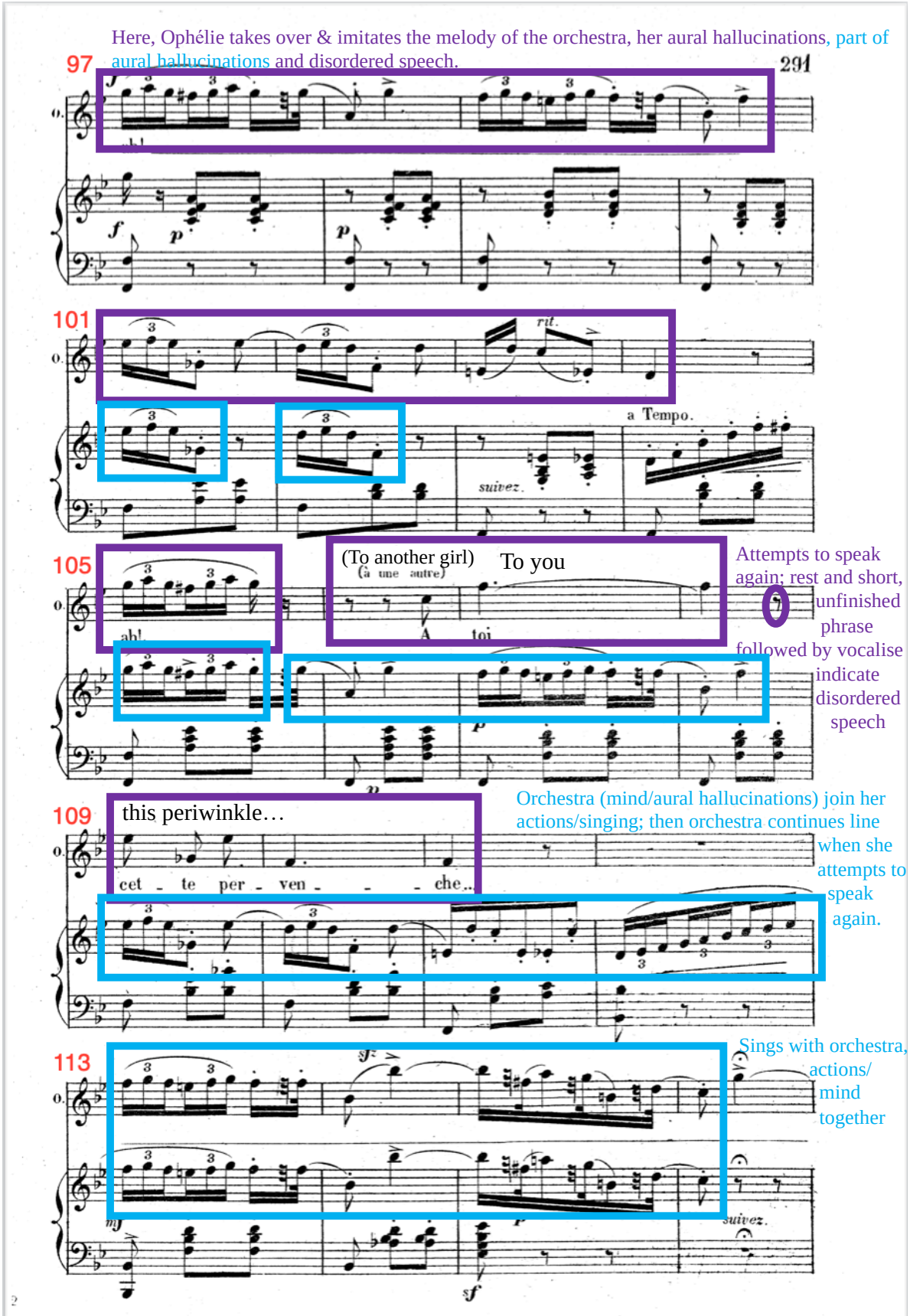
Never believe them!

No, Hamlet

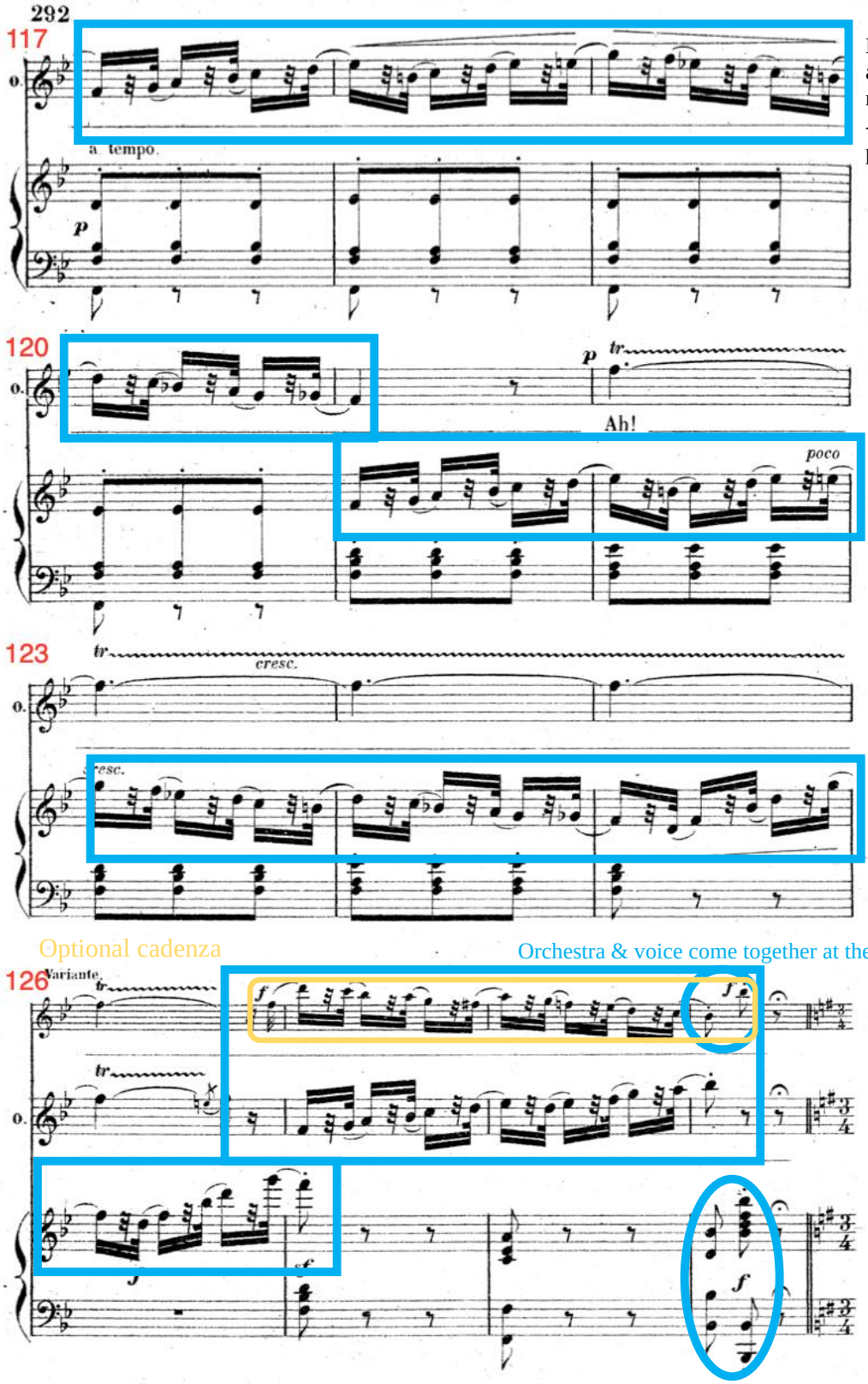
All of this is a continuation of her delusion/fantasy husband

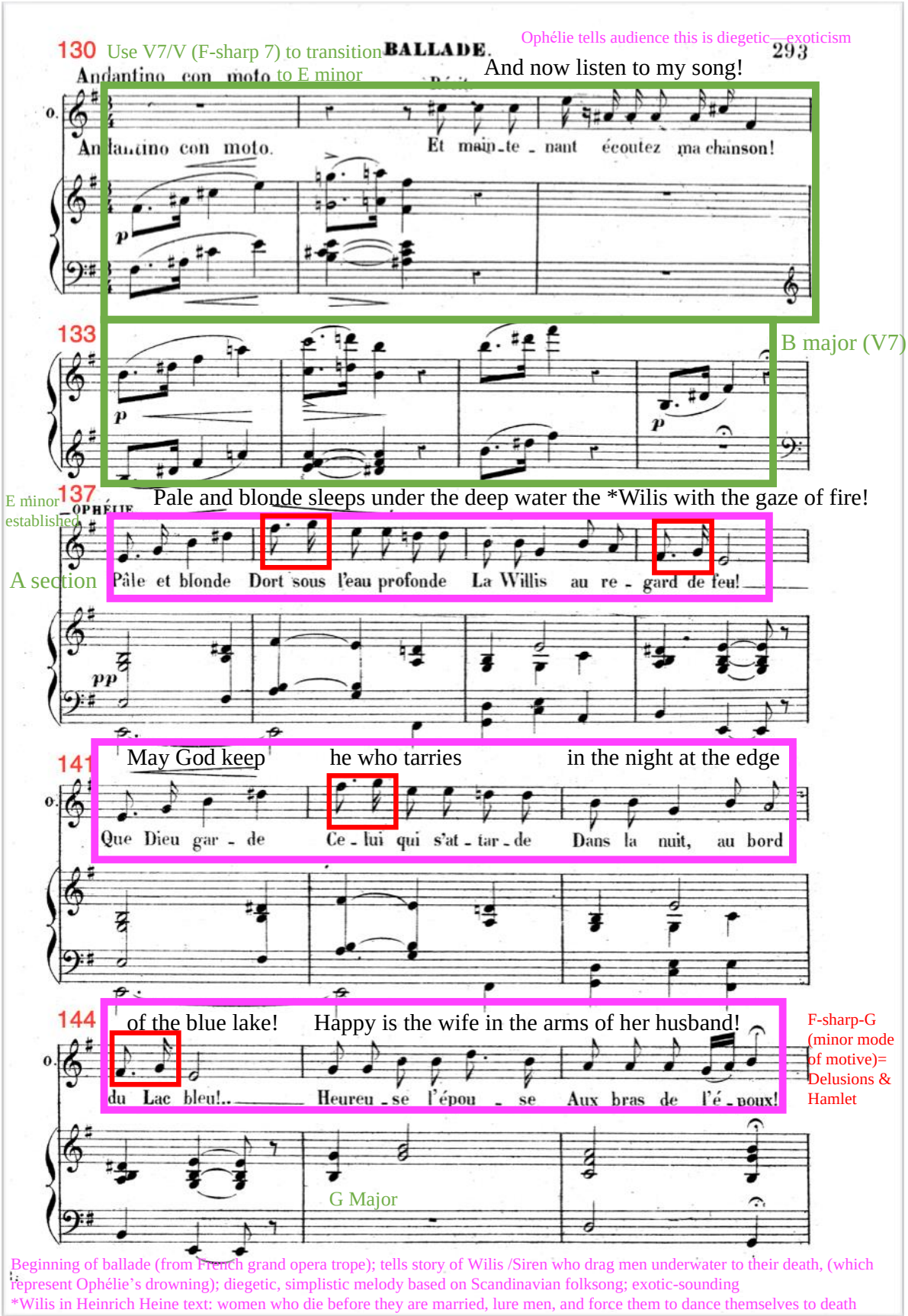

is my husband and me, and me, I am Ophélie.
Continuation of
289
delusion/fantasy husband
50
mf
pp retenu.
-let est mon_ 'é-poux et moi,_ Et moi je suis Ophéli - e.
mf
pp
a tempo.
col canto.
rit.
p
Self-fulfilling prophecy & transition recit to waltz section
54
If he betrayed his faith, I would lose my reason!
Récit. (avec tristesse)
S'il tra-hissait sa foi, j'perdrais la rai - son!
Pivot to B flat major of waltz section
f
p
B flat major
Allegretto mouv! de Valse. Waltz
Flute & violins=aural hallucinations
58
63
68


290
74
79
OPHÉLIE.
(gaily)
(gaiment)
Let me share my flowers with you!
Par - ta - gez - vous mes fleurs!..
84
(To a young girl)
(à une jeune fille)
To you
this humble
A toi
cette humble
89
Branch
of wild rosemary.
bran - che
De roma - rin sau -
93
va ge.
Rests between & in the middle of phrases indicate disordered speech patterns.
Continuation of aural hallucination in violins/flute


Here, Ophélie takes over & imitates the melody of the orchestra, her aural hallucinations, part of aural hallucinations and disordered speech.
97
291
101
rit.
a Tempo.
suivez.
105
(To another girl)
(à une autre)
To you
A toi
ah!
Attempts to speak again; rest and short, unfinished phrase followed by vocalise indicate disordered speech
109
this periwinkle…
cet - te per - ven - - - che...
Orchestra (mind/aural hallucinations) join her actions/singing; then orchestra continues line when she attempts to speak again.
113
Sings with orchestra, actions/ mind together
suivez.

Here, the voice and orchestra switch off with the melody; call & response between hallucinations & speech

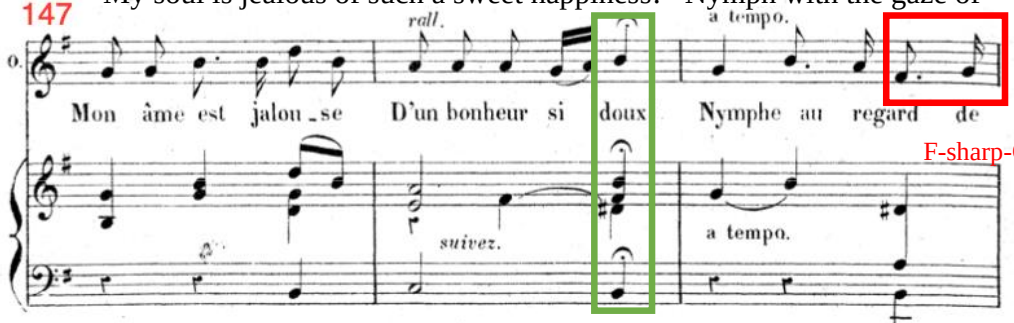



130
Use V7/V (F-sharp 7) to transition to E minor
BALLADE.
293
Ophélie tells audience this is diegetic—exoticism
And now listen to my song!
Andantino con moto.
Et main-te-nant écoutez ma chanson!
133
B major (V7)
137
E minor established
Pale and blonde sleeps under the deep water the *Wilis with the gaze of fire!
OPHÉLIE
A section
Pâle et blonde Dort sous l'eau profonde La Willis au re-gard de feu!
141
May God keep he who tarries in the night at the edge
Que Dieu gar-de Ce-lui qui s'at-tar-de Dans la nuit, au bord
144
of the blue lake! Happy is the wife in the arms of her husband!
du Lac bleu!.. Heureu-se l'épou-se Aux bras de l'é-poux!
F-sharp-G (minor mode of motive)= Delusions & Hamlet
G Major
Beginning of ballade (from French grand opera trope); tells story of Wilis /Siren who drag men underwater to their death, (which represent Ophélie's drowning); diegetic, simplistic melody based on Scandinavian folksong; exotic-sounding
*Wilis in Heinrich Heine text: women who die before they are married, lure men, and force them to dance themselves to death

III of G→V of E E minor re-established

294
147

My soul is jealous of such a sweet happiness! Nymph with the gaze of

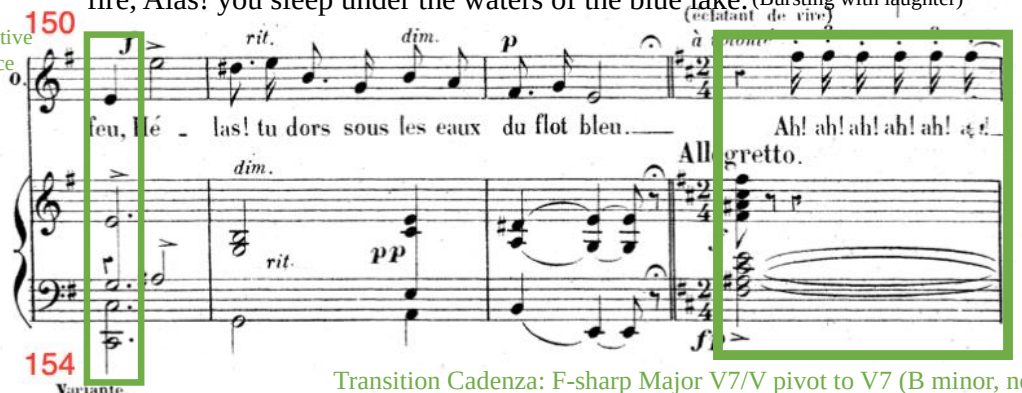


F-sharp-G motive

fire, Alas! you sleep under the waters of the blue lake. (Bursting with laughter)

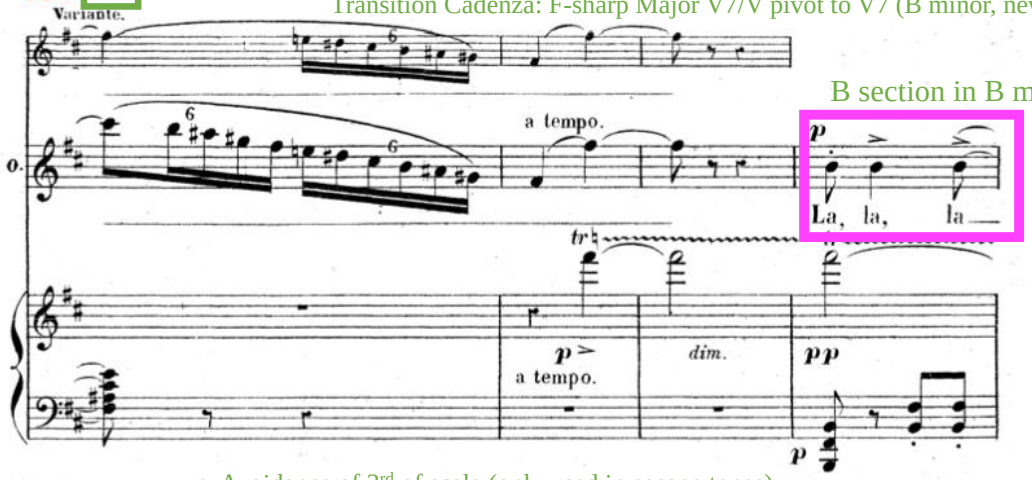
Deceptive cadence

150



154

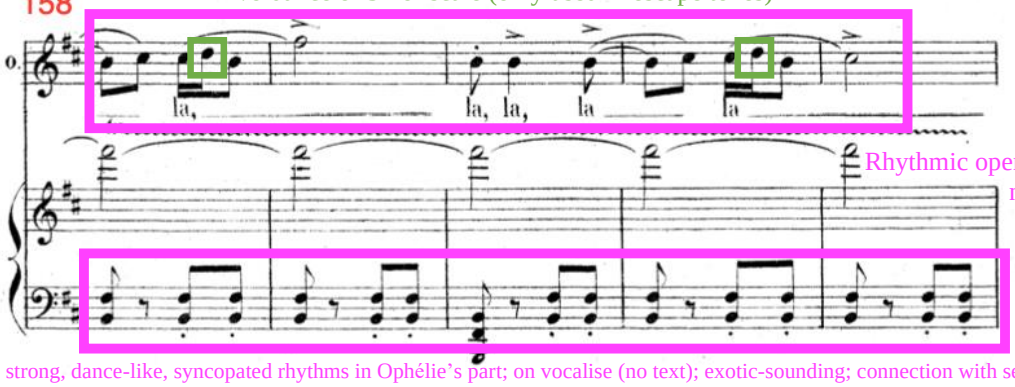
Transition Cadenza: F-sharp Major V7/V pivot to V7 (B minor, new key)



B section in B minor

158

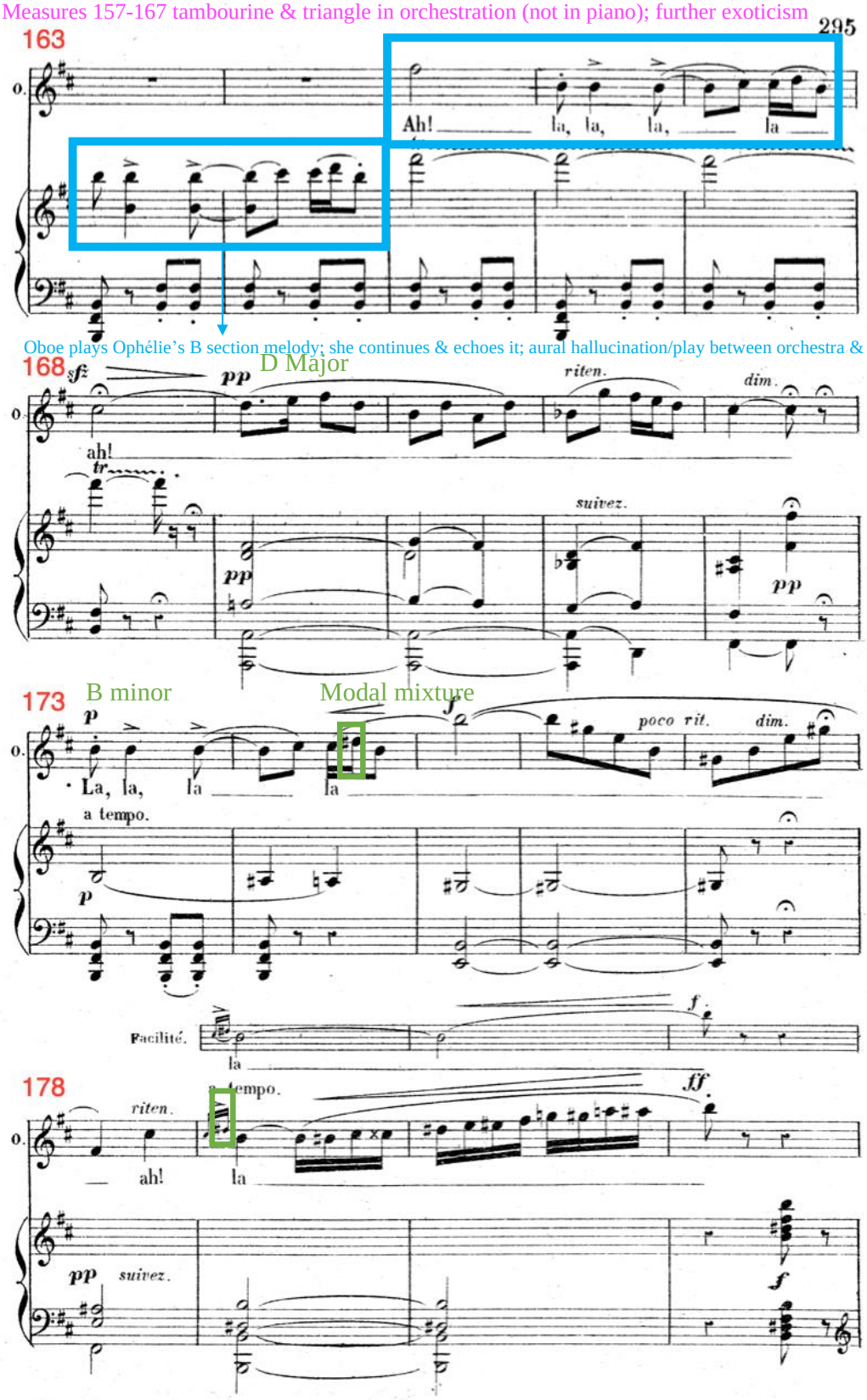
Avoidance of 3rd of scale (only used in escape tones)

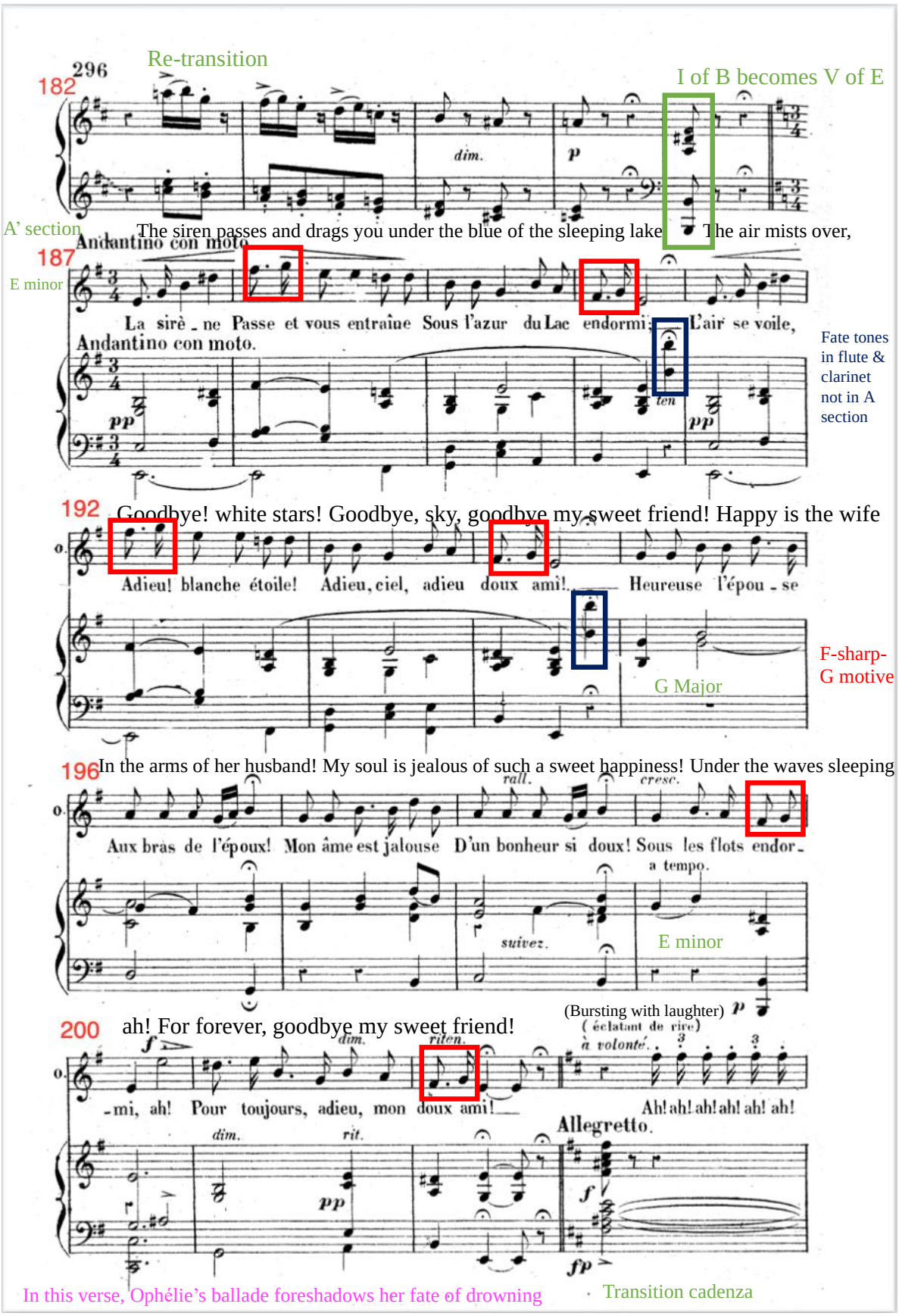


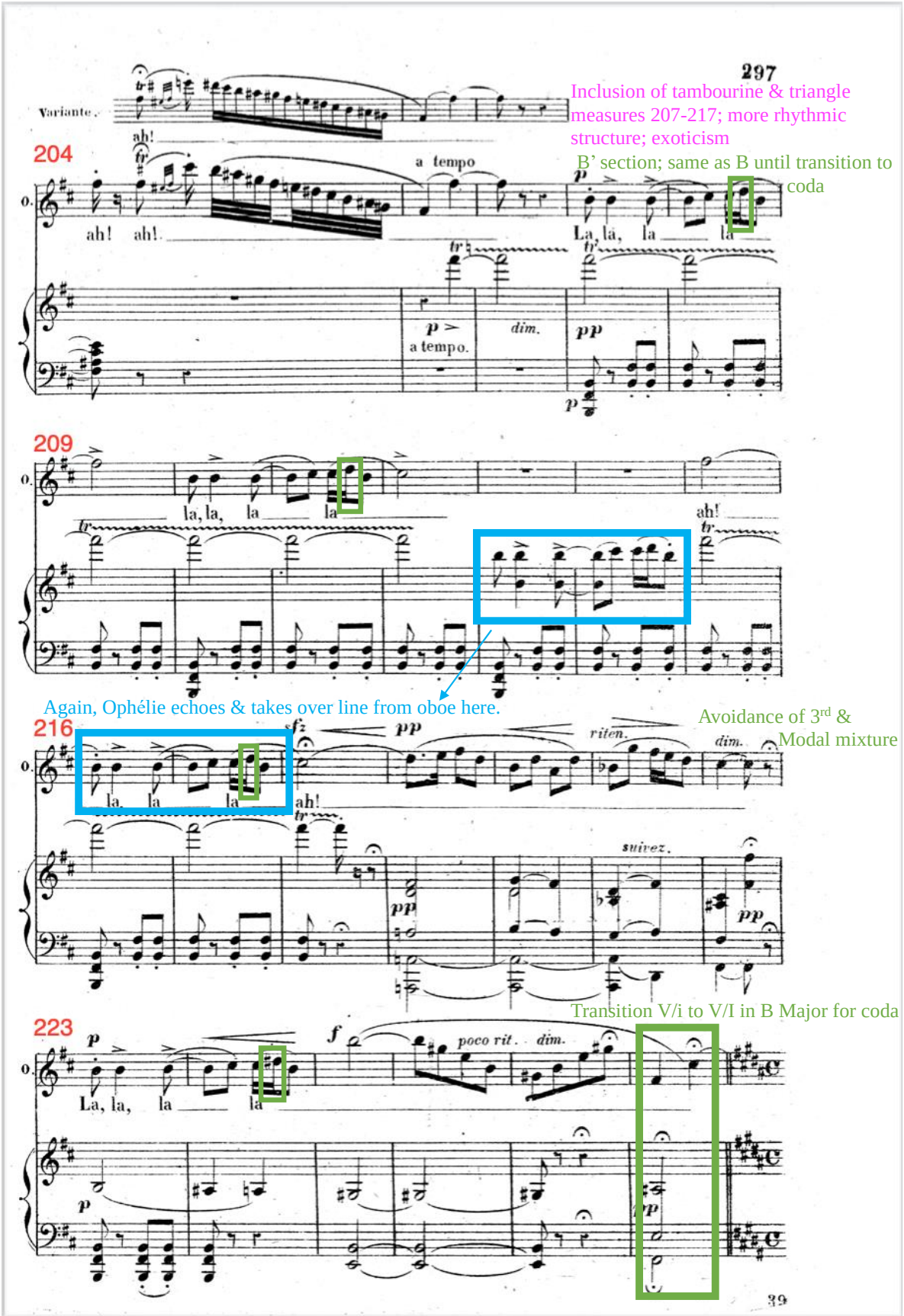
Rhythmic open fifths & no third in orchestra

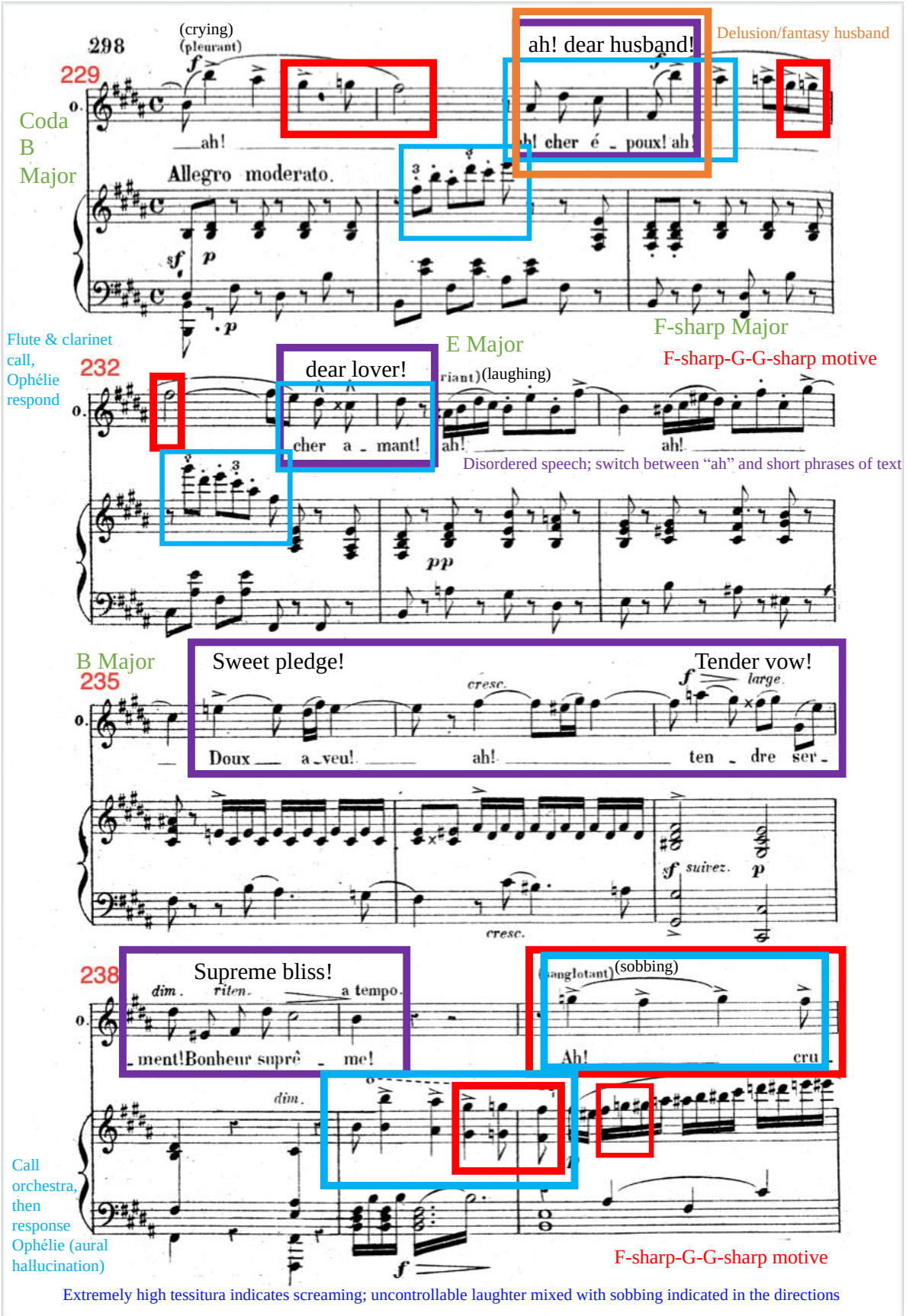
Use of strong, dance-like, syncopated rhythms in Ophélie's part; on vocalise (no text); exotic-sounding; connection with sensuality

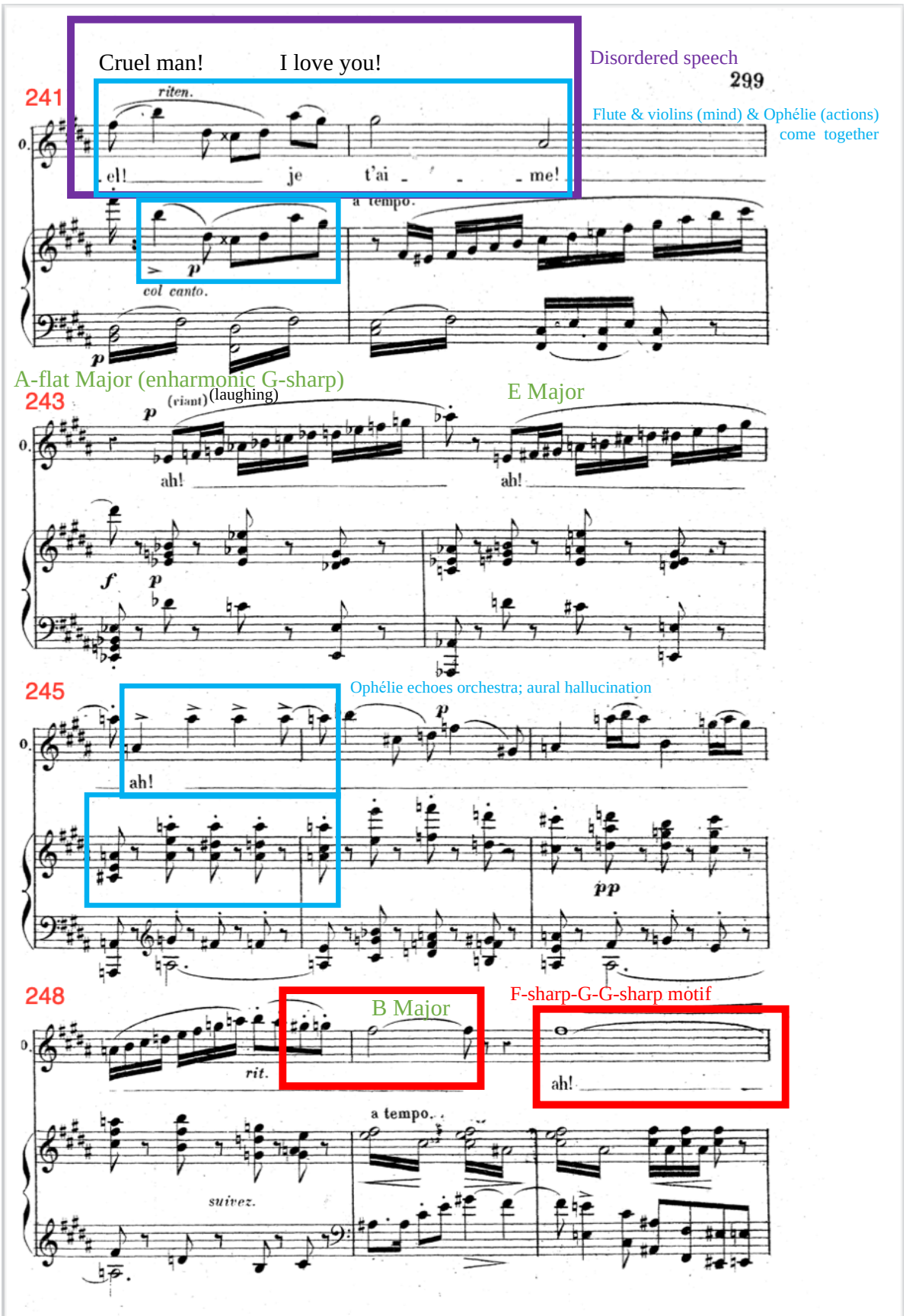
Measures 157-167 tambourine & triangle in orchestration (not in piano); further exoticism

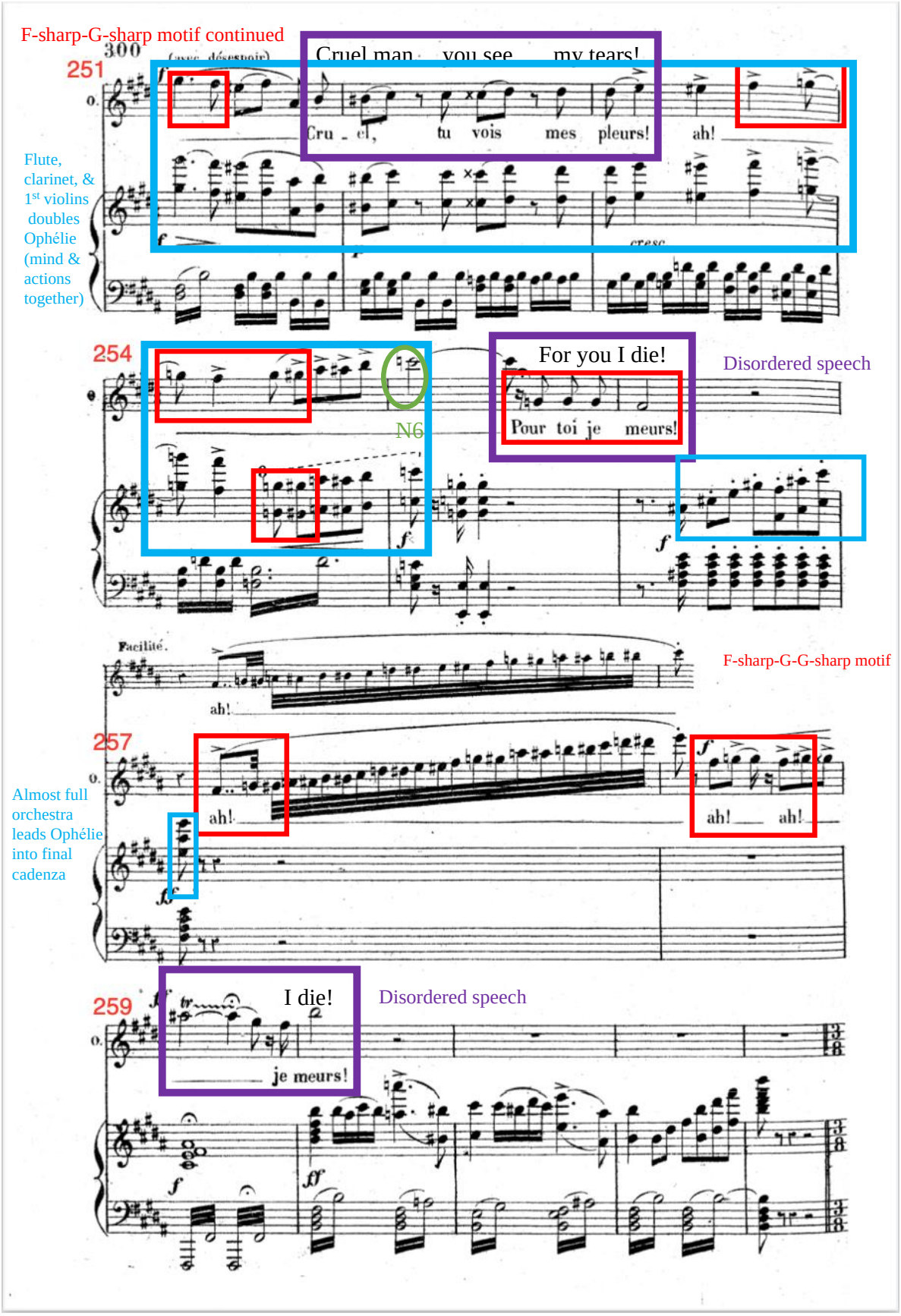



Re-transition
I of B becomes V of E
296
182
dim.
p
A' section
The siren passes and drags you under the blue of the sleeping lake. The air mists over,
Andantino con moto
187
E minor
La sirè - ne Passe et vous entraîne Sous l'azur du Lac endormi; L'air se voile,
Andantino con moto.
pp
ten
pp
Fate tones in flute & clarinet not in A section
192
Goodbye! white stars! Goodbye, sky, goodbye my sweet friend! Happy is the wife
Adieu! blanche étoile! Adieu, ciel, adieu doux ami! Heureuse l'épou - se
G Major
F-sharp-G motive
196
In the arms of her husband! My soul is jealous of such a sweet happiness! Under the waves sleeping
Aux bras de l'époux! Mon âme est jalouse D'un bonheur si doux! Sous les flots endor -
rall.
cresc.
a tempo.
suivez.
E minor
200
ah! For forever, goodbye my sweet friend!
(Bursting with laughter)
(éclatant de rire)
à volonté.
f
dim.
riten.
p
- mi, ah! Pour toujours, adieu, mon doux ami!
Ah! ah! ah! ah! ah! ah!
Allegretto.
dim.
rit.
pp
f
fp
In this verse, Ophélie's ballade foreshadows her fate of drowning
Transition cadenza

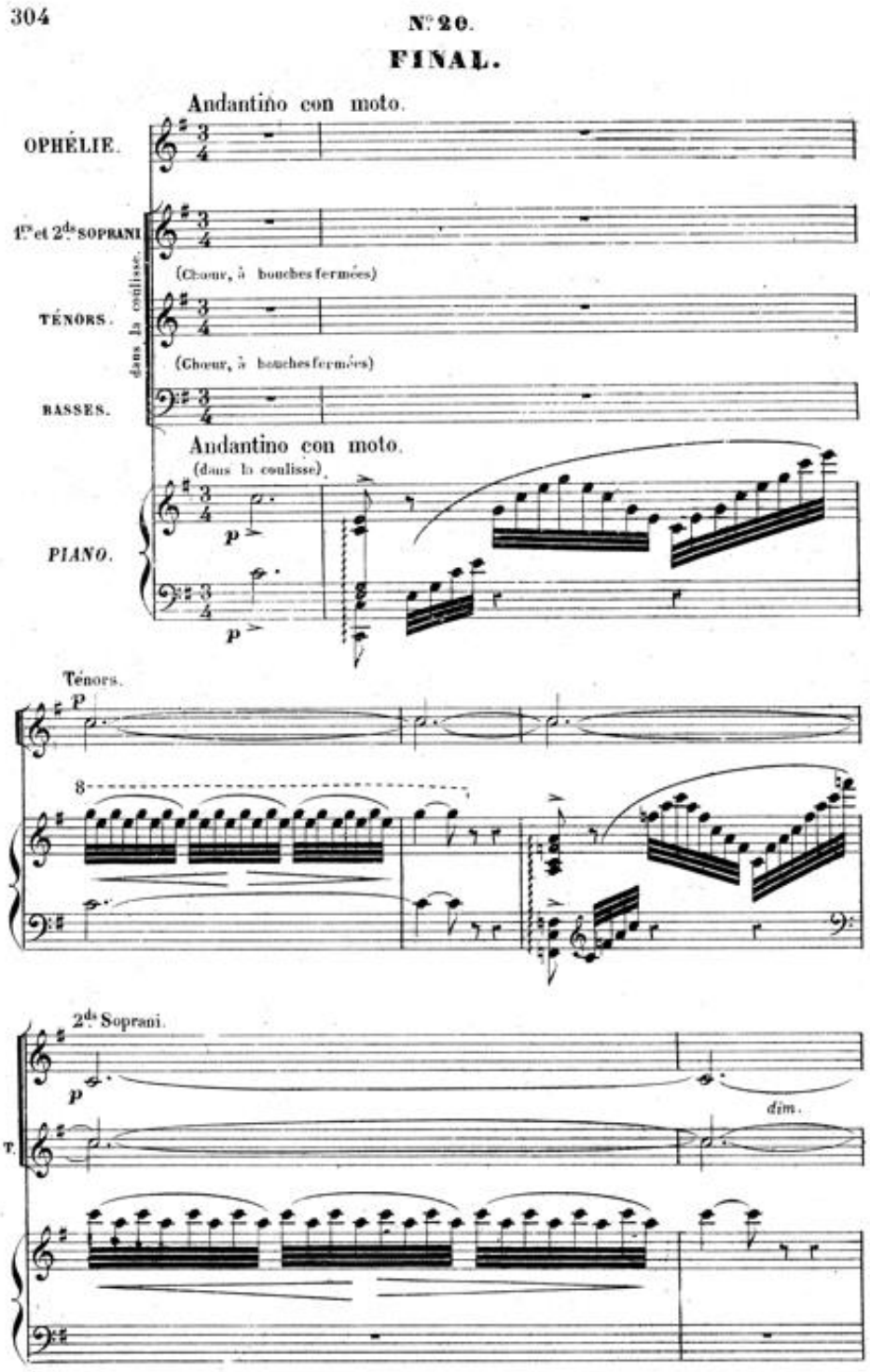

297
Variante.
ah!
204
a tempo
ah! ah!
La, la, la la
p
a tempo.
dim.
pp
209
la, la, la la
ah!
Again, Ophélie echoes & takes over line from oboe here.
216
la, la, la
ah!
riten.
dim.
suivez.
223
La, la, la la
poco rit.
dim.
39
Inclusion of tambourine & triangle measures 207-217; more rhythmic structure; exoticism
B' section; same as B until transition to coda
Avoidance of 3rd & Modal mixture
Transition V/i to V/I in B Major for coda

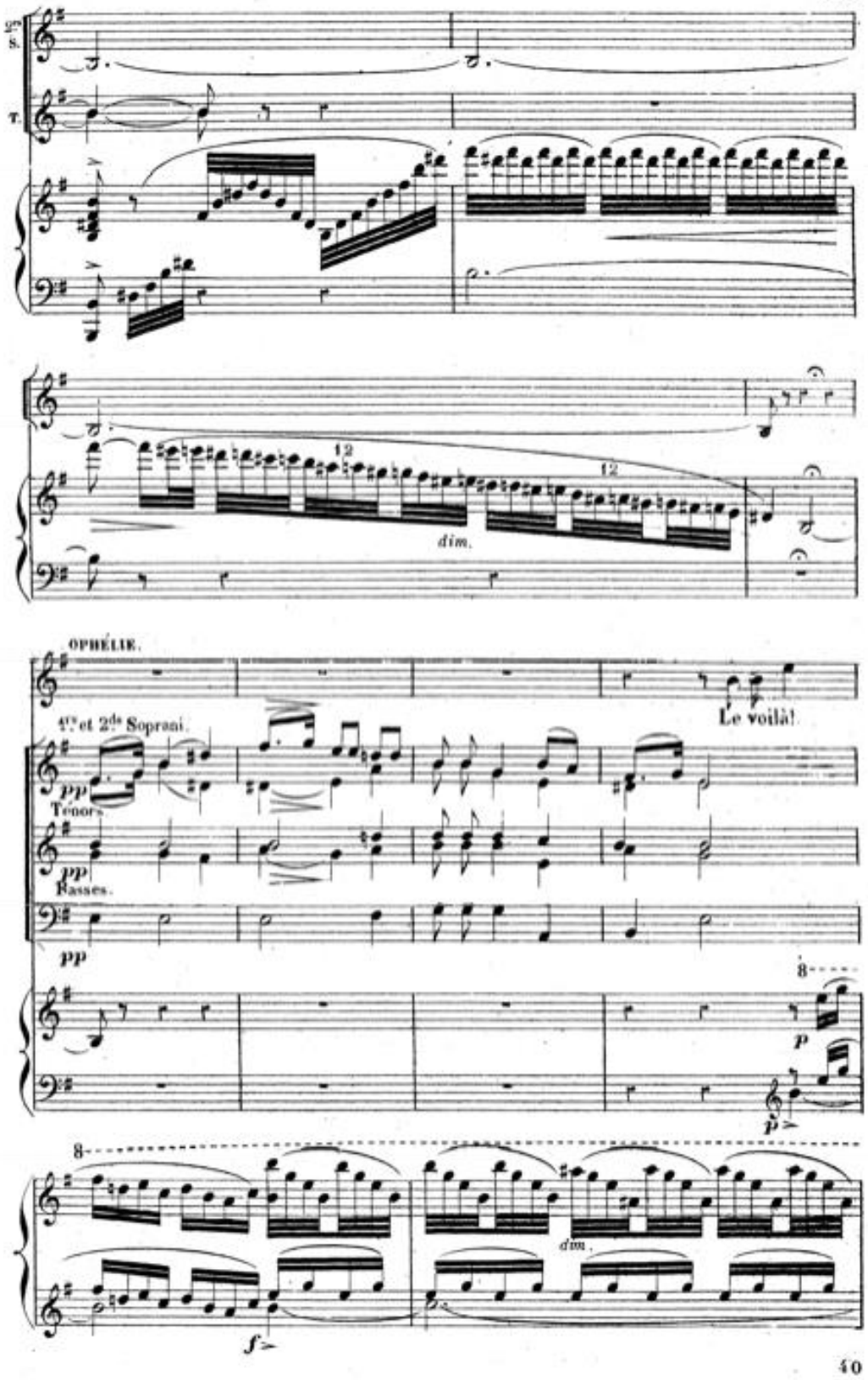

298
229
(crying)
(pleurant)
ah!
ah! dear husband!
Delusion/fantasy husband
Coda
B
Major
Allegro moderato.
ah! cher é - poux! ah!
F-sharp Major
Flute & clarinet call, Ophélie respond
232
E Major
dear lover!
F-sharp-G-G-sharp motive
(laughing)
cher a - mant!
ah!
ah!
Disordered speech; switch between "ah" and short phrases of text
B Major
235
Sweet pledge!
Tender vow!
cresc.
large.
Doux a - veu!
ah!
ten - dre ser -
suivez.
cresc.
238
Supreme bliss!
dim.
riten.
a tempo.
- ment! Bonheur suprê - me!
(sobbing)
Ah!
cru
dim.
Call orchestra, then response Ophélie (aural hallucination)
F-sharp-G-G-sharp motive
Extremely high tessitura indicates screaming; uncontrollable laughter mixed with sobbing indicated in the directions

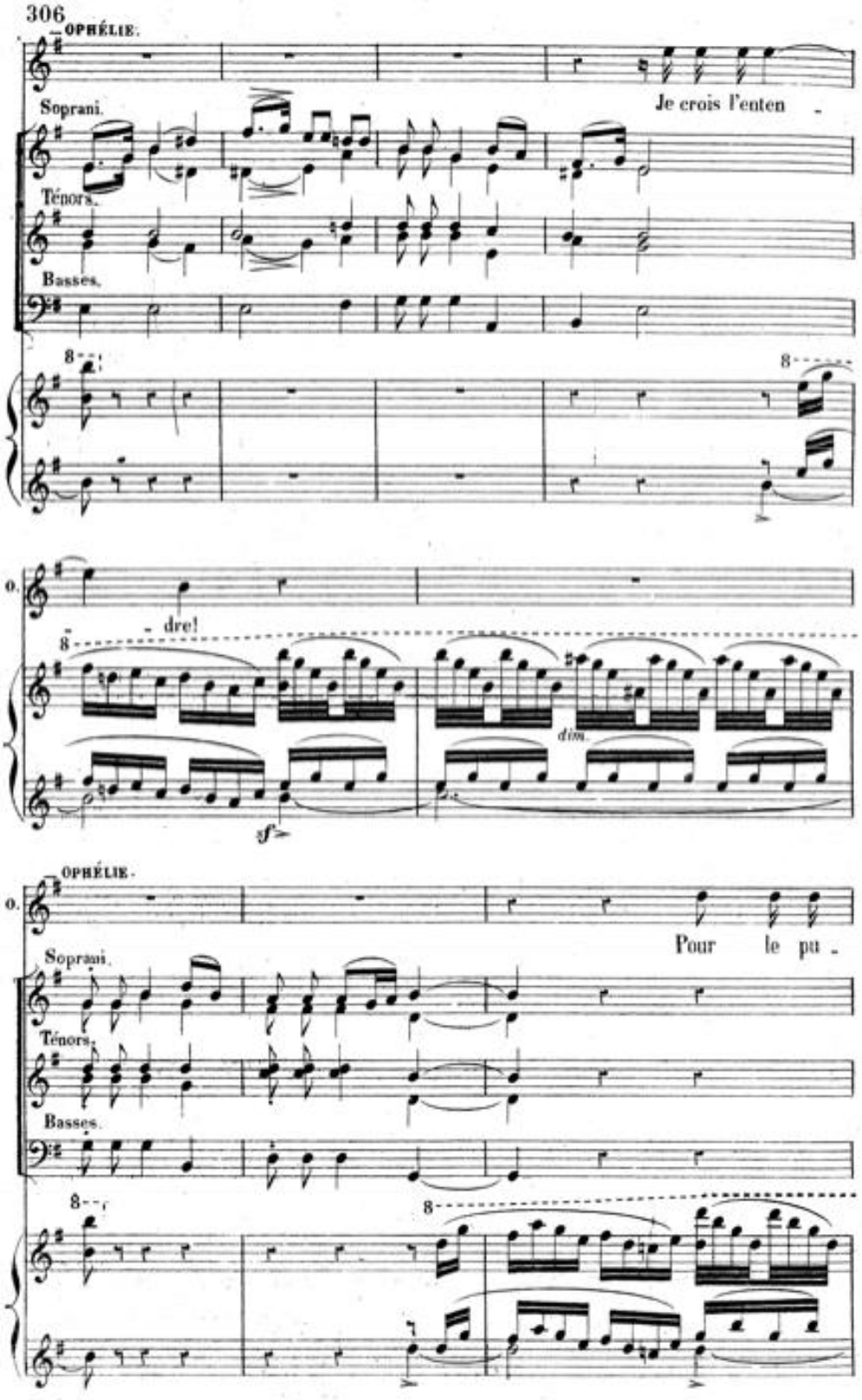

Cruel man! I love you!
Disordered speech
299
241
riten.
el! je t'ai me!
a tempo.
p
col canto.
Flute & violins (mind) & Ophélie (actions) come together
A-flat Major (enharmonic G-sharp)
243
(riant) (laughing)
E Major
ah!
ah!
f
p
245
Ophélie echoes orchestra; aural hallucination
ah!
pp
248
B Major
F-sharp-G-G-sharp motif
rit.
ah!
a tempo.
suivez.

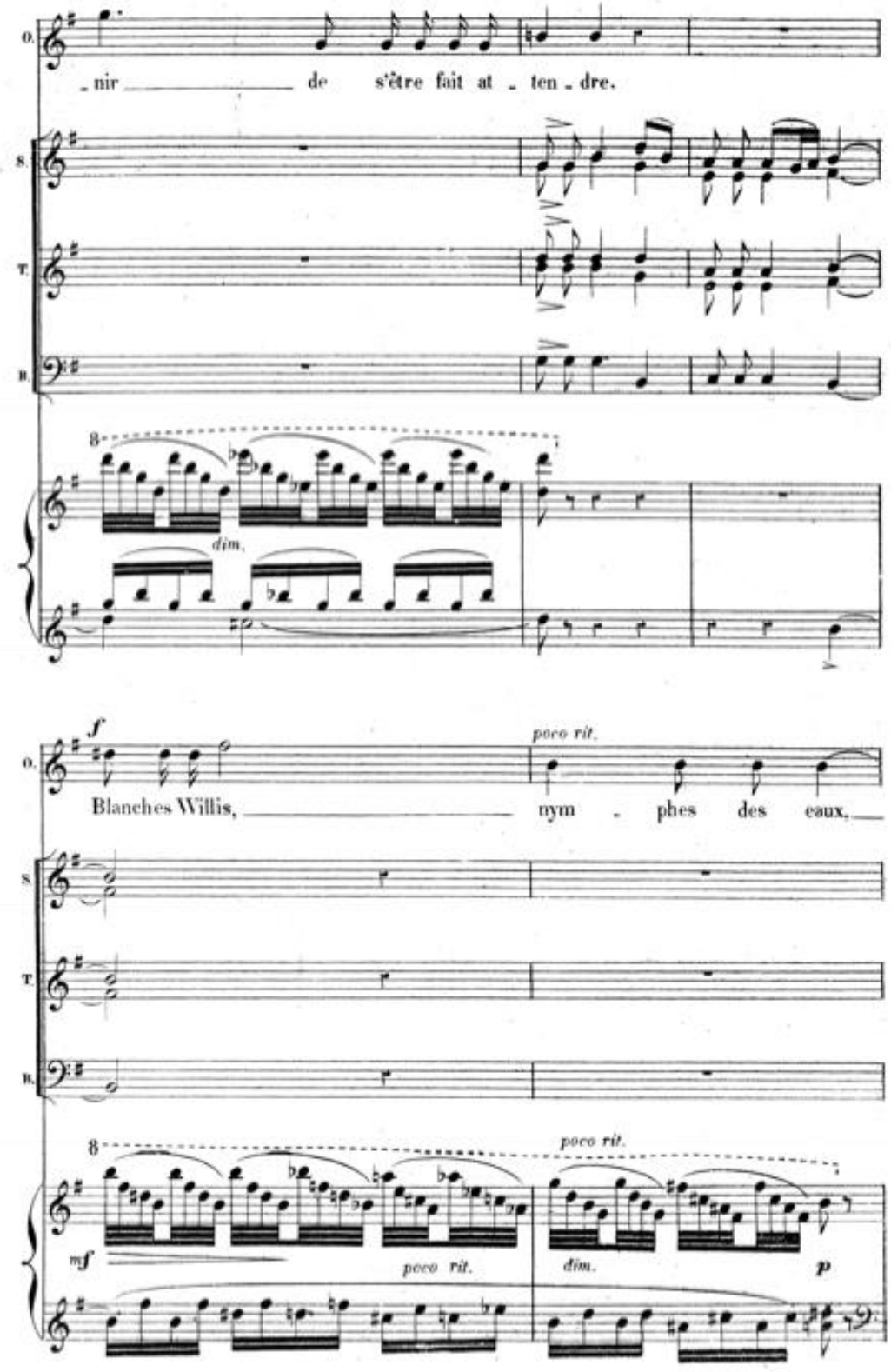

F-sharp-G-sharp motif continued
300
251
Cruel man, you see my tears!
Cru - el, tu vois mes pleurs!
ah!
Flute, clarinet, & 1st violins doubles Ophélie (mind & actions together)
254
For you I die!
Pour toi je meurs!
Disordered speech
N6
Facilité.
ah!
F-sharp-G-G-sharp motif
257
ah!
ah! ah!
Almost full orchestra leads Ophélie into final cadenza
259
I die!
je meurs!
Disordered speech

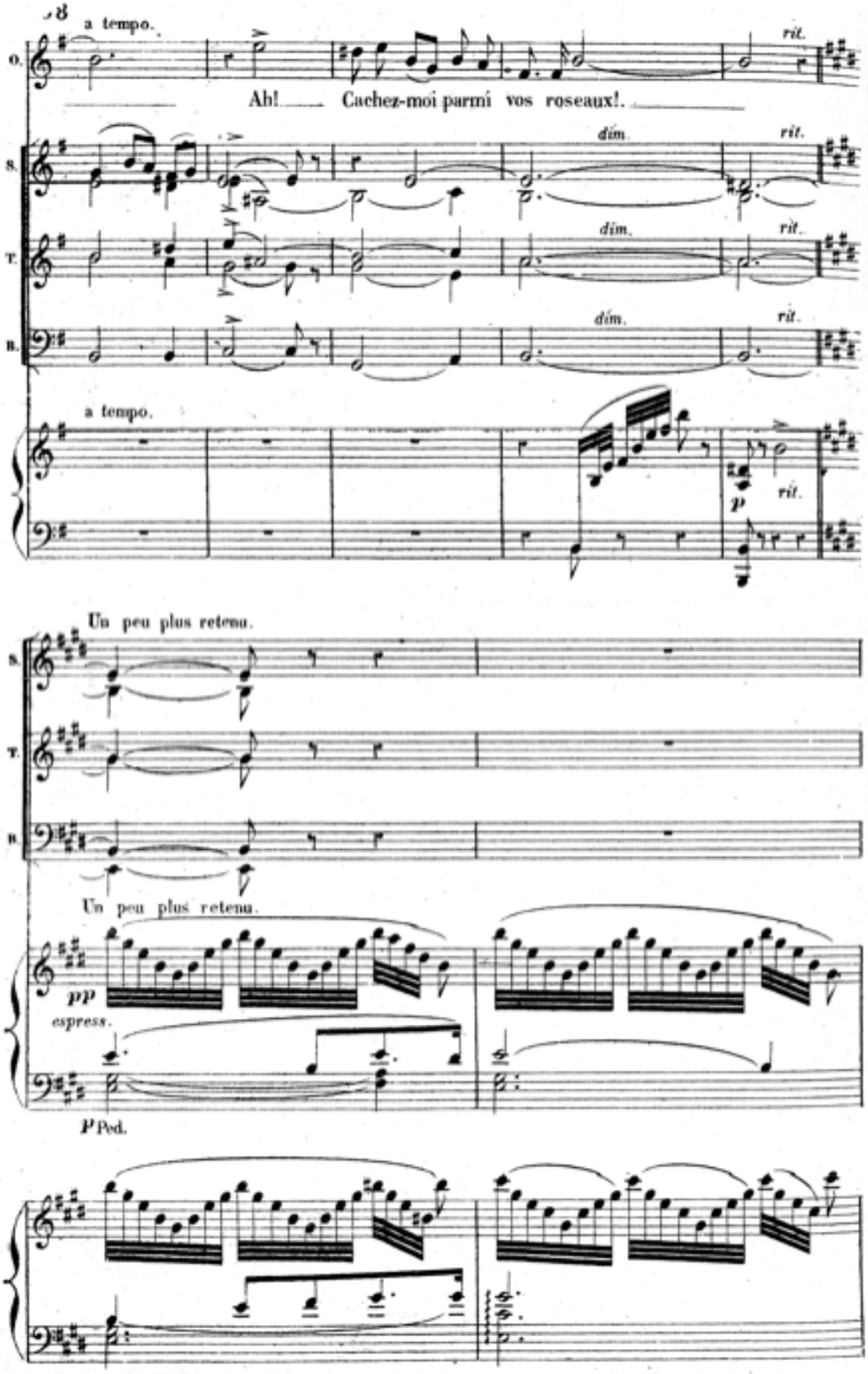
Appendix A.2: Act 4 Suicide Scene

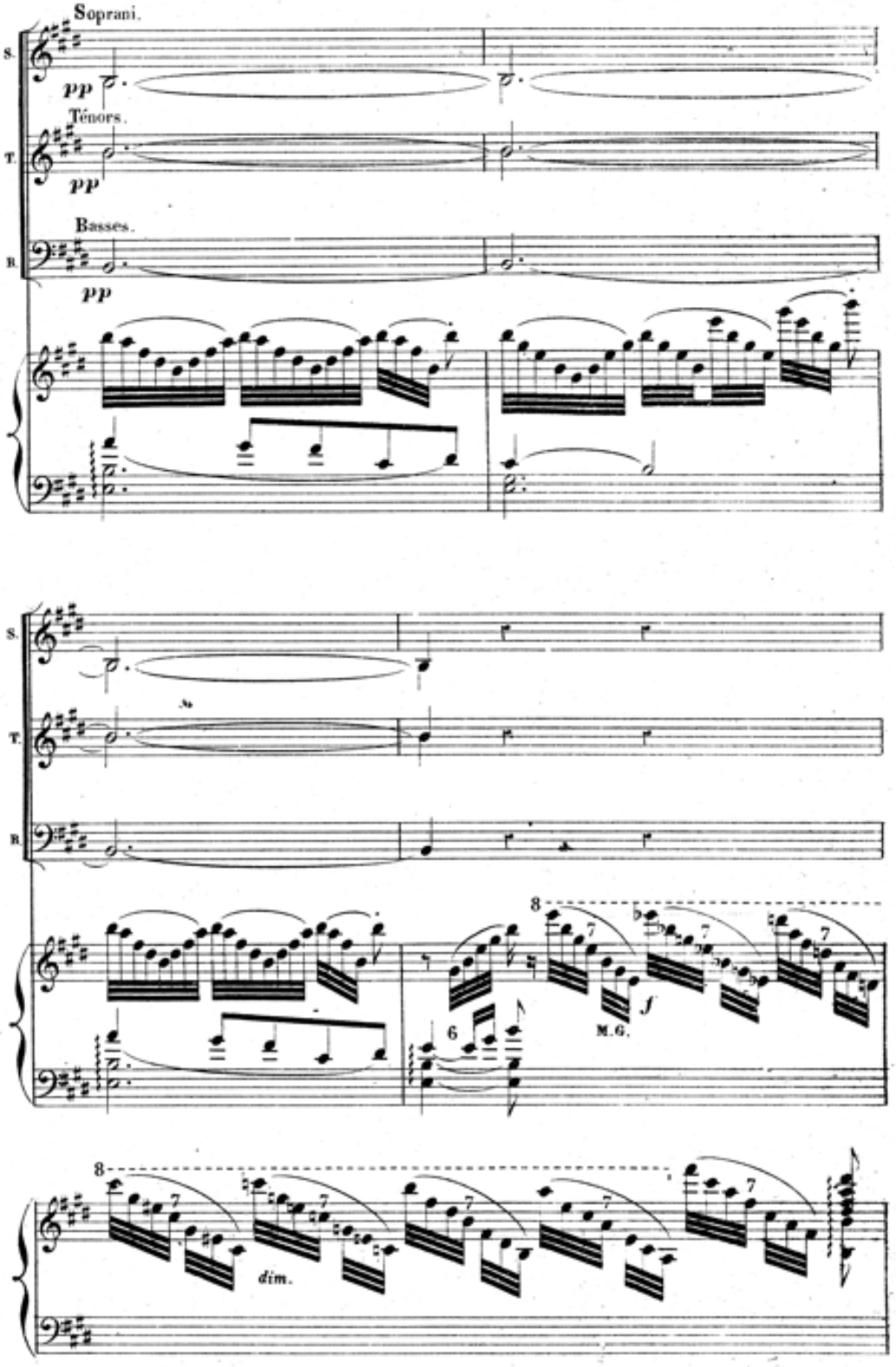


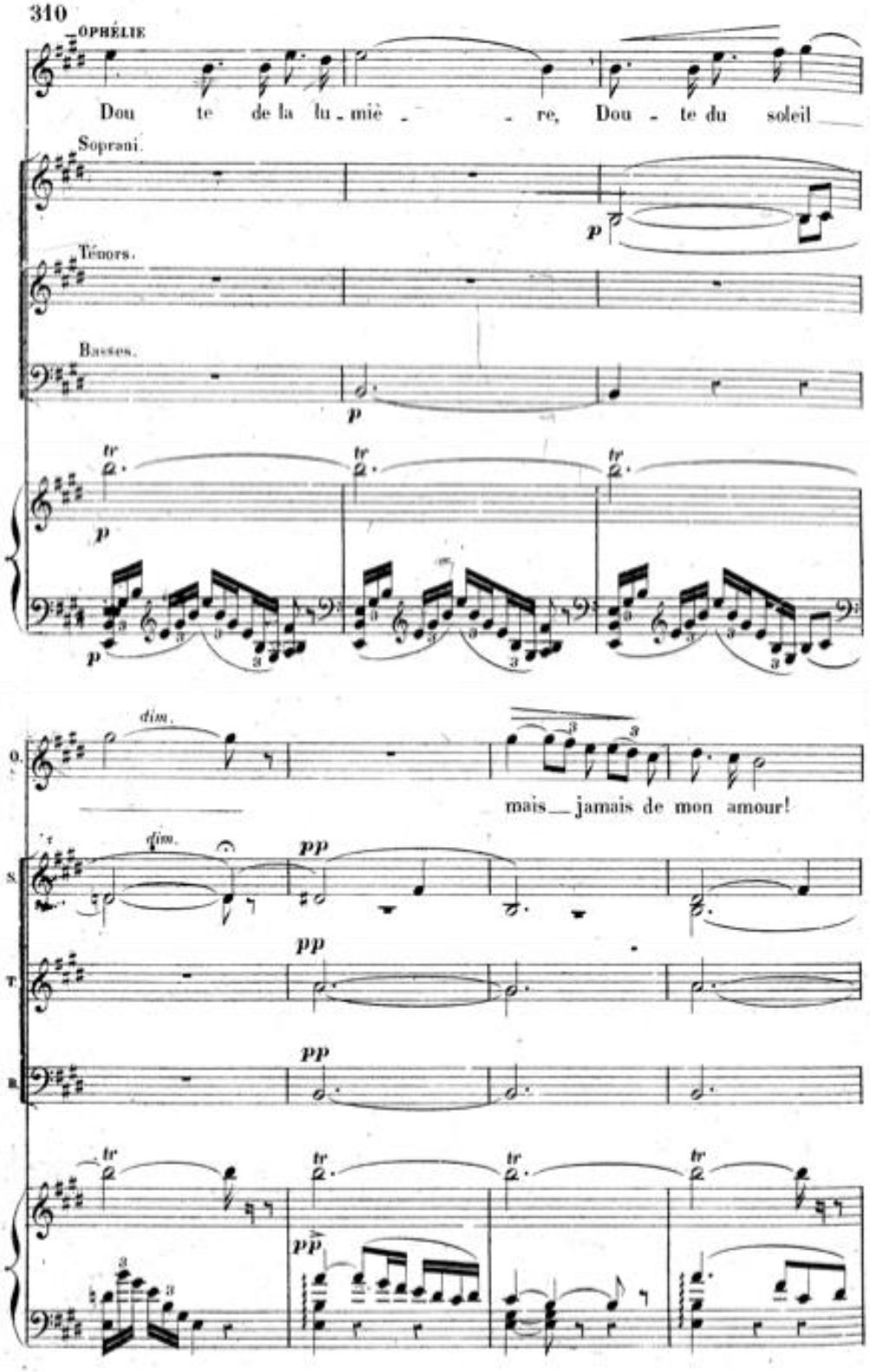

S.
T.
dim.
OPHÉLIE.
Le voilà!
1ers et 2ds Soprani.
pp
Ténors.
pp
Basses.
pp
p
p
dim.
f

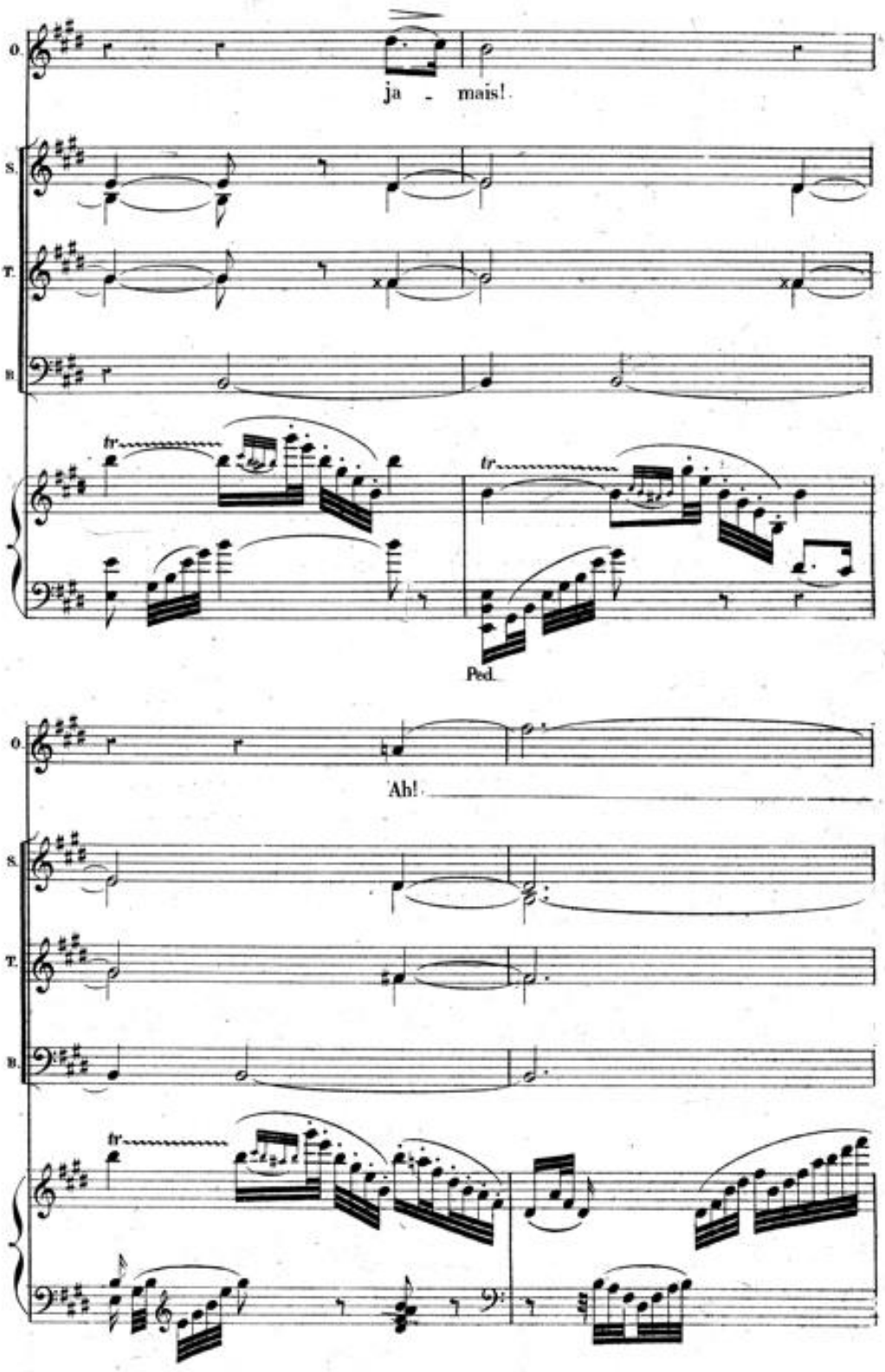

306
OPHÉLIE.
Soprani.
Je crois l'enten -
Ténors.
Basses.
- dre!
dim.
f
OPHÉLIE.
Pour le pu -
Soprani.
Ténors.
Basses.

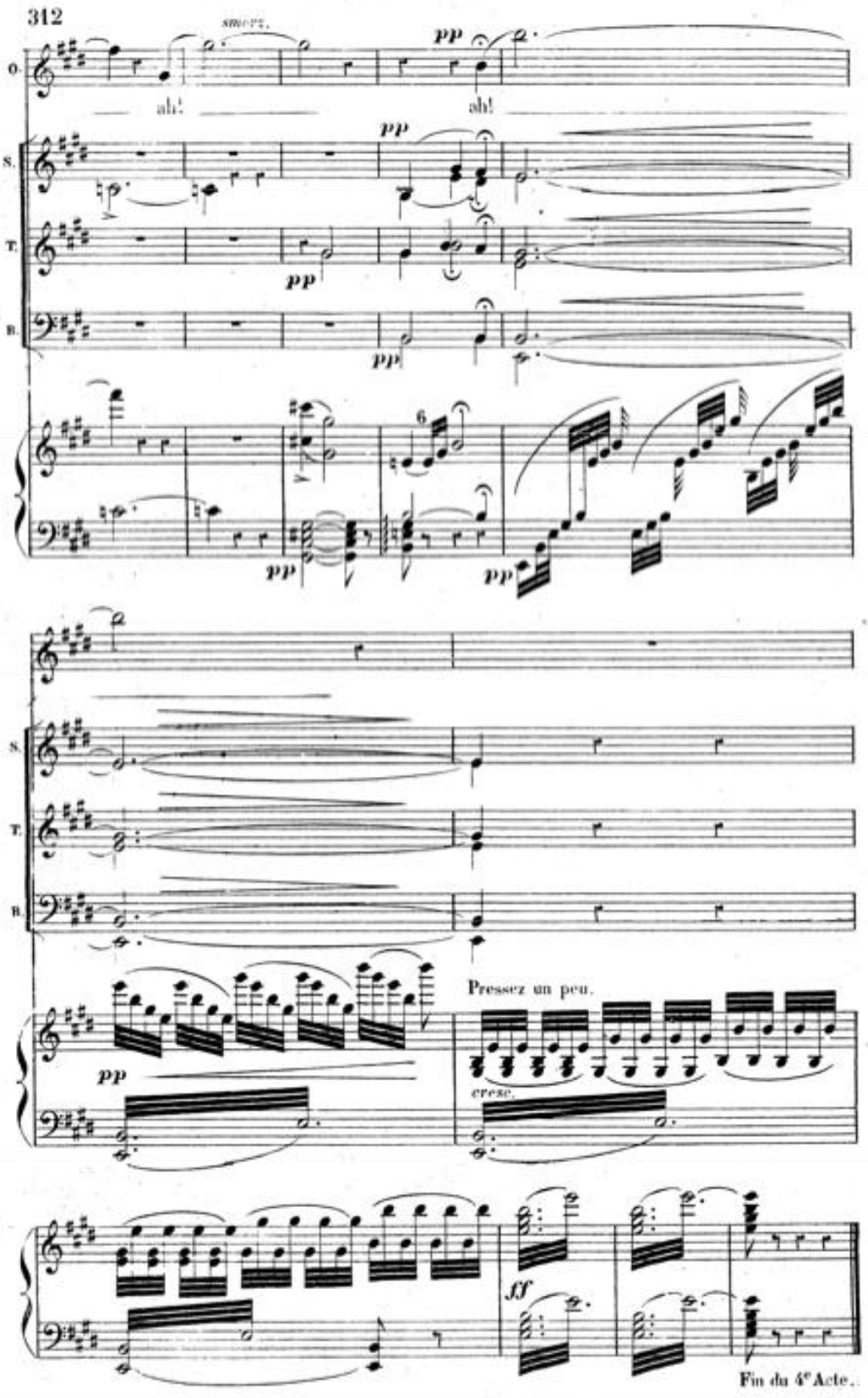

O.
S.
T.
B.
nir de s'être fait at ten dre.
dim.
f
poco rit.
Blanches Willis, nym phes des eaux,
mf
poco rit.
dim.
p


a tempo.
rit.
O.
Ah! Cachez-moi parmi vos roseaux!.
S.
dim.
rit.
T.
dim.
rit.
B.
dim.
rit.
a tempo.
p
rit.
Un peu plus retenu.
S.
T.
B.
Un peu plus retenu.
pp
espress.
P Ped.


Soprani.
S.
pp
Ténors.
T.
pp
Basses.
B.
pp
S.
T.
B.
M.G.
f
dim.


310
OPHÉLIE
Dou te de la lu - miè - re, Dou - te du soleil
Soprani.
Ténors.
Basses.
dim.
mais jamais de mon amour!
dim.
pp
pp
pp
pp


O.
ja - mais!
S.
T.
B.
tr
tr
Ped.
O.
Ah!
S.
T.
B.
tr


312
smorz.
pp
ah!
ah!
O.
S.
T.
B.
6
Pressez un peu.
cresc.
ff
Fin du 4e Acte.

Appendix B: Translations of Ophélie's Music

Appendix B.1: Translation of Act 4 Mad Scene

Translations are a combination of my own translation and the Nico Castel translations of the libretto.

Accompanied Recitative/Arioso section

À vos jeux, mes amis, permettez-moi	At your games, my friends, let me
de grâce, de prendre part!	please, take part!
Nul n'a suivi ma trace!	No one has followed me!
J'ai quitté le palais aux premiers feux du jour.	I left the palace at the first fires of day.
Des larmes de la nuit la terre était mouillée;	From the tears of the night the earth was wet
Et l'alouette, avant l'aube éveillée,	And the lark, before dawn,
planait dans l'air!	was soaring in the air!
Mais vous, pourquois vous parlez bas?	But you, why do you speak softly?
Ne me reconnaissez-vous pas?	You don't recognize me?
Hamlet est mon époux…	Hamlet is my husband
et je suis Ophélie!	And I am Ophélie!
Un doux serment nous lie,	A sweet vow binds us,
il m'a donné son coeur	He gave me his heart
en échange du mien…	in exchange for mine…
et si quel'qu'un vous dit	and if someone tells you
qu'il me fuit et m'oublie,	that he left me and forgot me
n'en croyez rien!	never believe them!
non, Hamlet est mon époux	no, Hamlet is my husband
et moi, je suis Ophélie.	and me, I am Ophélie.
S'il trahissait sa foi,	If he betrayed his faith,
j'en perdrais la raison!	I would lose my reason!

Waltz

Partagez-vous mes fleurs!	Let me share my flowers with you!
À toi cette humble branche	To you this humble branch
de romarin sauvage.	of rosemary.
À toi cette pervenche…	To you this periwinkle…

Ballade

Recit

Et maintenant écoutez ma chanson!	And now listen to my song!

A section

Pâle et blonde dort sous l'eau profonde	Pale and blonde sleeps under the deep water
la Willis au regard de feu!	The Wilis with the gaze of flame!
Que Dieu garde celui qui s'attarde	May God keep the one who tarries

dans la nuit au bord du lac bleu!	in the night at the edge of the blue lake!
Heureuse l'épouse aux bras de l'époux!	Happy is the wife in the arms of her husband!
Mon âme est jalouse d'un bonheur si doux!	My soul is jealous of such a sweet happiness!
Nymphe au regard de feu,	Nymph with the gaze of fire,
hélas! tu dors sous les eaux du lac bleu!	alas! you sleep under the waters of the blue lake!

B section
La la la…

A' section

La sirène passe et vous entraîne sous	The siren passes and drags you under
l'azur du lac endormi.	the blue of the sleeping lake.
L'air se voile,	The air mists over,
adieu blanche étoile, Adieu ciel,	goodbye white star, goodbye sky,
adieu doux ami!	goodbye sweet friend!
Heureuse l'épouse aux bras de l'époux!	Happy is the wife in the arms of her husband!
Mon âme est jalouse d'un bonheur si doux!	My soul is jealous of such a sweet happiness!
Sous les flots endormi, ah!	Sleeping under the waves, ah!
pour toujours, adieu, mon doux ami!	for forever, goodbye, my sweet friend!

B' section
La la la…

Coda

Ah! cher époux!	Ah! dear husband!
cher amant!	Dear lover!
doux aveu!	Sweet pledge!
tendre serment! Bonheur supreme!	Tender vow! Supreme bliss!
Cruel! Je t'aime!	Cruel man! I love you!
cruel, tu vois mes pleurs!	Cruel man, you see my tears!
pour toi je meurs!	For you I die!
je meurs!	I die![661]

[661] Castel et al., *French Opera Libretti*, 429–32.

Appendix B.2: Translation of Act 4 Suicide Scene

Le voilà!	There he is!
Je crois l'entendre!	I believe I hear him!
Pour le punir de s'être fait attendre,	To punish him for having made me wait,
Blanches Willis, nymphes des eaux,	White Wilis, nymphs of the water,
Ah! Cachez-moi parmi vos roseaux!	Ah! Hide me amongst your reeds!
Doute de la lumière,	Doubt the light,
Doute du soleil,	Doubt the sun,
mais jamais de mon amour!	but never doubt my love!
Jamais!	never![662]

[662] ibid., 432.

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