

John S. Powell

## HENRY GISSEY'S COSTUMES FOR *PSYCHÉ* (1671)

During carnival of 1671, on the eve of the creation of French opera, the royal court and the Parisian public flocked to the Salle des Machines in the Tuileries Palace to see *Psyché* – a production billed as a *tragi-comédie et ballet* that combined spoken tragedy (verses by Molière and Pierre Corneille), songs and choruses (lyrics by Molière and Philippe Quinault), music (by Jean-Baptiste Lully), ballet (by Pierre Beauchamps and others), and stage machines (by Carlo Vigarani). This production featured an unprecedented number of characters onstage – 300 by one count<sup>1</sup> – the identities of which had to be made immediately evident to the audience through music, dance, costumes, and accessories.<sup>2</sup> In *Psyché*, costume design serves a dramatic function: namely, to project different levels of theatricality. Costumes, accessories, and props aid in distinguishing human beings from gods, the natural from the supernatural, the celestial from the demonic, and the comic from the heroic.

As evidence of the sartorial splendor of this production, we are fortunate to have 36 of Henry Gissey's drawings that were bought by the Swedish ambassador Carl Gustav Tessin in 1742, and which now reside in the National Museum in Stockholm.<sup>3</sup> To complement these drawings, we have the *Official account of the expenses for performing Psyché in 1671*.<sup>4</sup> Signed and approved by the King and Colbert on 23 November 1672, this expense report shows that 334,645 *livres* were expended on the production. Whereas the greatest expense was for the sets and machines, a close second was for the costumes designed by Gissey and realized by Claude Fortier and Jean Baraillon, tailors to the King (see Table 1). Listed among the costume-related expenses are over 35,000 *livres* paid to costume the musicians and dancers (items 1, 2, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11), over 4,700 *livres* paid for the actors' costumes (items 3, 4, 5, 6, 7), and 800 *livres*

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<sup>1</sup> Letter of 21 January 1671 to the court of Savoy, in *Marquis de Saint-Maurice, Lettres sur la cour de Louis XIV*, Jean Lemoine ed., 2 vols., Paris, 1912, II, pp. 14-15.

<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the *livret* printed for the half-dozen performances given at the Salle des Machines during Carnival of 1671 lists by name over 250 performers (PSICHÉ | TRAGI-COMEDIE, | ET BALLET. | Dansé devant sa Majesté au mois | de Janvier 1671. | A PARIS, | Par ROBERT BALLARD, seul Impri- | meur du Roy pour la Musique, ruë S. Jean | de Beauvais, au Mont Parnasse. | M. DC. LXXI. | AVEC PRIVILEGE DE SA MAIESTÉ, henceforth *livret*).

<sup>3</sup> La Gorce first called attention to these drawings in the Nationalmuseum of Stockholm; see JÉRÔME DE LA GORCE, *Les costumes d'Henry Gissey pour les représentations de Psyché*, «Revue de l'art», LXII, 1983, pp. 39-52. See also STEPHEN VARICK DOCK, *Costume & Fashion in the Plays of Jean-Baptiste Poquelin Molière: A Seventeenth-Century Perspective*, Geneva, Slatkine, 1992, pp. 258-302.

<sup>4</sup> «État officiel de la dépense faite pour représenter *Psyché* en 1671», British Museum, Bibl. Egerton, ms. no 916, fols. 34 ff.; transcribed in ÉTIENNE-SYMPHONIEN BOUGENOT, '*Psyché* au Théâtre des Tuileries', «Bulletin historique et philologique du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques», 1891, pp. 71-80.

paid to Gissey for his drawings (item 13. Table 3 lists the extant costume designs chronologically throughout *Psyché* and provides electronic bookmarks to discussions of these costumes). From the gazetteer Charles Robinet we learn that the costumes worn by Molière's actors were afterwards given to them for use in their commercial production at the Théâtre du Palais-Royal.<sup>5</sup>

Other expenses relating to costume accessories – specifically masks, wigs, feather headdresses, costume jewelry, gloves, silk hose, garters, and shoes – and stage properties give us an idea of the amount of attention lavished on the details of this production. Also noteworthy are the eight gilded vases provided by a sculptor and used in the *Second Intermède* (item 4; see Table 2), the ass ridden by Silenus in the *Dernier Intermède* (item 4), various painted devices (item 5), and a wooden horse for the *entrée* of Mars and his warriors (item 7).

Unfortunately, we lack Gissey's drawing for the costumes worn by Psyche, a role created by Armande Béjart, the wife of Molière. One of these is depicted in the engraving by Pierre Brissart published in the 1682 edition of the *Œuvres de Molière*.<sup>6</sup> This is Act 3, where Cupid entertains Psyche in his the palace he has built for her. Psyche<sup>a1</sup> wears a courtly costume: a large headdress of plumes, a pearl necklace, a bodice of embroidered material decorated with a cluster of gems at the center of the neckline, large pendant sleeves, embroidered *retroussis*,<sup>7</sup> a floor-length embroidered skirt, and a long train.<sup>8</sup>

More information on Psyche's costume is found in the inventory that was taken of Molière's possessions after the playwright's death in 1673. His theater wardrobe contained 3 or 4 costumes worn by his wife in *Psyché*:

*Item*, the costumes for the presentation of *Psyché* consisting of a skirt of gold linen cloth decorated with three silver laces with an embroidered bodice and furnished with a tonnelet<sup>9</sup> and sleeves of gold and real silver; another skirt of silver linen cloth, the front of which is decorated with several laces of real silver with a mantle of crepe<sup>10</sup> embellished with similar lace; and another skirt of green and silver watered silk garnished with fake lace and with an embroidered bodice, the tonnelet and sleeves embellished with gold and real silver, another skirt of blue English taffeta,<sup>11</sup> decorated with four laces of real silver, appraised all together at 250 *livres*.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See CHARLES ROBINET, letter of 1 August 1671; quoted in *Le théâtre et l'opéra vus par les gazetiers Robinet et Laurent, 1670-1678*, William Brooks ed., «Biblio 17», LXXVIII, pp. 81-86.

<sup>6</sup> LES | ŒUVRES | DE | MONSIEUR | DE MOLIERE. | Reveuës, corrigées & augmentées. | *Enrichies de Figures en Taille-Douce*. A PARIS, | Chez DENYS THIERRY, ruë saint Jacques, à | l'enseigne de la Ville de Paris. | CLAUDE BARBIN, au Palais, sur le second | Per-ton de la sainte Chappelle. | ET | Chez PIERRE TRABOUILLET, au Palais, dans la | Gallerie des Prisonniers, à l'image S. Hubert; & à la | Fortune, proche le Gresse des Eaux & Forests. | M. DC. LXXXII. | AVEC PRIVILEGE DV ROY.

<sup>7</sup> *Retroussis* are the outer skirts that have been folded back over the hips and sewn in place.

<sup>8</sup> [LINK](#)

<sup>9</sup> A tonnelet is the antique Roman theater costume worn by tragic actors representing emperors; it resembles a knee-length skirt or kilt usually of gold or silver cloth.

<sup>10</sup> Crepe is a sort of slightly crimped and transparent fabric made of raw gummed silk.

<sup>11</sup> Taffeta is an even, thin fabric of silk used to make linings or light garments, coifs, scarves, and ribbons.

<sup>12</sup> «*Item*, les habitz pour la representation de *Psychée*, concistans en une juppe de toile d'or garnie de trois dantelles d'argent avecq un corps en broderie et garni d'un tonnelet et manches

A subsequent entry accounts for three cluster of plumes that accompany those costumes:

*Item*, three clusters of plumes, one black and the two others of different colors used in the costumes for *Psyché*, appraised at twenty *livres*.<sup>13</sup>

During most of the *tragi-comédie et ballet* Cupid appeared on-stage not as the naked child depicted in Brissart's engraving,<sup>14</sup> but rather in the guise of a courtly young man. The adult Cupid<sup>15</sup> was played by Michel Baron, Molière 18-year-old protégé. His costume with its wings makes it immediately clear that Cupid is no ordinary mortal. The play's text makes reference to Cupid's traditional accessories: the bow and the arrows in his hands, and the quiver of arrows on his back. Gissey's drawing shows him dressed in a tonnelet, the antique Roman theater costume traditionally worn by tragic actors.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, we see various other motifs that identify the character as the God of Love – such as the flaming hearts that adorn his headband, collar, sleeves, and belt.

Cupid's confidant is Zephyr,<sup>16</sup> a comic role created by Molière. His *costume à l'antique* associates him with the gods of mythology, while the costume accessories suggest flight: four gossamer wings attached to his shoulders, feathers on the headband, around the collar, on the arms, on the top and edges of the tonnelet, and at the knees.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, his costume is adorned by an inverted cross of flowers on the bodice, garlands of flowers on the shoulders, elbows, wrists, and knees, and a crown of flowers that he holds in his right hand. Below the drawing, Gissey's notes read:

For the collar, there will be a small silk ruff decorated with gold and silver lace. The headdress will be a headband of natural plumes with wing feathers, a belt, and arm band. The bodice is of white satin re-embroidered with colored flowers. The tonnelet will be the same. All the wings will be of silver-spangled gauze.<sup>17</sup>

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d'or et d'argent fin, une autre jupe de toile d'argent dont le devant garny de plusieurs dantelles d'argent fin avecq une mante de cresse garny de pareille dantelle et une autre jupe de moire verte et argent, garnye de dantelle fausse avecq le corps en broderie, le tonnellet et les manches garnis d'or et d'argent fin, une autre jupe de taffetas d'Angleterre bleu, garny de quatre dantelles d'argent fin, prisé le tout ensemble deux cens cinquante livres». «Inventaire après décès de Molière», in MADELEINE JURGENS and ELISABETH MAXFIELD-MILLER, *Cent ans de recherches sur Molière, sur sa famille, et sur les comédiens de sa troupe*, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1963, pp. 554-584: p. 570.

<sup>13</sup> «*Item*, trois bouquetz de plumes, l'un noir et les deux autres de differentes couleurs servants aux habitz de *Psychée*, prisées vingt livres». See MADELEINE JURGENS and ELISABETH MAXFIELD-MILLER, *Cent ans de recherches sur Molière*, cit., p. 573.

<sup>14</sup> The child Cupid who appears in the Prologue was played by the 11 year-old Pierre La Thorillière, son of the actor François Le Noir, sieur de La Thorillière who played Psyche's father. Brissart's frontispiece depicts the famous scene when Psyche lights an oil lamp to discover the identity of her lover, only to have him fly off when he is discovered.

<sup>15</sup> [LINK](#)

<sup>16</sup> [LINK](#)

<sup>17</sup> «Pour le colle de peultitte fraise de toile de soye avec une dantelle or et argen. La coiffure cera un bandeau de plume naturelle avec les ellérons, centure et brassard. Le corp de satin blan

## THE SARTORIAL SPLENDOR OF THE GODS

So far, we may posit that fundamental costume design distinguishes mortals from gods: 17<sup>th</sup>-century courtly dress for mortals, Roman-style *costumes à l'antique* for gods. This holds true for most of the Olympian gods – Apollo, Bacchus, Mars, and Jupiter – that appear in the *Dernier Intermède*.<sup>18</sup> For Apollo,<sup>19</sup> god of light and the sun, god of poetry, music, and protector of the muses, the rays of the sun form the principal motive of his costume:<sup>a4</sup> these can be seen on his headdress, around his collar, on his shoulders, and upon his *tonnelet*.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, he is shown holding a tall bow in his right hand, with a quiver of arrows on his back – arrows that both symbolize the sun's rays while reminding us that Apollo is also the God of Archery.

The costume of Bacchus,<sup>21</sup> god of the grape harvest, is covered with small bunches of grapes and grapevines, which also adorn the back of his knees and the top of his ankle boots.<sup>a5</sup> In his right hand he holds a large goblet of wine to celebrate «the juice of the arbor»; in his left is a thyrsus<sup>22</sup> covered with entwined grapevines.<sup>23</sup> The top of his double *tonnelet* and the collar are decorated with lambrequins.<sup>24</sup> On his right shoulder rests a tiger's head, reminding us that Bacchus's chariot was supposedly drawn by exotic beasts – such as tigers,

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rebrodé de fleur collarée. Le tonnellet cera de mesme. Tout les aylle ceront de gase d'argen pailletée». Noted on the drawing cited in footnote 16.

<sup>18</sup> This choice of gods perhaps requires some explanation. The presence of Apollo was obvious: he was the god of music, poetry, and dance, and the director of the choir of muses. He was also a god of light and of the sun, an emblem closely identified with Louis XIV. Bacchus was not only the god of wine and the fertility of nature, but was also the patron god of the Greek stage. His faithful companion and teacher Silenus was a woodland god closely connected to the satyrs, and was usually depicted as drunk and carried on an ass. The Maenads were women under the ecstatic spell of Bacchus, while the presence of Egyptians remind us of Bacchus's having conquered the Indes. Momus, the god of mockery, faultfinding, and unfair criticism, was also the patron of writers and poets; his criticism of the gods eventually led to his downfall and banishment from Olympus. The arrival of Mars and his warriors hearkens back to the Prologue, which celebrated the peace brought by Louis XIV and the return of spring. Mars was not only associated with war and death, but also with spring, of nature, and fertility.

<sup>19</sup> According to the *livret* printed for the court performances, Apollo was performed by Monsieur Langeais – who was probably François Langer (or Langez), *basse-contre* in the *Chapelle royale* from 1668.

<sup>20</sup> [LINK](#)

<sup>21</sup> According to the *livret*, Bacchus was sung by «Monsieur Gaye» – perhaps Jean Gaye (1640-1701), a versatile singer who sang tenor, haute-contre, and soprano roles in the *comédies-ballets*, and who in 1673 was engaged as an *haute-contre* for Lully's Académie-Royale de Musique.

<sup>22</sup> A thyrsus or thyrsos was a fennel staff covered with ivy vines and leaves and topped with a pine cone, which were carried by Dionysus and his followers. The thyrsus was a sacred instrument at religious rituals and *fêtes*. It is a composite symbol of the forest (pine cone) and the farm (fennel), and symbolizes a phallus – with the fennel representing the shaft of the penis and the pinecone representing the «seed» issuing forth.

<sup>23</sup> [LINK](#)

<sup>24</sup> Lambrequins are bands of fabric that served as an ornament for the epaulettes and the bottom of the coat-armor of the Greeks and Romans, usually of gold or silver cloth decorated with long bands of embroidery.

leopards, panthers, or lions. A verbal description (mistakenly pasted below the drawing of Palaemon's costume) gives further details of Bacchus's costume:

A silk collar decorated with gold and silver lace. The headdress and ankle-boots will be like the costume, that is to say, embroidered with silver over gold. The tiger's skin will be lined with light satin. The outer garment will be crimson-red, embroidered with silver and all the lambrequins will be of gold embroidered with silver and garnished with rubies. The under vest<sup>25</sup> is aurora embroidered with silver. The opening will be of silk cloth, and the sleeves will extend to the wrists. The ensemble will be decorated all over with grapevines, grapes, and fringes as seen in the drawing.<sup>26</sup>

Mars,<sup>27</sup> god of war, wears magnificent, Roman-style armor<sup>a6</sup> consisting of a helmet with a pointed visor adorned with plumes along the crest, a breastplate decorated with scales, a stomacher<sup>28</sup> decorated with scrollwork, and a tonnelet decorated with lambrequins, a double row of bullion fringe,<sup>29</sup> and trimmed with small bells.<sup>30</sup> Mars's right arm is passed through the handles of a large oval shield, and he wears a long sword on the left side of his *tonnelet*. Gissey provided the following instructions to the tailors:

A silk cravat with silver lace. The helmet of silver enriched with gold. All the breastplate decorated with the same gold. The sleeves and *tonnelet* of flame-colored satin. The fishscale decorations of the breastplate and shoulders of the same color – embroidered with silver. All the lambrequins will be of silver embroidered with gold. The ankle-boots are flame-colored.<sup>31</sup>

Jupiter<sup>32</sup> is easily recognized by the eagle at his feet, by the bolt of lightning that he grasps in his right hand, and by his royal crown adorned with a

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<sup>25</sup> The *veste* is a kind of camisole ordinarily made of silk cloth and descends to the mid-thigh, with buttons the length of the front and a pocket on each side.

<sup>26</sup> «Une cravatte de toile de soye avec une dantelle or et argen. La coiffure et les brodequin ceront comme l'abit, c'est à dire brodé d'argen sur l'or. La peau de tigre cera doublé de satin clair. L'abit de dessus rouge cramoisi brodé d'argen et tout les lambrequins d'or brodé d'argen garnis de rubis. La veste de decoub orore brodée d'argen. La finte cera de toile de soye et les manche jusqu'o poignait. Le tout enrichi de feuille de vigne et raisain, et de frange comme il paraît au dessin». Noted on the drawing cited in footnote 59.

<sup>27</sup> According to the *livret*, Mars was sung by «Monsieur Estival» – no doubt Guillaume d'Estival (d. 1678), a bass who was *ordinaire de la Musique du roi* from 1663 and *chantre de la Chambre et de la Chapelle* from 1664.

<sup>28</sup> A stomacher is a decorated triangular panel that fills in the front opening of a woman's gown or bodice.

<sup>29</sup> Bullion is a thick trimming of cord covered with gold or silver thread.

<sup>30</sup> [LINK](#)

<sup>31</sup> «Une cravatte de toile de soye avec une dentelle d'argen. Le casque d'argen enrichy d'or. Tout le cor de même rebrodé d'or. Les manche a vestir et le tonelet de satin couleur de feu. Les peutittes escaille des entournur des espolle et celle du busque de mesme couleur, brodées d'argen. Tous les lembrequins ceront d'argen brodé d'or. Les brodequins couleur de feu». Noted on the drawing cited in footnote 30.

<sup>32</sup> Jupiter was played by the actor Philibert Gassot, dit Du Croisy (1626-1695).

sumptuous bouquet of feathers symbolizing his sovereignty among the gods.<sup>a7</sup> He is dressed as a Roman general, with a great cloak falling from his shoulders to the ground in large folds.<sup>33</sup>

The one god who stands fashionably apart from the Olympian pantheon is Momus,<sup>34</sup> the god of satire and mockery.<sup>a8</sup> His costume appears modern than those worn by the other gods, and yet by 1670 standards it would seem a bit old-fashioned.<sup>35</sup> Consisting of a flat hat decorated with some plumes and feathers, a ruff collar, a doublet<sup>36</sup> held together by a single button, leg-of-mutton decorations on the shoulders, a knee-length cape, and breeches,<sup>37</sup> this outfit would have been more in style at the court Louis XIII, or even that of Henry IV. In his right hand Momus holds a thyrsus decorated with vines and double cones.<sup>38</sup> Gissey's instructions to the tailors, written below the image, indicate that flame is the dominant color of Momus's costume:

The mantle will be flame-colored embroidered with silver and lined with the same silver. The headdress will be of gold brocade lined with flame, the same color as the opening [of the doublet]. The upper sleeves, the doublet, and the breeches will be green embroidered with silver, and the lapels of the breeches, a kind of lambrequin, will be aurora yellow embroidered with silver, as will the sleeves, as far as the elbows. The lapels will be lined with silver.<sup>39</sup>

The *Dernier Intermède* concludes with a sumptuous *ballet à entrées* inspired, as Manuel Couvreur proposes, by antique drama.<sup>40</sup> It is organized in a series of *entrées* in which each god comes on-stage with his entourage of demi-gods, woodland creatures, and, in the case of Momus, *commedia dell'arte* characters.

Accompanying Apollo are nine singing muses – of which one, Urania, is depicted in Gissey's drawings.<sup>41</sup> The globe in her right hand identifies her as the muse of astronomy and astrology.<sup>a9</sup> Unlike Momus's old-fashioned garb, Urania's headdress and costume reflect the fashions of the 1670s: a plumed headdress with a train of gauze, a long dress with a V-shaped bodice, and a

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<sup>33</sup> [LINK](#)

<sup>34</sup> According to the *livret*, Momus was played by Monsieur Morel – perhaps Antoine Morel (d. 1711), a *basse* in the Musique de la Chambre from 1673.

<sup>35</sup> [LINK](#)

<sup>36</sup> A doublet is a man's snug-fitting buttoned jacket that is fitted and shaped to the man's body.

<sup>37</sup> Breeches are an item of clothing covering the body from the waist down, with separate coverings for each leg, usually stopping just below the knee.

<sup>38</sup> La Gorce reproduces a later drawing of Momus by Berain from the National Museum in Stockholm, which bears similarities with Gissey's drawing; see JÉRÔME DE LA GORCE, *Les costumes d'Henry Gissey, cit.*, p. 49.

<sup>39</sup> «Le manteau cera de feu brodé d'argen et doublé de meme argen. La coiffure brocar d'or doublé de feu, mesme coulleur que cera la finte. Les aut de manche, le corp et les chosse ceront vert brodé d'argen et les revvers des chosse en manier de lambrequin ceront aurore brodé d'argen, de meme que ceront les manchons, jusque au coude. Le revers doublé d'argen». Noted on the drawing cited in footnote 35.

<sup>40</sup> MANUEL COUVREUR, *Jean-Baptiste Lully: musique et dramaturgie au service du Prince, Bruxelles*, M. Volkar, 1992, p. 257

<sup>41</sup> [LINK](#)

long, floor-length skirt – over which is worn a puckered peplum.<sup>42</sup> Over this she wears a long mantle<sup>43</sup> with pendant sleeves attached at each shoulder with brooches.

Also accompanying Apollo are ten of the Arts,<sup>a10</sup> dressed as gallantly dressed shepherds «to appear more attractive in this festivity».<sup>44</sup> These roles were portrayed by professional dancers headed by the acclaimed Pierre Beauchamps. Stephen Dock states that «although shepherds' costumes were appropriate for pastoral settings and for the expression of emotion (cf. *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* I,I; 717-18), it appears that in this instance Molière was avoiding the expense of having an ornate costume made for each of the Arts».<sup>45</sup> This however seems unlikely, given the extraordinary amount of money that was lavished on this production.

Bacchus is accompanied by his tutor<sup>a11</sup> and faithful companion Silenus,<sup>46</sup> who sits astride a life-size sculpture of an ass draped with garlands of vines.<sup>47</sup> His bald pate is adorned with a crown of ivy that rests on his horse ears. The simple costume is decorated with garlands, while his hair-covered breeches and bare feet confirm Silenus as leader of the satyrs who accompany him. A notorious drunkard, Silenus holds a large wine goblet in his right hand, while in his left hand he holds a thyrsus to which a gourd is attached. Another larger gourd decorated with garlands is attached to his waist. Silenus usually appeared drunk, and had to be supported by satyrs. Gissey's drawings depicts two of these satyrs playing pastoral musical instruments: one playing an oboe<sup>a12</sup> and the other<sup>a13</sup> an unidentified wind instrument.<sup>48</sup>

Momus leads his company of clowns, who are also dressed in a more modern style than the followers of the other gods. Gissey's drawing shows in profile a Polichinelle,<sup>49</sup> who wears a tall hat<sup>a14</sup> ornamented with tall feathers at the back, a ruff collar, and a long striped doublet that is closed at the front by large buttons.<sup>50</sup> In his right hand he holds a sistrum decorated with bells on either side, which he strikes with the fire tongs in his left hand.

Mars leads a band of warriors dressed in Roman military costumes, which include trumpeters,<sup>a15</sup> pike-bearers,<sup>a16</sup> and ensign-bearers.<sup>51</sup> Each is dressed differently, which points to Gissey's willingness to individualize his costumes. The trumpeter wears great, slitted epaulettes, while the pike-bearer wears a

<sup>42</sup> A peplum is a flared ruffle attached to the waste of a jacket.

<sup>43</sup> A mantle is a long, loose cape-like cloak worn over indoor clothing to serve as an overcoat to protect oneself from the weather.

<sup>44</sup> «Les Arts travesties en Bergers Galants pour paroistre avec plus d'agrément dans cette Feste, commencent les Premiers à dancier» (*livret*, p. 34). [LINK](#)

<sup>45</sup> STEPHEN VARICK DOCK, *Costume & Fashion in the Plays of Jean-Baptiste Poquelin Molière*, cit., p. 276, fn. 44.

<sup>46</sup> According to the *livret*, the role of Silenus was sung by «Monsieur Blondel» who sang tenor roles in most of the Molière-Lully *comédies-ballets* of the 1660s.

<sup>47</sup> [LINK](#)

<sup>48</sup> [LINK](#) and [LINK](#)

<sup>49</sup> According to the *livret*, this role was performed by «La Montagne» – probably the dancer Pierre de la Montagne, who later served as *maître de danse* at the Hôtel de Guénégaud.

<sup>50</sup> [LINK](#)

<sup>51</sup> [LINK](#) and [LINK](#). The latter were portrayed by court dancers and ballet masters.

breastplate with *garde-collets* – raised plates or ridges on the shoulder piece of armor to protect the neck. His instructions to the tailors provide further details:

A silk collar decorated with gold and silver lace. The helmet and arms will be silver decorated with gold. The sleeves and the tonnelet will be of black satin trimmed with flame-colored satin, the whole embroidered with gold. The opening and the sleeves [will be] of silk. The bell-shaped tassels will be a combination of silver, gold, and black. The sleeves of the other will be decorated with gold and silver lace.<sup>52</sup>

#### COSTUME ATTRIBUTES OF THE LESSER DEITIES AND MORTALS

Whereas the Olympian gods dominate the *Dernier Intermède*, the Prologue to *Psyché* introduces us to Roman gods and goddesses of nature. For Flora,<sup>53</sup> the Roman goddess of flowers and the season of spring,<sup>54</sup> flowers adorn her headdress, sleeves, and tonnelet; floral garters also encircle her legs, and adorn her shoe-buckles.<sup>54</sup> The costumes of Flora's companions are similar to hers.<sup>55</sup> The nymphs who accompanied Flora were played by 1 female (Mlle Des-Fronteaux) and 5 males (MM. Gingan cadet, Langeais, Gillet, Oudot, & Jannot); judging by the bust, this latter drawing<sup>56</sup> would seem to depict the costume of one of the male nymphs *in travesti*.

Vertumnus,<sup>56</sup> the Roman god of seasons, gardens, and fruit trees,<sup>57</sup> is represented here as a gardener holding a spade.<sup>57</sup> His hat is decorated with fruit and leaves at the front, and plumes at the rear, while his sleeves are leg-of-lamb overlaid with pierced material and short lambrequins, and with large ruffs at the elbows. The bodice has a plain square top, and a tight-fitting lower section with decorations of gimp placed on the bias and bunches of leaves covering the vertical opening. Below that he wears a short tonnelet decorated at the top with scalloped lambrequins with fruit pompons, and trimmed at the lower hem with ears of wheat. His knees and ankles are encircled with garlands of fruits and leaves.

The aquatic demi-gods have naturalistic costumes that appear to be

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<sup>52</sup> «Une cravatte de toile de soye avec une dentelle or et argen. Le casque et les armes ceront d'argen enrichi d'or. Les manche a vestir et le tonnellet ceront de satin noir fon de satin couleur de feu, le tout brodé d'argen. La finte et les manche de toile de soye. Les campane ceront meslée d'argen, or et noire. Tout les manche de l'autre ceront garni de dentell or et argen». Noted on the first drawing cited in footnote 51.

<sup>53</sup> According to the *livret*, this role was sung by «Mlle Hilaire» – Hilaire Dupuis (1625-1709) from 1659 *musicienne ordinaire de la Chambre du roi*.

<sup>54</sup> [LINK](#)

<sup>55</sup> [LINK](#)

<sup>56</sup> According to the *livret*, this role was sung by «Monsieur de la Grille» – probably Dominique Normandin, *dit La Grille*, who held the position *chantre de la Musique de la chambre* from 1664.

<sup>57</sup> [LINK](#). La Gorce reproduces a later engraving by Jean Doliver entitled «Habit de Jardinier» that was modeled on Gissey's drawing; see JÉRÔME DE LA GORCE, *Les costumes d'Henry Gissey*, cit., p. 43.



adorned with sea plants. The sea god <sup>a20</sup> Palaemon<sup>58</sup> wears a headdress adorned with rows of small sea shells and sea plants and topped with plumes.<sup>59</sup> His doublet, sleeves, and tonnelet are also covered with sea plants, with rows of seashells on the collar, the opening of the doublet, the waist, the hem of the tonnelet, at the knees, and on the buckle of his shoes. Palaemon holds a sea shell in his right hand, and a sea plant in his left. The directions to the tailors (mistakenly) placed below this drawing do not pertain to the costume of Palaemon, but rather to that of Bacchus.

An unnamed river god <sup>a21</sup> appears in act 4, sc. 5, when Psyche is about to throw herself in a river. According to the scenic description printed in the *livret*, «the river god appears seated on a pile of rushes and reeds and leaning on a large urn, which emits the water of a large spring».<sup>60</sup> His costume bears some resemblance to that of Palaemon's – however, it is adorned by only one shell in his headdress, and is otherwise made up entirely of water plants.<sup>61</sup> To the left of the god is an urn, while in his left hand he holds an oar – a symbol of his profession.

Gissey's most striking costume designs were seen in Psyche's funeral cortege, as dramatized in the *Premier Intermède*. Here the set changes to «frightful rocks, with a terrible solitude in the distance», thereby depicting the desert where Psyche is to be sacrificed as per the command of the Oracle. A troop of mourners comes to lament Psyche's impending death with «touching laments» and «lugubrious concerts», while others express their distress «by all of the indications of the most violent despair».<sup>62</sup> Gissey's designs capture the overall desolation of the scene. The costumes, as well as the music and dance, were clearly inspired by funeral processions of Greek antiquity.<sup>63</sup> The boughs and drapes around the mourner's headdress,<sup>a22</sup> the overall draped effect of his costume, and the branch he holds in his left hand – all signal a funeral garment.<sup>64</sup> The mourner wears a long mantle with scalloped edges that opens at the sternum to reveal a long shirt worn over the bodice and tonnelet. Gissey's instructions to the tailors are included below the image:

The entire over-garment will be flame-colored and bedecked with gold and sil-

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<sup>58</sup> According to the *livret*, this role was sung by «Monsieur Gaye» – probably the court singer Jean Gaye (1640-1701).

<sup>59</sup> [LINK](#)

<sup>60</sup> «Le Dieu du Fleuve paroist assis sur un amas de Ioncs & de Roseaux, & apuyé sur une grande Vrne d'où sort une grosse source d'eau» (*livret*, p. 16).

<sup>61</sup> [LINK](#)

<sup>62</sup> The complete passage reads: «La Scene change en des Rochers affreux, & fait voir en éloignement une effroyable Solitude. C'est dans ce Desert que Psiché doit estre exposée pour obeir à l'Oracle. Vne Troupe de Personnes affligées y viennent deplorer sa disgrâce. Vne Partie de cette Troupe desolée témoigne sa pitié par des Plaintes touchantes, & par des Concerts lugubres, & l'Autre exprime sa desolation par toutes les marques du plus violent desespoir» (*livret*, p. 14).

<sup>63</sup> [LINK](#)

<sup>64</sup> According to the *livret*, the 2 singing male mourners were Langeais and Morel, who sang the roles of Apollo and Momus in the *Dernier Intermède*; the 12 dancing mourners were all court dancers and ballet masters.

ver. The vest and under-finte will be green embellished with silver and over the entire costume will be a large mantle with pendant sleeves of black, striped crepe and the edges will be embellished with a wide silver lace over a yellow background delineated with scales. The ankle-boots will be flame-colored.<sup>65</sup>

Another drawing depicts a male flutist dressed as a priestess,<sup>66</sup> thus evoking the aulos players that headed funeral processions in antiquity.<sup>63</sup> Like the mourner, the flutist wears a headdress of fronds, a scarf that passes through the headdress and tied at the sternum, and a floor-length mantle with scalloped edges.<sup>67</sup> His costume features large pendant sleeves, and an embroidered tonnelet with a fringed hem worn over a full-length skirt. A third drawing depicts the *femme désolée*<sup>64</sup> who sang Lully's famous Italian lament.<sup>68</sup> She wears a headdress of boughs and drapes, a floor-length mantle, pendant sleeves, and a long shirt over the bodice and tonnelet. In her right hand she holds a branch, and in her left hand a handkerchief – a common prop to suggest the presence of tears on-stage.<sup>69</sup>

Gissey's costume designs are designed to evoke a succession of moods. The *Second Intermède* is comic to the same extent that the *Premier Intermède* is heart-wrenching. Psyche, spirited away at the eleventh hour of her sacrifice by some zephyrs, is taken to a magnificent palace that Cupid is having built for her. In the *Second Intermède* eight cyclops<sup>70</sup> and eight fairies work on gold and silver vases (the ones mentioned in Table 2, item 4, in the «Official account of the expenses») to adorn her palace.<sup>71</sup> Gissey's drawing<sup>65</sup> of a cyclops shows the single eye in the middle of his forehead.<sup>72</sup> Wearing a stocking hat with cockscomb brim, the cyclops's beard and long mustache endows him with an air of age and rusticity. His costume is blue-collar simplicity: a doublet, rolled up sleeves, breeches, and a knee-length apron with a belt around his waist. Over his right shoulder the Cyclops holds a long paddle, while various blacksmith's tools (a hammer and tongs) are held by his belt.

The *Quatrième Intermède* takes us to Hades, where Venus has sent Psyche

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<sup>65</sup> «Tout le vestement de dessus [sic] sera de couleur de feu chamaré d'or et d'argen. La veste et finte de dessous sera verte enrichie d'argent et par dessus tout l'habit sera un grant manteau avec les manche pantante de crepe noire rayé et les bor enrichie d'une grande dantelle d'argen sur un font jonne coupé en escaille. Les brodequins couleur de feu». Noted on the drawing cited in footnote 63.

<sup>66</sup> According to the *livret*, the 10 flutists consisted of members of the *Musique de Chambre* and *Écurie*.

<sup>67</sup> [LINK](#)

<sup>68</sup> According to the *livret*, this role was sung by «Mlle Hilaire», who also sang the role of Flora in the Prologue.

<sup>69</sup> [LINK](#)

<sup>70</sup> According to the *livret*, the 8 cyclops were all performed by court dancer and ballet masters.

<sup>71</sup> «Le Theatre se change en une Cour magnifique coupée dans le fonds par un grand Vestibule qui est soustenu par des Colonnes extremement enrichies. On void au travers de ce Vestibule, un Palais pompeux & brillant que l'Amour a destiné pour Psyché. Des Cyclopes travaillent en diligence pour achever de grands Vases d'or, que des Fées leur apportent, & qui doivent estre de nouveaux Ornaments du Palais de l'Amour» (*livret*, p. 18).

<sup>72</sup> [LINK](#)

to receive a box of unknown content from Persephone.<sup>73</sup> This horrific *enfer* scene had been used nine years earlier in the 1662 production of Cavalli's *Ercole amante*.<sup>74</sup> Here, twelve dancing furies rejoice at Venus's anger and her forthcoming revenge over Psyche.<sup>75</sup> Gissey's costume design for one of the furies<sup>a26</sup> is dominated by two motifs: flames and snakes.<sup>76</sup> Snakes appear in her hair and around her collar, shoulders, and waist, while in her hands she brandishes bunches of snakes. She wears a terrifying «scream» mask, with an open mouth and drooping eyebrows. Her tunic and tonnelet are covered in golden flames, which set the snakes in visual relief while contributing to the frightful aspect of this infernal deity. Gissey's instructions describe other details:

The headdress will be of horsehair, snakes, and flames. The entire costume will be of black satin covered with flames. The openings of the sleeves and belt will be decorated with flames and snakes. The undergarment will be of black crepe enriched with gold and flame. The sleeves will be of brown flesh.<sup>77</sup>

Accompanying these twelve furies are «four goblins making perilous leaps».<sup>78</sup> The one shown here<sup>a27</sup> wears a headdress of flames and a grimacing mask, with flames shooting out of his headdress.<sup>79</sup> His costume consists of a doublet and tonnelet with diamond-patterned motifs, and knee breeches – all of which recall the costumes of jesters and fools. In his left hand he holds a spinning toy decorated with bells, which he operates by pulling a string with his right hand. Small bells also decorate the headband, the collar, the sleeves, the body, the knees, and the ankles. No doubt his leaps created a frightening jangle of noise, thereby giving this costume a sonic dimension.

*Psyché* concludes with the Olympian wedding, which is celebrated in a grand *ballet à entrées*. According to the printed *livret*:

The stage changes and represents the heavens. The great palace of Jupiter de-

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<sup>73</sup> «La Scene represente les Enfers. On y void une Mer toute de feu dont les flots sont dans une perpetuelle agitation. Cette Mer effroyable est bornée par des Ruïnes enflamées, & au milieu de ses Flots agitez, au travers d'une Gueule affreuse, paroist le Palais Infernal de Pluton» (*livret*, p. 16).

<sup>74</sup> According to Lagrange-Chancel, the King requested to see this set used again in another production: «Louis XIV demanda à Racine, à Quinault et à Molière un sujet où pût entrer une décoration qui représentait les Enfers et que l'on conservait avec soin au garde-meubles. Racine proposa le sujet d'*Orphée*, Quinault *L'Enlèvement de Proserpine*, et Molière, aidé du grand Corneille, s'attacha au sujet de *Psyché* qui obtint la préférence». FRANÇOIS JOSEPH LAGRANGE-CHANCEL, preface to *Orphée*, in *Oeuvres*, Paris, 1758, IV, p. 63.

<sup>75</sup> According to the *livret*, the 12 furies were all performed by court dancer and ballet masters, under the lead of the acclaimed dancing master Pierre Beauchamps.

<sup>76</sup> [LINK](#)

<sup>77</sup> «La coiffure cera de crin et de serpens et flames. Tout l'abit cera de satin noir couvrir de flame. Les entournure des manche et suture ceront garni fe feux et de serpens. L'abit decoupt cera de crepon noir anrichi d'or, le tout frange d'or et feu. Les manches a vestir ceront de chaire brune». Noted on the drawing cited in footnote 76.

<sup>78</sup> We know the names of the 4 goblins from the *livret* (Cobus, Maurice, Poulet, & Petit Jean), but I have been unable to identify them; no doubt they were professional acrobats.

<sup>79</sup> [LINK](#)

scends, and in the background are seen by three successions of perspective the other palaces of the most powerful gods of the heavens; a cloud emerges from the stage on which Cupid and Psyche are situated, and are lifted by a second cloud that descends to join with the first. A troop of little cupids arrive from different directions in five machines to express their joy with the god of the cupids: and in the same instance Jupiter and Venus cross in the air and line up next to Cupid and Psyche. The divinities of the heavens, who had been divided between Venus and her son, reunite when they see them reconciled; they appear 300 in number on clouds that fill the stage, and together with concerts, songs, and dances celebrate the Festivity of the Wedding of Cupid.<sup>80</sup>

This scene is depicted in a commemorative tapestry woven by the Gobelines Manufactory, whose director and chief designer was the royal painter Charles Le Brun.<sup>81</sup> In the background is shown not the places of other gods, but rather Claude Perrault's recently completed classical colonnade on the easternmost façade of the Palais du Louvre.<sup>82</sup> Above it is Jupiter's celestial palace surrounded by clouds, upon which are seated various winged gods—probably little cupids. The figure in the middle is most likely Venus, who gives her blessing to the wedded couple. The stage is flanked with orange trees, while standing downstage in the center are Cupid, Psyche, and Jupiter. Jupiter (right) is easily recognized by his great blue cloak that falls to the floor in large folds and surrounds his legs. Psyche (center) appears to wear a rose-colored bodice, sleeves, and skirt, and a silver tonnelet (c.f. the components of Psyche's costumes described above). Cupid (left) also wears a rose-colored bodice, with wings on his back; he is shown holding a crown in his left hand with which to crown Psyche. To the left and upstage of Cupid are various musicians playing trumpets and bagpipes, while to the right and upstage of Jupiter is a figure playing a flute. The other figures are too indistinct to attempt identification. Altogether there are some 25 figures on-stage – a number far shorter than the 300 reported in the *Gazette de France*.

When considering the succession of costume and set designs used throughout *Psyché*, one may discern a clear aesthetic arc. It begins with the bucolic Prologue and its nature motives, and progresses to the desolation of the *Premier Intermède* that is reflective of Psyche's lamentation. Then on to the comic *Second Intermède* and erotic *Troisième intermède* – which reflects Cupid's delight in and physical love for Psyche. After descending to the depths of Hades for

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<sup>80</sup> «Le Theatre se change & represente le Ciel. Le grand Palais de Iupiter descend, & laisse voir dans l'éloignement, par trois suites de Perspective les autres Palais des Dieux du Ciel les plus puissants ; vn Nüage sort du Theatre, sur lequel l'Amour & Psiché se placent, & sont enlevés par vn second Nüage, qui vient en descendant se joindre au premier. Une Troupe de petits Amours vient dans cinq Machines, dont les mouvements sont tous differents, pour témoigner leur joye au Dieu des Amours: et dans le mesme temps Iupiter & Venus se croisent en l'Air, & se rangent près de l'Amour, & de Psiché» (*livret*, p. 29). «Les Divinitez des Cieux, qui avoient esté partagées entre Venus & son Fils se réunissent en les voyant d'accord; Elles paroissent au nombre de trois cents sur des Nüages, dont tout le Theatre est remply, & Touts ensemble par des Concerts, des Chants, & des Dances celebrent la Feste des Nopces de l'Amour» (*livret*, p. 30).

<sup>81</sup> low res. [LINK](#); med res. [LINK](#); high res. [LINK](#)

<sup>82</sup> For an engraving printed in Diderot's *Encyclopédie* (1762), see [LINK](#)

HENRY GISSEY'S COSTUMES FOR *PSYCHÉ* (1671)

the terrors of the *Quatrième Intermède*, the entertainment concludes with the festive sumptuousness of the celestial *Dernier Intermède* and the apotheosis of Psyche. Throughout this *tragi-comédie et ballet*, costume design becomes an integral component of the overall dramatic plan.

Table 1. Expenses relating to costumes, taken from the *Official account of the expenses for performing Psyché in 1671*.

**Recipient /Occupation/Items/Amount in livres**

Claude Fortier / tailleur / Habits / 12,298  
 Jean Baraillon / tailleur / Habits / 12,343, 15s  
 André Hubert / comédien / habits des comédiens / 2,000  
 André Hubert / comédien / habits des comédiens / 2,400  
 André Hubert / comédien / habit pour la damoiselle Molière / 300  
 Hilaire Depuis / [chanteur] / habits et petites oyes<sup>83</sup> / 900  
 Guillaume Yvon / tailleur d'habits / 13 aunes de crespé noir pour l'habit de Hillaire Dupuis / 66  
 Anne Fonteaux / [chanteur] / Habits / 400  
 Anne Fonteaux / [chanteur] / petites oyes de ses habits / 200  
 Pierre Pieche / [garde des instruments de la musique du roi] / habits de ses filles / 400  
 Pierre Pieche / [garde des instruments de la musique du roi] / la petite oye des habbitz de ses filles / 200  
 Pierre Leclerc / brodeur / Habits / 4,593  
 Henry Gissey / désignateur / Dessins / 800

Table 2. Expenses relating to costume accessories and props, taken from the *Official account of the expenses for performing Psyché in 1671*.

**Recipient /Occupation/Items/Amount in livres**

Jean Dufour / marchand / bas de soye, masques, jarretieres,<sup>84</sup> / 4,373  
 la veufve Vagnard / --- / mannes, ustancilles / 4,229, 7s.  
 Jacques Ducreux / marchand / masques, jarretieres et perruques / 1,102, 10s.  
 François Fontelle / sculpteur / huit vases dorez et argentez et l'asne de Silene / 360

<sup>83</sup> Decorations and trimmings placed on stockings, hat, gloves, etc.

<sup>84</sup> Pieces of ribbon, cord, or cloth used to tie stockings above or below the calf.

Georges de Tourny / peintre / peinture des devises, des drapeaux et banderolles / 210  
Jean Breton / armurier / boucliers / 80  
Jean-Baptiste Ciolli / --- / un cheval de bois / 110  
Mathurin Chantoiseau / plumassier / plumes / 3,025, 10s.  
François Blanchard / marchand parfumeur / fournitures de gands / 298, 14s.  
Pierre Destienges / marchand / fournitures de rubans / 1,058, 7s.  
Eloy Des Pierres Brecourt / --- / pierreires / 1,090  
Louis Paysant / --- / fournitures de poudre et pomade / 550  
Jacques Ducreux / marchand / escarpins et chaussons / 1,519  
Jacques Ducreux / --- / pour ses peines et recompences / 150  
Jacques Ducreux / --- / / 150

Table 3. Henry Gissey's costume drawings for *Psyché*. N.B. a1, a2, a3, etc. are anchors that will link to places in the text where these costumes are discussed.

**Prologue:** Flora,<sup>a17</sup> Nymphe,<sup>a18</sup> Vertumnus,<sup>a19</sup> Palaemon<sup>a20</sup>,  
**Premier Intermède:** a mourner,<sup>a22</sup> a flutist,<sup>a23</sup> une femme desolée,<sup>a24</sup>  
**Act 2:** Cupid,<sup>a2</sup> Zephyr<sup>a3</sup>  
**Second Intermède:** a cyclops<sup>a25</sup>  
**Act 3:** Psyche,<sup>a1</sup>  
**Act 4:** a river god<sup>a21</sup>  
**Quatrième Intermède:** a fury,<sup>a26</sup> a goblin<sup>a27</sup>  
**Act 5, Dernier Intermède:** Jupiter,<sup>a7</sup> Apollo,<sup>a4</sup> Urania,<sup>a9</sup> an Art,<sup>a10</sup> Bacchus,<sup>a5</sup>  
Silenus,<sup>a11</sup> a satyr playing an oboe,<sup>a12</sup> a satyr playing a wind instrument,<sup>a13</sup>  
Momus,<sup>a8</sup> a Polichinelle,<sup>a14</sup> Mars,<sup>a6</sup> a trumpeter,<sup>a15</sup> a pike-bearer<sup>a16</sup>