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The guitar, the musette and meaning in the *fêtes galantes* of Watteau

Abstract

This paper examines the depiction of the guitar and musette in the *fêtes galantes* of Watteau by considering the theoretical, musical and literary evidence for the reception of these instruments in Watteau's culture. Documentary evidence suggests that the presence of the guitar and musette in the *fêtes galantes* may provide a tool for reading the nuances of these contested images.¹

On July 11 1712, Antoine Watteau (1684-1721), having lost the *Prix de Rome* once before, offered a series of images to the *Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture* as part of his submission for the *Prix* competition of that year.² On the basis of these works, he was received into the *Académie* as an *agrégé* on July 30 1712, and was permitted by the *académiciens* to devise the subject of his *morceau de réception*. Five years later, this painting, now one of Watteau's most famous, *Le pèlerinage à l'isle de Cithère*, was submitted to the *Académie* (Fig. 1).³ Confronted by the fact that the painting failed to fill any of the existing categories of the *Académie*, the *académiciens* voted for the reception of Watteau into their ranks by creating a new category for him: *peintre des fêtes galantes*.

This was an important moment in the history of French painting. The academicians appear to have concluded that the mandated genres of history, landscape, animal painting, portraiture and still life, under which they categorised the subjects of paintings and received painters into their ranks, would no longer serve adequately.⁴ Lest we attribute an unmerited spirit of innovation to the *Académie*, it should perhaps be emphasised that its hand was forced.⁵ 'If somewhat mystified by these paintings, which in style and subject matter were unclassifiable within the hierarchy of the genres, [the *académiciens*] were nonetheless dazzled by their originality and accomplishment':⁶ the *Académie* was compelled to invent a new category to accommodate them. The source of the *Académie*'s confusion about the generic categorisation of Watteau's *fêtes galantes* was surely the belief that Watteau's paintings were 'about' nothing, and the invention of a new generic category must be

¹ I would to thank the two anonymous referees for their contribution to the development of this paper, Assoc. Prof. David Marshall and Dr Felicity Harley of the Art History Discipline of the University of Melbourne, and the members of the university's European Visual Culture Seminar, before whom a version of this paper was read in April 2008.

² One of these works, *Les jaloux* (now lost) is described by Wine in the following terms: '*Les jaloux* has a mood, contains a situation, but shows no event. As such it did not fall within any of the accepted categories of painting.' See Wine, 1996, §1(iii).

³ Two autograph versions of this painting exist: the original dates from 1717 and is now in the Musée du Louvre, Paris; the second, shown in Fig. 1, dates from c. 1718-19 and is in the Charlottenburg Palace, Berlin.

⁴ Marlow notes: 'The subject-matter—or lack of it—puzzled the members of the *Académie*, as it did not easily fit into any prescribed category.' Marlow, 1996, §3.

⁵ Posner, 1984, pp. 192-94.

⁶ Wintermute, 1999, p. 11.

read as an attempt to deal with the ‘semantic vacuum’ they appeared to present.⁷ Even those closest to the painter, including one of his first biographers, the Comte de Caylus, felt this confusion:

His compositions have no subject. They express none of the conflicts of the passions and are consequently deprived of one of the most affecting characteristics of painting, that is, action.⁸

Confusion about the ‘subject’ of Watteau’s paintings continues today and, standing in front of them, it is easy to understand why.⁹ Showing ‘the meeting of men and women, clothed in choice fabrics, and who hold court in a landscape or architectural setting of glorious unreality, dancing with each other, making music or chatting’, these pictures do not seem to be ‘about’ anything.¹⁰ Critical reception of Watteau’s work has therefore been torn between a condemnation of it as sublime vacuity, recording the polite but ultimately empty banter of a class doomed to fall to the scythe of the Revolution, or as a sometimes misanthropic critique of love and (un)faithfulness, courting and barely concealed eroticism in the dying glow of the *grand siècle*.

Music, which appears in approximately one-third of Watteau’s paintings¹¹ and plays an important role in establishing the mood and possibly the content of them, has scarcely been overlooked in the critical literature.¹² Art historical writing on the role of music in Watteau’s work, however insightful, has nonetheless been insufficiently grounded in the repertoire and musico-theoretical literature of Watteau’s time to withstand close scrutiny. Humphrey Wine, for example, has noted that ‘the *fêtes galantes* have a psychological content often identifiable through the animated statues that inhabit them or through the musical instruments played by their human participants’.¹³ Wine is correct, but no study seems to have been made of the connection between the presence of instruments and the psychology of the characters. Wine’s own example—the tuning of theorbo player in *Les charmes de la vie* (Fig. 2)¹⁴ as ‘a metaphor for attempts to initiate gallant conversation’—is an interpretative rather than exegetical assertion. In this article, I consider the guitar and the musette as they appear in several *fêtes galantes* through the prism of the documentary evidence of the musical culture of early eighteenth-century in France. While in many ways my

⁷ Bryson, 1981, p. 65. According to Alan Wintermute, Watteau’s paintings are ‘essentially subjectless’: Wintermute, 1999, p. 29. It is surely this ‘semantic vacuum’ that has prompted the ‘verbal extravaganza’ identified by Norman Bryson. See Bryson, 1981, p. 64.

⁸ ‘Ses compositions n’ont aucun objet. Elles n’expriment le concours d’aucune passion et sont par conséquent dépourvues d’une des plus piquantes parties de la peinture, je veux dire l’action’ (quoted in Camesasca, 1970, p. 6). All translations in this paper are the author’s, unless otherwise stated. Wintermute has clarified Caylus: ‘Caylus’s criticism that Watteau’s painting were devoid of ‘action’ must be understood to mean that they are without legible narrative.’ Wintermute, 1999, p. 29.

⁹ Some attempts to read Watteau’s paintings symbolically have of course been made: Mirimonde examined the role of statues in Watteau’s paintings in 1962 and Seerveld in 1980: see Mirimonde, 1962 and Seerveld, 1980. In 1952 Panofsky famously asserted that the figure of Pierrot in Watteau’s *Comédiens italiennes* was deliberately ‘Christ-like’: Panofsky, 1952.

¹⁰ Michel, 1984, p. 195.

¹¹ Mercurio, 2006, p. 22.

¹² Camesasca has gone so far as to suggest that music ‘constitue une des clefs pour approcher le plus sûrement de l’un des aspects les plus secrets de sa personnalité.’ Camesasca, 1970, p. 6.

¹³ Wine, 1996, §1(iii).

¹⁴ c. 1717-18, Wallace Collection, London.

conclusions regarding the ‘content’ of Watteau’s works do not differ markedly from those of other students of the artist, I do present here for the first time the musical evidence that offers concrete support for the conclusions art historians have drawn on his enigmatic work. This paper is thus an attempt to recover the symbolic significance of the guitar and the musette in Watteau’s *fêtes galantes*, anchoring it with the documentation of its culture. In treating the musette and guitar in Watteau’s paintings as symbols, I am proceeding from a hypothesis that Watteau himself intended them to be read in that way, an assumption which, in the absence of recorded utterances from the artist himself or his contemporaries, might seem ambitious.¹⁵ A wider reading of Watteau’s culture, however, supports the presumption that these instruments are intended to be read symbolically: as I show below, there is a rich contemporary literature in a number of forms that can be brought to bear in a symbolic reading of these instruments, and this is a literature of which Watteau, an ‘acute, even fastidious judge of music’,¹⁶ can hardly have been unaware. Connoisseurs and scholars from Watteau’s day to our own have been convinced that these are profound paintings, ‘full of restrained action and psychological insight’.¹⁷ Camesasca has noted: ‘[Watteau] always painted what he wanted to say. But what did he want to say?’¹⁸ In the following argument I will seek to demonstrate that the guitar and musette provide some indication as to what Watteau wanted to say.¹⁹

This paper rests on the contributions of several scholars. A.P. de Mirimonde wrote extensively on the depiction of music in the painting of Watteau’s time. His monograph *L’iconographie musicale sous les rois bourbons (XVII^e–XVIII^e siècles)* is an exhaustive treatment of musical subjects in French painting in the reigns of Louis XIV and Louis XV in genres ranging from the still life to portraiture.²⁰ Although the monograph does treat Watteau, his article ‘Les sujets musicaux chez Watteau’ looks more intensively at music, musical instruments and musicians in the artist’s works.²¹ Mirimonde is not really concerned with the symbolic life of the instruments he discusses, and his article concentrates on the realistic depiction of the detail of playing technique that Watteau achieved. Richard Leppert has also made valuable contributions to the study of musical iconography in Watteau. Leppert’s *Arcadia at Versailles* examines the popularity of ‘peasant’ instruments in the same period, giving

¹⁵ Seerveld’s investigation of the statues in Watteau indicates his support for the potential of symbolic reading of the content of these images; in fact, he goes so far as to assert that ‘Watteau effected iconographic change without revolution in France and with genuine promise.’ Seerveld, 1980, p. 178.

¹⁶ Wintermute, 1999, p. 15.

¹⁷ Marlow, 1996, §3. The subtlety of Watteau’s psychology is frequently noted: see Wine, 1996, §1(iii). Zolotov has remarked that ‘[t]he problem of Watteau’s subjects becomes much more complicated when applied to his theatrical works and so-called ‘fêtes galantes’. The narrative element gradually faded in the artist’s works...The story as such, the plot, the intrigue were far less important to Watteau than the emotional tone, the ‘inner melody’ of his paintings, addressed to poetically responsive viewers rather than to fanciers of amusing or moralising tales.’ Zolotov, 1985, p. 7.

¹⁸ Camesasca, 1970, p. 7.

¹⁹ It should be pointed out that the titles (sometimes in the form of verses) given to Watteau’s paintings or to engraved copies of them are of practically no use in understanding their meaning. Watteau seems not to have given, nor to have sanctioned, these titles and, as Mirimonde notes, ‘par leur imprécision et leur inexactitude, elles ont contribué à rendre nombre de scènes inintelligibles.’ Mirimonde, 1961, pp. 249–50.

²⁰ Mirimonde, 1977.

²¹ Mirimonde, 1961.

more attention to the *vielle à roue* than to the musette.²² Leppert reads the musette as essentially phallic²³ and, while the discussion below does show that the musette was read as an amorous symbol in its own day, I hope to show that Leppert's conclusions are insufficiently nuanced when repertoire, poetry and theoretical writing on the instrument are examined.²⁴ Janice Mercurio's recent doctoral thesis²⁵ devoted a considerable amount of attention to the role of music in Watteau's musician portraits and *fêtes galantes*, giving particular regard to the depiction of the guitar, musette and lute but once again failing to ground this adequately in the musical documents of Watteau's own culture. Her conclusion, for example, that the musette was 'inextricably linked in France with the dance of nobles and peasants alike' is fine as far as it goes.²⁶ But in intimating the diffusion of the musette through French society, Mercurio moves into territory inadequately supported by the documentary sources. In fact, the sources reveal that the musette was conceived exclusively as an aristocratic instrument and that it was a point of honour that its mechanism made it so different from the kinds of bagpipe played by the peasantry. A real instrument of the peasantry in the hands of the nobility would have been unthinkable and the bagpipe, in the form of the musette, was only acceptable once it had been safely shorn of its peasant associations.

The guitar

The use of musical instruments in scenes depicting leisure or amatory activities is well attested in Western art traditions. The tradition stretches from the *Paradiesgärtlein* of the late medieval period through Titian's *Concert champêtre* ([Fig.](#)

²² Leppert's reading of musical iconography is essentially an exercise in Marxist exegesis: 'Throughout history, the sort of music we have played or listened to has served to indicate our actual social class or at least (and more importantly) our attitudes towards class... It seems to me that musical iconography is a potentially rich source for exploring class attitudes toward music and musicians.' Leppert, 1978, p. 106.

²³ Leppert, 1978, pp. 59-60, 66 and 68-72.

²⁴ Other contributions to this area of study, some not specifically musical, should also be acknowledged here. Bryson notes the 'semantic vacuum' of Watteau's paintings, and provides a brief, almost cursory, exploration of music: Bryson, 1981, pp. 65-66. He does not attempt to put these two observations together in an investigation of whether the 'semantic vacuum' might be filled in through an exploration of the symbolic life of the instruments or musical practices Watteau depicts. Sarah R. Cohen has investigated the meaning of Watteau's paintings through the prism of aristocratic dancing in eighteenth-century France, concluding that they valorise communal identity through the enactment of danced ritual: Cohen, 1994, pp. 160-81. Her assertion that this dancing is explicitly linked to encoded eroticism is, however, not reinforced through an investigation of contemporary reception of the minuet; the minuet in fact seems more rarely to have been charged with the sexual undertones levelled against the saraband, for example. Seerveld's study, continuing the work of Mirimonde, on the statues in Watteau's imagery contains a salutary reminder of the vagueness of Watteau's referents; as he notes 'there is no lexicon of fixed equivalents for Watteau's amalgamation of traditional elements and arabesques, chinoiserie and *commedia dell'arte*, because his art no longer uses classical Humanist or scholastic Christian horizons': Seerveld, 1980, p. 179. Posner's treatment of the *fête galante* examines music and instruments in Watteau's work, but does not ground his interpretation of these in documentary analysis: Posner, 1984, Chapter 4. He relies, for example, on Leppert for an interpretation of the musette in *Les bergers* as essentially phallic, an interpretation which does not seem to be borne out by a wider reading of the source material: Posner, 1984, p. 163. Emma Barker's recent article on Carle van Loo's *Conversation espagnole* and *Lecture espagnole* contains some pertinent observations with regard to 'Spanishness' in Watteau's culture: Barker, 2008. My findings on the symbolism of the guitar are in fact close to hers, but her article does not specifically address music.

²⁵ Mercurio, 2006.

²⁶ Mercurio, 2006, p. 203.

3)²⁷ and Rubens' *Garden of Love* (Fig. 4),²⁸ a work Watteau presumably knew well. If Watteau's use of music may be seen as responsive to this iconographic tradition, his choice of instruments is, nonetheless, responsive to the realities of his own society. We know, for example, that *divertissements paysannesques*, featuring music and dance and thus effectively *tableaux vivants* of the *Concert champêtre*, took place from as early as the reign of Louis XIII.²⁹

Watteau's taste in instruments is remarkably catholic, ranging from the theorbo³⁰ to the transverse flute,³¹ and his drawings, too, contain numerous studies of instrumentalists. Among the instruments depicted in his paintings, the guitar holds pride of place. As Mirimonde writes:

Watteau has so often drawn and painted guitarists that an enumeration would be tiresome. The instrument serves to accompany song, to embellish a theatre scene or a conversation in a park, to provide the rhythm of a dance and to charm the 'sombre pleasure of a melancholy heart.'³²

Although the influence and prestige of the guitar was perhaps waning during the first decades of the eighteenth century, the dense polemics of the late seventeenth century had argued the absolute superiority of the instrument in polite society.³³ Arising from an unknown provenance, the five-course guitar common during the Baroque period is attested in iconographic sources from the first years of the sixteenth century, although it appears in literary sources as early as 1280.³⁴ Early French theorists are agreed as to the Spanish origin of the instrument: Marin Mersenne notes that the first guitars seem to have come from Spain,³⁵ and Pierre Trichet, in his manuscript treatise of c. 1630, wrote:

The guiterre, or guiterne, is a musical instrument much used among the French and Italians, but still more among the Spanish, who were the first to make it fashionable, and who know how to play it more madly than any other nation.³⁶

²⁷ 1508-1509, Musée du Louvre, Paris. This work is attributed to Giorgione by the image source, the Web Gallery of Art. Wilenski, 1949, p. 104 ties Titian's work to Watteau's *La perspective*.

²⁸ c. 1634-35, Museo del Prado, Madrid.

²⁹ Leppert, 1978, p. 36. Mlle de Scudéry also attests to Louis XIV's enjoyment of 'petites festes galantes' in 1669. See Posner, 1984, p. 151.

³⁰ As in *Les charmes de la vie*, (c. 1718, Wallace Collection, London).

³¹ As in *Concert champêtre* (c. 1715, Musée des Beaux-arts, Angers).

³² Mirimonde, 1961, p. 252: 'Watteau a si souvent dessiné et peint des guitarists qu'une énumération serait fastidieuse. L'instrument sert à accompagner le chant, à agrémenter une scène de théâtre ou une conversation dans un parc, à scander le rythme d'une danse et même à charmer «le sombre plaisir d'un cœur mélancolique».'

³³ Mirimonde has noted that the popularity of the guitar extended through the life of Louis XIV (himself a guitar enthusiast) but that, after his death, it fell into a sort of oblivion before being rediscovered at the end of the eighteenth century. Mirimonde, 1977, pp. 32-33. There are no publications for the guitar between 1717 and 1760.

³⁴ Pinnell, 1980 contains an extended and valuable treatment of the Northern European history of the guitar. See also Pennington, 1981.

³⁵ Mersenne, 2003, p. 9: 'Les premières Guiternes, dont l'invention est ce semble venue d'Espagne.'

³⁶ Trichet, 2003, p. 15: 'La Guiterre, ou Guiterne, est un instrument de musique grandement usité parmi les François et Italiens, mais encore davantage parmi les Espagnoles, qui les premiers l'ont mis en vogue, et qui s'en savent plus follastrément servir qu'aucune autre nation.'

The first publication for the guitar, a collection of pieces by Girolamo Montesardo, appeared in Florence in 1606.³⁷ Montesardo's work is a landmark in the literature of the guitar, moving the instrument that Michael Praetorius was to dismiss during the 1620s in his *Syntagma musicum* as fit only for the strumming of 'villanelle and other vulgar, clownish songs' by 'Ziarlatini and Salt' in banco' into the world of art music and the most exalted circles of society.³⁸ The triumph of the guitar was signalled by the engagement in the mid-1640s of the most eminent guitarist in Europe, Francesco Corbetta, as guitar tutor to the Sun King: as Voltaire later acidly remarked, 'the only thing he [the King] ever learned was to dance and to play the guitar.'³⁹

I have noted that French theorists are practically unanimous on the Spanish origin of the instrument; in fact, as Gaspar Sanz noted in the *Instrucción de música sobre la guitarra española* (1674), 'the Italians, French and other nations add *Spanish* to the guitar: the reason is...its perfection originated in this country.'⁴⁰ The use of this national denominator was multivalent, however.⁴¹ Trichet used a polarity between France and Spain to deride the ascendancy of the guitar at the expense of the lute, asking rhetorically: 'For who does not know that the lute is proper and familiar to the French, and that it is the most noble and agreeable of all the musical instruments?'⁴² On the contrary, players of the 'Spanish' guitar employ 'thousands of gestures and movements of the body altogether grotesque and ridiculous, [so] that their playing is bizarre and confused.'⁴³ Denis Diderot, justifying the addition of the qualification 'Spanish' to the guitar, noted that, as well as the 'sweet reverie that [the guitar] inspires',⁴⁴ it reflected the Spanish national temperament: 'tender, gallant, discrete

³⁷ The first extant Spanish guitar publication is Gaspar Sanz's *Instrucción de música sobre la guitarra española* (1674).

³⁸ Praetorius, 1986, p. 59.

³⁹ Quoted in Pinnell, 1980, pp. 94-95.

⁴⁰ The Spanish origin of the instrument was also acknowledged more widely in Europe. Johann Gottfried Walther, in the *Musicalisches Lexicon, oder, Musicalische Bibliothec*, notes that 'das Wort *Spagnuola* oft dabey [i.e. after the word 'chitarra'] steht': Walther, 2001, p. 146. Brossard, too, notes that 'one often adds *spagnuola* [to the name of the guitar], because this instrument came from Spain and passed from there into Italy and thence into other countries. It is very common in Spain.' Brossard, 1965, p. 32.

⁴¹ Barker has written on the perception of 'Spanishness' in French culture in the first half of the eighteenth century. Some of her findings amplify the basic points being made here. She notes, for example, that Spain featured as a cipher for 'the destructive effects of idleness, intolerance, superstition, and pride' in *Encyclopédiste* discourse: Barker, 2008, p. 590. Specifically musical sources remove the negative moralising of this stance, and valorise the use of the guitar in hours of leisure (*precieux loisir*, see below). Barker has also demonstrated that Van Loo's 'Spanish' paintings 'look back nostalgically to the seventeenth-century heyday of *galanterie* as an era in which women had supposedly enjoyed far greater authority than they did at present.' This seems to support the notion I advance below of Spain as a 'women's subject', and the guitar as a pointer to the 'feminised space'. See Barker, 2008, p. 590.

⁴² Trichet, 2003, p. 15: 'Car qui ne scait que le Luth est proper et familier aux François, et qu'il est le plus noble et le plus agreable de tous les instruments musicaux?'

⁴³ Trichet, 2003, p. 15: '...mille gestes et mouvements du corps autant crotèques et ridicules, que leur jeu est bizzare et confus.' Trichet's thinly veiled xenophobia is also discernible in John Playford's *Music's delight on the cithern* (1666): '...nor is any musick rendered acceptable, or esteemed by many, but what is presented by foreigners: not a City Dame, though a tap-wife, but is ambitious to have her daughters taught by Monsieur La Novo Kickshawibus on the gittar, which instrument is but a new old one, used in London in the time of Queen Mary...being not much different from the Cithern.' Quoted in Pinnell, 1980, p. 137.

⁴⁴ Diderot, 2003, p. 63: 'la douce reverie qu'il inspire'.

and melancholic.’⁴⁵ When he uses the guitar in his *fêtes galantes*, then, Watteau brings specifically Spanish resonances to the visual field: the quotation of the instrument invests the *fête galante* with those qualities that French commentators believed to pertain to the Spanish nation itself. Depending on the image, we may be hearing the noisy jangle of Prætorius’s *ziarlatini*, also derided by Trichet: such seems to be the mood of *Les Comédiens Italiens* (Fig. 5).⁴⁶ Alternatively, we may be hearing the ‘tender, gallant, discrete and melancholic’ sounds that seem to emanate from the guitar of *Mezzetin* (Fig. 6), whose anguished song is even ignored by the statue in the background.⁴⁷

Mirimonde discusses the imagery of sound on several occasions in his analysis of the use of the guitar in Watteau’s paintings as an indicator of mood.⁴⁸ While sensitive, I believe, to both mood and depiction, and revelatory of Watteau’s knowledge of the playing technique of the instrument, Mirimonde’s description of sound quality is inadequately grounded in the historical evidence. There is in fact no corresponding set of descriptors of sound in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literature on the guitar. On the contrary, commentators of the period distinguished the playing of the guitar into just two categories, *rasgueado* and *punteado*, characterised by class considerations and repertoire rather than by sound. The strummed style of *rasgueado* was not only that of Prætorius’s *ziarlatani*, criticised by Trichet as ‘grotesque and ridiculous’, but also that of the first printed publications of guitar music.⁴⁹ The plucked style of *punteado*, which appeared exclusively from the 1630s onwards⁵⁰ and appears to have evolved from lute playing techniques (despite Corbetta’s protestations to the contrary),⁵¹ was reserved solely for art music. The adoption of the *punteado* style was probably an attempt to usurp the social cachet of the lute in its dying days.

⁴⁵ Diderot, 2003, p. 63: ‘le caractere d’une nation tendre, galante, discrete & mélancolique’. Barker has noted that the Spanish character was formulated as ‘faithful and romantic’ in Houdar de la Motte’s *L’Europa galante* of 1697, and Van Loo’s *Conversation espagnole* was already being referred to as Spanish and *galant* from the Salon of 1755. See Barker, 2008, pp. 584 and 592.

⁴⁶ c. 1720, National Gallery of Art, Washington. The work in Washington is a later copy of a lost original by Watteau.

⁴⁷ c. 1718-20, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Mirimonde analyses this painting with regard to Mezzetin’s playing technique. Mirimonde, 1977, p. 35.

⁴⁸ A particularly good example of this is given in Mirimonde, 1961, p. 252: ‘The young Valenciennois knew the technique of the guitar very well. Through the position of the hand and manner of employing the fingers, he suggests the nature of the sound [...] A middle quality is obtained by an attack close to the lower edge of the rosette as in *Belles n’écoutez rien* and in several drawings. The plucking of the finger close to the frets produces a sweeter sound, more persuasive. Watteau’s personages often have recourse to it: after all, is it not most suitable for accompanying or supplying tender confidences? One finds this manner of playing in *Le rendez-vous*, *La sérénade italienne*, *La cascade*, *L’enchanteur*, *La leçon d’amour*, *La récréation italienne*, *La gamme d’amour* and *La leçon de chant*. On the contrary, when one places the finger close to the bridge, the sonority become more open, a little nasal, but nonetheless thin [*loin*], as in *L’été*, *Les jaloux*, *L’amour au théâtre italien*, and in the famous *Mezzetin* in New York. Each time, the quality of the sound translates the nuance of the sentiment.’

⁴⁹ Juan Bermudo, in his *Declaración de instrumentos musicales* (1555), writes that ‘[t]his tuning is more for old *romances* and strummed music, than for music of the present’, which seems to indicate that, even by the time of his writing, there was a tension between the *rasgueado* and *punteado* styles. See Pinnell, 1980, p. 14.

⁵⁰ Pinnell, 1980, p. 35.

⁵¹ Corbetta, in the preface to *La guitarra royale*, wrote that ‘there are also always envious people, who would like to say that my manner of playing is too difficult because a certain number of my pieces approaches the manner of the lute, [to them] I would like to respond in all truth that I do not know even a single chord on that instrument; rather, I have had no other inclination than for the guitar alone, [and] my manner is entirely different from the lute.’ See Corbetta, 2003, p. 30.

There is no doubt that these different playing styles produced different sounds, and iconographic sources (though, curiously, not theoretical sources) do confirm that players were experimenting with the different sound qualities that could be produced by playing closer to the bridge or to the fretboard. Writers who describe the sound of the guitar, however, only ever use one word: sweet. François Le Cocq, for example, in the foreword to his *Recueil des pièces de guitarre* (1729), speaks of the ‘sweetnesses and charms of this instrument’,⁵² and Diderot noted in the *Encyclopédie* that ‘the sound of this instrument is so sweet that it requires the most profound silence to hear all the delicacies of a fine touch’, adding, memorably, that this silence was to be found in the ‘belles nuits d’Espagne’, thus linking the sound of the guitar to its inherent ‘Spanishness’.⁵³

The guitar was also clearly conceived within an aesthetic of ‘preciousness’.⁵⁴ This view of the guitar is bolstered by the continual use of adjectives that heighten the sense of intimacy offered by the guitar. Le Cocq writes of the ‘delicatesse suprenante’ of Corbetta’s playing.⁵⁵ Diderot notes that the guitar is so delicate that even a little background noise reduces its sound to a mere *tac* of fingers.⁵⁶ Ancelet further adds that:

If it [the guitar] has little effect in *concerts* of numerous players, it makes up for this in the *petite musique* of polite society, and in those small suppers, which are the only desirable ones.⁵⁷

The playing space is also often emphasised by commentators of this period. Robert De Visée, in the preface to his *Livre de guitarre* (1682), hopes that the dedicatee, Louis XIV, will use his publication in the solitude of his own chamber during his hours of ‘precieux loisir’.⁵⁸ Similarly, Le Cocq noted that ‘the guitar is a most harmonious instrument, and at all times has entertained princes in the hours of their precious leisure.’⁵⁹ The guitar is thus an instrument for the circle of intimates—presumably pressed close together for fear of the sound of the instrument being overwhelmed—joined in the pursuit of *loisir*.

Perhaps the most striking thing about the guitar’s reception at this time, however, is its persistent gendering as female—and in this regard it appears almost to be alone in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁶⁰ The gendering of the guitar elicited a

⁵² Le Cocq, 2003, p. 51.

⁵³ Diderot, 2003, p. 63: ‘Le son de cet instrument est si doux, qu’il faut le plus grand silence pour sentir toutes les délicatesses d’un beau toucher.’

⁵⁴ This preciousness also extended to the instruments themselves, which were frequently lavished decorated with mother-of-pearl inlay. Such a guitar is shown in the hands of Mlle de Charolais in Pierre Gobert’s painting (c. 1710) in the Musée des Beaux-arts de Tours.

⁵⁵ Le Cocq, 2003, p. 51.

⁵⁶ Diderot, 2003, p. 63.

⁵⁷ Ancelet, 2003, p. 67: ‘Si elle fait peu d’effet dans les Concerts nombreux, elle s’en dédommage avec usure dans la petite Musique de Société, & dans les soupers choisis, qui sont les seuls désirables.’

⁵⁸ De Visée, 2003, p. 35.

⁵⁹ Le Cocq, 2003, p. 51: ‘la Guitarre est un instrument de plus harmonieux, et qu’elle a fait de tout tems les amusemens des Princes dans les heures de leur précieux loisirs.’

⁶⁰ Corrette’s *Les dons d’Apollon* (1762), an instruction manual for the guitar, seems to suppose that women are its *only* readers. At the end of the introduction, Corrette writes: ‘the God of Parnassus has promised to the ladies who will play it a happiness and a joy that will make them more beautiful than Venus, and will make them live as long as Anchises.’ See Corrette, 2003, p. 136. An early eighteenth-

number of conflicting responses. Diderot notes that the guitar is ‘extremely graceful, above all in the hands of a woman’,⁶¹ a view Ancelet amplifies by stating that ‘the guitar between the hands of a woman is infinitely agreeable.’⁶² Watteau’s guitarists are often men, although women do sometimes play the instrument, as in *Les charmes de la vie* (Fig. 2). There is certainly no doubt that women were often renowned players of the instrument: Constantin Huygens referred to a Mrs Killigrey in 1671, whose playing was said to be better even than a man’s.⁶³ The presence of the guitar may thus indicate a ‘feminised space’ in which, as Emma Barker has suggested, a gendered longing for the values of a lost age of *galanterie* may be being played out.⁶⁴

A more antagonistic critic such as Trichet saw something morally dangerous in the guitar, however: a new apple. Trichet’s bitter attack on the guitar casts it as the instrument of ‘des courtisans et des dames.’⁶⁵ Charging it with a lack of virility, he notes that the current popularity of the guitar is due to ‘a certain effeminacy, which is pleasing to women, flatters their hearts and inclines them to things voluptuous.’⁶⁶ His views, clearly based on the former lowly status of guitar, seem to have had some historic currency, because he is able to quote Ronsard (albeit incorrectly) in a verse that confirms his views:

For, according to Ronsard in the ode which he made in honour of this instrument:
*It is the appropriate instrument for pensive women
And for the lascivious ladies dedicated to love.*⁶⁷

The guitar is also sometimes referred to as an instrument of love, as in Rémy Médard’s elegy on the death of his teacher Corbetta in 1681:

Here lies the Amphion of our days,
Francesco, that man so rare,
Who made his guitar speak
The true language of love.⁶⁸

century commentator noted that ‘[e]ven on the dressing tables of all the beauties one could rely on seeing a guitar as well as rouge and beauty spots.’ Quoted in Pennington, 1981, p. 176.

⁶¹ Diderot, 2003, p. 63: ‘très-bonne grace, sur-tout dans les mains d’une femme.’

⁶² Ancelet, 2003, p. 67: ‘La Guittare entre les mains des Dames a un agrement infini.’

⁶³ Pinnell, 1980, p. 139. As Mirimonde remarks: ‘Ce sont les femmes qui fournissent le plus fort contingent de portraits de guitarists. N’était-ce pas un moyen de renforcer leur pouvoir de séduction?’ Mirimonde, 1977, p. 36. Depictions of women guitarists are discussed by Mirimonde on pp. 36-37.

⁶⁴ Barker, 2008, p. 590.

⁶⁵ Trichet, 2003, p. 15.

⁶⁶ Trichet, 2003, p. 15: ‘la Guiterre a je ne scai quoi d’effeminé, qui leur [the *courtisans et des dames*] plaist, et leur flatte le cœur, et le rend enclins aux voluptés.’

⁶⁷ Trichet, 2003, p. 15. The text of the Ronsard quoted by Trichet is:

*Il est des Dames pensesives
L’instrument approprié:
Il est des Dames lascives
Pour les amour dediés.*

Ronsard’s poem actually has ‘des Dames sensibles’ instead of ‘pensesives’ in the first line. Trichet’s manuscript has the word ‘sensibles’ crossed out and ‘pensesives’ inserted. Nonetheless, the basic idea is not altered.

⁶⁸ Pinnell, 1980, p. 186:

Cy gist [Here lies] l’Amphion de nos jours,
Franscique, cet homme si rare,
Qui fit parler à sa guitarre
Le vray langage des amours.

Furthermore, the repertoire of the instrument was itself read as morally perilous.⁶⁹ In Proposition XIV of the second book of the *Harmonie universelle* (1636), Mersenne specifically singles out the passacaglia as one of the most important types of music played by the guitar.⁷⁰ The passacaglia was one of several dances of ostensibly Spanish origin that swept European guitar publications through the seventeenth century: most guitar publications, in fact, commenced with a set of *passacaglie*.⁷¹ This group of dances, which comprised the chaconne and sarabande, seems to have been thought of as a unity.⁷² Brossard, for example, says that the passacaglia is 'proprement une Chaconne',⁷³ and the Spanish *Actas de la sala de alcades de casa y corte* (1583) treats the chaconne and saraband as if they were the same.⁷⁴ And, indeed, from a moral standpoint, all three were a unity, universally condemned for their perceived lasciviousness.⁷⁵ The lascivious movements of the dancer's body in the danced chaconne, for example, were criticised in Juan de la Cerda's *Vida politica de todos los estados de mujeres* (1599), and Juan Ferrer, in the *Tratado de la comedias* (1613), noted that the dancing of the chaconne had been performed 'with such dissoluteness as to cause a serious scandal.'⁷⁶ Francisco Fernández de Córdoba, the author of the early seventeenth-century *Didascalía multiplex*, stated that the 'common people of his day have brought back from hell the obscene dances of the time of Martial, giving them now the name of zarabanda, now of chacona, which differs from the former only in that it is yet more provocative.'⁷⁷ Both dances were forbidden in Spanish public theatres for about twenty years from 1615. In England, at the court of Charles II, a popular sarabande by Corbetta played a key role in the public seduction of Lady Chesterfield by the Duke of York.⁷⁸ A little later, in 1692, Purcell's setting of Nicholas Brady's *Hail, bright Cecilia* would refer to the 'soft guitar' inspiring 'wanton heat and loose desire' in a duet that takes the form of a saraband.

⁶⁹ See also Cohen, 1994. Cohen's article compellingly reads Watteau's two Cythera paintings through the lens of the minuet, the dance in which 'lovmaking is generated metaphorically through the fusion of body and pattern': Cohen, 1994, p. 174. Cohen's argument is not predicated on the presence of musical instruments or their symbolism; rather it is dependent on a reading of the spatial and figural organisation of these images. Cohen concludes that 'Watteau's dance-like strategy gave pictorial shape to a current ideal of privileged collective ritual.' Cohen, 1994, p. 172.

⁷⁰ Mersenne, 2003, p. 11. Trichet, 2003, p. 15 notes that Spanish guitar players are occupied playing 'leur Sarabandes, Gaillardes, Espagnolettes, Passemezes, Passecailles, Pavanés, Alemandes, et Romanesques.'

⁷¹ The word *passacaille* seems to have made a late entry into the French language nonetheless: it is not mentioned in Ménage's *Origines de la langue française* (1650) or Furetière's *Essai* (1684).

⁷² Walker, 1968, p. 303. Machabey, 1946. These two studies are the most important contributions to the origins of the passacaglia and chaconne.

⁷³ Brossard, 1965, p. 72; Walther, 2001, p. 420 agrees: '*Passacaglio* oder *Passagaglio*...ist eigentlich eine *Chaconne*.' Diderot, writing on the chaconne in the *Encyclopédie*, says 'Chaconnes are composed of diverse couplets; in the major couplets, the music is ordinarily strong and proud; in the minor couplets, the music is sweet, tender and voluptuous.' See Diderot, 1985a.

⁷⁴ Walker, 1968, p. 301; Machabey, 1946, p. 3. In 1605, the poet Micer spoke of the sarabande and chaconne as virtually the same thing when he noted the prohibition of 'licentious' dances under Philip II: see Machabey, 1946, p. 4.

⁷⁵ As Walker, 1968, p. 301 notes, 'many references to popular dance types occur in the alarmed outbursts of guardians of the public morality.'

⁷⁶ Walker, 1968, p. 302.

⁷⁷ Walker, 1968, p. 303.

⁷⁸ This story is related in Hamilton's *Mémoires de Chevalier de Grammont* of 1713. See Pinnell, 1980, p. 140.

The guitar is thus a rich symbol in the work of Watteau: contemporary documents reveal it as the precious instrument of leisure time that invited the close gathering of individuals in a specifically feminised space to listen to its sweet sound. The instrument of women, the guitar seems to have symbolised a passionate, lascivious and even overtly sexualised love.

The musette

In the second part of this paper, I wish to consider the way in which Watteau uses the musette as a symbol.⁷⁹ The instrument occurs infrequently in Watteau's output. I have been able to identify its use in just four of Watteau's paintings⁸⁰ and it appears rarely in the works of his followers and contemporaries.⁸¹ Watteau does not depict the musette and the guitar together in the same picture (indeed, there is no evidence that they played in ensembles together)⁸² and the symbolic resonances of each are different, as we shall see.

French theorists are relatively silent on the musette. It is discussed briefly in Mersenne's *Harmonie universelle*⁸³ and is served by two dedicated treatises, Pierre Borjon de Scellery's *Traité de la musette* (1672) and Jacques Hotteterre dit Le Romain's *Nouvelle méthode pour la musette* (1737).⁸⁴ Scellery notes that just forty or fifty years prior to his writing, the musette had finally been brought to a state of perfection by the addition of an arm-operated bellows, and a final set of mechanical improvements was only made during the lifetime of Hotteterre.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ For the bagpipe in general, and the musette in particular, see Winternitz, 1943, especially pages 76-82.

⁸⁰ The works in which the musette are shown are *Les bergers* (c. 1716. Charlottenburg Palace, Berlin), *Fêtes vénétiennes* (c. 1717. National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh), *L'amour au théâtre français* (1718. Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin) and *La musette* (1710-16. Private collection, Paris). Cohen notes that 'the linear configurations traced by the peasants in *Les bergers* closely recall the elegant patterns found in couple dances such as the minuet': Cohen, 1994, p. 174. Minuets do of course feature explicitly or implicitly in the musette's repertoire. In regard to Watteau's *Fêtes vénétiennes*, Seerveld refers to the musette as the 'genital bagpipes', which is not quite correctly organologically or, I would suggest, interpretatively. See Seerveld, 1980, p. 174.

⁸¹ These works include Jean-Honoré Fragonard's *Musical contest* (c. 1754. Wallace Collection, London) and François Boucher's *Summer pastoral* (c. 1749. Wallace Collection, London). Perhaps the most famous depiction of a musette, however, is Hyacinthe Rigaud's *Portrait of Gaspar de Gueidan* (1737. Musée Granet, Aix-en-Provence). Mirimonde discusses the depiction of the musette in Mirimonde, 1977, pp. 60-61.

⁸² It is possible that an echo of the debate concerning the supremacy of the Apollonian stringed instruments over the Dionysian wind instruments is preserved here.

⁸³ Mersenne, 1957, pp. 359-68. Mersenne's opinion of the instrument was favourable: 'When one has heard the musette in the hands of those who play it perfectly, as does M. des Touches [a member of the *Grande écurie* under Louis XIII, otherwise unknown], one of the Royal oboists, it must be admitted that it yields to none of the other instruments, and that there is a singular pleasure in hearing it.' See Mersenne, 1957, p. 359.

⁸⁴ Only the first of these could be consulted for this paper, as it has been reissued in facsimile. Hotteterre's treatise does not appear to have been reprinted, though it has been discussed in Leppert, 1978, p. 56. It seems to have been less *spéculatif* than Scellery's and more useful from a practical point of view. In a like vein is Diderot's entry on the musette in the *Encyclopédie*, which is a thorough explanation of its construction and technique. Diderot does note that the musical piece called 'musette', which is 'convenable à l'instrument de ce nom', has a 'caractere naïf et doux.' See Diderot, 1985b, p. 985.

⁸⁵ Scellery, 1983. Michael Prætorius briefly describes the musette, but his text seems to intimate that it was a new French invention with which he was unfamiliar: 'there is a small bagpipe or Hümmechen which has been imported from France, in which the wind is produced solely by a small arm-operated

Despite its recent provenance,⁸⁶ there is no denying that, like the guitar, the musette enjoyed an enormous vogue in the early eighteenth century.⁸⁷ Among the most prolific composers for the musette was the Lorraine-born Joseph Bodin de Boismortier (1689-1755) who, between 1726 and 1746, published no fewer than twenty-three volumes of music for musette, either specifically or as an optional instrument.⁸⁸ I will return to the significance of Boismortier's output presently but, for our purposes, the most important source of information on the use and symbolism of the musette in eighteenth-century France is the operatic music of Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764).

There is no evidence that Watteau knew Rameau, although it is clear that he had strong connections with Rameau's circle.⁸⁹ Watteau's lifelong interest in the theatre seems to have informed many of his paintings, and it may provide a key to the theme of his *morceau de réception*, *L'embarquement pour Cythère*. Scholars have conjectured that it may be based on playwright Houdar de la Motte's *opera-ballet* of 1705, *La vénitienne*.⁹⁰ Similarly, his drawing *Jupiter, curieux impertinent* is clearly based on a scene from a play by Louis Fuzelier.⁹¹ These playwrights were later the librettists of Rameau's *Pigmalion* (1748) and *Les indes galantes* (1735) respectively. Although these specific works—and, indeed, all of Rameau's stage works—post-date Watteau's death in 1721, they share the same aesthetic as Watteau's *fêtes galantes*, reflecting the common cultural context from which they both arose. Louis de Cahusac, another of Rameau's librettists, explicitly compared Watteau's paintings to the genre of the *opéra-ballet*, the genre that dominated the French stage during Watteau's lifetime, and to which Rameau was later the most significant contributor.⁹²

bellows.' The accompanying woodcut of the musette is the first depiction of it. See Prætorius, 1986, p. 52.

⁸⁶ Leppert says the musette is attested in French from the thirteenth century, but it is only clear from the seventeenth century that it is the instrument we now refer to as a musette: Leppert, 1978, p. 8. Note that Leppert's discussion of the musette seems sometimes to be insufficiently differentiated from the generic bagpipe. His contention that the bagpipe is a frankly sexual symbol is unobjectionable (compare its use in Breughel's peasant scenes, for example, such as *The fat kitchen*) but this seems not to have been true of the musette, which—as a courtly instrument—had none of these 'vulgar' associations.

⁸⁷ The musette appeared at the French court at the end of the seventeenth century, and the court maintained several players of it in the *Grande écurie*. The Hotteterre family dominated the playing of the musette in the *Grande écurie*. See Leppert, 1978, p. 35. Scellery indicates that 'les villes sont toutes pleines de gens' who are playing the musette: Scellery, 1983, p. 12.

⁸⁸ The best study of the repertoire of the musette is Green, 1987. Boismortier may well have been the most prolific composer for the instrument but he was hardly the only one, as Green's study makes clear.

⁸⁹ Mirimonde explicitly compares Watteau and Rameau. See Mirimonde, 1961, p. 257: 'Each artist [i.e., Rameau and Watteau] has *échos*, *jeux de volants*, *coquettes* and *affligées* in his repertoire, and also *bergeries*, little pastoral tableaux where shepherds' pipes and musettes resound, where they express a amorous tenderness and a pensive voluptuousness and evoke the setting of the great parks, the caresses of the sun upon the leaning branches, the verdant mosses, the 'green carpet of the fields and the silver of the fountains.'

⁹⁰ Wine, 1996, §1(iii).

⁹¹ Wintermute, 1999, p. 17.

⁹² Bartlet, 1992, p. 683.

Rameau's operatic writing commenced in 1733, comparatively late in the composer's career, and is roughly divided into two major categories, the *tragédie lyrique*⁹³ and the *opéra-ballet*.⁹⁴ The former, the inheritor of the Lullian patrimony, is occupied with the expression of lofty sentiments and the explication of morally edifying mythological stories. The latter category, invented by de la Motte in *L'Europa galante* (1697), is a lighter form, generally representing love stories between contemporary characters or classicising figures, sometimes in exotic settings.⁹⁵

The musette appears frequently in the *opéra-ballets* of Rameau, although he was not the first to use it on the French stage: it had already appeared at the end of the seventeenth century in works by Lully and Campra.⁹⁶ Rameau is consistent in his use of the musette, indicating that, like Watteau, he considered it emblematic of a specific mood.⁹⁷ A characteristic example occurs in the third *entrée* of *Les fêtes d'Hébé ou les talents lyriques* (1739). This is a work comprising a prologue and three *entrées*, *La poésie*, *La musique* and *La danse*. The musette appears extensively in *La danse*, which, although it nominally focuses on the courtship of Eglé by Mercure, is actually a pretext for some of Rameau's most sumptuous dance music. The stage directions indicate that 'le théâtre représente un bocage; en découvre un hameau dans l'éloignement.' The location of the action in a *bocage* acts as a signal for the use of the musette, and it has clear parallels in the paintings of Watteau. One need only compare the *Fêtes vénitiennes* (Fig. 7)⁹⁸ with Rameau's *La guirlande* (1751), another musette-heavy score, which is set in a 'lieu champêtre où est un autel de l'amour. La statue du Dieu paraît dans le fond.' The *bocage* in *La danse* and *La guirlande* is a site for amorous action, a theme also taken up in a verse appended to an engraving, *Concert dans un parc*, by Bernard Picart, one of Watteau's predecessors in the genre of the *fête galante*:

In the shade of a grove [*bosquet*], on a beautiful summer's day
This agreeable company
Tastes the sweet pleasure that brings harmony
When all is well concerted.
But among the charms of beautiful music,

⁹³ The *tragédie lyrique* was also known as the *tragédie en musique*.

⁹⁴ The *opéra-ballet* was also known as the *pastorale-héroïque*, *acte de ballet*, and by several other names.

⁹⁵ Mirimonde has characterised the shift from the *tragédie lyrique* to the lighter genres in the following way: 'Scores on graceful subjects, called *fêtes galantes*, were henceforth preferred to the noble and tragic compositions of Lully. A playful approach to mythology, gentle sensitivity, and elegant, ingenious and spiritual music – that's what was henceforth appreciated. The opera was accommodated to the *bergerie*. 'The pastoral', as Brossard said, 'is a song that imitates that of the shepherds, in all its sweetness, tenderness and naturalness.'" See Mirimonde, 1961, p. 258.

⁹⁶ As Scellery notes: 'The pastoral and country representations [*les représentations pastorales & champestres*] cannot do without them [i.e. musettes], and we see them almost every year in the ballets of the King.' See Scellery, 1983, p. 32.

⁹⁷ The musette occurs almost exclusively in the lighter forms of French opera of this period (the *opéra-ballet*, *pastorale-héroïque*, etc) and only rarely in the *tragédie lyrique*. The only use of it in a *tragédie lyrique* of Rameau I have been able to find is at the end of *Hippolyte et Aricie* (1733) but, even here, it only occurs when the action moves from the dramatic setting at the start of the opera to the *forêt d'Aricie* with its *bergers* and *bergères*, amongst whom Aricie and Hippolyte celebrate their love in the Cinquième acte, Scène troisième.

⁹⁸ c. 1718-19, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh.

Whether by [Jean-]Baptiste [Lully] or [Michel] Lambert,⁹⁹
Love holds its own part and very often takes pride in
Making two hearts sigh in concert with each other.¹⁰⁰

Further associating the musette with the theme of love, the *bergers* and *bergères* of Rameau's *La danse* urge Mercure in a musette-accompanied chorus to lay down his arms, with which he is fighting off Cupid's 'attacks'. They exhort him to 'obey the laws which Love himself has given to us' and to 'obey the laws that we cherish in our woods.' The *bocage* is an enclosed, private environment in which these laws—those of Love alone—hold sway.¹⁰¹ The musette here acts as the 'go-between for lovers'¹⁰² and, as Myrtil sings in *La guirlande*, 'the heart sounded the first musette.'¹⁰³

That the *bocage* setting of these operas is intended to convey a sense of almost prelapsarian tranquillity and peaceful dedication to love is confirmed by several scenes in which the sound of the musette is contrasted with the noise of battle.¹⁰⁴ In the prologue to *Les indes galantes*, for example, the musette players attending Hébè are sent flying before the arrival of Bellona, the goddess of war, and a warrior in *La princesse de Navare* (1745) sings that musettes 'announce peace and repose to us and must crown their [i.e. warriors'] glorious works.'¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ Lambert (c. 1640-96) was a celebrated composer of *airs de cour*, of which he left over three hundred examples.

¹⁰⁰ A l'ombre des bosquets, dans un beau jour d'Eté
Cette agreable compagnie
Goute le doux plaisir que donne l'harmonie
Lorsque tout est bien concerté,
Mais parmi les attraits d'une belle musique
Ou de Batiste ou de Lambert
L'amour tient sa partie et tres souvent se pique
De faire que deux cœurs soupirent de concert.
As Mirimonde notes, 'Ces petit vers, en dépit de leur qualité modeste, expriment bien le sens des *Jardins d'amour* de Watteau.' See Mirimonde, 1977, p. 85.

¹⁰¹ *Les fêtes d'Hébè ou les talens lyriques*, Troisième entrée, Scène septième: 'Suivez les lois qu'Amour vient nous dicter lui-même! Suivez les lois que nous chérissons dans nos bois!'

¹⁰² The verse is given in Mirimonde, 1977, p. 90:

Par une tendre chansonette
On exprime ses sentiments
Souvent la flute et la musette
Sont l'interprete des amans.

Through a tender chansonette
One expresses his sentiments
Often the flute and the musette
Are the lovers' go-betweens.

A similar idea seems to be expressed by Scellery when he notes that the musette was played by lovers before the windows of their mistresses in ancient Rome. See Scellery, 1983, p. 8.

¹⁰³ *La guirlande*, Scène septième: 'La cœur fit résonner la première musette.'

¹⁰⁴ This point is also made without further discussion in Winternitz, 1942, p. 82: 'the French musette symbolises peace.'

¹⁰⁵ *La princesse de Navare*, Troisième acte, Scène cinquième: 'Annoncez-nous la paix et le repos/Qui doivent couronner leurs glorieux travaux.'

It is clear, then, that the musette in both Rameau's and Watteau's works is intended to evoke the ideal of a distant Golden Age.¹⁰⁶ According to Jean-Jacques Rousseau in the *First discourse* (1749), this was an age 'before art had moulded our manners and taught our passions to speak an affected language, our customs were rustic but natural, and differences of conduct announced at first glance those of character.'¹⁰⁷ Scellery goes so far as to locate the origins of the musette in this Golden Age, attributing its invention to Jubal and its first practitioners as the shepherds of Jubal's day, 'that is to say, all men who lived at that time.'¹⁰⁸

Like the guitar, the sound of the musette was often conceptualised as being 'sweet' and therefore, like the guitar, appropriate to love. Scellery's essay on the origins of the musette concludes with the remark that it became the 'most charming and sweetest of musical instruments.'¹⁰⁹ It is frequently referred to in these terms in Rameau's works: a shepherdess in *La temple de la gloire* (1745), for example, refers to the 'doux son de notre musette'¹¹⁰ and the singer in the cantata *La musette*, long attributed to Rameau,¹¹¹ refers to the 'doux sons [of Lissette's musette that] inspiraient de l'amour.'¹¹² Like the guitar, the musette was capable of playing *des airs amoureux* (sarabands and the other lascivious dances), although Scellery notes that it is better suited to 'the *plaintes* that are called the *aubades à la campagne*.'¹¹³ The belief that, in Scellery's words, the musette 'breathe[d] only rustic naïveté and simplicity'¹¹⁴ led, however, to the creation of a specialised repertoire of music for the musette. Boismortier's voluminous *œuvre* for the instrument features works under the titles *gentilleses*, *pastorales*, *divertissemens de campagne* and *ballets de village*, types which are attested rarely, if at all, beyond the musette's repertoire.¹¹⁵ Although these are actually in the contemporary forms of the sonata or concerto, the titles of these works are clearly aimed at conjuring the *bosquet d'amour* of works by Watteau or Rameau.

Watteau's use of the musette and the guitar in his *fêtes galantes*, then, is charged with a profound nostalgia for values that were vanishing before the artist's eyes. 'Spain' and the prelapsarian *bocage* are imagined as sites for the exercise of *courtesie*,

¹⁰⁶ As Leppert remarks: 'Might not Borjon's reference to these ancient shepherds with their primitive 'musettes'—he uses the word quite indiscriminately—establish a convenient basis for considering the eighteenth-century instrument appropriately Arcadian?' Leppert, 1978, p. 41.

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Leppert, 1978, p. 62.

¹⁰⁸ Scellery, 1983, p. 2: 'c'est à dire à tous les hommes, qui vivoient en ce temps-là.'

¹⁰⁹ Scellery, 1983, p. 5: 'l'un des plus charmans & des plus doux instrumens de la Musique'. Trichet agrees in his short examination of the musette: 'Among the French, [the musette] is far more refined, far sweeter and less shrill [than the bagpipe of the people of Hungary and Mysia, which he has just examined], so that it is played in chambers and in studies without offence to the ear.' Quoted in Leppert, 1978, p. 8. The foreword to Nicolas Chédeville's *Les deffis ou l'étude amusante*, an undated publication of music for the musette, refers to the 'dulcet harmonies of the sweet musette.' See Leppert, 1978, p. 38. Scellery also notes that 'there is nothing sweeter or more marvellous these days than those concerts in which the musette is heard.' Scellery, 1983, p. 32.

¹¹⁰ *La temple de la gloire*, Première acte, Scène deuxième.

¹¹¹ It is now thought to be by the baritone Pierre de la Garde (1717-c. 1792), and to be dated before 1758.

¹¹² *La musette*, Récitatif.

¹¹³ Scellery, 1983, p. 29.

¹¹⁴ Scellery, 1983, p. 29: 'Cet instrument ne respire que la naïveté & la simplicité champêtre.'

¹¹⁵ Green names others, including *concert champêtre* (used by Chédeville) and *fêtes rustiques* (used by Naudot). See Green, 1987, p. 470.

honêteté and *gallanterie*. Each of these instruments also brings its own specific resonances to the *fête galante*. Works such as *La gamme d'amour* (Fig. 8),¹¹⁶ for example, emphasising the intimate sound of the guitar, show an intense, private, and perhaps more overtly sexual encounter between two lovers, an 'impenetrable intimacy'¹¹⁷ conducted in a space that is specifically feminised and in which the strains of 'Spanish' melancholy and lasciviousness predominate.¹¹⁸ On the other hand, works such as *L'amour au théâtre italien* (Fig. 9),¹¹⁹ taking place in a *bosquet d'amour*, perhaps emphasising a courtly, polite and less sexually charged interaction between the participants, point to the rewards of peace and surrender to the *lois immortelles* of Love.

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¹¹⁶ c. 1715-18, National Gallery, London.

¹¹⁷ Bryson, 1981, p. 84.

¹¹⁸ Mercurio reads the scenario of *La gamme d'amour* less as a record of an actual or possible musical performance but rather as a meditation on 'concerns about the place of Italian music in French society and the fate of a much-loved instrument', asserting further that the guitar has an 'iconographic meaning as a bearer of desire.' See Mercurio, 2006, p. 196.

¹¹⁹ c. 1718, Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.

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