

“Prendre le dessin d'un bijou...Fantaisie aux divins mensonges”, LAKMÉ, Act I, music by Léo Delibes, libretto by Edmond Gondinet and Philippe Gille, 1883; based on Pierre Loti's novel, *Le mariage de Loti*. (“Pierre Loti” was the pseudonym of Louis Marie-Julien Viaud.)

SYNOPSIS: In mid-19<sup>th</sup> century India, Gerald, a British officer of the occupying forces, is accompanying a group of sightseers, when they intrude upon a sacred garden attached to the Brahmin temple of Nilakantha. His daughter, Lakmé, left her jewels behind as she went to bathe in the nearby stream. When the others leave, Gerald stays behind to sketch the beautiful exotic objects, imagining who their owner might be...

GÉRARD

Prendre le dessin d'un bijou,  
est-ce donc aussi grave?  
Ah! Frédéric est fou!  
Mais d'où vient maintenant  
cette crainte insensée?  
Quel sentiment surnaturel  
a troublé ma pensée  
devant ce calme solennel!  
Fille de mon caprice,  
l'inconnue est devant mes yeux!  
Sa voix à mon oreille glisse  
des mots mystérieux.  
Non! non!

Fantaisie aux divins mensonges,  
tu reviens m'égarer encor.  
Va, retourne au pays de songes,  
O fantaisie aux ailes d'or!  
Va! va! Retourne au pays des songes.  
O fantaisie aux ailes d'or!  
*(Inspecting the jewels)*  
Au bras poli de la païenne  
cette annelet dut s'enlacer!  
Elle tiendrait toute en la mienne,  
la main qui seule y peut passer!  
Ce cercle d'or, je le suppose,  
a suivi les pas voyageurs  
d'un petit pied qui ne se pose  
que sur la mousse ou sur les fleurs..  
Et ce collier encor parfumé d'elle,  
de sa personne encor tout embaumé.  
a pu sentir battre son coeur fidèle,  
tout tressaillant au nom du bien aimé.  
Non! Non! Fuyez!  
Fuyez, chimères,  
rêves éphémères  
qui troublez ma raison.

GERALD

If I make a sketch of these jewels,  
Is that a such a serious thing?  
Ah! Frederick is mad!  
But what just now has caused  
this ridiculous fear?  
What supernatural feeling  
has come to trouble me  
surrounded by this solemn calm!  
A child of my caprice,  
I can see her, the unknown maid.  
I hear her softly whispering  
some strange exotic words.  
No, no!

Oh, chimera of divine untruths,  
you come back to disturb me once more.  
Go; return to the land of dreams,  
oh, fantasy with golden wings.  
Go, go! Return to the land of dreams,  
oh, fantasy with golden wings.

The pagan woman's burnished arm  
by this bracelet was enclosed.  
It fits completely in my hand--  
my hand can only pass through it...  
This golden ring, I suppose,  
has followed the wandering steps  
of a tiny foot which has stepped  
on nothing but mosses or flowers...  
And this necklace, still perfumed by her,  
still imbued with her lovely scent,  
has felt the beating of her faithful heart,  
all aflutter, at her beloved's name.  
No! No! Be gone!  
Be gone, visions,  
fleeting idle dreams,  
you, that cloud my mind.

Fantaisie aux divins mensonges,  
Tu reviens m'égarer encor.  
Va, retourne au pays des songes,  
O fantaisie aux ailes d'or.

Oh, chimera of divine untruths,  
you come back to disturb me once more.  
Go; return to the land of dreams,  
oh, fantasy with golden wings.

--From "Romanticism and the Arts," a course for Lifelong Learners at UC Santa Cruz,  
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