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«La plus grande audace à notre époque: être simple».

Simplicity, Subversion and Intimations of the Surreal in Francis Poulenc's Early Collaborations with Jean Cocteau

Prelude: Simplicity, Sophistication and Subversion in the Post-War Aesthetics of Jean Cocteau

In his pamphlet *Le coq et l'arlequin*, Jean Cocteau praises Erik Satie for the lesson his music teaches about simplicity: «Satie teaches the greatest audacity of our age, to be simple».¹ But this simplicity is not only audacious; it is deceptive – and, in fact, requires a whole explanatory note from Cocteau in the volume's preface:

The word “Simplicity”, which is to be found often in the course of these notes, calls for some definition. One should not take simplicity to be the synonym of “poverty”, nor for a retrogression. Simplicity progresses in the same way as sophistication, and the simplicity of our modern musicians is no longer that of our clavecinists. The simplicity that arises as a reaction to sophistication benefits from that very sophistication – it distils out the accumulated richness and then condenses it.²

Cocteau's simplicity may progress in the same way as sophistication, but it is also a reaction to it and one that is no less rich and complex. In this respect, it is intrinsically problematic – a paradoxical quality to be found within simplicity – which makes it a

¹ «Satie enseigne la plus grande audace à notre époque: être simple», JEAN COCTEAU, *Le coq et l'arlequin*, Paris, Éditions de la Sirène, 1918, p. 30. Here and with reference to *Le rappel à l'ordre*, below, I have cited Cocteau's statements from the documents in which they appeared their first-published form. The reader may also wish to consult the following excellent publication which brings together Cocteau's writings on music from 1910 to 1963 in a single volume: JEAN COCTEAU, *Écrits sur la musique*, ed. by David Gullentops and Malou Haine, Paris, Vrin (MusicologieS), 2016.

² «Le mot “simplicité”, qui se rencontre souvent au cours de ces notes mérite qu'on le détermine un peu. Il ne faut pas prendre simplicité pour le synonyme de pauvreté, ni pour un recul. La simplicité progresse au même titre que le raffinement et la simplicité de nos musiciens modernes n'est plus celle des clavecinistes. La simplicité qui arrive en réaction d'un raffinement relève de ce raffinement; elle dégage, elle condense la richesse acquise», J. COCTEAU, *Le coq et l'arlequin*, cit., unnumbered (numbering begins at p. 12, by which reckoning this would be p. 9).

potential tool for destabilisation and provocation. We are disconcerted by it, while being unsure whether this is because it is too trivial for our serious attention or too profound for us to grasp it properly. Cocteau himself understood this well and articulated it, perhaps even more clearly than in *Le coq et l'arlequin*, in his 1923 article *D'un ordre considéré comme une anarchie*: «Our simplicity will dumbfound Molière's ghost with its complexity and will unnerve the avant-gardes by its childishness».³

It is significant that, in both statements, Cocteau makes a distinction between the classical simplicity that is seen as part of France's cultural heritage (les clavecinistes; Molière) and that which is explicitly contemporary (nos musiciens modernes; les avant-gardes). It is also telling that the simplicity that he advocates is calculated to confound both those nostalgic for the irrecoverable glories of a seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France and those impatient for further radical progress in the twentieth century. It is a simplicity which emphasises that there is much that needs to be stripped away, but one that is ambivalent about how what is then left should be perceived. Rather than being an obstacle to its reception, this capacity of Cocteau's simplicity to "wrong-foot" traditionalists and progressives alike seems suspiciously as though it is its very *raison d'être*.

By extension, the act of wrong-footing could be seen as operating in some respects as the kind of disruptive *frisson* that was so important to the Surrealists in their quest for actions that spring us out of the continuum of normal reality and create the fissure through which *le merveilleux* can enter. Disconcerting simplicity is far from unknown among Surrealist artists and poets; Magritte's baldly literal visual depiction of a pipe with the legend underneath it «Ceci n'est pas une pipe» starts as model of almost banal simplicity but leads us into what turns out to be a veritable "hall of mirrors" of reality, stretching to infinity. As will be discussed later, Cocteau was only equivocally associated with the Dadaists, and positively reviled by Breton and the Surrealists; nevertheless, I would argue that there are parallels between the aesthetic he was proposing from 1917 and through the earlier half of the 1920's and the principles which became codified and, in the process, commandeered and monopolised by the Surrealists, in the *Manifeste du Surréalisme* (1924) and thereafter.

This is equally true, of course, of the musical and musico-theatrical works which Cocteau instigated during this period, and upon which he collaborated with Satie and the musicians of Les Six. My argument is that there is an oblique but telling correspondence to

³ «Notre simplicité stupéfiera l'ombre de Molière par sa complication et déconcertera les avant-gardes par son enfantillage», JEAN COCTEAU, *D'un ordre considéré comme une anarchie* [1923], in Id., *Le rappel à l'ordre*, Paris, Stock, 1948, pp. 237-260: 240.

be drawn between the deliberate use of simple, commonplace materials in these works (which has the effect of “uncoupling” the higher-order aesthetic and intellectual elements of artistic creation from the pure, unfettered act of art-making) and the principle of “psychic automatism” engaged with by the Surrealists and, in the 1924 manifesto, enshrined as the defining attribute of the surreal in creative activity. The simplicity of such music seems to declare that it hides no mystery and exists only on the level of its immediately audible surface. But this very lack of rationale – as though what we hear has simply sprung into being arbitrarily and quasi-autonomously – paradoxically hints at some motivating force other than that of its composer’s consciousness; it therefore introduces an unsettling note of strangeness which, while ostensibly at odds with simplicity, actually emanates from it. I shall explore this proposition further through the examination of a number of Cocteau-inspired works by one of these musicians, Francis Poulenc, and, in particular, the set of three songs written by him in 1919 and collectively entitled *Cocardes*.

Cocteau, Satie and Apollinaire: the «esprit nouveau» and «une sorte de sur-réalisme»

In *Le coq et l'arlequin*, Cocteau highlighted the element of simplicity in Satie’s music partly as a tactic for vindicating his own intentions in the ballet *Parade* (this being an important motive for the pamphlet) but also as an example which he exhorted the young French musicians to follow. Satie – and, therefore, simplicity à la Satie – offered the prospect of a blank slate: «a pristine path on which anyone can freely impress his or her own footprints».⁴ This invitation was not lost upon the composers of Les Six, especially the youngest two, Poulenc and Georges Auric. Indeed, to some extent it pointed in a direction that they had already identified for themselves (Cocteau consulted Auric extensively during the writing of *Le coq et l'arlequin*) even if Poulenc was later to deny that they had any truly shared aesthetic. His assertion that the pamphlet was essentially a disguised defence of Satie against the Stravinsky of the of the pre-War Diaghilev ballets has some justification. Cocteau’s agenda of deflecting any unfavourable comparisons between these and his own and Satie’s contribution to the catalogue of “scandalous” Ballets Russes premières with *Parade* only serves to underline how pertinent and alluring was the prospect of a «pristine path» for the poet-scenarist as well as for the composers. And the gateway to this untrodden path was simplicity, however sophisticatedly conceived.

⁴ «Une route blanche où chacun marque librement ses empreintes», J. COCTEAU, *Le coq et l'arlequin*, cit., p. 30.

The experience of *Parade* was revelatory for Poulenc in several ways, not least in that it confirmed Satie as a musical model for his budding compositional ambitions, and one whose embodiment of the new spirit in art made him capable of rivalling – and even temporarily displacing – Debussy and Stravinsky. While he was later somewhat rueful about this youthful inconstancy, it is significant that Poulenc used the Apollinairian phrase, «esprit nouveau», when recalling how eagerly he drank in the lessons of the ballet, in particular those contained in Satie’s music and Picasso’s sets and costumes: «With the injustice of a twenty-year-old, despite idolising Debussy, I allowed myself to deny him a little because I was so thirsty for the new spirit brought to us by Satie and Picasso».⁵

In this context, it is important to acknowledge that when Apollinaire claimed in his programme notes to *Parade* that it demonstrated «une sorte de sur-réalisme», his pioneering use of the term, as opposed to Breton’s later dogmatic formulations, denoted a quality that was, to some extent, interchangeable with that of the new spirit (elsewhere in the same notes he described the ballet as partaking of «a sequence of manifestations of this *esprit nouveau*»)⁶ Many of the Apollinaire’s pronouncements in his November 1917 lecture, *L’esprit nouveau et les poètes* share resonances with such definitions as he cared to provide for his concept of a more-than-real realism, especially those proclaiming a new synthesis of the arts.⁷ Moreover, between the *Parade* première and this lecture, he invoked the term for a second time (now without the hyphen) to capture the essence of his «drame surréaliste», *Les mamelles de Tirésias*, performed at the Théâtre René Maubel in Montmartre on the 24th of June. Poulenc was present at this event and later, of course, was to set Apollinaire’s theatrical text as an «opéra-bouffe en deux actes et un prologue».

Ostensibly, *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* came about as a putting into practice of the «tendances nouvelles» that Apollinaire had outlined to Pierre Albert-Birot in an interview which appeared the previous autumn in the latter’s artistic review, «SIC».⁸ Perhaps more

⁵ «Avec l’injustice des vingt ans, quoique idolâtrant Debussy, j’acceptai de le renier un peu car j’avais soif de cet esprit nouveau que nous apportaient Satie et Picasso», FRANCIS POULENC, *Moi et mes amis. Confidences recueillies par Stéphane Audel*, in ID., *J’écris ce qui me chante*, Paris, Fayard, 2011, pp. 859-860.

⁶ «Une série de manifestations de cet esprit nouveau». For this text in French, cf. GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE, *Œuvres en prose complètes*, 3 vols., ed. by Pierre Caizergues - Michel Decaudin, Paris, Gallimard (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), 1977-1993, II (1991), pp. 865-866, and for an English translation, DANIEL ALBRIGHT, *Modernism and Music. An Anthology of Sources*, Chicago - London, University of Chicago Press, 2004, pp. 320-321.

⁷ The text of this lecture was published in the issue of «Mercure de France» for 1 December 1918. This publication is available online at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k201831j/f11.item> (accessed on June 13, 2018).

⁸ «SIC», 8-9-10 (1916), available through the online International Dada Archive, <http://sdr.lib.uiowa.edu/dada/Sic/index.htm> (accessed on June 13, 2018).

specifically, it was supposedly a concrete example of ideas put forward in his own article, published in the same issue, describing what he called «un theatre nûnique», invoking the Greek word for “now” to emphasise the uncompromisingly contemporary character that such a theatre should embody. Clearly, surrealism, as construed by Apollinaire in 1917, was simply one of a constellation of labels whose collective coordinates nevertheless defined a radical and purging novelty of which Satie stood at the time as the strongest musical exemplar.

But while the influence upon Poulenc of Satie and the new spirit may initially have been direct, it rapidly came to be refracted through the lens of Cocteau’s pronouncements and the poet’s self-assumed role as spokesperson for the young composers. During 1918, Cocteau enlisted Poulenc to provide three musical numbers for a «Hommage au music-hall» that he was planning with the actor, director and stage-designer, Pierre Bertin. The music-hall is another recurrent theme in *Le coq et l’arlequin* where, in a trope of the simplicity motif, Cocteau praises it for its capacity to enrich the artist as does life itself, unmediated by the slow and circumspect turnings of art. In the music-hall, he says, there are no scruples; you can take the stairs two at a time («Ici, pas de scrupule, on saute les marches»).⁹ Simplicity here appears in the guise of lightness and insouciance and an unashamed openness to influences beyond those of high art and more in the realm of “shallow” popular entertainment. This multi-valent nature of simplicity is something to which I shall return.

With Poulenc on military service, many of the preparations for the «Hommage au music-hall» were conducted by correspondence, a factor which gives us unusual insight into the creative exchanges (predominantly uni-directional) between Cocteau and Poulenc. One item required of the composer was a setting of a so-called «chanson hispano-italienne», *Toréador* – in fact, a synthetic text specially-written by Cocteau. Among the many almost micro-managing instructions from Cocteau concerning the musical treatment was that «you should make it *good but lousy*»¹⁰ – a revealing oxymoron that points to the perilous line that it is necessary to walk in order to create an art based on simple, popular genres. It also suggests certain quite complex “rules of engagement” around the notion of how much sincerity and belief one should have in a simple, in the sense of trivial, musical model when one is emulating it and simultaneously subjecting it to satire.

⁹ J. COCTEAU, *Le coq et l’arlequin* cit., p. 34.

¹⁰ «Il faut la faire *bien mais moche*» (Cocteau’s emphasis), Jean Cocteau’s letter to Francis Poulenc, 15 October 1918, in FRANCIS POULENC, *Correspondance 1910-1963*, ed. by Miriam Chimènes, Paris, Fayard, 1994, p. 72.

The Cockerel and the Rocking Horse: Cocteau, Tzara, Picabia and first interactions with Dada

Le coq et l'arlequin was published by the Éditions de la Sirène, of which Cocteau was co-editor with Blaise Cendrars. The frontispiece carries the date of June 1918 but the volume was not printed until December and only finally achieved distribution in January 1919, by which time we know from an unpublished letter that Poulenc was impatiently awaiting getting his hands on it.¹¹ As a result, its emergence came at a time when the presence of Dada was being reinforced in France – a tendency which was to culminate in the arrival of Tristan Tzara from Zurich in early 1920. The post mortems about *Parade* in *Le coq et l'arlequin* were therefore less topical by this time than the sense in which both the 1917 ballet and Cocteau's refractory, aphorism-laden prose now mirrored the burgeoning spirit of Dada in French artistic circles. The rapprochement worked both ways; Tzara had made contact with Cocteau in the months following the performances of *Parade*, in which he saw a kinship with the spirit of Dada, and we know from Tzara's account that pieces by Satie were included in the Dada soirée held at the Salle Kaufleuten in Zurich in April 1919. By the time of the pamphlet's diffusion, the lessons to be drawn from *Le coq et l'arlequin* by the young composers might well, therefore, have taken on a more explicitly modernist and, arguably, a less flagrantly chauvinistic flavour than would have been the case the previous year and, especially prior to the November 1918 armistice.

With the cessation of hostilities and European borders becoming less restricted, Tzara was keen to establish Dada in other European capital cities. The founding of the review «Littérature» in March 1919, edited by André Breton, Philippe Soupault and Louis Aragon, greatly assisted this process as far as Paris was concerned. Breton and his colleagues had been planning such a review for almost two years but the project received new impetus, and took on a new flavour, thanks to the influence of Dada emanating from Zurich, not least in the form of the first three issues of «Dada» which were beginning to find their way into circulation among the artistic community of post-war Paris. The first issue of «Littérature» contained a review by Aragon of Tzara's *Vingt-cinq poèmes* and, after his own arrival in Paris, Tzara would become a leading figure in the «Littérature» circle up until his break with Breton in 1922 and subsequent refusal to support the *Surrealist Manifesto*.

¹¹ Cf. CARL B. SCHMIDT, *Entrancing Muse. A Documented Biography of Francis Poulenc*, Hillsdale (NY), Pendragon Press, 2001, p. 71, note 110.

Cocteau was eager for acceptance into the circle of the newly-formed review but was already perceived as an opportunistic dilettante by Breton and others. Despite his bombarding Aragon with letters and, as a result, being listed on the back cover of the first issue among its contributors, his proposed contribution – interestingly, an article on *Le coq et l'arlequin* – was suppressed. He had more success with Dada itself, largely through his friendship with the Parisian-born artist, poet and theorist, Francis Picabia. It was Picabia who, during a three-week stay in Zurich in January and early February 1919, collaborated with Tzara on the production of issue 4-5 of «Dada», also known as *Anthologie dada*. This issue appeared in two versions: an “international” one including some contributions in German and one which replaced these with French items to avoid French government censorship. According to a letter from Tzara to Picabia after the latter’s return to Paris, copies of the international version were available in Zurich as early as March 1919. However, it would appear that he was “jumping the gun”; a short letter from Picabia to Tzara dated 18 April refers to his sending «Trois Pièces faciles pour petites mains, de Jean Cocteau» and asking Tzara what he makes of them.¹² Presumably, the reaction was positive, despite Tzara’s having earlier voiced a certain scepticism about Cocteau by referring to his having received from him «a letter (pseudo)-enraptured by “Dada”». ¹³ In any event, the publication as it finally appeared in May contains these poems under the title quoted by Picabia.¹⁴ The same poems were almost immediately set to music by Poulenc in May-August 1919 as *Cocardes* and eventually published under the latter title in Cocteau’s *Poésies (1917-1920)*. The poems and songs of *Cocardes* are therefore a manifestation of a close alliance during 1919 between Cocteau – plus, vicariously, Poulenc – and Dada, its aesthetic and several of its key protagonists.

Cocteau was clearly delighted to be published in the *Anthologie dada*, even while preserving a certain distance between himself and the movement. In 1919, he wrote to Picabia in the format of a postcard-style photo-montage. The main image featured him, in officer’s uniform, positioned so as to appear perched on the back of Picasso’s infamous horse from *Parade*, and carried the rather smug inscription: «I’m not a Dadaist, but I can be

¹² The letter is reprinted in MICHEL SANOUILLET, *Dada à Paris*, revised edition, Paris, CNRS, 2005, p. 467.

¹³ «Une lettre (pseudo)- enthousiasmée par “Dada”», *ibidem*, p. 460. The reference to «Dada» concerns the third issue of that publication.

¹⁴ See Digital «Dada» Library, http://sdr.lib.uiowa.edu/dada/dada/4_5/pages/03.htm (accessed on June 13, 2018).

found parading about in your book».¹⁵ Elsewhere, Cocteau enjoyed characterising himself in paradoxical terms as the very antithesis of a Dadaist but therefore their neighbour, within hand-shaking proximity, at the encircling point where extremes touch.¹⁶ Significantly, the simplicity he had so artfully championed in *Le coq et l'arlequin* was also part of the Dadaist lexicon of desirable attributes. The previous issue of «Dada», number 3, had been published in December 1918 and contained an important document by Tzara that is known to have been influential upon Breton and his «“Littérature” colleagues».¹⁷ The *Manifeste Dada 1918* is described in the following terms in Michel Sanouillet’s authoritative study of Dada in Paris: «it is the first, the great gospel of Dadaism which contains in embryonic form all the subsequent evolution of Dada and of Surrealism».¹⁸

At one point in this manifesto can be found, printed on a single line, the phrase: «Active simplicity».¹⁹ Elsewhere in the text, Tzara proclaims that:

What we need is works that are strong straight precise and forever beyond understanding. Logic is a complication. Logic is always wrong. It draws the threads of notions, words, in their formal exterior, toward illusory ends and centres. Its chains kill, it is an enormous centipede stifling independence.²⁰

Simplicity is present, albeit implicitly, in this call for works combining strength, straightness and precision – qualities which also recall the Satiean virtues enumerated by Cocteau in *Le coq et l'arlequin*. Even the sudden twist which adds to these the characteristic of perpetual incomprehensibility echoes, albeit more vehemently, Cocteau’s observations about the bemusing aspect of his and the young musicians’ simplicity. For Tzara, it is logic that is the villain of the piece; in perhaps paradoxically poetic language, he seems to imply that it is specifically the logic of semantic sequence – the way that individual units of meaning are strung together like the monstrously organised tread of the centipede – that

¹⁵ «Je ne suis pas un dada mais je me promène dans votre livre», image accessible online at <https://uk.pinterest.com/pin/406449935092829826/> (accessed on June 13, 2018).

¹⁶ As cited in FRANCIS STEEGMULLER, *Cocteau. A Biography*, London – Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1970, pp. 257-258.

¹⁷ This manifesto is itself thought to have been influenced by the text *Letzte Lockerung* (The Last Loosening) written earlier in the same year by the German Dadaist Walter Serner.

¹⁸ «C’est le premier, le vrai, le grand évangile du dadaïsme, qui contient en germe toute l’évolution ultérieure de Dada et du surréalisme», M. SANUILLET, *Dada à Paris*, cit., p. 117.

¹⁹ «La simplicité active», Digital «Dada» Library, <http://sdr.lib.uiowa.edu/dada/dada/3/02.htm> (accessed on June 13, 2018).

²⁰ «Il nous faut des œuvres fortes droites précises et à jamais incomprises. La logique est une complication. La logique est toujours fausse. Elle tire les fils des notions, paroles dans leur extérieur formel, vers des bouts des centres illusoirs. Ses chaînes tuent, myriapode énorme asphyxiant l’indépendance», *ibidem* <http://sdr.lib.uiowa.edu/dada/dada/3/03.htm> (accessed on June 13, 2018).

stifles the innate vitality of words, which is precisely the quality out of which the kinds of works he is advocating should be made. This vitality – strong, straight and precise – is only released when words remain in isolation, each one arising spontaneously and for reasons which cannot be inferred from its predecessor or bequeathed to its successor. In this sense, to borrow a metaphor from medicine, each word becomes *idiopathic*; it manifests itself without divulging the cause of its appearance at that juncture or offering any contextual cues that might aid logical diagnosis. Far from being hampered thereby, a word thus treated is revived and allowed to shine its pristine quiddity, instead of falling feebly and obediently into line at its ordained place in the sequential chain of semantic logic.

Interlude: Mapping the Coordinates of Simplicity

This is an important addition to the cloud of connotations surrounding the concept of simplicity. It makes it timely to consider in a more systematic way the forms that simplicity might take and how these might be taken up by musicians. The diagram below is itself a “simplification of simplicity” but it may be of assistance in the discussion which follows.

There are four categories of simplicity that have been identified here amongst the doubtless many more possible; they are designated alphabetically in a clockwise sequence that builds from the primitively elemental (in the bottom-left sector) to the austere refined (in the bottom right). In the process, they traverse zones of paring down and lightening up and, in the other axis, lack of sophistication moving to sophistication (tab. 1).

	Unsophisticated	Sophisticated	
“Lightened up” Carefree and purged of darker, more convoluted or introspective elements	B: Childlike, infantile, naive, innocent	C: Humorous, debunking, appropriating popular genres and styles	“Lightened up” Carefree and purged of darker, more convoluted or introspective elements
“Pared down” Minimal, stripped of ornamentation or anecdote	A: Primitive, rudimentary, elemental	D: Austere, refined, ascetic	“Pared down” Minimal, stripped of ornamentation or anecdote
	Unsophisticated	Sophisticated	

Tab. 1

Several observations may be made about these categories:

1) The placing of austerity and asceticism on the “sophisticated” side of the diagram may initially seem puzzling. Sophistication can, of course, go hand-in-hand with complexity, luxuriousness and an abundance of ornamentation but it may also be manifested in a minimalist aesthetic. In fact, it could be argued that restrained artistic expression generally tends to be valued more highly the more sophisticated is the evaluator; popular, unsophisticated taste is more likely to be drawn to rich sumptuousness. Moreover, there is surely a sophistication, not just technical but almost moral, in the willing act of self-denial of the artist who consciously embraces austerity and selects from a vast range of resources only a narrow group of carefully vetted and seemingly impoverished materials. Not for nothing did Cocteau remind us that «the simplicity that arises as a reaction to sophistication benefits from that very sophistication».

2) Arising out of this, it becomes clear that, of all four categories, only D is wholly accessible as a mode of sincere expression to the fully self-aware artist; such an artist may be knowingly humorous in a quasi-sincere way, but the adoption of a satirical, debunking mode already implies a multi-layered, equivocal engagement, while the “learned” appropriation of popular styles is an entirely synthetic process. As for adopting the manners of childish naivety or “pre-cultural” primitivism, for the self-declared artist these can only ever be borrowed masks, whether infantile or exotic.

3) This does not mean that faux-primitive, faux-naïve or faux-popular processes of production necessarily generate similar layers of falsehood in the reception of music made in these ways – although they may do so, whether intentionally or otherwise.

4) A and D – primitivism and asceticism – might imply a relatively dissonant sound palette, whereas B and C – naivety humour and the use of popular genres – are more likely to go hand-in-hand with greater consonance.

5) But as a partial contradiction of the foregoing, a “classical” diatonic language, especially when seen as a withdrawal from romantic dissonance, might be applicable both to D and to C in either its more cerebral or witty, rather than broadly humorous, manifestations.

6) In terms of avoiding Tzara’s complicating falsehood of logic, none of the categories offers an automatic solution to this dilemma, although primitivism, if conceived in a ritualistic manner, might circumvent the developmental tendencies of individual human

logic, as might the unschooled utterances of a child (the oft-quoted, although disputed, origins of the very word “Dada” suggest this affinity).

7) If this lack of a ready musical answer to the call for a suppression of logic feels discouraging, it should be remembered that a composer need not remain faithfully within any one of these categories for an entire piece; a more volatile ranging over any and all of these domains will introduce its own semantic disjunction (or «semantic dissonance» in Daniel Albright’s phrase²¹) and might well therefore be employed as a strategy to generate a simplicity that partakes of the incomprehensibility which Tzara desires.

Armed with this “toolkit for active simplicity”, I shall now turn to Cocteau’s poems set by Poulenc as *Cocardes*, using poetry and music as case-studies for an approach to simplicity that offers intimations both of dadaistic anti-logic and of surrealist automatism.

The Deceptive Difficulty of “Easy Pieces”

The title of the poems as they appear in *Anthologie dada, 3 pièces faciles pour petites mains*, is both simple and enigmatic. It suggests a musical, rather than poetic, composition; more specifically, it evokes at least three of the wartime piano miniatures composed by Stravinsky: *Trois Pièces faciles* (1915), *Cinq Pièces faciles* (1917) and *Valse pour les enfants* (1917). These pieces by Stravinsky, too, are superficially simple but more problematic on closer inspection. Cocteau, who in *Le coq et l’arlequin* maintained an apparent unawareness of them so as to reinforce his attack on the pre-war Stravinsky, clearly knew them well enough to play not just upon their titles but also upon the aesthetic signals that they evoke about what we may expect to find in his poems (appropriately, the 1915 *Trois Pièces faciles* were subsequently among the pieces played at the «Soirée du Coeur à Barbe», organised by Tzara in July 1923, alongside fox-trots by Milhaud and Auric and Satie’s *Trois Morceaux en forme de poire*).

Perhaps, in alluding to music in his title, Cocteau was also hinting at the sonic device which is the key structuring element of all three poems, both separately and as a group. By turning, at the point of articulation from one line to the next, from the sense of the words to their abstract “musical” sounds, he is able at regular intervals to replace semantic logic with that of sonorous mimesis. This strategy, in turn, enables him to realise to a significant degree Tzara’s vision of the liberation of the «strong, straight and precise» qualities latent

²¹ D. ALBRIGHT, *Untwisting the Serpent*, cit., p. 297; cf. also *ibidem*, p. 289: «Dada is a phenomenon of semantic destruction; but surrealism is a phenomenon of semantic dislocation and fissure».

in the individual words and short phrases out of which he then composes the various lines of the poems. In order to illustrate this, and to prepare the ground for further commentary, here is the first of the three poems in its entirety, on the left as it appears in *Anthologie Dada* and on the right as found in Poulenc's setting (these differences and their significance will be discussed further below):

1 Miel de narbonne

Use ton cœur Les clowns fleurissent du crottin d'or
 Dormir un coup d'orteils on vole
 Volez vous jouer avec moa
 Moabite dame de la croix bleue Caravane
 Vanille Poivre Confitures de Tamarin
 Marin cou le pompon moustaches mandoline
 Linoléum en trompe l'œil Merci
 Cinéma nouvelle muse

1 Miel de Narbonne

Use ton cœur. Les clowns fleurissent du crottin d'or
 Dormir. Un coup d'orteil on vole
 «Vôlez-vous jouer avec moâ»
 Moabite dame de la croix bleu Caravane.
 Vanille Poivre Confiture de tamarin
 Marin. Cou le pompon moustache. Mandoline
 Linoléum en trompe l'œil merci
 Cinéma nouvelle muse.

The structural technique which Cocteau employs is known as palilogia, meaning the repetition of a word or phrase. In rhetoric, it is a device employed for emphasis, but emphasis is not Cocteau's purpose; instead, his repetition of the last syllable of one line as the first of the next is used as a springboard from which thoughts and associations dive off at an arbitrary tangent, obedient only to the discipline of following the aural cue provided by the repetition. The more unlikely and ingenious the articulation, it seems, the greater its appeal to Cocteau. Thus, the conclusion of the first line matches the sound of the beginning of the second but is orthographically different (the texts below are given as in *Anthologie Dada*):

Use ton cœur Les clowns fleurissent du crottin d'or
 Dor mir un coup d'orteils on vole

Perhaps even more outrageously, the line that follows on from the above features a commonplace phrase forced brutally in between two lines in such a way that both its first and last phonemes have to be distorted:

Dormir un coup d'orteils on vole
Vol ez vous jouer avec moa
Moa bite dame de la croix bleue Caravane

As it turns out, this line, located in between quotation marks in Poulenc's setting, is one of the very few which forms an integral semantic and syntactical unit from start to finish; the predominant pattern is for lines to consist of strings of words or short phrases, often with obliquely suggestive, but by no means explicitly comprehensible, connections between them. In this respect, the sound-based interlocking of one line to the next is crucial to the poems being more than mere lists of words and phrases piled haphazardly one upon another. It is the interlocking which gives the poems strength, straightness and precision while avoiding their need to have recourse to semantic logic. In fact, the foregrounding of sound as a structuring principle also seems to stimulate a corresponding sonorous vitality in the words chosen; their sounds scintillate in a similar manner to the darts and flashes of association which their individual connotations evoke. Thus, the unlikely, but not impossible, gastronomic combination of «Vanille», «Poivre» and «Confiture de tamarin» forms a richly evocative medley of sounds and taste memories even though its underlying function is simply to span the line-length between the preceding «Caravane» and following «Marin».

As was already seen above with reference to *Miel de Narbonne*, there are a number of small variations between the texts of the poems as they appeared in *Anthologie dada* and as they were set by Poulenc and subsequently published by Cocteau and this phenomenon actually applies to all three of them. One of the later discrepancies is presumably a typographical slip since it breaks the rule of sonorous correspondence: the word which opens the third poem in *Anthologie dada*, and which subsequently appears as «Técla», and therefore links with «Fraternité» is misspelt there as «Ticla». Other small variations include the addition of punctuation in the later version and the initial use of the plural forms of some words which are subsequently presented in the singular. The sequence of titles (which follows the same principle of palilogia as the line-to-line sequences within the poems) is a good example of this. In *Anthologie dada*, these read as *Miel de narbonne*, *Bonne d'Enfant̄s* and *Enfant̄s de Troupe*, whereas "Enfant" subsequently appears in the singular in both cases. This is suggestive of the slender importance of meaning in the titles – or, for that matter, in those cases where plural becomes singular within the poems themselves. It also emphasises

the primacy of sound, since the pluralisation does not alter the way in which the words are pronounced.

But by far the strongest indication of meaning's inconsequentiality comes from the fact that between the set's first and subsequent appearances, the complete texts of the second and third poems were transposed: poem two became poem three and vice versa. Since the titles remain in the same sequence in all versions (in order to preserve the thread of sonorous connection between them) this means that a given title suddenly acquires a quite different text. Since it would therefore seem that the attaching of title to poetic text is entirely arbitrary, it follows that the relationship of title to poem exists outside logic and, by definition, is «forever beyond understanding».

As well as echoing the call-to-arms of the *Manifeste Dada 1918*, there is a sense in which the arbitrary discipline imposed by the device of palilogia at line endings and beginnings also functions somewhat like the fold in the Surrealists' games of verbal and pictorial "consequences" known collectively by the commencement of one of their most famous examples: *Le cadavre exquis*. These exercises, which began relatively frivolously but came to be seen as more serious channels through which to liberate the imagination, decouple consciousness from the overall creative process by allocating only part of this process to each participant and obliging them to make their contribution in ignorance of the input provided by each of the others. Only vestigial lines overlapping a fold in the paper – or, in the case of verbal examples, simple rules about the part of speech that each contributor should supply – give clues as to how each individual's contribution should be configured. With such limited information, participants are forced (or, one might argue, freed) to be original.

Writing in 1948, and with an uncharacteristically undogmatic qualification as to whether he was remembering correctly, André Breton suggested that the use of devices of this kind as creative tools could be traced back to around 1925, which would put them firmly within the ownership of surrealism and would make any parallels drawn with Cocteau's poems anachronistic.²² But as early as 1918, Pierre Reverdy was asserting that

The image is a pure creation of the mind. It cannot be born of a comparison but of the reconciliation of two realities that are more or less distant.

²² ANDRÉ BRETON, *Le cadavre exquis, son exaltation*, exhibition catalogue (Galerie Nina Dausset, 7-30 October 1948), Paris, La Dragonne, 1948, p. 5.

The more the relationship of the two realities that are brought together is both remote and apt, the stronger the image – the more emotive power and poetic reality it will have.²³

Judging by this, the concept, if not the specific means of generation, of *Le cadavre exquis* was already being articulated in contemporary avant-garde circles a year or so before Cocteau's poems. His approach to their construction would therefore have been aesthetically *à la mode*, combining, as it does, remoteness of meaning with aptness of sound.

Another potential objection to the comparison is that Cocteau's self-imposed restriction of finding two entirely different contexts for one sound in a succession of line endings and beginnings means that he is solely in charge of the overall creative project. His approach therefore lacks the dimension of multi-authorship that is important – some would say essential – to the technique of *Le cadavre exquis* in its post-1925 guise; however, it does still oblige him to take a series of vestigial cues and make what he can of them in discrete units of a line at a time. Like the co-contributors to later *Le cadavre exquis* exercises, his imagination is liberated thereby and he is forced/freed into a series of non-sequiturs and juxtapositions.

As already indicated, within the span of each line, Cocteau seems happy to exploit interactive associations to some extent but these are brusquely overturned as one line gives way to the next. Thus, focussing once again on *Miel de Narbonne*, «Moabite» and «Caravane» may both suggest some kind of geographically exotic connotation (the Middle East?) but «Vanille» switches us, as already seen, into the world of food ingredients. In a similar manner, «tamarin/Marin» takes us from the gastronomic arena to the image of a sailor, parts of whose appearance and accoutrements may perhaps be alluded to in the sequence of images that follows: «cou/le pompon/moustache/mandoline». The poems therefore unfold as though their individual lines may be composed according to a dimly perceptible internal logic but each line operates in the same kind of semantic ignorance of its neighbours as would come from multi-authorship. They contain only one feature that truly distinguishes them from the more complete kind of “tunnel vision” that comes from having several contributors working independently; this is the fact that the principle of linkage between lines is finally folded back upon itself; the very last syllable of each of the three poems is

²³ «L'image est une création pure de l'esprit. Elle ne peut naître d'une comparaison mais du rapprochement de deux réalités plus ou moins éloignées. Plus les rapports des deux réalités rapprochées seront lointains et justes, plus l'image sera forte – plus elle aura de puissance émotive et de réalité poétique», PIERRE REVERDY, *L'image*, «Nord-Sud», II, 13 (March 1918), pp. 3-4: 3, available online as part of Princeton Blue Mountain collection at <http://bluemountain.princeton.edu/bluemtn/cgi-bin/bluemtn?a=cl&cl=CL1&sp=bmtnaaw> (accessed on August 22, 2018).

found also to have been its first. Only fully conscious control of the totality of the enterprise emanating from a single author can achieve this effect of the “serpent eating its own tail”, and this feature is perhaps a final reflection of the complex means by which apparently simple material is manipulated by Cocteau.

But where did the creative spark for the actual choice of materials, either for the linking duplications between lines or the lists of items within them, come from? As Hervé Lacombe recounts in his biography of Poulenc, it turns out that Cocteau’s poetic imagination was partly guided by his own memory in this respect. A letter to his mother, dated 5 September 1918, includes a description of the *salle de danse* of a certain grocer, M. Dumur, whose decorations include, within a longer list: «portraits of Carnot and of Joffre. Photos of seamen with moustache and kiss curl, pipes [...]».²⁴

The names of Carnot and Joffre appear in the poem which eventually became the second of the set, *Bonne d’enfant*; «Joffre» even forms one of the line-to-line links, metamorphosing into «J’offre» for the start of the next line. Meanwhile, of course, «marins à moustaches» and «pipes» give us three of the elements referred to above in one line of the first poem. Significantly, in recounting this assemblage of items to his mother, Cocteau describes it as «le vrai décor de Picasso», showing that he recognised an incongruous link between the sentimental eclecticism of petit-bourgeois taste and the Cubist – not to say proto-surreal – juxtapositions of the great painter’s imagination.²⁵ Details recounted in a more-or-less realistic manner in the letter (allowing for some creative embroidering) become the raw materials for free association and collage-like wordplay in the poems. In the process, they are wrenched out of any “real-life” context but it is important to note, first, that they were already striking for their illogical heterogeneity in their original setting and, second, that the fact that they emanate from concrete observation arguably helps them to retain a sense of elusive coherence, even when rendered abstract and pretty much terminally baffling by their poetic treatment.

²⁴ «Portraits de Carnot et de Joffre. Photos de marins à moustaches en accroche-cœur, pipes [...]», JEAN COCTEAU, *Lettres à sa mère 1898-1918*, Paris, Gallimard, 1989, p. 422, as cited in HERVÉ LACOMBE, *Francis Poulenc*, Paris, Fayard, 2013, pp. 175-176.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

From *Pièces faciles* to *Cocardes*: Poulenc's Settings of Cocteau's Poems and Their Dadaist Undertones

How should a composer respond to poetry of this nature when attempting a musical setting? In a letter to the Belgian musicologist, pianist and conductor Paul Collaer from early 1920, Poulenc gives important clues as to what guided him in this process; he emphasises that the creation of *Cocardes*, which he composed between May and August 1919, was an unusually collaborative act:

These songs have this particularity, namely that words and music were written at the same time, from which stems the good mutual understanding; we didn't each go our separate way. I wanted to write a work stripped of artifice and *gross*, which [simply] presents itself and sounds out.²⁶

Not only was this an act of close cooperation with Cocteau; it was one in which Poulenc felt that he and the poet were of the same mind aesthetically. It is also revealing to note how Poulenc, too, makes a connection between simplicity (in the sense of the stripping away of artifice) and the quality of the music simply presenting itself idiopathically («[l'œuvre] se présente d'elle-même»). It may indeed be that this is partly what he means by wanting to write a work that was «gross», in the sense of being unfiltered, “raw” and without any self-consciousness. At the same time, the adjective may also suggest the presence of popular influences that, by the standards of traditional art music, would be regarded as coarse and unrefined, and this quality can certainly be found in the music of *Cocardes*.

Poulenc speaks of words and music being written «simultanément». Logically, and chronologically, this must refer more specifically to the revisions Cocteau made to the texts rather than to their original creation which, as we know from Picabia's letter of April 1919, must have pre-dated the start of composition by at least a month. One wonders what Poulenc's reaction, as a lifelong proponent of the fundamental principle of song composition being that of faithfulness to the text, would have been to whole poems being re-ascribed to different titles, plurals being changed to singulars, etc. With the text appearing to be as arbitrary and malleable as this, it must have been hard for him to be sure what it was to which he was attempting to be faithful. Nevertheless, given that he insists on the good

²⁶ «Ces chansons ont cela de particulier, à savoir que paroles et musique ont été écrites simultanément, d'où bonne entente; nous n'allons pas chacun dans notre sens. J'ai voulu écrire là une œuvre dépouillée d'artifice et *grosse*, qui se présente d'elle-même et qui sonne» (Poulenc's emphasis), Francis Poulenc's letter to Paul Collaer, 21 January 1920, printed in F. POULENC, *Correspondance*, cit., p. 103.

understanding that operated between him and Cocteau, he must have been aware of the dadaist orientation of the poet's intentions and, for this work at least, must have voluntarily espoused them himself to some extent.

While a close rapport may therefore have prevailed between poet and composer during the songs' composition, the same was not necessarily assured when presenting them for the scrutiny of others. Soon after its composition, Poulenc sent a sketch for the first song, *Miel de Narbonne*, to his friend, Edouard Souberbeille, urging that he should «try to understand what it is that I'm giving you», as though recognising the possibility of its being misconstrued.²⁷ His fears were well-founded; in October 1920, he was horrified to find Paul Collaer proposing to programme *Cocardes* in a light-hearted concert: «I beg you not to perform *Cocardes* as part of a light-hearted concert, because it's actually very sad apart from the 3rd. You've undoubtedly mis-conceived this work to find a "mad gaiety" in it».²⁸

Collaer seems to have taken his pleas to heart, because Poulenc was clearly delighted by the way the Belgian had written about the work in 1921: «The way you speak about *Cocardes* is perfect. It's the first time that I've read anything accurate about this work. You at least have had the wit to see its *gloomy* side».²⁹ Poulenc's choice of adjective – and his placing of it in emphasis, showing that it was not casually selected – is striking. In the earlier categorisation of simplicity, one of its attributes was seen as a "lightening-up" of darker emotions which, of their nature, tend more towards complexity. A lugubrious or gloomy simplicity seems like yet another oxymoron.

And yet it is also important to note that Poulenc only suggests that these songs have a gloomy *side* to them; not that they are unrelievedly lugubrious. Their mainly major-mode diatonic language certainly does not immediately evoke gloom but if one is searching for a musical justification for Poulenc's description, perhaps it lies in their use of circular, repetitive ostinato-like patterns. Ostinati are a feature of all three song settings; they are not always literal – often the repetitions are made with small variations – and they rarely last for more than a few bars at a time; but their quasi-static effect dominates the musical material. Purely mechanical repetition can be a form of simplicity and, as already noted,

²⁷ «Tâchez de comprendre ce que je vous donne», as cited in F. POULENC, *Correspondance*, cit., p. 96, note 4.

²⁸ «Je vous en prie, ne donnez pas *Cocardes* au concert gai, car c'est très triste à part le 3^e. Vous avez sans doute mal regardé cette œuvre pour y voir de la "folle gaieté"», Francis Poulenc's letter to Paul Collaer, 15 October 1920, printed in F. POULENC, *Correspondance*, cit., p. 114.

²⁹ «La façon dont vous parlez de *Cocardes* est parfaite. C'est la première fois que je lis quelque chose de précis sur cette œuvre. Vous au moins en avez su voir la côté *lugubre*» (Poulenc's emphasis), Francis Poulenc's letter to Paul Collaer, 7 May 1921, printed in F. POULENC, *Correspondance*, cit., p. 124.

may be a characteristic of simplicity in its austere, ritualistic manifestation. But the musical language of these songs is not austere; outwardly at least, it is benignly, if somewhat banally, charming. And yet, it could be argued that it is precisely out of this disjunction between the insouciance of tone in any given bar and the bleak and futile stasis which is evoked when virtually the same insouciance is multiply repeated that Poulenc generates the kind of existential gloom – the «coté lugubre» – that was clearly so important to him.

There is a chronologically close and much-acclaimed precedent in Poulenc's output for a work dominated by the ostinato principle, namely the *Trois Mouvements perpétuels* for piano, composed in December 1918. These pieces are outwardly more gracious and straightforwardly charming than the songs of *Cocardes* and yet they, too, have prompted commentators to muse on the paradoxically complex nature of their simplicity. Hervé Lacombe, for example, suggests that the second of the three pieces «which seems to enunciate falteringly a rudimentary motif, radicalises the effect of simplification». ³⁰ He goes on to assert that «Poulenc composes a music which seems simple, verging on the banal, but which nevertheless contains many details that disturb the clear unfolding of motifs and tonalities». ³¹

In a way that partially foreshadows *Cocardes*, the binding factor of ostinato in each of the three *Mouvements perpétuels* enables otherwise disparate ideas to be overlaid in a manner that both seems arbitrary and, because of the sense that all of the ideas are united in their relationship with the ostinato, implies a compliance with some kind of robust, although hermetic, logic. In other words, what Poulenc has succeeded in creating are «works that are strong straight precise and forever beyond understanding» – he has answered, in his own terms, the challenge laid down in Tzara's contemporaneous 1918 manifesto.

It should also be noted that there is a clear – and, given Cocteau's original title for the poems for *Cocardes*, singularly apposite – musical precedent for this compositional technique of combining ostinati with disparate and essentially idiopathic melodic ideas, namely the sets of three and five *Pièces faciles* for piano duet by Stravinsky. In fact, there is a strong motivic kinship between the *seconda* parts of the *Polka* from the *Trois Pièces faciles* (ex. 1a), the *Balalaïka* from the *Cinq Pièces faciles* (ex. 1b) and the first movement of the

³⁰ «Qui semble ânonner un motif rudimentaire, radicalise l'effet de simplification», H. LACOMBE, *Francis Poulenc*, cit., p. 162.

³¹ «Poulenc compose une musique qui semble simple, à la limite du banal, et qui contient pourtant nombre de détails venant troubler le clair déroulement des motifs et des tonalités», *ibidem*, p. 163.

«La plus grande audace à notre époque: être simple»

Assez modéré (♩ = 144)

PIANO *p*

En général, sans nuances, beaucoup de pédale

Ex. 3: Francis Poulenc, *Mouvements perpétuels*, for piano, London, Chester, 1918, I, mm. 1-2.

Très calme

mf

Ca - ra - va - ne.

Très calme
très doux

mf

Ex. 4: Francis Poulenc, *Cocardes*, Paris, Eschig, 1920, I: *Miel de Narbonne*, fig. 5.

Of course, the use of ostinato was a constant throughout Poulenc's compositional output. However, there is something quite distinctive about the way it is deployed in these earliest works of his, in which the influence of Stravinsky's wartime miniatures is at its least mediated. To illustrate this, one has only to think of the later piano version (1929) of the *Pastourelle* that was Poulenc's contribution in 1927 to the multi-authored incidental music for the one-act ballet, *L'éventail de Jeanne*. This piece begins in a manner – and key – that instantly recalls the first of the *Mouvements perpétuels*. The left-hand ostinato is almost identical and the right-hand melody has the same falling contour but starting on the third of the scale instead of the fifth. However, in the *Pastourelle*, the ostinato turns out to be merely the underpinning of a conventional, periodically-phrased melody that soon veers to the dominant in a quasi-classical manner before reverting to the tonic. Only the slightly sinister

rhythmic tattoo in the minor mode that breaks in on the work's coda disturbs what otherwise seems an uncomplicatedly charming occasional piece in a broadly conventional ternary form. The allusions to classical gestures and procedures reinforce a mood of delicate nostalgia and ensure that the work's occasional dissonances, rhythmic dislocations and other mildly astringent incongruities remain essentially benign. In the *Pastourelle* there is both greater sophistication than in the *Mouvements perpétuels* and less enigma.

But while the ostinati in *Cocardes* clearly share particular family likenesses with their Stravinskian precursors and Poulenc's own *Mouvements perpétuels*, they also display a crucial difference. In the first three examples above, the ostinato is essentially pursued unvaryingly throughout the entire movement in question; in *Cocardes*, as already noted, ostinato patterns generally last for only a few repetitions, although there are strong family relationships between different, short-lived, ostinati. The first song, *Miel de Narbonne* is the best example of this. Following nine bars that are introductory in character, the new one-bar motif introduced at figure 3 is repeated verbatim in each of the next two bars but then initiates a four-bar phrase in which each bar is itself a variant of the motif. The next two bars cloud the harmonic language but preserve the motivic shape. Then, after two bars of what might be viewed as dominant preparation, a further variation of the ostinato motif (in fact, the pattern reproduced in the extract above) is introduced at figure 5, lasting, in turn, for four bars. The next two bars repeat the second half of the four-bar phrase heard earlier, while the two after that recall the dominant preparation passage. Finally, the last six bars of the song consist of varied reiterations of the motif at figure 5, each two bars long, separated by a dominant chord that fills the entire third bar and a tonic one that fills the sixth and rounds off the entire piece. This final bar also harks back to the opening nine bars of the entire song, creating the sense of a frame around the ostinato-based material outlined above.

Table 2 below illustrates all of these relationships in greater detail:

mm.	Code	Comments
1	x	Scurrying figure suggesting a lydian modal flavour
2	y	Pedal D with arpeggiated figure above; interval of 6 th and pitch of 3 rd important
3-6	y ₁	Folksong-like melody lasting 3,5 bars before breaking off; interval of 6 th and pitch of 3 rd again important
6-7	x	Repeat of x
7-9	y	Extended repeat of y; final gesture echoes lydian aspect of x

mm.	Code	Comments
10-12	A	x 3 First ostinato statement (N.B. <i>Très modéré</i> after music that has been either <i>Très vite</i> or <i>Très lent</i>) Voice overlays ostinato on statements 2 & 3
13-16	A ₁	Becomes first bar of 4-bar phrase; mm. 2 & 3 slight variants of this figure and m. 4 a completion with slight cadential feeling Derived from middle voice of ostinato above, but with the pitches of lower voice Off-beat syncopations introduced
17-18	A ₂	x 2 Upper voice of accompaniment is the previous ostinato with first two notes reversed; bass line and voice introduce rising 4 th alternating with falling 3 rd Syncopations add dissonant harmonies
19-20	z	x 2 Syncopations from figure 4 Rising 4 th , falling 3 rd becomes rising 7 th , falling 3 rd with extension A kind of “dominant preparation” interlude before B
21-22	B (A ₃)	x 2 Syncopation becomes quaver movement (added to top line on repetition) Shares rhythmic contour with A ₁ /A ₂ (hence potentially A ₃) Alternating 4 ^{ths} in bass
23-24	B ₁	x 2 New, dissonant upper line over lower voices that repeat B identically
25-26	A ₁	An almost identical repetition of the 3 rd and 4 th bars of the 4-bar unit described at A ₁ (mm. 15 & 16)
27-28	z ₁	A similar interlude to z, preparing for B ₁ Incorporates the running semiquaver figure from A ₁ , etc.
29-30	B ₁	<i>Subito vite</i> variant of B
31	z ₁	The final chord of x ₁ isolated from rest of motif and with added sub- and super-octave A's
32-33	B	x 2 Instrumental part is identical to previous statement of B
34	x	Harks right back to opening bars

Tab. 2: For the music to which this table refers, see Francis Poulenc, *Cocardes*, Paris, Eschig, 1920, pp. 2-5, I: *Miel de Narbonne*. The shaded elements denote passages based on the ostinato principle; note that, given certain resemblances between B and A₁/A₂, all these shaded elements could be seen as constituting a single network of varied ostinati.

Although the gesture of recalling introductory material at the end of a movement is a typical enough one to encounter in any kind of musical discourse, here it also mirrors the poem's specific device of the last syllable replicating the very first. More generally, though,

the very ubiquity of repetition as a feature of normal musical rhetoric means that a literal appropriation by Poulenc of Cocteau's structural device of palilogia would not have the same significance as it does when deployed in poetry. This is where the varied ostinati come into play. Ostinati *do* stand out as conspicuously repetitive devices in music; they arrest any forward movement or development and create the paradox of "static motion" in sound. A varied ostinato has a subtler – and more unsettling – effect; it reminds us of music's innate yearning to move forward through time but shows this desire to be constantly thwarted. It is worth noting that virtually the whole of *Miel de Narbonne* is shackled to the key of D major (the only exceptions are bars which either inject a momentary clouding of non-diatonic tones or provide brief pseudo-relief in the form of dominant preparation prior to yet another return of this key). As one manifestation of the basic ostinato archetype gives way to another, it is as though we pass through a succession of doorways only to find ourselves each time back in the same room that we just exited. And, again, although throughout his compositional career Poulenc continued to use repetition and mosaic-like structuring, there is something uniquely obsessive and unsettling about the tension between sameness and the illusion of change that he creates here out of the simplest material.

As already indicated, the structural armature which Poulenc applies to the music does not attempt to mimic in any direct way the method used for structuring the poetry. However, on the level of analogy, it meets the same requirements and evokes equivalent sensations, albeit in a manner appropriate to its own medium. It has another benefit which, again, recalls Hervé Lacombe's observations concerning the *Mouvements perpétuels*. Like the details alluded to there, which were seen to disturb «the clear unfolding of motifs and tonalities», it allows the interjections of the voice into the ostinato fabric to be as fragmentary and as idiopathic in their motivation as the verbal imagery of Cocteau's poems. The very fact that it is appropriate to describe them as interjections is telling in itself. In general, the voice is very "present" in Poulenc's songs. He often employs short introductions (with the practical benefit of setting the tonality and establishing the singer's opening pitch) and sometimes, especially at the end of cycles, uses instrumental codas for a specific poetic effect; otherwise, though, his sensitivity to the overall prosody of a poem means that he rarely fractures the flow of the vocal line to any great extent. In *Cocardes*, purely instrumental passages are interleaved throughout the texture of each of the three songs. The ratio of vocal to non-vocal bars is far lower than customary and, in fact, decreases as one moves through the set, from roughly two-thirds, via an equal balance to a

minority (about two-fifths). Moreover, the number of consecutive bars in which the voice appears is generally low – often just one, two or three bars at a time; the longest unbroken sequences of bars containing vocal elements are six in the first song, ten in the second (which is generally less fragmented than in partners) and four in the third.

Table 3 below sets out in greater detail the actual numbers involved:

<i>Miel de Narbonne</i>				<i>Bonne d'enfant</i>				<i>Enfant de troupe</i>			
Bars with voice		Instruments only		Bars with voice		Instruments only		Bars with voice		Instruments only	
			1				1	1			
2							2	2			
			3				3				3
			4				4				4
			5	5							5
			6	6				6			
			7	7							7
8											8
9											9
			10	10							10
11											11
12											12
			13					13			
			14					14			
15								15			
16							16				16
17											17
18							18	18			
			19	19			19	19			
			20	20				20			
			21	21							21
22											22
23							23	23			
24							24	24			
25							25	25			
26							26	26			
27							27				27
			28				28	28			
29							29				29
30											30
31											31
32							32				32
33							33	33			
34							34	34			
TOTAL	21 bars	13 bars	TOTAL				35	35			
							36	36			
							37				37
											38
											39
											40
							41				41
							42				42
							TOTAL	21 bars	21 bars	TOTAL	43
											44
											45
											46
							TOTAL	18 bars	28 bars	TOTAL	

Tab. 3: For the score of the three songs to which this table refers, see Francis Poulenc, *Cocardes*, Paris, Eschig, 1919.

This purely quantitative account is only part of the story; the comparative fragmentation of the vocal interjections goes hand in hand with their being relatively disparate and scarcely memorable. Repetition is rare and usually the result of the accompaniment itself being repeated. The voice often follows a line – not always the top line – of the instrumental texture; where it does add an element of its own, it hardly feels as though this is the leading part of the musical argument. Among the more striking examples of this downplaying of the melodic significance of the vocal line is the way in which Poulenc sets the phrase «*Ave Maria* de Gounod», which appears in the second song. In complete disregard either for Gounod's seraphic lyricism or the sublime arpeggios of the Bach C major prelude on which the former is based, Poulenc sets the line to a banal rising C major scale (the key, at least, is apposite, even if the language is almost impudently incongruous!). When the upper C is reached, the line simply stops; meanwhile; the accompaniment to the scale, a falling and rising three-note stepwise pattern, becomes the inner line of a four-bar ostinato with a dissonant augmented 5th oscillation in the upper voice. All in all, for a composer who, throughout most of his life, venerated words in their meaning, sounds and inflexions almost to the point of obsession, this uncharacteristic carelessness seems to be telling us that words, here, are not to be taken at their normal face value; they are simultaneously shallow ciphers and Delphic utterances beyond our comprehension.

Protestations of Innocence: Poulenc, Cocteau, Radiguet and *Le gendarme incompris*

While all of this suggests that Poulenc was fully complicit in the dadaistic aspects of the poems and happy to reflect these in his settings, it is interesting to note that a counter-narrative of harmless innocence is initiated almost simultaneously with the song's publication in 1920. On the title page, *Cocardes* are described as «Chansons populaires de Francis Poulenc sur des poèmes de Jean Cocteau». Whether popular, in this context, means “of the people” or “widely enjoyed”, neither interpretation quite fits the reality (although, at a stretch, it might be argued that the legendary popularity of these songs among the tiny clique of the composers of Les Six offers a tenuous justification for the latter interpretation). The title is surely another example of deceptive simplicity; it implies that there will be nothing esoteric or difficult about these songs whereas, as has been seen, this is far from the truth.

Interestingly, Cocteau himself made allusion to this when, in introducing the songs at their premiere on 21 February 1920, he acknowledged that they were «bogus popular songs, in the same way that our circus is a fake circus and the theatre an optical illusion». ³² Later in the same presentation, he also emphasised that, while the instruments employed by Poulenc – trombone, cornet, bass drum – might provoke laughter, their nostalgic association with childhood memories of 14th July parades meant that «I regard them as inseparable from a certain sadness that is very much home-grown». ³³ Whereas the latter observation chimes with Poulenc's concern that the «coté lugubre» of the songs should not be overlooked, the former raises as many questions as it resolves. Yes, these supposedly «popular songs» are acknowledged to be false examples of such a genre but in what sense do they thereby resemble a «fake» circus or a theatre of optical illusions? For that matter, what does this pair of seemingly equivalent analogies mean when Cocteau elsewhere characterises the circus and theatre as virtually polar opposites, of which the latter, specifically contrasted in *Le coq et l'arlequin* with the café-concert, is «always corrupt»? ³⁴ A kind of mystification masquerading as clarification seems to be at work here.

Whilst such double-edged explaining/obscuring was far from uncharacteristic of Cocteau, there may be a further agency involved. Raymond Radiguet and Cocteau had met in 1919 and were already closely associated with one another by the time of the February 1920 «spectacle-concert» at which the *Cocardes* were premiered. They would shortly collaborate, along with the composers of Les Six and a variety of other musicians, artists and poets – including Tzara – on the pamphlet *Le coq*, which ran for four issues between April and November of the same year and, in its layout and typography, closely resembled Dada publications. Radiguet wrote a review article about the «spectacle-concert», which appeared on the same day as the event. In it, he suggests that, far from being deliberately obscure in their meaning, the poems (and therefore the songs) are examples of the art of portraying by allusion, as opposed to description, and that their subject, evoked but unnamed, is none other than the city of Paris. Writing nearly twenty years later in his *Journal de mes mélodies*, Poulenc was both more specific and, in the process, contradictory of

³² «De fausses chansons populaires, comme notre cirque était un faux cirque et le théâtre un trompe-l'œil», JEAN COCTEAU, [untitled text], in BRIGITTE BORSARO, *Jean Cocteau, le cirque et le music-hall. Textes et documents inédits ou retrouvés de Jean Cocteau*, Paris, Passage du Marais, 2003 («Cahiers Jean Cocteau», nouvelle série; 2), p. 40.

³³ «Je les estime inséparables d'une certaine mélancolie de chez nous», *ibidem*.

³⁴ «Toujours corrompu», J. COCTEAU, *Le coq et l'arlequin*, p. 33.

Radiguet's claim: «Médrano in 1920, Paris before 1914 [...], Marseilles in 1918 are evoked here».³⁵

Médrano, was the famous Parisian circus, located in Montmartre so it is only the sudden transposition, in the case of the last song, to the Mediterranean coast that clashes with Radiguet's explanation. Nevertheless, there is a disingenuous aspect to both men's accounts; they present their explanations as though, once grasped, they will explain everything – and, moreover, even better than direct description could (Poulenc echoes Radiguet's argument here by saying that the locations and dates which he specified have to be divined as though squinting at «those views you look at in a pen-holder»³⁶). Despite the lapse of time, Poulenc was almost certainly thinking of Radiguet's article when he wrote these lines. Radiguet's justification for allusion over description uses the example of the Tricolour flag as a symbol which evokes French patriotism far more strongly than the word itself; Poulenc refers to the music being composed «under the aesthetic influence, as French as the tricolour, of Roger de la Fresnaye».³⁷

Did either Radiguet or Poulenc really believe that these poems and the songs composed to them were as specific and consistent in their meaning as their respective explanations suggest? It seems more likely that Radiguet certainly – and perhaps Poulenc too, guided to some extent by him – was throwing yet another layer of mystification across the already deceptively fraught surface of these works. If only we can hold them up to the light in the right way, they seem to suggest, all will become clear and they will be shown to be as simple as many of their traits suggest they are. And yet the explanations do not have this effect; instead, they only serve to compound the refractory nature of what we are struggling to grasp. Why, for example, if it is the first poem that evokes the Médrano circus, is it the third, ostensibly conjuring up Marseilles, that contains the line «Le trapèze encense la mort», with its overt reference to an iconic piece of equipment of the high-flying circus acrobat?³⁸ Perhaps Poulenc was closer to the mark when in July 1921, writing once more to Paul Collaer, he described *Cocardes* as «that work into which I perhaps made the mistake of

³⁵ «Médrano de 1920, Paris d'avant 1914 [...], Marseille de 1918 sont évoqués ici», FRANCIS POULENC, *Diary of My Songs/Journal de mes mélodies*, trans. by Winifred Radford, London, Gollancz, 1985, p. 22.

³⁶ «Ces vues qu'on regarde dans un porte-plume», *ibidem*.

³⁷ «Sous l'influence esthétique, tricolore, de Roger de la Fresnaye», *ibidem*. Significantly, in a piece written for the first issue of «Le Coq» in April 1920, Radiguet anticipated Poulenc's later allusion by suggesting an explicit equivalence between the image-making of Roger de la Fresnaye, which he hailed as «un chef-d'œuvre de clarté, de grâce et d'équilibre», and the music of Poulenc's *Cocardes*, along with that of Auric's *Fox-Trot*, *Adieu*, *New York!*

³⁸ «The trapeze flatters death» or, perhaps more vividly, «The trapeze defies death with flattery».

putting too many intentions, writing it as I did right in the midst of the people whose synthetic portrait I painted there».³⁹

That Radiguet took a faintly sadistic pleasure in hoodwinking those searching for meaning in certain of his works is clear from the collaborative piece that he and Cocteau concocted in the autumn of 1920, with music subsequently provided by Poulenc: the genre-mixing «critique-bouffe» entitled *Le gendarme incompris*. Finally performed in May 1921, *Le gendarme incompris* is both simple to the point of being rudimentary and deliberately baffling in a way calculated to provoke hostile reaction. But in flaunting these dual characteristics, it seems to have been expressly designed to spring a trap upon an unwitting audience. Incorporated within its text, but “hidden in plain sight” thanks to the incongruous context, were substantial quotations from Mallarmé; once the audience’s and critics’ all-too predictable derision was voiced, the deception could be revealed with a flourish and either the public be shown to be an illiterate ass or Mallarmé be revealed as a hollow poetic fraud with an over-vaunted reputation. Radiguet’s intense aversion to Mallarmé was apparently a key motivating factor the whole enterprise although, in recounting the tale a year later, Cocteau, too, cannot resist gloating over the success of the prank:

In 1921, with R. Radiguet and Francis Poulenc, we amused ourselves by writing an act of criticism, in which we put the *Ecclésiastique* of the *Divagations* into the mouth of a gendarme.

The piece is performed. No-one, no-one I tell you, neither public nor critics, recognized this illustrious text, nor even an allusion to the style of its author. M. Banès spoke in the «Figaro» of the «fatuous volte-faces of this facetious flatfoot». I shan’t quote the others. Let’s not be cruel.⁴⁰

In offering his *Excuses to the critics* a few days after the performances he is equally triumphant, although he insists that «the authors had no idea, when writing it, that they were setting a trap».⁴¹ He even goes so far as to offer an earnest explanation of the function of the piece and reason for its hybrid title, «critique-bouffe»:

³⁹ «Cette œuvre, ou j’ai peut-être eu le tort de mettre trop d’intentions, l’ayant écrite au milieu même des gens dont j’ai fait là le portrait synthétique», Francis Poulenc’s letter to Paul Collaer, 12 July 1921, printed in F. POULENC, *Correspondance*, cit., pp. 127-128.

⁴⁰ «En 1921 avec R. Radiguet et Francis Poulenc, nous nous amusâmes à écrire un acte de critique bouffe, où nous mîmes, en fait de procès-verbal, *L’Ecclésiastique* des *Divagations* dans la bouche d’un gendarme. On joue la pièce. Or personne, vous m’entendez bien, ni public ni critiques, ne reconnût ce texte illustre, ni même une allusion au style de son auteur. M. Banès parla dans le “Figaro” des “palinodies de ce pandore stupide”. Je ne cite pas les autres. Ne soyons pas cruel», JEAN COCTEAU, *Le secret professionnel* [1922], in Id., *Le rappel à l’ordre*, cit., pp. 177-233: 188.

⁴¹ «Les auteurs ne savaient pas, en l’écrivant [...] qu’ils tendaient un piège», JEAN COCTEAU, *Excuses aux critiques*, «Comœdia», XV, 3085 (28 May 1921), p. 4, reproduced in *Souvenirs et études critiques*, Paris, Gallimard, 1971 («Cahiers Jean Cocteau», 2), pp. 68-69.

For, I regret to inform Mr. Nozière, among others, that *The Gendarme* is a critique, in the sense that the style of Stéphane Mallarmé is its target, that this critique is comical because it mocks, at the same time as its target, criticism itself, and that its novelty stems from the fact that instead of commenting on a text it simply presents it in an unexpected guise.⁴²

The idea that presenting a text in an unforeseen context, rather than commenting explicitly upon it, constitutes an act of criticism is here linked to the notion, seen throughout this article, of a complex and refractory simplicity («it simply presents it in an unexpected guise»). The difference is that the audacity of simplicity has become more directly confrontational, and the sense of the artist's antagonistic relationship with his public (already present in *Le coq et l'arlequin*) more blatant and closer to the foreground of the artwork's very purpose. If, as noted at the outset, a defining characteristic of Cocteau's simplicity was that it «will dumbfound Molière's ghost with its complexity and will unnerve the avant-gardes by its childishness», here is a prime example of an interweaving of complexity and childishness that seems expressly calculated to wrong-foot both camps and expose them equally to ridicule.

Forced Laughter: The *Grande saison dada* and *Les mariés de la Tour Eiffel*

The provocative aspect of this kind of creative strategy – socially and culturally as much as aesthetically – is very much in line with the spirit of Dada. The way that *Le gendarme incompris* takes a critical stance against a revered figure also prefigures, albeit less militantly, an action such as the mock trial of Maurice Barrès, held a few months later on 13 May 1921. The *Procès Barrès* formed part of the *Grande saison dada*, which took place between April and June of that year. The events assembled for this season show the tensions already growing within Dada between Breton and the «Littérature» group on the one side and Tzara, Picabia and the Zurich veterans of the movement on the other. In the words of Michel Sanouillet, the former felt that it was time to set in motion «a certain number of projects all which would no longer arouse in the public hilarity or the shrugging of shoulders, but instead the forced laugh and the rictus of fear».⁴³ In this respect, it is perhaps

⁴² «Car, j'ai le regret d'apprendre à M. Nozière, entre autres, que *Le Gendarme* est une critique, en ce sens que le style Stéphane Mallarmé est le motive, que cette critique est bouffe parce qu'elle se moque en même temps de la critique et que sa nouveauté vient de ce qu'au lieu de commenter un texte on le montre simplement sous un aspect inattendu», *ibidem*, pp. 68-69.

⁴³ «Un certain nombre de projets qui tous tendaient à susciter dans le public, non plus l'hilarité ou le haussement d'épaules, mais le sourire jaune et contraint de la peur», M. SANUILLET, *Dada à Paris*, cit., 2005, p. 210.

significant that the vehemence of the public reaction to *Le gendarme incompris* evidently transcended the more usual posturing and almost ritual outrage that Cocteau and the young composers expected – one might even say required – from a section of their audience. Auric evokes the chastened atmosphere of the post-concert gathering on the terrace of a small restaurant in the rue Lepic where «we strove, as night fell, to draw lessons from the failure of a spectacle in which we had placed so much confidence».⁴⁴

While the Bretonist faction among the Dadaists wanted the *Grande saison dada* to concentrate on militancy and engagement, ultimately prompting Picabia to withdraw from the event, Tzara sought to achieve a re-balancing towards the original preoccupations of Dada through the *Salon dada* that was embedded within the season. The uneasy compromise is shown in the text of the prospectus for the season, which was circulated in February, in which culturally-rooted activities rub shoulders with acts of overt agitation: «Visits, the *Salon dada*, congresses, commemorations, operas, plebiscites, requisitions, indictments and judgments».⁴⁵

The *Salon dada* was held in rooms of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées and comprised a permanent exhibition plus three linked manifestations, one to be held on the evening of the 10th of June and the others on the afternoons of June 18 and 30. On the evening of the 17th June, Tzara and his colleagues attempted to disrupt a «concert bruitiste» organised in the same theatre by Marinetti. Confronted by Jacques Hébertot, the manager of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, and refusing his instruction to desist, they brought upon themselves the closure of their exhibition and the cancellation of the remaining two manifestations. As it happened, the first performance of Cocteau's *Les mariés de la Tour Eiffel* was due to take place in the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées on the evening of June 18. With little left to lose, Tzara and his colleagues used this event as the opportunity for further disruption, constantly standing up and sitting down throughout the performance and issuing cries of “Vive Dada!”. *Les mariés* was itself a creation associated in the public mind with Dada; the review published on 21 June 1921 by the «International Herald Tribune» referred to it as «The Dada ballet, with Dada music by MM. Milhaud, Honegger and several other members of that already famous coterie of ultra-modern composers».⁴⁶ That it should itself be the object of Dadaist protests was seen by the author of the review as simply adding to the

⁴⁴ «Nous nous efforcions, la nuit tombant, de tirer la leçon de l'échec d'un spectacle auquel nous avons accordé tant de confiance», GEORGE AURIC, *À propos du "Gendarme incompris"* [1921], in *Souvenirs et études critiques* («Cahiers Jean Cocteau», 2), cit., p. 39.

⁴⁵ «Visites, Salon dada, congrès, commémorations, opéras, plébiscistes [sic], réquisitions, mises en accusation et jugements», M. SANOUILLET, *Dada à Paris*, cit., p. 212.

Dadaist character of the event but, in reality, was a sign that, for the movement, the days of «the public hilarity or the shrugging of shoulders» were definitely numbered.

Postlude: From *Les mariés* to *Les biches* – Simplicity Takes a More Sober Turn

The *Grande saison dada* therefore embodied, and partially catalysed, two important trends whose prominence was only to increase over the next two-to-three years. On the one hand, the two factions within Dada split further, with Breton and his followers proclaiming a formal break after the failure of the *Congrès international pour la détermination des directives et la défense de l'esprit moderne* in 1922 and the movement itself effectively dissolving by the end of the same year; on the other, the always uneasy relationship between Cocteau's circle and that of the Dadaists grew more estranged and the musical aspirations of the young composers became less iconoclastic and more specifically geared towards developing their standing within the musical medium (significantly, it was in November 1921 that Poulenc began taking lessons in composition from Charles Koechlin). From the latter perspective, the offering by Diaghilev of commissions to Auric and Poulenc to write scores for his Ballets Russes was an important stimulus and one that, by autumn 1922 was leading Poulenc in a direction away from dadaistic simplicity and towards the more purposeful clarity and economy of neo-classicism. In a letter to Paul Collaer, he asserts his new orientation: «I'm working hard on my ballet *Les biches* and on a few smaller things besides. I'm very happy because I've tapped into a productive vein. No more wrong notes, no more polytonality. I'm prowling around perfect chords and modulations».⁴⁷ If Poulenc's goal was still one of simplicity, this appears to have taken on a less audaciously paradoxical character and was now being channelled towards the purer simplicity to be found in classical virtues – consonance and coherent progression as opposed to wrong-note trickery and polytonal clashes. Although an altogether slighter creation than *Les biches*, the *Pastourelle*, discussed earlier, is a further symptom of this same trend in Poulenc's development, and one which also has many points of correspondence with Cocteau's roughly contemporaneous invoking of a «rappel à l'ordre».⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Accessed online on June 13, 2018 at <https://iht-retrospective.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/07/14/1921-review-of-jean-cocteaus-dadaist-ballet/>.

⁴⁷ «Je travaille ferme mon ballet *Les Biches* et des petites choses à côté. Je suis bien content car j'ai trouvé le filon. Plus de fausses notes, plus de polytonie! Je rôde autour de l'accord parfait et de la modulation», as cited in H. LACOMBE, *Francis Poulenc*, cit., p. 252.

When *Les biches* was finally performed, along with Auric's *Les fâcheux*, in Monte Carlo in January 1924, Cocteau was there to record the double event and celebrated it in terms which similarly evoke a classical, and in this case overtly eighteenth-century, paradigm. In the following extract from unpublished notes, he contrasts the sense of liberation aroused in him with the «solemn procession» that had characterised music since the death of Mozart, and welcomes the sense of homecoming which the young French composers' scores offer to the pleasures – by implication simple ones – of occupying one's own side of the street:

Since the death of Mozart, a solemn procession has prevented me from crossing my street. Suddenly, it seems that this procession (already jostled by Stravinsky) is moving away. The footsteps of Beethoven and Wagner recede. *Les biches* and *Les fâcheux* allow me to come back home.⁴⁹

Some nine months after the première of *Les biches*, in October 1924, the publication of the *Manifeste du Surréalisme* marked a cardinal point in the dissolution of the movement from its Dadaist precursors. Even so, it is possible to detect a certain continuity of ideas from the Dadaist principle, elaborated in 1918, that artworks and the actions of artists should be «strong straight precise and forever beyond understanding»⁵⁰ and the new proposition of pure psychic automatism, dictated by «thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason».⁵¹ In either case, simplicity, whilst not necessarily a goal in itself, is more likely than not to ensue, whether from the rejection of comprehensibility or from the suppression of the control of reason.

Thus, whilst Poulenc's ballet score and Breton's manifesto may seem at polar extremes in terms of the preoccupations which they illustrate within French cultural life in

⁴⁸ J. COCTEAU, *Le rappel à l'ordre*, cit. The title of this collection of essays became something of a rallying cry for a more sober and classically-oriented modernism. The later pieces in the collection are those which reflect this tendency most clearly; it is worth noting, however, that the text of *Le coq et l'arlequin* is also re-printed as part of the collection, albeit with an updating supplement. In this latter, among other observations, Cocteau acknowledges the more recent stylistic trends in Stravinsky's compositions which, of course, constituted a corresponding recall to classical order within the musical sphere.

⁴⁹ «Depuis la mort de Mozart, un cortège solennel m'empêche de traverser ma rue. Soudain, il semble que ce cortège (déjà bousculé par Stravinsky) s'éloigne. Les marches de Beethoven et de Wagner se baissent. *Les biches* et *Les fâcheux* me permettent de rentrer chez moi», transcribed by the author from manuscript notes by Cocteau displayed at the exhibition *Les Ballets russes* mounted at the Centre culturel du Marais, February-March 1978, catalogue no. 259.

⁵⁰ Cf. note 20.

⁵¹ «[Dictée de] la pensée, en l'absence de tout contrôle exercé par la raison», ANDRÉ BRETON, *Manifesto of Surrealism (1924)*, in ID., *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. by Richard Seaver - Helen R. Lane, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1969, pp. 1-47: 26.

1924, they may still have more in common than meets the eye. This view gains a degree of corroboration from a perhaps unlikely source when one considers Theodore W. Adorno's assertion, made in 1962 and with the benefit of almost forty years' historical perspective, that:

The basic stratum of neo-classicism is not far removed from surrealism. Stravinsky's Baroque revenants duplicate the statues in Max Ernst's *Femme 100 Têtes* which tumble among the living beings and whose faces are frequently missing as if they had been erased by the dream censorship.⁵²

The wielding of simplicity as a form of frisson-inducing audacity continued to have a role of sorts in the subsequent histories of both surrealism and musical neo-classicism. However, with the exception of a few commentators such as Adorno (for whom it must be admitted that an equation of Stravinsky with surrealism served to advance his own particular agenda in the Schoenberg/Stravinsky polemic) this connection has been largely overlooked. Finally, with the benefit of a longer historical perspective, the paradoxical and partly concealed radicalism of musical neo-classicism, and its many interconnections with the more obviously modernist tendencies in the art of the early half of the twentieth century, is beginning to be better understood. As part of this process, and as we advance through a significant succession of centennial anniversaries, from the coining of the term «sur-réalisme» in 1918 to the publication of the *Manifeste du Surréalisme* in 1924, perhaps the time is ripe for a re-evaluation of the relationship between music and surrealism, and of the role of simplicity as a factor in this relationship.

NOTE

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⁵² THEODOR W. ADORNO, "Quasi una fantasia". *Essays on Modern Music*, trans. by Rodney Livingstone, London, Verso, 1998, p. 156.