

Jean Cocteau and Georges Auric:
The *Poésie* and Music That Shaped Their Collaboration in the
Mélodies, Huit poèmes de Jean Cocteau (1918)

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Abstract

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Georges Auric (1899–1983) was the preferred musician of the author, impresario, cinematograph and artistic innovator Jean Cocteau (1889–1963). This was borne out by their fifty-year friendship and working relationship. Auric composed the soundtracks for all of Cocteau’s films. Their long-term alliance was based on mutual admiration and a shared transdisciplinary artistic aesthetic, motivated at the start by a desire to initiate a post-First World War new French musical identity. The collaboration did not fulfil the generally accepted understanding of the term, that of working simultaneously and in close proximity. Their creative processes were most successful when they worked individually and exchanged ideas from a distance through published correspondence and articles. Jean Cocteau’s creative practice spanned all of his artistic disciplines except music. Indeed, he chose not to be restricted by the limitations of any particular art form. Yet, he had a strong musical affinity and music was integral to the shaping of his diverse productions. He longed to be a musician and relied on Georges Auric to fill the musical void in his artistic practice. This thesis explores two *mélodies*, *Hommage à Erik Satie* and *Portrait d’Henri Rousseau*, the first and last, in Auric’s song series *Huit poèmes de Jean Cocteau* (1918)—one of his early collaborations with Cocteau. I analyse the word/music relationships from a transdisciplinary perspective, based on the interart work of Daniel Albright (1945–2015), Peter Dayan and Nicholas Cook, together with my interpretation of Cocteau’s concept of *poésie*, as an alternative applied methodology.

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List of Abbreviations

sd = sans date

nd = no date

BHVP=Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris

BNF= Bibliothèque Nationale de France

Notes on Text

The term ‘negro’ as found in an original French quotation reflects the colonial attitude of Paris at the time. In translation, it has been changed to ‘African American’ because of the racist connotation now.

The term dissonance is used in an interart context to describe the tension created by the interactions of heterogenous non-musical elements, rather than in any harmonic musical sense.

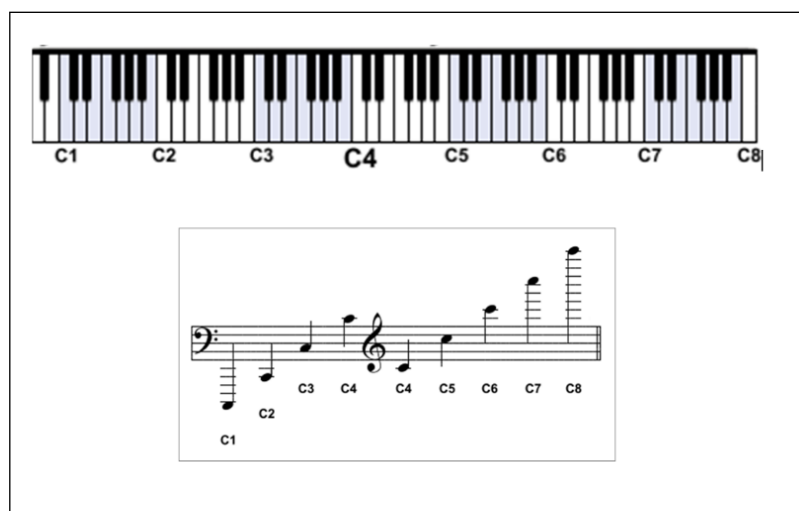
Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

I have assigned numbers to images and pages in *L'Album des Eugènes* for clarity, as there are none in book. Image numbers are enclosed in square brackets with prefix I and feature in Chapter five. Edition used: *Le Potomak, 1913–1914: précédé d'un prospectus 1916*. 1950 Texte définitif. Paris: Stock, 1924.

All references to principles of *poésie* in the text are enclosed in square brackets with relevant number.

Pitch notation throughout text is designated according to piano keyboard, as shown below:

Figure (A) Pitch Notation According to the Piano Keyboard.¹



¹ ‘An Easy Guide to Scientific Pitch Notation’, accessed 6 July 2019, www.musicalbri.com/an-easy-guide-to-scientific-pitch-notation/

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Part I: Critical, Creative and Collaborative Contexts

Chapter 1: Introduction

Huit Poèmes de Jean Cocteau, a Musical Collaboration: Aims and Objectives

Jean Cocteau (1889–1963) has often been seen to be ahead of his time. He anticipated the French postmodern movement of the 1980s when he moved away from the idea of an autonomous art object and narrowed the distinction between categories of ‘high’ and ‘low’ art.² He did not restrict himself to a single art form but wrote poetry, plays and novels, alongside his work as a critic, cultural journalist, essayist, director, cinematographer, artist, set designer, librettist, choreographer and actor.

I use the term transdisciplinary, as opposed to interdisciplinary, throughout my thesis because it describes Cocteau’s and Auric’s creative approach and sensibilities more accurately from my research perspective. *Poésie* represents the overarching creative principle that shaped and unified Cocteau’s creative production and represented the transdisciplinary orientation that both men shared. It is based on a unified intellectual framework and a transdisciplinarity that goes beyond artistic boundaries but functions through interart differences.

Despite his varied and prolific output, Cocteau believed that poetry was his true calling above all else. He experienced an epiphany in 1909, and accepted his calling to the ‘priesthood’ of poetry, along with ‘a destiny of cruel suffering, far from other men’.³ He confirmed that ‘it was only at the age of twenty that I understood the role of a poet’s work and what *la poésie* actually was’.⁴ He explained how:

² Claude Arnaud, *Jean Cocteau: A Life*, trans. Lauren Elkin and Charlotte Mandell (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 9.

³ James McNab, ‘The Personal Mythology of Jean Cocteau: The Emergence of a Poet, 1920–1930’ (PhD thesis, Duke University, 1972).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1: ‘Je n’ai compris qu’à vingt ans le rôle d’une œuvre de poète et ce qu’était la poésie’.

Until the age of twenty, I thought everything was about charm. After that, I understood that I needed to be tormented, interrogated by the guardian of the Muses.⁵

The Muses, in Greek mythology, were the inspirational goddesses of the arts, science, and literature. They were considered the source of knowledge embodied in poetry, lyric songs and myths. Cocteau accepted the seriousness of his new role as poet, and on which he would be judged. Yet he spent most of his artistic life in search of a creative process that would shape, unify and satisfy his transdisciplinary artistic practice, and leave behind a unique legacy of his work. He named his concept *poésie*, literally poetry. He did not consider poetry merely a written form but expanded the meaning of *poésie* to encompass all the processes and practices of his creative expression.

So, what is *poésie*? *Poésie*, in its broadest sense, represents Cocteau's all-encompassing concept that shaped and unified his diverse works, regardless of his means of expression. In other words, *poésie* epitomised his unified creative and intellectual approach that went beyond disciplinary perspectives. It characterised his view of how the different arts relate and was the lens through which he concentrated the disparate threads of his artistic practice. He thought that one art form could assert itself in terms of another, whilst retaining its own characteristics. *Poésie* refers to exchange and transformation of content between and across the different arts. Although he wrote extensively about what *poésie* meant in terms of his artistic goals, Cocteau never attempted to formalise the concept (nor has anyone else) beyond the broad description in his 1946 letter, in which he explained his conception for the unity of his works (see Figure 1.1). Cocteau shaped and categorised his own output in order to control his self-representation. It would be harder for other artists to legitimately attach themselves to the concept if he did not fully define the format. Cocteau's determination to make his

⁵ Jean Cocteau, *La Salle des mariages, hôtel de ville de Menton* (Monaco: Rocher, 1958), 1: 'Jusqu'à l'âge de vingt ans, j'ai cru qu'il s'agissait de faire du charme. Après cet âge, j'ai compris qu'il fallait se laisser tourmenter, interroger, par police des Muses'.

works difficult to classify would ‘set himself apart from his colleagues, implying that their struggles are not his’.⁶

This thesis provides a formal definition of the *poésie* concept and establishes eleven key principles which I have adapted as part of a new interart method. I show that *poésie* characterised far more than a unifying principle for Cocteau. It was his state of being, his artistic perception, and exemplified his artistic transformation. *Poésie* delineated the evolution of his œuvre. He saw all arts as one and his work was mediated through the lens of his polysensorial experiences, which is why I describe his working practice as transdisciplinary. Cocteau described his creative aspirations in the 1922 preface to his collaborative ballet spectacle, premiered in 1921, *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel*.⁷ The quotations listed on page 18 encapsulate his vision of *poésie*. Much later, in his 1946 letter, he wrote an overview (in the third person), which explicitly and coherently set out the way he wanted his work to be understood. Here he emphasised how *poésie* (in its all-encompassing sense) was the fundamental unifying principle at the very core of his creativity (see Figure 1.1). I regard the many documented discussions between Cocteau and Auric as collaborative; some of these resulted in published works—relevant in the context of this thesis, such as *Huit poèmes de Jean Cocteau* (1918) and *Le Coq et l’Arlequin* (1918)—and some of these did not, though they were still collaborative.

⁶ Charles Wilson, ‘György Ligeti and the Rhetoric of Autonomy’, *Twentieth-Century Music* 1, no. 1 (1994), 7.

⁷ Jean Cocteau, Preface (1922) to *Les Mariés de la tour Eiffel* (1921) in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 7 (Geneva: Marguerat, 1948), 11–18.

Figure 1.1 Autograph Manuscript, c.1946, entitled 'Jean Cocteau'.⁸

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⁸ 'Manuscrit autographe Cocteau Jean' (1946), Autographe (specialist manuscript dealer), accessed 1 December 2018, <http://autographe.com/fiche-autographe2014.php?REFERENCE=30135>

Poésie in Cocteau's Own Words

Here I renounce the mystery. I illuminate everything, I underline everything. Sunday vacuum, human cattle, readymade expressions, dissociation of ideas in flesh and blood, ferocity of childhood, *poésie* and miracle of everyday life. This is my piece, so well understood by the young musicians who accompany it.

A play should be written, decorated, costumed, accompanied by music, played, and danced by a single man. This universal athlete does not exist. It is, therefore, important to replace the individual with what most closely resembles one: a friendly group. There are many chapels, but few of these groups. I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to create one, with some young musicians, poets and painters. The complete *Les Mariés de la tour Eiffel* represents the poetic spirit of which I am proud to have already contributed a great deal.

The poet must extract objects and feelings from their veils and mists, and suddenly reveal them, so naked and so fast, that man hardly has time to recognise them.

Revolution that opens a door to explorers. Young people can pursue research, or fairy play, dance, acrobatics, pantomime, drama, satire, orchestra, the word combined in a dialogue that reappears newly formed. They will stage, without means of fortune, what the official artists take for studio farce and that is no less than the plastic expression of poetry.

⁹ Cocteau, Preface to *Les Mariés*, 12.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

Ici, je renonce au mystère. J'allume tout, je souligne tout. Vide du dimanche, bétail humain, expressions toutes faites, dissociations d'idées en chair et en os, férocité de l'enfance, poésie et *miracle* de la vie quotidienne voilà ma pièce, si bien comprise par les jeunes musiciens qui l'accompagnent.⁹

Une pièce de théâtre devrait être écrite, décorée, costumée, accompagnée de musique, jouée, dansée par un seul homme. Cette athlète complète n'existe pas. Il importe donc de remplacer l'individu par ce qui ressemble le plus à un individu: un groupe amical. Il existe beaucoup de chapelles, mais peu de ces groupes. J'ai la chance d'en former un avec quelques jeunes musiciens, poètes et peintres. *Les Mariés de la tour Eiffel*, en bloc, sont l'image d'un état d'esprit poétique auquel je suis fier d'avoir déjà beaucoup contribué.¹⁰

Le poète doit sortir objets et sentiments de leurs voiles et leurs brumes, les montrer soudain, si nus et si vite, que l'homme a peine de les reconnaître.¹¹

Révolution qui ouvre toute grande une porte aux explorateurs. Les jeunes peuvent poursuivre des recherches, ou la féerie, la danse, l'acrobatie, la pantomime, le drame, la satire, l'orchestre, la parole combinés réapparaissent sous une forme inédite; ils monteront, sans moyens de fortune, ce que les artistes officiels prennent pour des farces d'atelier et que n'en est pas moins l'expression plastique de la poésie.¹²

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹² *Ibid.*, 16-17.

Cocteau was concerned that critics would misinterpret the diversity of his works. He wanted to dispel the criticism that he was a superficial *touche-à-tout* (jack of all trades), a term he hated (see the manuscript letter, Figure 1.1).¹³ The letter is significant because it is a direct confirmation of his overarching concept of *poésie*, which he designates as a *poésie de roman* (of literature); *de théâtre* (of theatre); *de critique* (of criticism); *de graphique* (of drawing); *de cinématographique* (of cinema); *de plastique* (of sculpture).¹⁴ His letter reads:

Jean Cocteau, a French poet, was born near Paris at Maison Laffitte on July 5, 1889. His work is organised by himself as *poésie*. Poetry of Literature. Theatre poetry. Critical poetry. Graphic poetry. Poetry of Cinematography.

Principal works.

poésie [de *poésie*]: *Le Cap de Bonne Espérance*.
Plain-chant. *Discours du Grand Sommeil*.
Opéra. *Allégories*. *Léone*.

Poésie de roman:

Le Potomak. *Le Grand Écart*. *Thomas l'Imposteur*. *Les Enfants Terribles*.
Poésie de Théâtre : *Orphée*. *Antigone*. *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel*.¹⁵

¹³ Jean Cocteau, *Écrits sur la musique*, eds. David Gullentops and Malou Haine (Paris: VRIN, 2016), 326: 'Je déteste les touche-à-tout'.

¹⁴ James S. Williams, *Jean Cocteau*, French Film Directors (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2006), 5; Léon Dile Milorad, 'La Poésie selon Cocteau', in *Cahiers Jean Cocteau*, no. 6 *La poésie*, ed. Jean DENOËL and Pierre Chanel (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), 12 and 35; and, Georges-Emmanuel Clancier, 'l'auteur de *Plain-chant*, *d'Orphée* et des *Enfants terribles* a inscrit toute son œuvre sous le signe de la poésie: poésie de roman, poésie de théâtre, poésie critique, graphique, cinématographique, enfin si je puis dire poésie de poésie' in Jean-Pierre Rosnay, *Quelques mots*, accessed 20 January 2018, www.poesie.net/cocto2.htm. See listings in Dominique Moyen, 'Poésie de poésie, poésie de roman, poésie de théâtre, poésie graphique, poésie graphique', in *Jean Cocteau Sur le Fil du siècle, L'Exposition* (Paris: Centre Pompidou: 2004), 59.

¹⁵ Autographe, 'Manuscrit autographe:' 'Jean Cocteau, poète français, est né près de Paris à Maisons Laffitte le 5 juillet 1889. Son œuvre est ordonnée par lui-même en poésie. *Poésie de roman*. *Poésie de théâtre*. *Poésie critique*. *Poésie graphique*. *Poésie de cinématographe*. Oeuvres principales. Poésie : *Le Cap de Bonne Espérance*. *Plain-Chant*. *Discours du Grand Sommeil*. *Opéra*. *Allégories*. *Léone*. Poésie de roman : *Le Potomak*. *Le Grand Écart*. *Thomas l'Imposteur*. *Les Enfants Terribles*. Poésie de Théâtre : *Orphée*. *Antigone*. *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel*'.

Cocteau was more concerned with ‘the adaptable expression of *poésie*’.¹⁶ It was a means of artistic expression: one that was fluid and transgressed artistic boundaries. He acknowledged that it was difficult to maintain the process of such an adaptable expression of *poésie*, and this was why he struggled so much artistically.

The one discipline that eluded Cocteau was music, because he lacked the ability to consistently compose music or independently create any musical work. Consequently, he did not mention a *poésie de musique*. I aim to show how the musical settings of Cocteau’s poems by Georges Auric (1899–1983) fulfil certain transdisciplinary characteristics of *poésie*. Yet, Cocteau’s musical affinity was so strong that I claim it shaped his entire creative output in one way or another. *Poésie de musique* might have taken the form of performance when Cocteau played piano or drums, as part of a jazz trio. But he certainly asserted music in other ways; for example, he ascribed musical characteristics to his texts with the sonorities derived from his rhythmic and rhyming patterns—enacting the very essence of *poésie*. He clearly stated that ‘the use of sound interests me as much as the use of images’.¹⁷ His lack of musical self-sufficiency necessitated collaborations with musicians in order to complete his transdisciplinary objectives. Cocteau first nominated Auric as ‘his favourite musician’ in a signed copy of an original La Sirène edition of his collected writings, *Carte Blanche*, in 1920.¹⁸

à mon cher Georges Auric, le musicien que je préfère
son ami
Jean Cocteau le parisien
juillet 1920

He subsequently repeated the compliment directly to Auric in a letter.¹⁹

¹⁶ Cocteau, Preface to *Les Mariés*, 17: ‘l’expression plastique de la poésie’.

¹⁷ Jean Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film, A Conversation with André Fraigneau*, trans. Vera Traill (London: Dennis Dobson, 1954), 109: ‘L’emploi du son m’intéresse autant que l’emploi des images’.

¹⁸ Jean Cocteau dedication to Auric in original edition, *Carte Blanche* (Paris: Sirène, 1920).

¹⁹ Pierre Caizergues, ed., *Correspondance Georges Auric-Jean Cocteau* (Montpellier: Université Paul Valéry, 1999), 69: ‘le musicien que je préfère’.

It is possible that Cocteau intended merely to flatter the composer with his dedication, but he never described any other composer in similar terms. This is borne out because of their friendship and working relationship that lasted over fifty years (despite their ten-year age gap). Their long-term affiliation demonstrated many shared aesthetic ideals. Without Auric and Satie's influence, Cocteau would not have become the foremost theorist of the new musical aesthetic of the 1920s.²⁰ Cocteau documented these ideas in *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* (1918), his seminal musical manifesto, which he dedicated to Auric, and thus confirmed the author's admiration for the composer.²¹ Why was Cocteau, a keen musical critic and theorist, so influential in the development of the new French music? Cocteau continuously aspired to the condition of music, as a means of creative expression, because it could convey an aesthetic message in purely abstract terms. Abstraction appealed to him as a universal conceptual process, and this explained his interest in music. It led him to formulate his theory of *poésie*, which provided him with a method of abstracted artistic expression. He integrated his understanding of music to develop a new interart approach based on equivalences. As far back as the nineteenth century, Walter Pater (1839–1894) declared that 'everything aspires to the condition of music'.²² Although Pater referred to the Renaissance, he is relevant because he influenced subsequent French writers who looked to music for direction in developing a new aesthetic in poetry and literature. Cocteau was not the first. According to Pasler, 'Charles Baudelaire took inspiration from Wagner's music...Stéphane Mallarmé publicly envied music's power of suggestion'.²³ But Cocteau considered the

²⁰ Ornella Volta, *Satie/Cocteau: les malentendus d'une entente* ([Bègles]: Castor Astral, 1993), 9.

²¹ Jean Cocteau, *Le Coq et l'Arlequin, Notes autour de la musique* (Paris: Stock, 1918; reprinted 1979), 7–39.

²² Walter Pater, *Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, ed. Adam Phillips (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 86.

²³ Jann Pasler, 'New Music as Confrontation: The Musical Sources of Cocteau's Identity', *Musical Quarterly* 75, no. 3 (Autumn 1991), 255.

idea so significant that he quoted the opening verse of Paul Verlaine's (1844–1896) *Art poétique* (1874) in *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*.²⁴

Music before everything—and for that go towards the uneven, as mistier
and more melting in air, without anything in it which weighs or fixes.²⁵

Cocteau identified with the ephemeral and malleable attributes of music, as described by Verlaine, which he believed resonated with his conception of *poésie*. Cocteau wrote extensively about the role of *poésie* in his work, especially in *Rappel à l'ordre* (1926) and many of his other written works of the period (1918–1926). These provide a rich source of primary research material.²⁶

Many biographical details about Cocteau are available. This includes Francis Steegmuller's biography *Cocteau* (1970) and Claude Arnaud's *Cocteau: A Life* (1989).²⁷ These are important contextual sources for the poet's social and musical background, and they document his aesthetic evolution. In contrast, Auric's significance and influence as a composer, author and critic has been overlooked. Consequently, there is less published material. Auric, as a journalist, did, however, write extensively on many aspects of music throughout his career and this included several scholarly articles.²⁸

Very little has been written about Cocteau and Auric's collaborative relationship, and even less on the transdisciplinary perspective that formed the basis of their respective creative processes and shared aesthetic. The purpose of my research is to correct this imbalance in the chapters that follow and to reassess Cocteau from a musical perspective. The main aim of this thesis is to identify and redefine *poésie* as the

²⁴ Cocteau, *Le Coq* (1979), 61: 'De la musique avant toute chose. Et pour cela préfère le pair. Plus lourd et moins soluble dans l'air. Avec tout en lui qui pèse et qui pose'.

²⁵ Robert Hull, 'Translating a Poem From French: 'Art Poétique' by Paul Verlaine (1844–96)', 2015, accessed 27 March 2018, www.stephen-spender.org/translation_resources/Verlaine_teachers.pdf

²⁶ Jean Cocteau, *Le Rappel à l'ordre* (1926) in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 9 (Geneva: Marguerat, 1950).

²⁷ Francis Steegmuller, *Cocteau: A Biography* (London: Macmillan, 1970); Claude Arnaud, *Jean Cocteau* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003); Arnaud, *Jean Cocteau*, trans. Elkin and Mandell.

²⁸ Carl B. Schmidt, ed., *Écrits sur la musique de Georges Auric*, 4 vols. (Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen Press, 2009).

process through which Cocteau and Auric collaborated. I test *poésie* as an analytical framework that is based on musico-poetic parameters (rather than traditional musical ones) to interrogate the nature of the collaboration as specifically demonstrated in Auric's *Huit poèmes de Jean Cocteau*. I then explore this framework within the context of contemporary discourse. I aim to show how Cocteau's texts are inherently musical, thus making them eminently suitable for vocal composition. I contribute to and advance interart scholarship by proposing *poésie* as a valid concept which is equally applicable to the processes of creation, performance and interpretation in a work where text or programme is relevant. My objective is to put forward a method that will encourage the readers of this thesis to take a similarly critical approach to understanding the collaborative relationship between Cocteau and Auric, as well as to other artists and theoreticians of the period from an interart perspective.

The thesis is divided into three parts. Part I (Critical, Creative and Collaborative Contexts) consists of three chapters which establish the musical, collaborative, methodological and textual contexts. Part II (Establishing the methodology), comprising two chapters, distils Cocteau's *poésie* from his writings and then categorises them into eleven principles, as a framework to examine *Le Potomak*. Part II bridges the context and theory in preparation for Part III (Analytic and Interpretive Perspectives), which contains an analysis of the two chosen case studies, using Cocteau's *poésie* and my interpretation of it as an analytical method from the perspective of Cocteau and Auric's creative practice.

Parts I and II emphasise the creative and theoretical voice of Cocteau using primary source material. This, as well as the analysis, responds to my central aim and contributes to the interart discourse pertaining to exchange and dialogue across and between the arts. Because I examine Cocteau from a musical perspective, as a collaborator and interart theorist, and adapt Cocteau's *poésie* to form the basis of an

analytical interart method, I claim my research is uniquely placed to advance knowledge in the field. This chapter outlines the aims and objectives of the thesis in the context of the wider, relevant discourse. The remaining literature is critically embedded throughout the text, wherever relevant, allowing a focus on the primary source material to lead Part I. Chapter two documents the influence of music on Cocteau's diverse works, drawing on the extensive primary and secondary literature concerning Cocteau's aesthetic. I ask: why was music so important for him? How did he become so influential in the development of a new French musical identity as a reaction to the Germanic influence? I claim that whilst he was not technically a musician (he never composed music, and was only able to play piano by ear and improvise on drums), Cocteau is described here using that term because of his use of *poésie*—he asserts music as part of his transdisciplinary creative method.

Chapter three examines Auric from the perspective of his shared aesthetic with Cocteau and his transdisciplinary orientation. There is considerably less material on Auric compared to Cocteau: I have utilised the letters between Cocteau and Auric, as well as Cocteau and Auric's published articles. As such, Part I ensures that the private and public writings of both artists are interrogated in relation to the concept of *poésie*. Here I ask: to what extent does Auric adopt the transformative potential of Cocteau's *poésie* as part of his own compositional process? Did their collaboration represent a complete form of transdisciplinary practice for them both? Once the collaborative context has been established, Chapter four (that is, the first chapter of Part II) identifies, defines and critiques the eleven principles of *poésie*. I introduce additional corroborative primary material from Cocteau's many other sources, particularly his volume *Le Rappel à l'ordre* (1926) (A Call to Order), and my application of his principles creates a new methodological analytical method. In Chapter five I interrogate Cocteau's seminal

written work *Le Potomak* (1913–1916), a watershed moment in terms of his artistic journey, as an early example of *poésie*.

The objective of Part III is to expose analytical interpretations of the *Hommage à Erik Satie* and *Portrait d'Henri Henri Rousseau*, the first and last *mélodies* in the *Huit poèmes de Jean Cocteau*.²⁹ I chose these because they represent the first published musico-poetic collaboration between Cocteau and Auric.³⁰ I maintain that they reveal shared aesthetic and transdisciplinary sensibilities, and demonstrate certain principles of *poésie* that I have formulated in Chapter four. In Chapters six and seven I produce a detailed analysis of both *mélodies*, based on the principles of *poésie*, and question how the analysis informs a musico-poetic relationship between the text and music—and in combination—as a *mélodie*. The aim is to test how grounded *poésie* was, in terms of Cocteau's aesthetic and as a new analytical method, using different parameters that expose an interart dialogue which is inherently music centric.

Primary Sources

The primary sources used in my research incorporate a range of contemporary reviews and articles, autobiographical and critical sources, such as Cocteau's personal diaries, and other publications.³¹ These provide an important overview of the artistic and musical revolution at the time, and give direct access to his personal perspective on the role of music when combined with other art works. Cocteau made a significant contribution to commentary on his film-work: specifically, he kept a diary of the making of the film *La Belle et la bête*, which is particularly relevant in the present

²⁹ For a detailed summary of historical, chronological performance settings and discography of *Huit poèmes de Jean Cocteau* see the GA 20 catalogue entry in Carl B. Schmidt, *The Music of Georges Auric: A Documented Catalogue in Four Volumes* (Lewiston N.Y.: Mellen Press, 2013), 1:53–59.

³⁰ I claim that their collaborations were more extensive and far less determined by the formal understanding of the term, because of their frequent, ongoing discussions and exchange of ideas in their correspondence and frequent meetings.

³¹ Jean Cocteau, *Le Passé défini*, 8 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1951–1963); Cocteau, *Carte Blanche*; Jean Cocteau, *Le Rappel à l'ordre* (Paris: Stock, 1926); Jean Cocteau, *Portraits-Souvenir 1900–1914* (Paris: Grasset, 1935); Jean Cocteau, *La Difficulté d'être* (Paris: Morihien, 1947); and Jean Cocteau, *Journal d'un inconnu* (Paris: Grasset, 1953).

context because it gives a valuable insight into his view of asynchronous relationships between image and music.³² The diary also reveals the nature of Cocteau and Auric's collaboration during the project. Further understanding of their collaborative relationship is drawn from published extracts of André Fraigneau's fourteen radio interviews with Cocteau (1951).³³ Later, Fraigneau interviewed Georges Auric and these 1976–1977 interviews were published as 'Avec les musiciens': they reveal Auric's perspective on their collaboration.³⁴ The exchange of letters between Auric and Cocteau, published in the volume by Pierre Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric-Jean Cocteau*, provides an important insight into their close personal relationship and indicates how their artistic alliance functioned.³⁵

The main Cocteau archival resources are the 'Fonds Jean Cocteau' Bibliothèque Nationale de France; Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris; Bibliothèque de l'Université Paul-Valéry, Centre d'Études Littéraires françaises du XX^e siècle, Montpellier; Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris; the Carlton Lake collection at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre, Austin, Texas; and the library of Vrije Universiteit Brussels.

Primary sources on Georges Auric are limited to his *Quand j'étais là* (1979) and his journalistic and critical articles, collated and edited by Carl B. Schmidt.³⁶ These give a broad view of Auric's critical commentary on all the arts, which is particularly revealing because he began publishing articles at the age of fourteen. His first article 'Erik Satie, musicien humoriste', published in 1913, reflects upon Satie's music, as suggested by the title.³⁷ His articles also give an insight into Auric's ideas and

³² Jean Cocteau, *L'Édition Anniversaire, La Belle et la Bête* (Paris: Rocher, 2003).

³³ Jean Cocteau, *Entretiens avec André Fraigneau* (Monaco: Rocher, 1988).

³⁴ Georges Auric, 'Témoignages', in *Cahiers Jean Cocteau, no. 7, Avec les musiciens* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978).

³⁵ Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*.

³⁶ Schmidt, *Écrits*.

³⁷ Originally published as Georges Auric, 'Erik Satie, musicien humoriste', *Revue française de musique* 4 (10 December 1913), 138–142.

aspirations. Malou Haine has published four interviews between Georges Auric and Stéphane Audel (1955), transcribed from recordings conserved at La Radio Suisse Romande.³⁸ These are significant because Auric talks about his early musical education in Montpellier and Paris, his influential meetings with other composers (such as Vincent d'Indy and Erik Satie), his first piano performances, and his experiences as one of *Les Six*, with Diaghilev and the *Ballets Russes*, with theatrical impresarios and, of course, with Jean Cocteau.

Cocteau and Auric: Secondary Sources

In 'New Music as Confrontation: The Musical Sources of Jean Cocteau's Identity' (1991), Jann Pasler describes Cocteau's musical experiences and suggests that he consciously changed his musical attitudes to distance himself from his bourgeois background.³⁹ Jane Fulcher's *The Composer as Intellectual: Music and Ideology in France, 1914–1940* (2005)⁴⁰ centres around questions of nationalism and political influences of the inter-war composers. She considers the inter-war period from the perspective of the different responses of individual composers as intellectuals. Although Auric and Cocteau had discussions that resulted in the publication of *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*, Auric then became associated with sections of politically orientated writers who were critical of Cocteau's populist aesthetic. Auric would later ease this oppositional tension and become more ideologically aligned both in printed articles and in his compositions. Barbara Kelly, in *Music and Ultra-Modernism in France: A Fragile Consensus, 1913–1939* (2013), presents an overview of political, cultural and historical contexts.⁴¹ She draws attention to the spirit of musical experimentation in the

³⁸ Georges Auric, 'Entretiens inédits de Georges Auric avec Stéphane Audel (1955)', *Revue musicale de Suisse Romande* 62, no. 1 (2009).

³⁹ Pasler, 'New Music.'

⁴⁰ Jane Fulcher, *The Composer as Intellectual: Music and Ideology in France, 1914–1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁴¹ Barbara Kelly, *Music and Ultra-Modernism in France: A Fragile Consensus, 1913–1939* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2013).

early twentieth century, and cites sonority as a specific and continuing interest of composers at that time. She devotes a chapter to what she describes as ‘composer-critic partnerships’ and their roles in the historical construction of French music.⁴²

Both authors refer to Jean Cocteau and Henri Collet’s (1885–1951) contributions via their seminal texts, in an attempt to examine what characterised the music of the first three decades of the twentieth century.⁴³ Fulcher’s volume is densely written and more suitable for selective reading, whereas Kelly writes a more cohesive book that seeks an experimental ‘consensus’ drawn from composers and critics within the inter-war period.

James S. Williams’s biography of Cocteau is primarily concerned with the poet’s relentless self-questioning and how this pervaded his creativity. The book documents the multifaceted and volatile evolution of his work and aesthetic, which should be considered as his quest into being and subjectivity that impacted upon his subsequent artistic production.⁴⁴

Cocteau’s relationship to music is explored through several sources: David Gullentops and Malou Haine’s edited volume, *Jean Cocteau: textes et musique* (2005), is a useful compilation of all Cocteau’s texts that have been set to music by different composers, and includes essays by various authors on topics that relate to Cocteau and Auric’s contribution to music, as well as their interart orientation. One chapter in that volume, ‘Lectures du *Coq et l’Arlequin* par *Les Six*’, by Catherine Miller discusses Cocteau’s influence as a mentor of *Les Six* and as a pioneer for the direction of a new French music. Miller also wrote *Jean Cocteau, Guillaume Apollinaire, Paul Claudel et*

⁴² Ibid., 67–94.

⁴³ Cocteau, *Le Coq* (1979), 56, 58–60, 62–64, 67–68, 71; Henri Collet, ‘Les Cinq Russes, les Six français et M. Satie’, *Comoedia*, 16 January 1920; Henri Collet, ‘La Musiquechez soi, Œuvres d’Erik Satie, Darius Milhaud, Louis Durey et Georges Auric’, *Comoedia*, 17 September 1920.

⁴⁴ James S. Williams, *Jean Cocteau* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008).

le Groupe des Six (2003).⁴⁵ It is a critical discussion exploring the particularly strong interest that composers of the time had in vocal music. This interest came about because of a heightened engagement with literature. Malou Haine makes an important contribution with her overview of the many elements of Cocteau’s musicality in her 2003 article, ‘Jean Cocteau et sa connaissance de la musique’.⁴⁶ Josiane Mas identifies the connections between Cocteau and contemporary music with ‘Jean Cocteau et la musique contemporaine’ in *Jean Cocteau Aujourd’hui: Actes du colloque de Montpellier* (1992).⁴⁷ The catalogue of Cocteau’s exhibition at Centre Pompidou, *Jean Cocteau, sur le fil du siècle* (25 September 2003–4 January 2004), highlights Cocteau’s efforts to promote popular French musical styles in more traditional concert venues.⁴⁸ David Gullentops and Malou Haine have produced a more recent collection of all of Cocteau’s writings on music in *Jean Cocteau, Écrits sur la Musique* (2016). It provides evidence of Cocteau’s extensive and diverse interest in the various aspects of the world of music, as well as his engagement with musicians and his critical writings concerning music.⁴⁹ Carl B. Schmidt has documented historical and chronological details of performances and recordings of *Huit poèmes de Jean Cocteau* in volume one of *The Music of Georges Auric* (2013).⁵⁰ Three further sources—Josiane Mas’s edited volume, *Centenaire Georges Auric-Francis Poulenc* (2001); Antoine Goléa’s *Georges Auric* (1958); and Alexis Galpérine’s *Georges Auric 1899–1983* (2003)—give further insight into Auric’s collaborative practice. Auric collaborated with Goléa in 1957 and Goléa’s book documents the project *Le chemin de lumière*.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Catherine Miller, *Jean Cocteau, Guillaume Apollinaire, Paul Claudel et le groupe des six: Rencontres poético-musicales autour des mélodies et des chansons* (Sprimont: Mardaga, 2003).

⁴⁶ Malou Haine, ‘Jean Cocteau et sa connaissance de la musique’, *Europe, revue littéraire mensuelle* 894 (October 2003), 248–282.

⁴⁷ See Josiane Mas, ‘Jean Cocteau et la musique contemporaine’, in *Jean Cocteau Aujourd’hui: Actes du colloque de Montpellier*, ed. Pierre Caizergues (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1992), 145–156.

⁴⁸ *Jean Cocteau: Sur le Fil du siècle, L’Exposition* (Paris: Centre Pompidou: 2003).

⁴⁹ Cocteau, *Écrits sur la musique*.

⁵⁰ Schmidt, *The Music*.

⁵¹ Josiane Mas, ed. *Centenaire Georges Auric-Francis Poulenc* (Montpellier: Université Paul Valéry, 2001); Antoine Goléa, *Georges Auric* (Paris: Ventadour, 1958).

This cultural era has received some attention in doctoral research, especially in terms of Cocteau's evolution as a poet, explored by James Potter McNab in his 1972 thesis, 'The Personal Mythology of Jean Cocteau: The Emergence of a Poet, 1920–1930'.⁵² It focusses on the decade of Cocteau's artistic transformation and is the foundation of his conception that *poésie* is more than the written word, and shows its transformation across all disciplines in Cocteau's artistic practice.

Laura Anderson, in her recent thesis 'The Poetry of Sound: Jean Cocteau, Film and Early Sound Design' (2013), explores Cocteau's method (as director) of setting images to music and sound in his film design. She writes about his technique to achieve asynchronous relationships between image and music (drawn from his own writings on his filmic sound design processes) as examples of *poésie cinématographique* in practice, and this is analogous with my ideas on the dissonances established between text and music in Auric's word setting of Cocteau's poems that I nominate as *poésie de musique*.

Colin Roust adds to the scholarship on Auric with his PhD 'Sounding French: The Film Music and Criticism of Georges Auric, 1919–1945' (2007). He also wrote the foreword to Schmidt's four volume publication of *Écrits sur la musique de Georges Auric/ Writings on Music by Georges Auric*.⁵³ His thesis concentrates on what he regards as the middle part of Auric's career (1924–1945), when the composer became politically active and, as an administrator, worked to protect composers' rights. Roust scrutinises Auric's film music from the perspective of the collaboration with Cocteau and their shared nationalism, especially with respect to launching a new French musical identity. His new book *Georges Auric: A Life in Music and Politics* was published in 2020.

⁵² McNab, 'Personal Mythology.'

⁵³ Schmidt, *Écrits*.

Secondary Interart Sources

There have been many interesting developments in the study of musico-literary relationships, with several theorists working on various aspects of the interart dialogue. I aim to situate my research within the wider interart discourse.

I argue that for *poésie* to be substantiated as a concept, it must function according to certain identifiable conceptual processes. Specific theories are particularly relevant and form the starting point for my interpretation of Cocteau's ideas on *poésie*—that is, as both a transdisciplinary and a unifying creative model. My exploration of the literature falls into two categories: theorists who explore the arts from an interdisciplinary perspective, and those who propose an approach based on conceptual mapping and blending.

Particularly relevant, and useful in the first category, is the work of Peter Dayan and Daniel Albright. Dayan made an important contribution to the interart debate with *Art as Music, Music as Poetry, Poetry as Art, from Whistler to Stravinsky and Beyond*, 2010, in which he proposed five defining laws for an interart aesthetic.⁵⁴ He applies them to case studies in music, visual art and poetry—as if all arts operate in the same way. He maintains that it is essential to ‘describe work in one medium as if it were operating in another’.⁵⁵ There is an important equivalence with Cocteau's aesthetic, because he also viewed all arts as one and mediated his creativity through the lens of *poésie*, which enacts the transdisciplinary characteristic of *poésie*.

In *Untwisting the Serpent* (2000), Albright introduces notions of figures of consonance and dissonance in hybrid art forms.⁵⁶ The idea is relevant in my application of *poésie* because Cocteau always juxtaposed elements in an asynchronous way—so as

⁵⁴ Peter Dayan, *Art as Music, Music as Poetry, Poetry as Art, from Whistler to Stravinsky and Beyond* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵⁶ He introduces the terms consonance and dissonance in a non-musical context, which I apply in interart relationships.

to create tension as a feature of *poésie*. Both Dayan's and Albright's theories have their limitations as they tend to generalise.

The second group of relevant theorists includes Nicholas Cook (*Analysing Musical Multimedia*, 1998), who tests ideas of similarity and contest in his analysis of multimedial works.⁵⁷ Lawrence Zbikowski, in *Conceptualizing Music: Cognitive Structure, Theory, and Analysis* (2002), looks at the cross-domain mapping of medial elements.⁵⁸ He also examines links between musical and non-musical ideas, and describes musical analysis as essentially metaphorical, which resonates with the metaphorical function of *poésie*. This connects with the work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (*Metaphors We Live By*, 1980), and Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, (*The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities*, 2002), who are cited from the perspective of metaphorical processes.⁵⁹ In order to explore how different arts relate and work together, it is necessary to consider how Cocteau might experience music in terms of other art forms through metaphor. In order for *poésie* to be valid, it can only function through the conceptual mechanisms described above. I draw on and expand these conceptual ideas which underpin *poésie* in its transformative, transdisciplinary and metaphorical functions. I construct my methodology of *poésie* accordingly to then test it against two practical examples of *mélodies*, through Cocteau's text and Auric's music.

⁵⁷ Nicholas Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

⁵⁸ Lawrence Zbikowski, *Conceptualising Music: Cognitive Structure, Theory, and Analysis*, AMS Studies in Music (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁵⁹ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago and New York: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

Chapter 2: Jean Cocteau's Musical Practice

Introduction

Jean Cocteau's biography, writings and creative output have been well documented. He has been described variously as a jack-of all-trades, as a novelist, dramatist, librettist, cinematographer, critic, artist, impresario, and performer, but—above all—he regarded himself as a poet.

My aim in this chapter is to reassess his creative practice through the lens of his highly developed musicality. The influence of music on Cocteau is certain for many reasons, as described by Jann Pasler and Malou Haine.⁶⁰ He grew up in a very musical environment; he surrounded himself with musicians and composers throughout his artistic life and participated in collaborative musical works whenever possible. In an article published in 1958 (at the age of 69), Cocteau reflected with regret that he had never learnt to play a musical instrument. He freely confessed that he longed to be a musician.⁶¹ He believed it was 'the science of the art' that stopped him (Rorem, who knew Cocteau, uses the term composer rather than musician in this context).⁶² I will demonstrate how musical features permeate his poetry through sonority and rhythm. Indeed, his images often portray musical instruments and influential composers of the time. The most significant indicator of his commitment to music was his persuasive publication *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* in which he made a nationalistic call for a new music: he demanded 'a French music for France'.⁶³ The fact that *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* became so widely accepted as a musical manifesto, despite his lack of musical education, shows

⁶⁰ Pasler, 'New Music,' 255–278; and Haine, 'Jean Cocteau.'

⁶¹ Jean Cocteau, 'Préface au passé', *La Revue de Musique* (February 1958), 15: 'Car, hélas, j'aimerais être musicien'.

⁶² Ned Rorem, 'Cocteau and Music', in *Jean Cocteau and the French Scene*, ed. Dore Ashton (New York: Abbeville Press, 1984). 154.

⁶³ Jean Cocteau, *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* (1918) in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 9 (Geneva: Marguerat, 1950), 24: 'une musique française de France'.

he was a potent force in the musical world. Auric endorsed the work in 1923, and confirmed how:

A book by Jean Cocteau: *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*, contributed a great deal to the understanding of our situation and our position. You certainly know this 'tract' which has provoked confusion and misunderstandings, like all living things, that only now begin to dissipate. But this brief volume provides more insights into an art that reaches us deeply, than so many more vacuous and technical articles. I think it will always remain an indispensable document for the whole fertile period of our music.⁶⁴

Because of his lack of musical credentials, *Le Coq* represented 'a manifesto without meaning'.⁶⁵ Auric acknowledged the controversy caused by Cocteau's pamphlet (he did not even call it a book) but he gave Cocteau's critique some credit, regardless of its lack of substance and technical musical expertise. His comments must be taken in context, however, because, through extensive discussions, Auric contributed significantly to the content of *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*.⁶⁶ Because of *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*, 'certain [musical] priorities' were exposed, which were subsequently repeated by others.⁶⁷ For example, in support of Cocteau's statement, Auric re-iterated the importance of everyday music derived from the music-hall, fairground circus, and jazz to revitalise the new music.⁶⁸ As a result, Cocteau's name (and *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* itself) became synonymous with the birth of a new French music.

⁶⁴ Georges Auric, 'Les Jeunes au Collège de France: La jeune musique française', in *Écrits sur la musique de Georges Auric*, ed. Carl B. Schmidt (Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen Press, 2009), 1:1439: 'Un livre de Jean Cocteau: *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*, contribua beaucoup à éclairer notre situation et notre position. Vous connaissez certainement ce tract qui a soulevé, comme toutes les choses vivantes, malentendus et des confusions qui ne commencent à se dissiper qu'en ce moment. Mais ce bref volume ouvre plus d'aperçus sur un art qui nous atteint profondément que tant d'articles techniques et vides. Il demeurera toujours, je crois, un document indispensable sur toute une période fertile de notre musique'.

⁶⁵ Arnaud, *Jean Cocteau*, trans. Elkin and Mandell, 229.

⁶⁶ 'On the eve of, as on the day after *Parade* ... Cocteau and I began long discussions which inevitably resulted in an article to which I was quickly converted, namely *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*', see Georges Auric, *Quand j'étais là...* (Paris: Grasset, 1979), 78: 'rue d'Anjou, à la vielle comme au lendemain de *Parade*... nous commencions, Cocteau et moi, de longs dialogues qui s'achevaient obligatoirement par une lecture à laquelle je fus vite convié, celle du *Coq et l'Arlequin*'.

⁶⁷ Kelly, *Music and Ultra-Modernism*, 163.

⁶⁸ See Cocteau, *Le Coq* (1979), 64: 'Le music-hall, le cirque, les orchestres américaine de nègres, tout cela féconde un artiste au même titre que la vie'; and Georges Auric, 'Après la pluie le beau temps' *Le Coq 2* (June 1920), in *Écrits sur la musique de Georges Auric*, ed. Carl B. Schmidt (Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen Press, 2009), 1:196: 'Pourquoi nous reprocher le cirque, le music-hall, la foire de Montmartre?'

All discussed above shows how music was fundamental to Cocteau's life and work. On a visceral level, Cocteau connected the percussive element of music, especially drumming with the rhythms of his poetry.⁶⁹ Cocteau refers to *poésie* often, but he does not define it as an analytical theory. I establish a theoretical approach from his writings that span 1913 and 1930.

Poésie and music consistently informed and shaped his artistic process across the disciplines. But do *poésie* and music connect all his different art works, or do they function as a combined and unique aesthetic principle? Either way, he grappled with the enduring question: 'are the arts one or are they many?'⁷⁰ I maintain that Cocteau's transdisciplinary concept of *poésie* determines how one art form can assume the qualities of another and, as such, show that *poésie* intersects interart boundaries (after Dayan). My application of *poésie* enables me to describe many of Cocteau's works—including his poems, plays and film—as musical (albeit from a non-traditional perspective). I illustrate, in what follows, that one of the defining characteristics of *poésie* is its transformative ability to assert music through other art forms. When understood through metaphor, *poésie* can describe one thing in terms of another. Its transformative potential is realised within a similar conceptual space as metaphor, and it functions in the same way (see Chapter four).

This chapter examines and contextualises the basis for the musicality of Cocteau's oeuvre. Cocteau's poems and other texts are a rich source of primary material that confirm his devotion and dependence on music and musicians. It is very hard to categorise Cocteau in musical terms, but for the purposes of this thesis, I will call him an intuitive musician (albeit an enthusiastic non-professional), and describe his works as compositions, on the following understanding. He was not a musician in the accepted

⁶⁹ Denise Pilmer Taylor, 'La Musique pour tout le monde: Jean Wiéner and the Dawn of French Jazz' (PhD thesis, Michigan University, 1998), 102.

⁷⁰ Daniel Albright, *Panaesthetics: On the Unity and Diversity of the Arts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), 2.

sense of a professional performer or composer, although he was a keen amateur piano player (who was able to play by ear). He was a percussionist and performed in jazz trios. He did not compose music in any notational sense, but he did create musicality within his poems with sonorous rhyming and rhythmic patterns, and he sometimes structured his texts in a musical way.

Auric described Cocteau as a musician and a composer (see below). He identified multiple talents, including his musical potential, and described him in glowing terms. He wrote:

Jean Cocteau possessed the talent, the genius—very special, very rare and very persuasive—of instantly bringing to light talent and genius not yet recognised. Our poet would readily become musician, painter, sculptor in turn—as well as dramatist, film director or choreographer.... He never learnt to sing, but I have heard him play the piano with disconcerting and irresistible authority! And I am sure that, had he wished, he would have been a composer of music—a composer, no doubt, as skilful, inspired and bold as one might expect.⁷¹

Why then, was his influence so potent that his texts became widely understood to be musically informed and quoted (as stated earlier), despite his lack of formal musical training? Why did he write *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* as a musical manifesto? Cocteau had a genuine aim to revolutionise French music and his timing of the work was clearly intentional: he wanted to benefit from the scandal that ensued after *Parade*, which he used to endorse Satie and popular music. Cocteau added sound effects to the score, which was virtually unheard of at the time. These included a typewriter, foghorns, sirens and clanging milk bottles. The sounds were removed for the 1917 première, but some were re-introduced in 1921.⁷² Cocteau prioritised his sound effects over Satie's music and annotated the first page of the final score:

⁷¹ Georges Auric, 'On the Diaghileff Ballet and Jean Cocteau', *Ballet Annual* 11 (1957), in *Écrits sur la musique de Georges Auric*, ed. Carl B. Schmidt (Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen Press, 2009), 1:152–153.

⁷² Deborah Menaker Rothschild, *Picasso's Parade: From Street to Stage* (London: Sotheby's Publications, 1991), 88.

the music for *Parade* is not presented as a work in itself but it is designed to serve as background for placing in relief the primary subject of sounds and scenic noises.⁷³

Although Satie was the first composer to deliberately write background music (*Musique d'Ameublement*, Furniture Music), he was annoyed by Cocteau's intervention. Their disagreement led to a less than satisfactory collaboration. Cocteau insisted on the inclusion of these noises. This irritated Satie, who sarcastically described how he felt disengaged during the early stages of the ballet:

I only composed a background to throw into relief the noises which the playwright considered indispensable to the surrounding of each character with his own atmosphere.⁷⁴

Through *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*, he could also demand that arts move away from existing restrictive categorisation. According to Kelly, who interprets the text as a manifesto:

Le Coq et l'Arlequin is generally credited as an anti-Impressionist manifesto.... It had the ability to appeal beyond this narrow struggle between musical generations. Read alongside the journal *Le Coq*... it was also a rejection of the dominant contemporary artistic movements, including dada and cubism.⁷⁵

However, there is a cynical aspect to the publication of *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* that is noteworthy of mention—one that is overshadowed by its musical status. Cocteau thrived on self-promotion and was very aware of the importance of marketing. He wanted to raise his profile, disturb the public, and 'gain publicity and press attention' with this work.⁷⁶ He achieved the desired notoriety. Francis Poulenc (1899–1963) viewed *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* more specifically as a defence of Satie's aesthetic (which was shared by Cocteau and Auric), in opposition to that of Debussy, Ravel and

⁷³ Score in Frederick Koch Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University: 'Le piano à quatre mains de *Parade* ne présente pas l'oeuvre exacte mais le fond musical destiné à mettre en relief un premier plan de *batterie* et de *bruits scéniques*'.

⁷⁴ Quoted in Jeremy Cox, "Le Théâtre forain": Historical and Stylistic Connections between "Parade" and "Histoire du soldat", *Music and Letters* 76, no. 4 (1995), 575.

⁷⁵ Kelly, *Music and Ultra-Modernism*, 210.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 163.

Stravinsky, before 1914.⁷⁷ Cocteau learnt, from Stravinsky, to experiment rather than follow established traditions (which lead to stagnation).⁷⁸ Nevertheless, from whichever perspective, *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* can be considered a musical manifesto.

Alongside the composer Satie, Cocteau became the mentor and figurehead for the group of young French composers that came to be known as *Les Six*. He was also involved in many musical productions and worked with several composers. To what extent was he reliant on or influenced by these (especially Auric) to satisfy his quest for a musical aesthetic as fundamental to his works? Auric's context and collaborative contribution are set out in the next chapter. I conclude, therefore that Cocteau can be described as a musician, if only in the broadest sense.

Cocteau's Early Musical Influences

Jean Cocteau was exposed to many musical influences during his privileged bourgeois childhood.⁷⁹ He often watched his parents preparing to go to the Opéra, and saw his mother dressed in fine evening gowns and jewels. At the age of seven, he discovered the magical world of theatre at the Châtelet and was entranced and indelibly marked by the transformative experience of music, dance and the visual spectacle of the various performances.⁸⁰ On Winter Sundays, the nine-year-old Cocteau was taken to concerts at the Conservatoire by his grandfather, where he heard music by Beethoven, Liszt, Berlioz and Wagner.⁸¹ Later, in *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*, he would condemn such music. His maternal grandfather, Eugène Lecomte, lived on the fourth floor of the apartment building at number 2, rue de la Chaussée d'Antin where the composer Rossini (1792–

⁷⁷ Francis Poulenc, *Entretiens avec Claude Rostand* (Paris: Julliard, 1954), 45: 'A vrai dire, *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* n'est pas tant un manifeste de groupe, qu'une défense de l'aesthétique de Satie en l'opposant aux grands aînés d'avant [19]14: Debussy, Ravel, Strawinsky'.

⁷⁸ Jean Cocteau, *Démarche d'un poète*, ed. David Gullentops (Paris: Grasset, 2013), 3: 'Le premier, Stravinsky m'enseigne cette insulte aux habitudes sans quoi l'art stagne et reste en jeu'.

⁷⁹ Pasler, 'New Music,' 255.

⁸⁰ Haine, 'Jean Cocteau,' 255: 'Cocteau va découvrir le monde merveilleux du théâtre aux matinées du Chatelet'.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 253.

1868) had occupied the first floor.⁸² Lecomte delighted Cocteau with stories about Rossini, who hosted open evenings in the large lounge of his apartment.⁸³ The Saturday salons included music by Rossini's contemporaries, and featured unpublished piano pieces. Literature and painting were also discussed at these recitals.⁸⁴ There is no doubt that the stories of those animated musical evenings fed the dreams and fantasies of the young Cocteau who, as an adult, would arrange similar occasions with his musical friends. As a young man, he participated in Sunday café-concerts at the Eldorado (boulevard de Strasbourg) where, between 1897 and 1907, the variety performer Mistinguett (1875–1956) danced. Despite Cocteau's childhood and adolescence 'bathed in music and dance spectacles',⁸⁵ there is no evidence that he had any formal music education. Nevertheless, music was so fundamental to his early years that it would impact his later creative practice. Indeed, his experience was a sensitivity to the sonority of language. He sustained a long-term attraction to the popular music of circus, street parades, variety hall and musical theatre (in common with Auric), that would lead him to seek out musicians, as collaborators, for other larger scale productions when the musical component was beyond his ability. He did not want to eliminate the gap between high and low art: he just enjoyed the tension generated by putting them together as 'figures of dissonance' (as described by Albright).⁸⁶ Cocteau processed his childhood experiences of music into the multifaceted expressions of his concept of *poésie*.

⁸² Ibid., 249: 'Eugène Lecomte, qui lui raconte des anecdotes sur Rossini, qui habitait au premier étage de son immeuble du 2, rue de la Chaussée d'Antin'.

⁸³ See Jean-Marie Bruson, *Rossini à Paris*, Exposition Catalogue: 27 October–31 December 1992 (Paris: Musée Carnavalet, 1992), 137–165.

⁸⁴ Camille Saint-Saëns, *École buissonnière: Notes et souvenirs* (Paris: Lafitte, 1913), 265.

⁸⁵ Haine, 'Jean Cocteau,' 255: 'baignées de musique et de spectacles de danses'.

⁸⁶ Daniel Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and Other Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 200.

Cocteau's Musicality

Our understanding of Cocteau's musical knowledge is based on Malou Haine's article, 'Jean Cocteau et sa connaissance de la musique'.⁸⁷ Cocteau possessed musical talents beyond his piano and drumming improvisations. He knew how to talk and write about music without the use of any specific musical terminology. It was on this very point that both André Gide (1869–1951) and critic Jean Marnold (1859–1935) disparaged him. The former criticised his musical incompetence and technical ignorance, whilst the latter found Cocteau's writings problematic because they were overrun with metaphor. On this point, Cocteau responded to Marnold's criticism when he stated in *Le Rappel à l'ordre* that, 'For me, [metaphor] is the only language possible'.⁸⁸ It is not surprising that metaphor is Cocteau's chosen form of language because his whole artistic endeavour is based on the dissolution of boundaries between the arts, allowing for interart exchange. Metaphor functions in the same way and, through conceptual blending (see Chapter four), music, words, images and ideas can interact to create new meaning. The specificity of language that excludes metaphor severely limits an essential form of verbal expression for Cocteau, with no alternative. There are aspects of music, in general, that are inevitably discussed in metaphorical terms, which made it easier for Cocteau to understand and write about it. Metaphor is also essential in the understanding of *poésie*, so the metaphorical concept essentially links his linguistic and musical forms of artistic expression.

Cocteau reacted against the criticism, in that he believed he could write musical articles without using a single technical term.⁸⁹ He thought that musicians found articles

⁸⁷ Haine, 'Jean Cocteau,' 248–282.

⁸⁸ Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 198: 'C'est pour moi le seul langage possible'.

⁸⁹ Jean Cocteau, 'La nouvelle musique en France', *Revue de Genève* 21 (March 1922), 396: 'Je viens d'écrire sur la musique sans employer un seul terme de technicien'.

by technicians incomprehensible as well. His priority was to be understood.⁹⁰ Contrary to Marnold's opinion, however, Claude Rostand (1912–1970) was particularly convinced by the structure of Cocteau's musical articles.⁹¹ He found them surprisingly concise and brilliantly shaped with aspects of *poésie*, which more than made up for any lack of musical terminology.⁹² Although Rostand made no direct reference to *poésie*, he focussed on Cocteau's unusual contribution to music. In a radio interview with Poulenc he stated:

Cocteau will have been one of the few [...] that has always been in direct and immediate contact with music; [...] for its own sake, as a thing in itself, as an essential element; especially, to have been able to observe it live, from a very well informed knowledge and understanding of the developments of musical events of the preceding eras. It helped him survive and to fulfil his destiny, at a that time. He was not content to be a spectator, to talk about it as a user, as it suited him, but he played an active role in music.⁹³

Composer Henri Sauguet (1901–1989) corroborated this; he observed how Cocteau found exactly the right vocabulary to discuss music and musicians expressively, without any specific terminology.⁹⁴ According to Haine, Rostand defined Cocteau's relationship with music as unusual, in that Cocteau maintained an immediate and direct contact with it, purely for its own sake. Rostand recognised how music formed an essential and innate part of Cocteau's personal and artistic whole.⁹⁵ Rostand was not alone in praising Cocteau's musical sensibilities. Sauguet described the tight synergy that existed

⁹⁰ Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 198: 'Mais outre que les musiciens tiennent les articles de techniciens pour incompréhensibles, je ne suis pas technicien et je cherche avant tout à me faire comprendre'.

⁹¹ Cocteau, *Écrits sur la musique*.

⁹² Haine, 'Jean Cocteau,' 274.

⁹³ Interview Four from *Francis Poulenc ou l'invité de Touraine: Entretiens avec Claude Rostand*, Paris, 13 October 1953–16 February 1954, Radio France, 1995, CD: 'Cocteau aura été un des rares [...] qui ait toujours été en contact direct et immédiat avec la musique; à l'avoir fréquentée pour elle-même, comme une chose en soi, en tant qu'élément essentiel; bien plus, à avoir su la regarder vivre, et, partant d'une connaissance fort bien éclairée des époques ayant précédé la nôtre, partant d'une compréhension de l'enchaînement des faits musicaux, à avoir su l'aider à vivre, à accomplir son destin à une époque donnée. Il ne s'est pas contenté d'être un spectateur, d'en parler comme un usager le fait d'un produit qui lui convient, mais il a joué vis-à-vis de la musique un rôle efficace'.

⁹⁴ Henri Sauguet, 'Cocteau et la Musique', in *Cahiers Jean Cocteau, no. 7 Avec les musiciens* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), 83: 'Cocteau a su trouver pour parler de la musique et des musiciens un vocabulaire si juste, si expressément défini tout en échappant totalement à la terminologie spécifique'.

⁹⁵ Haine, 'Jean Cocteau,' 274.

between Cocteau and music, even though he was not a composer, stating that he showed ‘real and profound visceral connections’.⁹⁶ He perceptively situated the poet in a world of sound, an orphic universe through ‘osmosis and transfer’,⁹⁷ which are features of *poésie*. Cocteau uses the Orphic myth as a recurring theme, whereby he explores the complex relationships between reality and imagination, and between the creator and his works. The reality originates with Cocteau and is then processed into the work via the imagination. The receiver applies their own individual interpretation of reality during the experience of the work. Sauguet recognised that Cocteau’s *poésie* extended beyond the written word, he wrote that ‘all *poésie* ought to [assert] music, (although all music is not necessarily *poésie*)!’⁹⁸ Sauguet then emphatically described Cocteau as being ‘the personification of music’;⁹⁹ in other words, its embodiment. Sauguet showed great understanding of Cocteau’s musicality. His statement was bold, unambiguous and surprising—especially because in the light of other criticism, it was written by a composer. Sauguet supported the idea that Cocteau’s artistic practice was viscerally musical through *poésie*. Other composers, such as Igor Markevitch (1912–1983), also recognised Cocteau’s unique musical aptitude. Markevitch commented on Cocteau’s musical orientation, his ability to feel the music, and his intuition in the discussion of his compositions.¹⁰⁰ It would be easy to condemn these composers’ praise of Cocteau as biased, because of his positive reviews of their work. However, his role as an intuitive promoter, catalyst and contributor to the arts was rather more widespread. Arthur Honegger (1892–1955) believed that:

⁹⁶ Sauguet, ‘Cocteau et la Musique,’ 83: ‘liens d’intimité organiques’.

⁹⁷ Ibid.: ‘par osmose ou transfert’.

⁹⁸ Ibid.: ‘toute *poésie* se doit d’être musique (si, par contre, toute musique n’est pas nécessairement *poésie*) !’

⁹⁹ Ibid.: ‘Il était physiquement musique’.

¹⁰⁰ Igor Markevitch, ‘Cocteau et la Musique’, in *Cahiers Jean Cocteau, no. 7 Avec les musiciens* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), 79–80: ‘Cocteau avez un grand sens musical, ce qui est peu connu. Il *sentait* la musique [...] Je m’éloigne de mon propos qui est de vous parler du don musical de Cocteau. J’ai eu l’occasion d’observer plusieurs fois son intuition dans la manière dont il parlait de mes œuvres’.

Without really being a musician, Cocteau acted as a guide to many young [musicians] because he was able to express the general reaction against the pre-war aesthetic.¹⁰¹

The author Marie Scheikévitch (1882–1966) supported such claims and identified Cocteau’s unusual musical talents when she wrote that:

His ability to continually create showed his vitality and agile thought, never still.... An insightful observer, his antennae picked up the beginnings of the tendencies that were to become doctrines. At the forefront of all the artistic movements, he plays the role of sorcerer and generously exerted his influence on new ideas.... For him, the music hall, the Circus, the [African American] Orchestras fertilised an artist as in life.... Cocteau’s talent is so diverse, it draws inspiration from the developments of his time.¹⁰²

Scheikévitch encapsulated Cocteau’s unique ability to predict new trends and situate himself at the heart of so many musical collaborations, re-enforcing the idea that musicality was essential to Cocteau’s creativity in whatever form that took. He was indisputably unlike other music critics in the way he had an antenna that told him how certain ‘numbers’, as he phrased it, ‘will come up’.¹⁰³ He identified Georges Auric, in his preface to *Le Coq et l’Arlequin*, as one such person.¹⁰⁴ His acute perception gave him the credibility to identify and formulate the aspirations for a new aesthetic to replace ‘the fog of Debussyste impressionism’.¹⁰⁵ It was the consensus among these composers and critics alike that Cocteau’s general lack of technical knowledge did not

¹⁰¹ Arthur Honegger, *Je suis compositeur* (Paris: Conquistador, 1951), 147: ‘sans être vraiment musicien, Cocteau servit de guide à beaucoup de jeunes, [car il exprimait] le sens général d’une réaction contre l’esthétique d’avant-guerre’.

¹⁰² Marie Scheikévitch, *Souvenirs d’un temps disparu* (Paris: Plon, 1935), 241: ‘avec esprit il transposait ses visions en formations originales [...] Tout ce qui se trouvait à sa portée servait sa fantaisie et il transformait et animait à son gré les plus humbles objets. Cette faculté de perpétuelle création donnait de la mesure de sa vitalité et du mouvement de sa pensée jamais en repos. [...] Observateur perspicace, ses antennes lui révélaient dans la trame encore informe des commencements les tendances qui devaient devenir des doctrines. À l’avant-garde de tous les mouvements artistiques, il joua le rôle de sorcier et mit généreusement son influence à la disposition des idées neuves [...] Pour lui, le music-hall, le cirque, les orchestres américains de nègres, fécondaient un artiste au même titre que la vie. [...] Le talent si divers de Cocteau puise son inspiration dans les évolutions de son temps’.

¹⁰³ Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 214: ‘Des antennes m’indiquent les numéros qui doivent sortir’.

¹⁰⁴ Original edition Jean Cocteau, *A Call to Order* (London: Faber, 1926); later edition: *Order Considered as Anarchy*, in Jean Cocteau, *A Call to Order*, trans., Rollo H. Myers (New York: Haskell House, 1974), 195–196; and Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 214: ‘C’était mettre ma fortune sur le numéro...comme dans la dédicace du *Coq et l’Arlequin* je misais sur le numéro Georges Auric’.

¹⁰⁵ Haine, ‘Jean Cocteau,’ 273: ‘les brumes de l’impressionnisme debussyste’.

prevent his intuitive understanding or aesthetic appreciation of music. They believed he possessed a real musical instinct coupled with an uncommon musical sensibility.

Poulenc went so far as to describe Cocteau as ‘our poetic chronicler much more than our theoretician’ with respect to *Les Six*.¹⁰⁶ But Cocteau argued that he was never their theoretician.¹⁰⁷ Poulenc did have reservations about the poet’s limited musical knowledge. Consequently, he actively tried to prevent Cocteau’s participation in a joint work on French composers, because Cocteau was unable to select pieces of music as examples.¹⁰⁸ Poulenc felt that the volume should be compiled solely by musicologists. The book had been planned in 1923 but remained unpublished. Such condemnation upset him deeply, so much so that he vigorously defended his position.¹⁰⁹

Despite the negative criticism, Cocteau continued to believe he was capable of valid commentary on the artistic aesthetic changes of the time, but sarcastically stated that he would leave comments on more technical matters to those better qualified. He also sought to improve his credibility and, at the same time, defend Stravinsky’s new form of music and the originality of his musical language. Stravinsky had composed dissonant music in *The Rite of Spring* (1913). He used strident, irregular rhythms set against very simple melodies, and juxtaposed and superimposed musical material to interact contrapuntally. Cocteau responded to the music because of its dissonance and it appealed to his aural sensibilities. Cocteau delighted in the provocation of Stravinsky’s

¹⁰⁶ Poulenc, *Entretiens*, 45: ‘C’était, si vous voulez notre chroniqueur poétique bien plus que notre théoricien’.

¹⁰⁷ ‘Lettre ouverte à mes amis Musiciens’, *Comoedia* 10 January 1922, 1: ‘Je n’ai jamais été votre théoricien’.

¹⁰⁸ Francis Poulenc, *Correspondance, 1910–1963*, ed. Myriam Chimènes (Paris: Fayard, 1994), 191, (lettre du 27 mars 1923): ‘il faut que ce livre soit uniquement composé par des musicologues capables d’extraire des exemples’.

¹⁰⁹ Jean Cocteau, *Théâtre Serge de Diaghilew: Les Facheux* (Paris: Éditions des Quatre Chemins, 1924), 1:7–13: ‘Depuis que je parle de musique, j’évite ce qui ne me regarde pas. Je saute les détails. Je me refuse nuances et pédales. On ne me reproche mon indécatesse. Mais que voulez-vous, je n’ai pas une minute à perdre. Je dois aller vite, débayer, [clear] fournir un gros travail. Je laisse donc au musicographes le soin de compter les couleurs qui orientent la perle. Je passe vite d’une perle à l’autre, injuste et vrai’.

composition. He understood Stravinsky's observations, and the nature of the musical revolution that was under way.¹¹⁰

Cocteau acknowledged with confidence how important music was for him in a letter to his mother in 1921: 'musicians do for me what painters did for Apollinaire. It is a rare opportunity to be able to serve a cause'.¹¹¹ Cocteau's relationships with musicians were as complicated as those of Guillaume Apollinaire's with artist Giorgio De Chirico.¹¹² The analogy is important because, by referencing Apollinaire in this way, he highlights the significance of the musical influences 'both direct and indirect' that permeated his poetry, drama and imagery.¹¹³ Cocteau revealed, in no uncertain terms, his predominant interart orientation. He was attracted to and mixed with musicians in the same way that Apollinaire did with painters, but they were subsequently affected in very different ways. Apollinaire 'reacted against the *symbolist* preoccupation with music in favour of the more concrete attractions of the visual arts',¹¹⁴ whereas Cocteau was far more interested in the qualities of rhythm, sonority, structure and metaphor that he found in music.

Cocteau, Satie and *Les Six*

Cocteau used his friendship with Satie to stimulate his musical creativity. Cocteau heard Satie's *Morceaux en forme de poire* (1903) during a Ravel-Satie concert at the Salle Huyghens on 18 April 1916.¹¹⁵ The piece impressed him so much that he conceived of a ballet conceptualised on 'pieces in the shape of a pear'.¹¹⁶ Cocteau confirmed his admiration for Satie and their proposed collaboration, which was to become *Parade*

¹¹⁰ Scheikévitch, *Souvenirs*, 241–244.

¹¹¹ Jean Cocteau, *Lettres à sa mère: II 1919–1938*, ed. Jean Touzot and Pierre Chanel (Paris: Gallimard, 2007), 99: 'Les peintres ont fait pour Apollinaire ce que les musiciens font pour moi. Servir une cause est la chance la plus rare'.

¹¹² See Willard Bohn, 'Apollinaire and De Chirico: The Making of the Mannequins', *Comparative Literature* 27, no. 2 (Spring 1975), 153–165.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 153.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Volta, *Satie/Cocteau*, 20.

¹¹⁶ Ornella Volta, ed., *Satie Seen Through his Letters*, trans. Michael Bullock (London: Marion Boyars, 1994), 108.

(1917).¹¹⁷ In a letter, dated May 1916, he declared ‘...I love you and I love our project, already finished’.¹¹⁸ *Parade* was composed and performed during the First World War, at a time of strong anti-Germanic feeling.

Cocteau found another way to be more involved with music and maintain a position at the forefront of musical progress when he acted as promoter and mentor, together with Satie, for a group of French composers, *Les Nouveaux Jeunes*, that came to be known as *Le Groupe de Six*. They were Francis Poulenc (1899–1963), Darius Milhaud (1892–1974), Georges Auric (1899–1983), Arthur Honegger (1892–1955), Germaine Tailleferre (1892–1983) and Louis Durey (1888–1979). The musicians were first linked, as a group, in two *Comoedia* articles dated 16 and 23 January 1920 by critic Henri Collet. However, it was Jean Cocteau who instigated the introduction between Collet and the musicians in September 1919. In a letter to Collet, dated 27 January 1920, Cocteau wrote:

Most of the music of our group is unpublished. The best thing would be to put you in contact with the composers, which always gives the pieces a greater vivacity [...] Have you read my little book, *Le Coq et l’Arlequin*, a kind of hidden programme [...]? A lot of new works will be given this winter. I’m delighted to know that *Comoedia* will notice them as it should.¹¹⁹

Yet Barbara Kelly shows that *Les Six* enthusiastically participated in their own genesis before Collet’s articles.¹²⁰ Poulenc mentions ‘mes camarades du groupe’ (my friends in the group), referring to *Les Six*, in a letter to Paul Collaer (1891–1989) as early as

¹¹⁷ Cocteau asked Satie to write the music for *Parade* (1917) at a dinner given by Valentine Gross (1887–1968) in 1915.

¹¹⁸ Erik Satie, *Correspondance presque complète*, ed., Ornella Volta (Paris: Fayard/IMEC, 2003), 240: ‘Je vous aime et comme j’aime notre œuvre déjà faite’.

¹¹⁹ Letter from Jean Cocteau to Henri Collet, 27 September 1919, reproduced in Jean Roy, *Les Six: Poulenc, Milhaud, Honegger, Auric, Tailleferre, Durey* (Paris: Seuil, 1994), 7: ‘La plupart des œuvres musicales de notre groupe sont encore inédites. Le mieux sera de vous mettre en contact avec les musiciens, ce qui donne toujours aux articles un vivacité plus grande. [...] Avez-vous lu mon petit livre *Le Coq et l’Arlequin*, sorte de programme masqué [...] Cet hiver on entendra beaucoup d’œuvres nouvelles. Je suis enchanté de savoir que *Comoedia* en parlera comme il faut’.

¹²⁰ Barbara Kelly, *Tradition and Style in the Works of Darius Milhaud 1912–1939* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 4, n.12.

October 1919.¹²¹ Furthermore, Roy draws attention to Cocteau's dedication of a draft copy of *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* sent to Collet, which read 'Souvenir du chef d'orchestre, Jean Cocteau' (see Figure 2.1).¹²²

Figure 2.1 Title page of draft copy of *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*, sent to Henri Collet, signed by Cocteau as *chef d'orchestre* (1919).¹²³

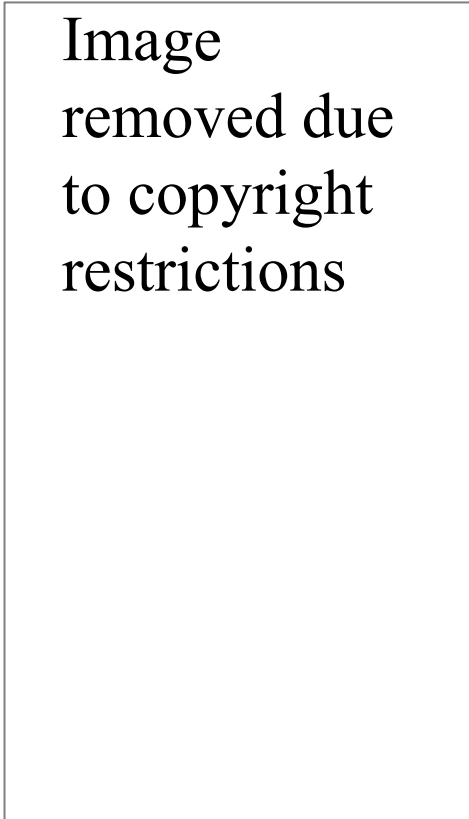


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Cocteau publicised himself in musical terms, as head of the orchestra. Poulenc confirmed Cocteau's managerial capacity; when asked by Rostand what Cocteau's role in *Les Six* had been, Poulenc replied: 'That of a miracle manager, and of a faithful and exquisite friend'.¹²⁴

Cocteau was universally accepted as an impresario and an ambassador for these young musicians. He catapulted them into a world of performances of this new music and encouraged them to participate in collaborations with painters of the time. He

¹²¹ Poulenc, *Correspondance* (1994), 10.

¹²² Roy, *Les Six*, 7.

¹²³ Reproduction in Jean Gallois, *Henri Collet: ou L'Espagne impériale* (Paris: Papillons, 2001), 44.

¹²⁴ Poulenc, *Entretiens*, 45: 'Celui d'un manager de génie, d'un ami fidèle et exquis'.

considered himself as the seventh of the group, shown in the drawing below (Figure 2.2).¹²⁵

Figure 2.2 Jean Cocteau drawing of *Les Six*, Georges, Francis, Darius, Louis, Arthur, Germaine, including himself. n.d.¹²⁶



Cocteau as Composer

As stated earlier, Cocteau does not fulfil the criteria of a composer in the strict literal sense of the word, as applied to music. Music has been described as ‘the science or art of ordering tones or sounds in succession, in combination, and in temporal relationships to produce a composition having unity and continuity’, and a composer is the person

¹²⁵ Haine, ‘Jean Cocteau,’ 267: ‘Il joue le rôle de véritable impresario, se fait leur porte-parole, les propulse dans un monde de spectacles d’avant-garde et les entraîne à collaborer à des œuvres communes auxquelles participent également les peintres de l’époque. A ce titre, Cocteau pourra plus tard se déclarer le ‘septième’ d’un Groupe’.

¹²⁶ Cocteau, *Écrits sur la musique*, 479: private collection.

who organises such a work.¹²⁷ Cocteau structured some of his poems in the same way. He organised syllable/word rhymes and rhythms to create sonorities in the same way that musical compositions are shaped. The same terminology used across different art forms can only be semantically valid based on a conceptual basis. In this case, I propose the concept of *poésie* here, which is understood through metaphor, to mitigate the semantic problems.

There are certain references that show Cocteau identified himself as a composer: two *chansons parlées* (spoken songs)—1. *Anna la bonne* (1934) and 2. *La Dame de Monte Carlo* (1934)—are described as ‘written for Marianne Oswald, music by the author’.¹²⁸ These songs were reproduced on *Cocteau Anthologie* (1997) alongside another song, also sung by Marianne Oswald (3. *Mes soeurs, n’aimez pas les marins*). The liner notes attribute both the words and the music of songs 1 and 3 to Jean Cocteau.¹²⁹ Cocteau referred to *Anna la bonne* and explained:

that is why I composed a spoken song [Anna la bonne]. Song is a genre. whether it be sung or recited, it bears neither reference to monologue nor to poetry. An article is a genre. It must resemble nothing else.¹³⁰

Some of these songs attracted other composers. *La Dame de Monte Carlo* was modified five times as three songs, one film and one piece for soprano and orchestra. *Anna la bonne* was reproduced in seven different versions, as two songs, one *mélodie*, two soundtracks, one show song, and one lyrical melodrama.¹³¹ The song versions varied from those for ‘chanson parlée’ (spoken song), to those for voice and piano,¹³² voice,

¹²⁷ See ‘music’ in *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, accessed 1 October 2019, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/music

¹²⁸ Jean Cocteau, *Théâtre de poche* (Monaco: Rocher, 1999), 112 and 118: ‘Ecrit pour Mademoiselle Marianne Oswald Musique de l’auteur’.

¹²⁹ CD liner notes from *Cocteau Anthologie*, FA 064, Frémeaux & Associés, 1997. 4 CD set: ‘Paroles et Musique de Jean Cocteau’.

¹³⁰ Cocteau, *Portraits-Souvenir*, 17: ‘C’est pourquoi j’ai composé une chanson parlée [Anna la bonne]. La chanson est un genre. Qu’on la chante ou qu’on la récite, elle ne relève ni du monologue, ni du poème: elle reste une chanson’.

¹³¹ David Gullentops and Malou Haine, ‘La pérennité musicale de l’œuvre musicale de Jean Cocteau’, in *Jean Cocteau: textes et musique*, ed. David Gullentops and Malou Haine (Sprimont: Mardaga, 2005), 9.

¹³² Malou Haine, ‘Catalogue des textes de Cocteau mis en musique’, in *Jean Cocteau: textes et musique*, ed. David Gullentops and Malou Haine (Sprimont: Mardaga, 2005), 192.

accordion and piano, and soprano and orchestra.¹³³ Did Cocteau's song versions suggest something that resonated with other composers? The texts are evocative which makes them particularly versatile in different musical settings.

Cocteau also composed the music for the song *Le général Clapier*, which was Auric's nickname for Cocteau. He wrote it whilst on holiday with Louise de Vilmorin (1907–1987) in 1946, and sang it as a duet with André, his hostess's brother.¹³⁴ There is some question as to whether Cocteau had any help with the musical transcription. It is possible that he was assisted by Jean Françaix (1912–1997), a French neoclassical composer, pianist, and orchestrator, known for his prolific output and vibrant style, who later set Cocteau's text *La Valse langoureuse* to music (1942).¹³⁵

Cocteau is explicit about his approach to composing. In his self-reflective *Paris-Midi* article of June 1935, *Pourquoi j'ai composé de la musique* (Why I composed music), he revealed how:

a real work, a *good work*, even a minor one, pre-exists. It's not a question of imagination but of discovery (if I'm not mistaken, *intervening* is the correct word). [...] I needed a refrain and a song for Marianne Oswald. Once discovered, the words are hummed and re-hummed until they cannot be presented in any other way and give the impression of being familiar'.¹³⁶

He describes his method of using the sonority in the text, through repetition, to expose its inherent melody, thus producing a song already formed. His use of the word *besoin* is significant because it reflects his need for a tune to match his words for the song. He takes the opportunity in this article to comment on the negative reception of the public, especially those musically informed (he calls them technicians) who do not accept the

¹³³ Ibid., 202; nos.63–65.

¹³⁴ Pierre Chanel and Jean Denoël, eds. *Cahiers Jean Cocteau, no. 5 Jean Cocteau et son théâtre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 34.

¹³⁵ Haine, 'Jean Cocteau,' 275.

¹³⁶ Jean Cocteau, 'Pourquoi j'ai composé de la musique, Paris-Midi', 4 June 1935, *Écrits sur la musique*, eds. David Gullentops and Malou Haine (Belgium: VRIN, 2016), 326: 'Une vraie œuvre, une bonne œuvre, fût-elle mineure, pré-existe. Il ne s'agit pas de l'imaginer, mais de la découvrir (si je me trompe, *invinere* serait le verbe exact). J'avais besoin d'un refrain et d'une chanson pour Marianne Oswald. Une fois découverts, c'est-à-dire une fois que les textes chantonnés et rechantonnés ne peuvent plus se présenter autrement à l'esprit et donnent l'illusion d'être déjà connus'.

song for what it is. By implication, his musical abilities are disparaged. It seems he improvised some songs at the piano. He stated that:

Having discovered my music, I entreated Oswald to bring her pianist, to whom I dictated note by note, and he inscribed them, but the notation remained a mystery for me. Then I left him free to orchestrate it, so long as he stayed true to my instructions.¹³⁷

He confesses here that he was unable to read the music. Gullentops and Haine detail how Marianne Oswald recorded with several pianists but named Henry de Monfried (1879–1974) as the one most likely to have produced the transcriptions.¹³⁸ Cocteau believed that he composed these songs. His choice of the word ‘composed’ is specific and reveals that he does not want to be bound by strict artistic boundaries, and that he wants to attribute musicality to his texts—they go beyond the characteristics of genre. In his usual way, he adapts the word to extend its meaning. He suggests that music can be represented by means other than notation. He uses devices such as syllabic and rhythmic patterns to create structural sonorities that contribute to the equivalent of musical form and correspondence in his texts.

Music in Cocteau’s Texts

Music in Cocteau’s texts can be considered in two ways: one, where the musical content is directly accessible and, two, where music is mediated or illustrated through *poésie* (see Chapter four). Cocteau has extensively talked and written directly about music.¹³⁹ *Le Coq et l’Arlequin* (1918), for which Cocteau is particularly known, is generally accepted as a musical manifesto. Its significance was extraordinary; mainly because it is a randomly structured and less-than-rigorous publication written by an author with no musical training. Fulcher suggests another reading of *Le Coq* where in reality he used the work to promote his personal agenda. She suggests that Cocteau used the rhetoric on

¹³⁷ Ibid., 325: ‘Ayant découvert mes musiques, je priai Oswald d’amener son pianiste, je les lui dictai note par note et il leur donna l’inscription qui me demeure une énigme. Ensuite je le laissai libre d’orchestrer a sa guise pourvu qu’il s’en tint à mes directives’.

¹³⁸ Ibid., n. 8.

¹³⁹ Cocteau, *Écrits sur la musique*.

music in the guise of his ‘contemporary version of the wartime chauvinistic discourse’, to justify his collaborative work *Parade*.¹⁴⁰

Both *Le Coq et l’Arlequin* and the earlier *Le Potomak* (1919) demarcated Cocteau’s use of written and visual texts as a basis for his interart and collaborative artistic process through *poésie*. *Le Coq et l’Arlequin* is a more recognisable, albeit unusually constructed, treatise on music, but it has no musical features. *Le Potomak* requires decoding in order to reveal its less-consistent and more-complex (or at least obscurely mediated) musical content and references.

Cocteau’s poem *Le Cap de Bonne-Espérance* (1915–1918) was an earlier example of his experiment with *poésie* in poetic form (*poésie de poésie*). *Poésie de musique* is evident as his musical orientation in the poem. The sonority of the text is transformed, and its spatial structure affects the prosody (described in greater detail in Chapter four). In an unpublished fragment of an article, Cocteau wrote ‘Tu as chanté *Le Cap de Bonne-Espérance*’ (you sang *Le Cap de Bonne-Espérance*).¹⁴¹ His choice of the verb *chanté*, meaning ‘sang’, is a strong indication that he considered the text as song rather than a poem.

In questioning the musicality of Cocteau’s texts, analogies can be found in Nicholas Cook’s theory that ‘poetry can be musical, not like music, but ready for music’.¹⁴² Cook makes the point that ‘music-ready text has music-shaped gaps’.¹⁴³ He quotes Schoenberg, who wrote that ‘the author of the text must save space on the surface for music to occupy, since music’s aim is to penetrate the depths’.¹⁴⁴ What is

¹⁴⁰ Fulcher, *The Composer*, 162.

¹⁴¹ Jean Cocteau, archives of Milly-la-Forêt, Fontainbleau (1993), in a notebook *Le Cap de Bonne-Espérance* (1915–1918), no catalogue number, as confirmed in email from Curator, Pascale Léautey and *Discours du grand sommeil* (n.d.).

¹⁴² Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, 105.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 105.

¹⁴⁴ Arnold Schoenberg, Foreword to *Texte* (Vienna and New York: Universal Edition, 1926), in Arnold Schoenberg, *Wassily Kandinsky: Letters, Pictures and Documents*, ed. Jelena Hahl-Koch, trans. John C. Crawford (London: Faber, 1984), 89.

meant by the terms ‘music-shaped gaps’ and ‘surface space for music’? These are both metaphors that describe a conceptual interface and an implied surface for an internal structure that allows for potential musico-poetic dialogue, analogous with *poésie*—both as a process and product. Many parameters may be relevant to the exchange, including prosody, rhythms, stresses, silences and melodic contours. In general terms, the episodic nature of any text provides spaces of indeterminacy which then allow for interpretation in the creative process. They might be actual spaces or pauses within the material, or they might be conceptual spaces that allow ‘the spectator to fill missing aspects.’¹⁴⁵ That something is missing gives the implication that a void needs filling. There is no such thing as an empty space, because a textual or musical pause is occupied by a visual or sonic imaginative process belonging to the author or spectator/listener. Spaces do not exist in isolation but are framed by other material, and this establishes a relativity between something tangible and what appears to be a space. So the process would be better described as an overlaying of the gaps with a personal interpretation, according to individual experience and context, rather than filling an emptiness.

What does Schoenberg mean by ‘music-shaped’? Is it a literal description referring to musical structure? Or does it relate to pitch, dynamics, timbre or duration, as characteristics of sound? Because the musical setting of a text is a construct, the resulting interpretation is more concerned with the relationship between the collection of sounds rather than the sounds themselves.¹⁴⁶

For Cocteau, the musical component was as important as the text. However, by incorporating jazz features into his poem, he was not looking for fusion or consonance between elements. He applied them across different art forms, through their commonalities, to establish a tension through dissonance—which then accentuates their

¹⁴⁵ Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, 105.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 105.

differences. Daniel Albright (1945–2015) cited ‘figures of dissonance... where inter-medial figments fail to fuse [and] remain in state of discord’.¹⁴⁷ Cocteau’s concept of asynchronicity represented the same process, whereby there is a tension created by dissimilar elements that activates the greatest expressive potential (see Chapter four). The artist Ferdinand Léger (1881–1955) similarly believed that ‘contrast equals dissonance and hence a maximum expressive effect’.¹⁴⁸ The idea of dissonance became a preoccupation for Cocteau and was central to his creative technique. He devised the term ‘accidental synchronisation’ in his later work with film (see Chapter three), particularly in terms of the image/music relationships. However, in retrospect, the idea is equally applicable to Cocteau’s experimentation in other art forms, including music. He came to detest synchronisation or consonance, in any form, because he believed it nullified any possible interaction between components.¹⁴⁹

Cook similarly identifies the specific feature of ‘contest’ as the most appropriate characteristic of his multimodal paradigm.¹⁵⁰ Contest functions in the same way as Albright’s ‘figure of dissonance’ and Cocteau’s asynchronisation. Cook uses the term ‘contest’ to emphasise the ‘sense in which different media are, so to speak, vying for the same terrain, each attempting to impose its own characteristics on each other’.¹⁵¹ There is a sense of tension as ‘each medium attempts to deconstruct the other in order to make space for itself’, in order to generate new meaning.¹⁵² Whilst there are certain analogous features in whichever medium, the interface between artforms is ‘characterised by

¹⁴⁷ Albright, *Panaesthetics*, 210.

¹⁴⁸ Fernand Léger, *Functions of Painting* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), 16.

¹⁴⁹ Cocteau, *Entretiens autour*, 85–86. Cocteau stated how: ‘Nothing seems more vulgar to me than musical synchronization in film. It’s even a pleonasm. A sort of glue in which everything sticks together and the interplay between instruments doesn’t quite happen. The only synchronization that pleases me is *accidental* synchronization, whose effectiveness has been proven to me through innumerable experiences’: ‘Rien ne me semble plus vulgaire que le synchronisme musical dans les films. C’est encore du pleonasm. Une sorte de glu ou tout se colle et où le jeu (j’emploie ce mot comme pour du bois qui joue) ne saurait se produire. Le seul synchronisme qui me plaise est le synchronisme accidentel dont d’innombrables expériences m’ont prouvé l’efficacité’.

¹⁵⁰ Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, 103.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 106.

contest',¹⁵³ and is inherently dynamic, or (in other words) the most creatively active arrangement. However, the various elements retain their individual characteristics because 'music says what words cannot, and words what music cannot', each medium completes the deficit in the other.¹⁵⁴

Helen Abbott proposes a different perspective on the interaction between music and poetry. She states that 'The process of give-and-take between poetry and music enacts the process of exchanging voices in a particularly profound way (since poetry hankers after music's abstraction and emotive force, and music hankers after poetry's meanings)'.¹⁵⁵

Cook suggests an alternative perspective by stating that 'each art makes explicit the dimension that the other leaves implied'.¹⁵⁶ So, with his musical sensibility, Cocteau is able to highlight the implied musical dimension whilst composing his texts. On the one hand, Cook states that the arts complement each other by communicating in ways specific to each form but, on the other, proposes a reciprocal interplay between the explicit and implicit elements. That is, one art form highlights the hidden facet of the other. Is Cook describing two different processes, or alternative features of the same activity? In reality, no one action occurs in isolation and what is more likely is that both exist simultaneously to a greater or lesser extent.

Music is present, in a variety of ways, in about a hundred of Cocteau's poems, more than half of which were published before 1912.¹⁵⁷ It is evident that at this stage he attempted to impart musicality to his texts without any musical collaborations.¹⁵⁸ Other texts are inherently musical because they include aspects of music directly or indirectly.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 103.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 119.

¹⁵⁵ Helen Abbott, *Between Baudelaire and Mallarmé: Voice, Conversation and Music* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 9.

¹⁵⁶ Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, 120.

¹⁵⁷ Haine, 'Jean Cocteau,' 258.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

They are permeated with musical qualities and may structurally imitate music. Cocteau even wrote some poems on manuscript paper (see Figures 2.3 and 2.4).¹⁵⁹

Cocteau drew some *Eugènes* as well and created an embryonic example of *poésie* with its intersection of image, music and text. It can be argued that the mere inclusion of manuscript paper does not necessarily make a musical contribution to the draft, but it does evoke music in a virtual way—through imagination.

In his notes (Figure 2.4), Cocteau included other drawings amongst the text. He drew treble clefs and four semiquavers (drawn back to front) with unfilled note heads. A bit further along the stave, he crossed out some other notation that looks like ‘filled in’ note heads. Cocteau may have planned the unfilled beamed ones and designated them as an A minor⁷ chord. The significance of the chord is not apparent. Cocteau has also attempted a key signature near the crossed-out note heads, but the placement of the sharp signs is incorrect. There are sketches towards the bottom which are Picasso-like, and then a train with carriages.

Again, Cocteau attempts to link the suggestion of music to the visual within the text. They are very simple techniques but confirm Cocteau’s persistent transdisciplinary process as an example of *poésie*, which he continued to experiment and develop. At the time he was writing *Le Cap de Bonne-Espérance*, Cocteau wanted to liberate himself from the constraints of fixed form poetry, as he wrote in the preface of the poem ‘freeing yourself from the fixed form (without abandoning oneself to the vague rhythms of free verse) forces the poet to an individual method.’¹⁶⁰ His attitude to rhythm was also influenced by his experience of a jazz dance performance, *Laisser tomber* (Drop it), at

¹⁵⁹ Lynn Van de Wiele, ‘Jean Cocteau, la musique et le dessin: un rôle de composition’, in *Jean Cocteau: textes et musique*, ed. David Gullentops and Malou Haine (Sprimont: Mardaga, 2005), 133, n.11.

¹⁶⁰ Preface to *Le Cap de Bonne-Espérance* in Jean Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques complètes*, ed. Michel Décaudin (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), 6: ‘se libérer de la forme fixe (à moins qu’on ne s’abandonne aux rythmes vagues du vers libre) oblige le poète à une méthode individuelle’.

the Casino de Paris in 1917.¹⁶¹ It was organised by the producer Jacques-Charles (1882–1971).¹⁶² The outcome was that Cocteau spatially manipulated the text, in order to subvert the scansion of it, and create a visual component in the layout (which is further discussed in Chapter four). In the musical context, a definite aural dimension is introduced through the disruptions in the design. The layout forces the reader into a different reading of the poem each time, and results in irregular, unanticipated rhythms. The blank spaces can also be considered equivalent to silences in music—and they are as important. The arrangement of the poem is a visual representation of such irregular rhythmicity.¹⁶³ His clever compositional technique uses rhythm to structure the poem and demonstrates the transdisciplinary component of *poésie*, whereby he makes poetry assert both art and music.¹⁶⁴ He used other structural devices in a musical context, as with the three poems, *Avec des si...* (1958), *Cérémonial espagnol de phénix* (1960) and *La partie d'échecs* (1960). They are divided into named sections that imitate those found in classical musical form. The first title refers to ‘si’ the seventh note in the solfège scale and contains performance indications as well. It is set out as follows:

¹⁶¹ Cocteau, *Le Coq* (1979), 53: ‘c’est, par exemple, une certaine danse américaine que j’ai vue au Casino de Paris’.

¹⁶² Jacques-Charles, *Cent ans de music-hall, histoire générale du music-hall, de ses origines à nos jours, en Grande-Bretagne, en France et aux U.S.A* (Paris: Jeheber, 1956), 30.

¹⁶³ See Gilbert Pestureau, ‘Le Cap de Bonne-Espérance: audace, hélice, et jazz’, in *Jean Cocteau Aujourd’hui: Actes du colloque de Montpellier*, ed. Pierre Caizergues (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1992), 25–34.

¹⁶⁴ See Chapter four for further discussion on *poésie* in the context of one art form working as another, after interart theory as discussed in Dayan, *Art as Music*, 3.

*Avec des si...*¹⁶⁵
Essai d'une transmutation verbale
des chiffres en nombres sur un thème connu
À la mémoire d'Anton Webern

PREMIER MOUVEMENT [6 verses]
(*andante cantabile*).

DEUXIÈME MOUVEMENT [4 verses]
(*allegro vivace*).

TROISIÈME MOUVEMENT [7 verses]
(*minuetto–allegretto*).

QUATRIÈME MOUVEMENT [6 verses]
(*finale, allegro, molto*).

ALÉA [3 verses]
(*largo facultatif*).

*Ce largo facultatif est dédié à la mémoire d'Arnold Schönberg.*¹⁶⁶

Cocteau noted in his journal, *Le Passé défini*, that he decided to write *Avec des si...* in memory of Anton Webern (1883–1945) during a concert he had attended at the Salle Pleyel on 11 October 1957.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 982–985: 'Essay of a verbal transformation of letters and numbers on a known theme. In memory of Anton Webern'.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 985: 'This optional *largo* is dedicated to the memory of Arnold Schoenberg'.

¹⁶⁷ Jean Cocteau, *Le Passé défini*, vol. 5 (1956–1957) (Paris: Gallimard, 2006), 734: 'Pendant le concert de vendredi [...] Je compte écrire au *Cap*, un poème, intitulé: 'Avec des Si' et le dédier à la mémoire de Webern'.

Figure 2.3 Fragment of Cocteau's handwritten extract of *Le Potomak* on manuscript paper (n.d.).¹⁶⁸

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

¹⁶⁸ Fonds Madame Louis Solvay at Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique 1141/1.

Figure 2.4 Fragment of Cocteau's handwritten notes of *Le Potomak* on manuscript paper (n.d.).¹⁶⁹

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

¹⁶⁹ Fonds Madame Louis Solvay at Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique 1141/1.

In her notes on Cocteau's *Paraprosodies* series, Monique Bourdin refers to a facsimile of his handwritten sketch of *Avec des si...* showing a single verse *Aléa* (see Figure 2.5).¹⁷⁰ The document reveals the poet's many musical aspirations. There is a subtitle, marked 'for flute and viola'. Cocteau annotates the margins and interweaves multiple strands of meaning in so doing. Cocteau specified two musical themes. The first—a quotation, *Le sort en est jeté* (literally, 'the die is cast')—is taken from the title of the first Act, *Le sort en est jeté* (The Spell),¹⁷¹ of Tchaikovsky's (1840–1893) ballet, *The Sleeping Beauty* (1890). The indirect reference is to Julius Caesar, who supposedly uttered the Latin proverb 'Alea jacta est' (The die is cast).¹⁷² Cocteau adopts the French equivalent as his title in the final part of the composition. On an artistic level he uses musical structural devices and musical terminology. He also cross-references musical works as a method of activating *poésie*, so as to assert the musicality of his text. I claim that, for Cocteau, the poem represented so much more than text, because he really believed he had composed his poem as music. It is questionable whether it is sufficient for Cocteau to ascribe musical terminology in the structure of his poem and liken it to a musical score to make it so. He also used the title *Le sort en est jeté*, with all its hidden connotations, to make an obscure and personal reflection that ultimately needs decoding. He introduced yet another layer of associations, for greater elemental dialogue within the work, because he favoured multiplicity within a work. The significance of these multiple relationships will become more apparent in the context of *poésie* as an integral part of Cocteau's creative method (as I show in Chapter four).

The second song mentioned in the draft is *Au clair de la lune, mon ami Pierrot*. The last line of *Aléa* describes how 'Pierrot [is] sprinkled by some galaxy'.¹⁷³ Cocteau

¹⁷⁰ Monique Bourdin in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 1790.

¹⁷¹ See facsimile in Jean-Jacques Kihm, *Cocteau* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), opposite 177.

¹⁷² The Latin form, 'Alea jacta est' was used by Julius Caesar in 49 B.C., before crossing the Rubicon River. It meant that the situation was left to chance and that there was no turning back. Later, it came to mean that there was a risk for someone who rushed into things to change his or her life.

¹⁷³ *Avec des si* (1960) in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 985: 'Pierrot enfariné par quelque galaxie'.

alludes to Schoenberg's well-known composition *Pierrot lunaire* and, indirectly, reinforces his overt dedication to Schoenberg. Two other poems, part of the same collection, *Cérémonial espagnol de phénix* (1961) and *La partie d'échecs* (1961), are similarly organised in classical musical form.¹⁷⁴

The number of verses in each song does not appear to have any musical significance,¹⁷⁵ but Cocteau emphasised song aspect when he used two lines from a 1930 flamenco song, *No preguntes por saber* (Do not ask to know), as part of his dedication.

Cérémonial espagnol de phénix (1961)¹⁷⁶

OUVERTURE [7 verses]
PREMIER MOUVEMENT [12 verses]
CADENCE [6 verses]
DEUXIÈME MOUVEMENT [3 verses]
TROISIÈME MOUVEMENT [5 verses]
QUATRIÈME MOUVEMENT [6 verses]
CINQUIÈME MOUVEMENT [7+ 2 verses]
FINALE [8 verses]

La Partie d'échecs (1961)¹⁷⁷

OUVERTURE [6 verses]
PREMIER MOUVEMENT [3 verses]
DEUXIÈME MOUVEMENT [2 verses]
CADENCE [1 verse]
TROISIÈME MOUVEMENT [3 verses]
FINALE [3 verses]

He completed the text/music/image triad with a pen and ink drawing of *La partie d'échecs* (n.d.), showing Jean Hugo and Pierre Colle playing chess,¹⁷⁸ which acts as a more realistic representation of the subject matter (Figure 2.6).

¹⁷⁴ These poems are dedicated to Concha Garcia Lorca (n.d.), sister of Spanish poet, Federico Garcia Lorca (1898–1936) and friend of Cocteau.

¹⁷⁵ I use the word song, rather than poem, to be consistent in my hypothesis of the musicality of Cocteau's texts, as compositions.

¹⁷⁶ *Cérémonial espagnol de phénix* (1961) in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 1003–1010.

¹⁷⁷ *La partie d'échecs* (1961) in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 1011–1013.

¹⁷⁸ Jean Cocteau, *La partie d'échecs* (n.d.), pen and ink drawing, accessed 2 February 2019, www.artnet.com/artists/jean-cocteau/la-partie-d%C3%A9checs-jean-hugo-et-pierre-colle-0AG-biDOo7leTw8_INixiA2

Figure 2.5 Facsimile of Cocteau's handwritten sketch of *Avec des si* (1960).¹⁷⁹

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

¹⁷⁹ See facsimile in Kihm, *Cocteau*, opposite 177.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Cocteau used other techniques to satisfy his musical orientation. He described his early collection of poems *Le Prince frivole* (1910) in musical terms, as confirmed by the contents listing of *Les chansons du Prince frivole* (the songs of the *Frivolous Prince*, see Figure 2.7). There is no doubt that he considered his poems as more significant than written words: he intended them to have musical connotations and associations for the reader. Indeed, it is significant that Cocteau has chosen not to include any of his own writing in this first song but, instead, quotes Voltaire and Lord Byron. The musical component consists of a three-bar extract from the first movement (*Andante grazioso*) of Mozart's Piano Sonata no. 11 (K.331). This is featured on the cover of the book, as well as on its fly leaf beneath the title (see Figure 2.7).

The Mozart quotation is also featured in the song, shown below (Figure 2.8). The score fragment has a clear visual and aural impact. The aural part functions conceptually—that is, as part of the reader's experience—whilst the evocation of music occurs in the imagination.

¹⁸⁰ Cocteau, *La partie d'échecs*.

Figure 2.7 *Le Prince Frivole* (1910), contents page listing *Songs of the Frivolous Prince*.¹⁸¹

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Toute une époque includes some direct references to musical instruments, an orchestra, and dances, the waltz, polka and contradance.¹⁸² (See annotated diagram: verse one, lines one, three and four, and verse three, line one, and the final line of the text, *au solo du trombone*, Figure 2.9.)¹⁸³ Again, I re-iterate that Cocteau's insertion of various musical references in his texts do not necessarily make them musical. They do show, however, the extent to which music formed an integral part of his creativity.

Some collection titles have a self-evident musical perspective. These include *Les Vocalises* (1913); *Tambour* (1919) (Drum); *Les Tambours qui parlent* (1941) (The

¹⁸¹ Fonds Jean Cocteau, l'Université Paul-Valéry, Montpellier III, associés au programme *Cocteau & Cie* du centre de recherche Rirra21 (équipe d'accueil 4209), accessed, 10 July 2018, <http://cocteau.biu-montpellier.fr/index.php?id=18>

¹⁸² *Contradanse* is a French form of country dance which originated in the eighteenth century and is related to the quadrille.

¹⁸³ The four-bar musical extract is by Reynaldo Hahn, who composed the music for another of Cocteau's verse texts, *La Patience de Penelope*.

Speaking Drums); *Plain-chant* (1923); *Opéra*; *Opéra des Dieux* (1927) (Opera of the Gods); and, *Le Requiem* (1962).¹⁸⁴

Figure 2.8 Fly leaf for *Le Prince Frivole* (1910), including an extract from Mozart Piano Sonata no.11 (K. 331).¹⁸⁵

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Cocteau wrote *Opéra* and *Opéra des Dieux* during the same year that Stravinsky asked him to write the libretto for *Oedipus Rex*, their opera-oratorio after Sophocles. Cocteau may have been highlighting the significance of his operatic collaboration with Stravinsky when he named the two poem collections.

¹⁸⁴ See Haine, 'Jean Cocteau,' 260; and Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 1453, 467, 622, 355, 517, 575 and 1029 respectively.

¹⁸⁵ Fonds Jean Cocteau, *Cocteau & Cie.*

Figure 2.9 *Toute une époque* (1910), with musical extract by Reynaldo Hahn (1874–1947).¹⁸⁶

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Other titles mention musical ornaments, such as *Trilles* (1925), *Appogiatures*, and *En marge d'Appogiatures* (1953).¹⁸⁷ It is unclear why Cocteau chose to spell *Appogiatures*¹⁸⁸ with only one 'g'. Perhaps it was intended to differentiate from the musical term *appoggiatura*, or possibly to be ambiguous and impose his own connotation.¹⁸⁹ It is not a common word for a non-practicing musician to use so it could

¹⁸⁶ *Toute une époque* (*Le Prince Frivole*) in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 1357.

¹⁸⁷ Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 299 and 787, respectively.

¹⁸⁸ *Appogiatures* in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 817–831.

¹⁸⁹ 'Appoggiatura' is defined as 'a grace note which delays the next note of the melody, taking half or more of its written time value. See 'appoggiatura' in *Lexico Dictionary*, accessed 22 February 2020, www.lexico.com/definition/appoggiatura

have been a misspelling. He also gave the *Appogiatures* series a structure comparable to the musical ternary form.¹⁹⁰

The *Appogiatures* series comprises fifty-one poems in three sections. The first forty-two, and final eight take the form of prose poems, and are divided by a single poem, *Prose en vers*.¹⁹¹ This is arranged in the manner suggested by the title; that is, it is written in verse form. Cocteau places *Appogiatures* before a further collection, *En marge d'Appogiatures* (at the margin of *Appogiatures*).¹⁹² He uses the technique to make a literary equivalent of the grace note; as an embellishment to the longer second poem series. There are two ways to view the structure of *En marge d'Appogiatures*. The first is to consider its ternary shape based on content. The first and third sections frame a short middle section, referencing the painters Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), Pierre-Augustus Renoir (1841–1919) and Vincent Van Gogh (1853–1890), as an interart intersection. My second way to view the structure is based on poetic forms, and this results in different sonorities when reading. Cocteau introduces a spatial component with a page layout determined by verse or prose text and a sonorous component that emerges because of the different versions. Accordingly, I have identified three sections, divided as follows:

¹⁹⁰ The ternary form, in music, contains three sections, A B A where each section is complete in itself, but the B section is in a different key. The third section is normally a literal or a varied repeat of the first. The form has particular associations with the eighteenth-century da capo aria, also A B A, but for a vocal composition.

¹⁹¹ *Prose en vers* in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 811–812.

¹⁹² *En marge d'Appogiatures* in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 817–831.

Section A

Two poems in verse
four prose poems
one poem in verse
two prose poems
three poems in verse

transition

one poem in mixed form consisting of three sections prose, preceding three verses

Section B

one prose poem
one poem in verse
three prose poems are dedicated to painters, Picasso, Renoir and Van Gogh

[re]transition¹⁹³

one poem in verse dedicated to Picasso

Section A¹

Nine poems in verse

There does not seem to be any regularity or significance in the numbers of either poems, or verses within those poems. However, consistency or predictability was never a feature in Cocteau's works. In fact, Cocteau chose to be ambiguous or enigmatic wherever possible, as a feature of *poésie*. Gullentops points out that 'Cocteau composed *Appogiatures* at the same time as he was re-editing *Opéra*, which prompted the critics to connect the two works'.¹⁹⁴ His choice of the word 'composed' rather than 'wrote' is significant, as it indicates how others also associated the poet with music.

Cocteau introduced what he regarded as musicality into his writings by as many direct, indirect and metaphorical means as possible. He placed fragments of musical notation and scores in his texts as direct musical references. He represented music indirectly using names and images of composers, instruments or musical works, in his poems and drawings. Cocteau paid homage to various composers with different

¹⁹³ The use of the term 'retransition' in a non-musical context may be confusing because there is obviously tonal transition in text.

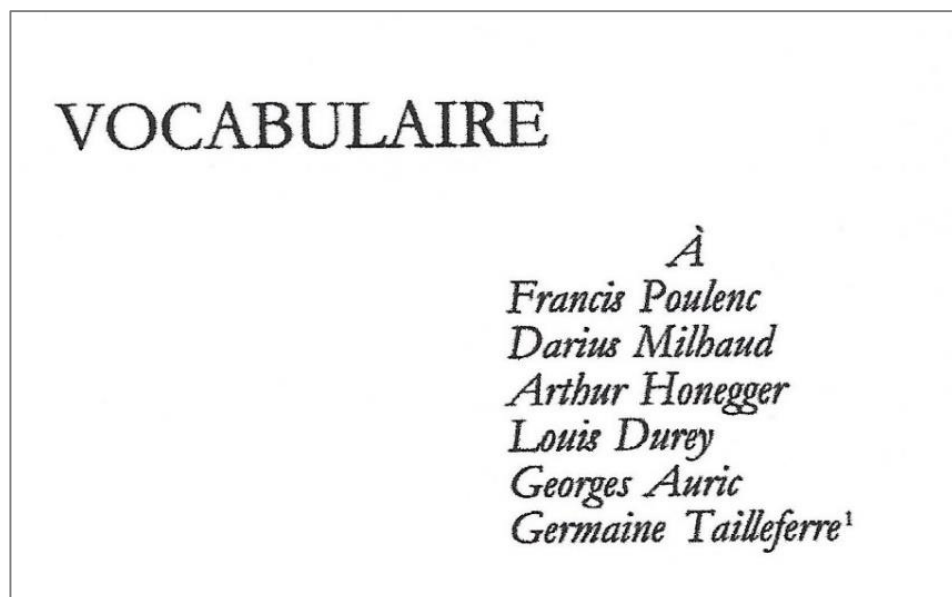
¹⁹⁴ David Gullentops in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 1748: 'le fait que Cocteau compose *Appogiatures* au moment où il réédite *Opéra*, a incité la critique à établir une relation entre les deux ouvrages'.

poems.¹⁹⁵ Wagner is cited in *Le Casque de Lohengrin (Allégories, 1941)*.¹⁹⁶ There is an irony that comes about through Cocteau's reference to Wagner because of his critical reaction to his music in *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*.¹⁹⁷ He showed his regard and friendship for *Les Six* with his dedication of *Vocabulaire* (1922), as shown below (Figure 2.10). Cocteau also used five of the *Les Six* names in the first line of an untitled poem in the *Plain-chant* (1923) collection. He wrote:

Auric, Milhaud, Poulenc, Tailleferre, Honegger
*I put your bouquet in the water of the same vase ...*¹⁹⁸

Cocteau dedicated the poem to them and simultaneously declared himself as their promoter.

Figure 2.10 Dedication to *Les Six* in *Vocabulaire* (1922).¹⁹⁹



The number of his poems with musical connections is evidence of how important music was for him. He managed to introduce aspects of scores and notation

¹⁹⁵ For example, *À Mendelssohn (Lampe d'Aladin, 1909)*; *À la mémoire de Claude Debussy (En marge de Vocabulaire, 1922)*; *Hommage à Igor Stravinski*; and *Sur une statuette de Paganini (En marge de Clair-obscur, 1954)*; as well as *Hommage à Erik Satie (Embarcadères, 1918)*. See Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 1277, 350, 949, 899 and 135, respectively.

¹⁹⁶ *Casque de Lohengrin (Allégories, 1941)* in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 643.

¹⁹⁷ David Gullentops in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 1617, n.1.

¹⁹⁸ *Plain-chant* (1923) in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 370: 'Auric, Milhaud, Poulenc, Tailleferre, Honegger. J'ai mis votre bouquet dans l'eau du même vase [...].'

¹⁹⁹ *Vocabulaire* (1922) in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 293.

despite a lack of technical knowledge. He structured some poems as musical compositions. His use of musical vocabulary—such as trills, appoggiaturas, cadences and performance instructions—showed an intuitive understanding of the idiom. The sonority of his poetry, by its very nature, was demonstrably musical in form, rhythm and prosody. Cocteau often described piano playing and focussed on agile fingers dancing on the keyboard as a recurring image. In *Danse de Brahms* (an unpublished early poem),²⁰⁰ he vividly describes Brahms's (1833–1897) fingers on the white keyboard:

*Vos doigts sur le clavier blanc
 Quand nous avons joint nos bouches
 Vos doigts sur le clavier blanc
 Vos doigts fins qui s'effarouchent
 Ont cessé leur jeu tremblant*

*C'était je crois un andante
 Qui s'envolait sous vos doigts
 C'était je crois un andante
 Mais n'en sais trop rien ma foi
 Votre main était tremblante*

Your fingers on the white keyboard
 When we joined our mouths
 Your fingers on the white keyboard
 Thin fingers that scare
 Have stopped their shaking game

It was I believe an andante
 That flew under your fingers
 It was I believe an andante
 but do not know too much my faith
 Your hand was trembling

In the same collection, two other poems relate to the piano. He makes a further reference to a pianist's fingers in *Piano*, this time mentioning Robert Schumann (1810–1856):

*Pour chanter le reflet de tes doigts sur les touches,
 Lorsque l'air de Schumann semble naître de toi...*²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ *Danse de Brahms* (n.d.) in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 1514–1515.

²⁰¹ *Piano* (n.d.) in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 1528.

To sing the reflection of your fingers on the keys,
When Schumann's melody seems to be born of you

The sheer quantity of Cocteau's poems that were set to music by various composers confirms the consistent and recognisable musicality of his verse. His poems, as well as his musical writings, demonstrate his profound musical sensibility and orientation. He showed himself open to all kinds of music from classical to popular, from dance to jazz and music hall.²⁰² Haine goes as far as to describe him as 'un mélomane averti',²⁰³ that is to say, 'a connoisseur of music'—someone passionate and knowledgeable about music. Cocteau made music a constant presence around him and made it a part of his artistic activities. It is in this context that his collaborative relationship with Georges Auric will now be examined. I have shown how fundamental music was to Cocteau's artistic practice and Chapter three aims to explore how important *poésie* was to Auric's transdisciplinary compositional process, thus shaping the *Huit Poèmes* as their first collaboration. Cocteau became more specific with musical details in *Le Quinzième Prélude de Chopin (Le Prince frivole* series, 1910).²⁰⁴ In the last line he describes his very visceral experience of music, when he remarks upon 'Le lancinant, l'impitoyable la bémol' (the pitiless pulsating A flat). His musical preference for Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms and Chopin is evident from his poems. Although numerous examples have been identified here, the list is by no means complete; however, they do give a substantial record of the musical references and content that permeate Cocteau's written texts.

Another noteworthy aspect of Cocteau's musicality is revealed in the musical salons that he organised, from 1908, at his rented pied-à-terre in the hotel annexe on rue de la Varenne, where he entertained admirers and celebrities.²⁰⁵ He immortalised these

²⁰² See 'Mes disques préférés' in Jean Touzot, *Jean Cocteau: Qui êtes-vous?* (Paris: La Manufacture, 1990), 291–292.

²⁰³ Haine, 'Jean Cocteau,' 262.

²⁰⁴ *Le Quinzième Prélude de Chopin (Le Prince frivole*, 1910) in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 1359.

²⁰⁵ David Gullentops in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 1837, n.1.

soirées with the lines ‘Te souviens-tu du soir où nous avons chanté?’ (Do you remember the night we sang?) from *Vœu* (*La Lampe d’Aladin*, 1908),²⁰⁶ and with ‘Sous les doigts furtifs ... la, la, si, do, ré/Le clavier luisait de reflets qui bougent’ (Under the furtive fingers... la, la, ti, do, re/The keyboard shone with moving reflections’, in *Souvenir de l’Ermitage* (*La Lampe d’Aladin* 1908).²⁰⁷ His lines evoke a visual image of the keyboard and the sounds of the notes of the solfege scale.

In *Les Sonnets de l’Hôtel Biron* (*Le Prince frivole*, 1910)²⁰⁸ he wrote ‘I still hear Debussy’s *passepied*; He played it on the piano as though caressing’.²⁰⁹ A reference to Reynaldo Hahn (1874–1947) playing and singing is featured in the first verse of *Pour Reynaldo Hahn* (*Poèmes épars de jeunesse*, 1916), see Figure 2.11.²¹⁰ My annotation of the poem shows that Debussy (1890–1905) played his *Suite Bergamesque*, and that Reynaldo Hahn sang *L’Offrande* (a 1903, poem by Verlaine), *Chanson d’Automne* (1891) and some of Chabrier’s *mélodies*.

²⁰⁶ *Vœu*, (*La Lampe d’Aladin*, 1909) in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 1300.

²⁰⁷ *Souvenir de l’Ermitage* (*La Lampe d’Aladin*, 1909) in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 1273–1274.

²⁰⁸ *Les Sonnets de l’Hôtel Biron* (*Le Prince frivole*, 1910) in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 1378.

²⁰⁹ ‘J’entends encore un *passepied* de Debussy: Il le jouait au piano comme on caresse’. Cocteau referred to the *Passepied* in Claude Debussy, *Suite Bergamasque* (Paris: Fromont, 1905). *Passepied* is a lively dance in triple metre, popular in France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

²¹⁰ *Pour Reynaldo Hahn* (*Poèmes de jeunesse épars*, 1916) in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 1476: ‘Reynaldo, you sang languid and disturbing Venetian tunes, with a cigarette in your mouth. And your supple fingers, flying from key to key. There were ten white dancers on an ivory road’.

Figure 2.11 *Pour Reynaldo Hahn (Poèmes de jeunesse épars, 1916)*.²¹¹

Reynaldo, vous chantiez, cigarette à la bouche,
Des airs vénitiens langoureux et troublants,
Et vos doigts souples, qui volaient de touche en touche
Sur un chemin d'ivoire, étaient dix danseurs blancs.

Puis c'était, brusque choc contre le doux mystère,
Hymne de Chabrier pour esquif ou bateau,
Un large embarquement de Montmartre à Cythère
Des tam-tams de Chéret aux bonbons de Watteau.

Enfin — *l'Offrande* — ou bien encore — *Chanson d'automne*,
Et, fantômes rôdeurs du vieux parc qui s'étonne,
Pour la première fois ivres d'un charme tel,

Sous les sombres tilleuls de l'étrange domaine
Venaient, pour vous entendre, aux vitres de l'hôtel,
Moris, Lauzun, Biron et Madame Du Maine.

Cocteau expressed his assiduous devotion to music through linguistic devices such as musical metaphors. It is not surprising that metaphor formed an integral part of his creative method and this includes musical metaphor. In his journal, *Passé défini*, he wrote: 'My limits. There is a sharp point that I cannot achieve, a high note that I cannot reach. If I tried, it would make me frown'.²¹² During a creative hiatus, he compared himself to an 'out-of-tune guitar, with heavy strings. They even hear my fatigue'.²¹³

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Jean Cocteau, *Le Passé défini*, vol. 1 (1951–1952) (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), 42: 'Mes limites. Il y a un point aigu que je ne peux pas obtenir, une note haute que je ne peux pas donner. Si j'essayais, j'obtiendrais une grimace'.

²¹³ Jean Cocteau, *Le Passé défini*, vol. 2 (1953) (Paris: Gallimard, 2011), 329: 'Ma fatigue est si profonde qu'il m'est impossible d'écrire. Toute la guitare est désaccordée. Toutes les cordes pendent. Même m'entendre me fatigue'.

Musicality in Cocteau's Drawings

Cocteau introduced musical references and symbols into his drawings in many ways, as part of his creative practice. Cocteau united music and drawing as powerful artistic catalysts, connected by the same creative motivation through *poésie*.²¹⁴ His ambitions in this context were not necessarily realised, because he was not always able to put his ideas into practice. But as examples of *poésie* in practice, they are less mediated. He reinforced his visualisations of music in his drawings and caricatures with musical references. He drew instruments, composers, dancers and other personalities associated with music. The drawing below (Figure 2.12) depicts Stravinsky as composer and pianist, playing his *Le Sacre du printemps*, as identified by the title. Cocteau's drawing illustrates the musical process from creation to performance. The characters behind Stravinsky represent the audience. His method of drawing transforms the static illustration and evokes movement away from the composer—perhaps reminiscent of film animation. Their expressions are dejected and document the shocked reception of the work. They appear to have turned their backs on the figures in the far distance which represent the performers. Cocteau has used flowing lines for Stravinsky's figure, in contrast with the angular and repetitive lines of the others. These lines are a direct visual representation of the strident, repeated rhythms which shocked the audience at the premier, but which were so innovative and characteristic of the piece. Cocteau has translated musical characteristics into visual form and made them integral to his drawing as his way of asserting musicality. He uses his musical representations, not only to incorporate music into his *poésie graphique*, but also to record significant musical moments.

²¹⁴ Van de Wiele, 'Jean Cocteau,' 133.

Figure 2.12 Memories of the Ballets Russes: Stravinsky at the piano, playing *Le Sacre du Printemps*.²¹⁵

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

He illustrated several other important musical associations, including some with *Les Six* (see Figure 2.13, below). Here, Cocteau characterised himself as the photographer—that is, the instigator—of the group (all of whom are passive participants). It is a visual representation of his role as mentor of the young composers, from right to left: Germaine Tailleferre, Francis Poulenc, Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud, and Georges Auric (Louis Durey is absent).

Figure 2.14 is a photographic image of the same group. The image shows an important musical moment for *Les Six*, and Cocteau provides his own contribution to this with the drawing. He visually expressed his musicality with his drawings of many other composers, performers and musical instruments (including the cello and guitar). Furthermore, Cocteau immortalised Auric at the piano in another drawing (Figure 2.15). This image symbolises the importance of Auric both as a musician and as his long-term collaborator.

²¹⁵ Cocteau, *Écrits sur la musique*, 261.

Figure 2.13 *At the time of Les Six* (n.d.), private collection.²¹⁶



Figure 2.14 *Les Six* and Jean Cocteau on the Eiffel Tower (1920).²¹⁷

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

²¹⁶ Ibid., 180.

²¹⁷ Anonymous photograph (Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Fonds Francis Poulenc), in *Jean Cocteau: Sur le Fil du siècle, L'Exposition*, 30.

Figure 2.15 Auric at the piano.²¹⁸



Figure 2.16 Christian Chevallier, *Christian Chevallier prince de jazz français*, 1956, Record sleeve, Columbia.²¹⁹



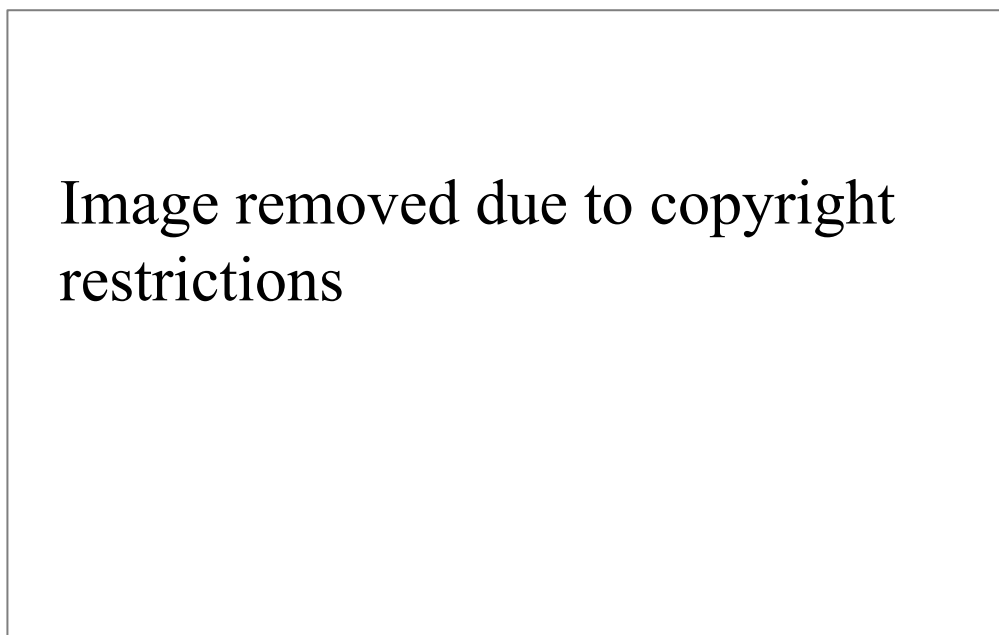
Cocteau also designed record covers as another musical component of his art. The cover-image shown above (Figure 2.16) is not particularly musical but illustrates his affinity for Jazz. He made observations on past composers, such as Mozart, through his drawing (see Figure 2.17, below). The image is a visual comment on the ideas

²¹⁸ Private collection (n.d.), Cocteau, *Écrits sur la musique*, 219.

²¹⁹ Christian Chevallier (1930–2008), French songwriter, arranger, and jazz orchestra leader. See Cocteau, *Écrits sur la musique*, 523.

represented in the musical manifesto, *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*, with regards to new French music that broke away from the Austro-German musical tradition. However, it is a satirical snapshot: Mozart is playing to lavishly dressed men and women who are not overtly attentive or enjoying the music.

Figure 2.17 Mozart at the piano.²²⁰



Cocteau is derisory, yet ambiguous, with his comment that:

As far as Mozart is concerned, his enchantment may escape the cruel style of our time, but the era will have a hard time sealing all the openings where this enchantment penetrates and impregnates us with a delicious poison... The young man's legs are now long enough for his feet to reach the pedals. He is no longer a true prodigy, a monkey on an organ. He has nothing left. Nothing but genius.²²¹

He suggests that the music of Mozart is as destructive as poison. In the article featuring this Mozart drawing, Cocteau commented on the way music, especially jazz, affects us.

He wrote that:

In music, things do not follow the same path [as painting]. Music is sneaky. It penetrates the soul through slits that cannot be seen. It seems to pass through watertight partitions and I'm wondering if any of the

²²⁰ Private collection (n.d.), Cocteau, *Écrits sur la musique*, 517.

²²¹ Cocteau, *Écrits sur la musique*, 518: 'Bref, en ce qui concerne Mozart, son enchantement échappe peut-être au style cruel de notre époque, mais l'époque aura bien du mal à boucher tous les orifices où cet enchantement pénètre et nous imprègne d'un poison délicieux... Les jambes du jeune sont maintenant assez longues pour que ses pieds puissent atteindre les pédales. C'est n'est plus un vrai prodige, un singe sur un orgue. Il ne lui reste rien. Rien, *sauf le génie*'.

fiercest jazz fans are listening to any note that betrays the cause, that break away from rules and find their ways into the heart.²²²

Music exerts its power because it is non-semantic, ephemeral, fluid and can permeate boundaries and borders. Jazz is especially potent because its improvisational style breaks away from the rigid conventions of classical music.

Cocteau in Performance

Cocteau first performed his poems at a *matinée* programme in the Théâtre Fémina on 4 April 1908. It was organised by an actor, Édouard De Max (1869–1924), and Laurent Tailhade (1854–1919), solely to launch the artistic career of the young poet.²²³ The event was also noteworthy because it represented his first collaboration with other musicians. Cocteau recited a selection of his poems, but he did not perform musically. Two of his poems were sung by soprano Jeanne Dereims-Devriès (1849–1924) and Lucienne Bréval (1869–1934). *Réminiscences* (1908)²²⁴ was set to music by Jacques Renaud (n.d.) and an untitled *mélodie* (1908)²²⁵ by Tiarko Richepin (1884–1956).²²⁶ Cocteau subsequently dedicated the poem *La Soirée douce*²²⁷ to Richepin.²²⁸ The event was a great success for Cocteau because he amazed the audience ‘with his natural presence and charisma, his verbal facility and *esprit*’.²²⁹ Roger Martin du Gard (1881–1958) described the performance as ‘a triumph’.²³⁰ He was elated by the thrill of his public acclaim and to find himself in the company of so many musicians. He

²²² Jean Cocteau, *La Grande Chance de Mozart* in *Écrits sur la musique*, 517: ‘en musique, les choses ne suivent pas la même pente. La musique est sournoise. Elle pénètre l’âme par des fentes qu’on n’aperçoit pas. Elle traverse semble-t-il, des cloisons étanches et je me demande si de farouches adeptes du jazz guettent d’une longue oreille la moindre note qui trahirait la cause, s’évaderait des règles et chercherait les routes du cœur’.

²²³ Bernard Delvaille, ‘Cocteau avant Cocteau’, in *Cahiers Jean Cocteau*, no. 6 (Paris: Gallimard, 1981) 39: ‘M. de Max a l’honneur de vous informer qu’il sera donné, sur son initiative, le samedi 4 avril 1908, en matinée à 3 h ½, au Theatre Fémina, 90, avenue des Champs-Élysées, une Conférence par Laurent Tailhade, sur les poésies d’un tout jeune poète de dix-huit ans, Jean Cocteau’.

²²⁴ *Réminiscences* (1908), (*La Lampe d’Aladin*, 1909) in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 1319.

²²⁵ *Mélodie* is not included in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*.

²²⁶ Score unpublished.

²²⁷ *La Soirée douce* (*La Lampe d’Aladin*, 1909) in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 1268.

²²⁸ Haine, ‘Jean Cocteau,’ 257.

²²⁹ Williams, *Jean Cocteau*, 32.

²³⁰ Roger Martin du Gard, *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), 1:77.

immediately understood how these collaborations could propel him into the world of music. He met several other musicians at various musical salons organised by Misia Sert (1872–1950), Anna de Noailles (1876–1933), Geneviève Straus (1849–1926—that is, Bizet’s widow)—and Princesse Edmond de Polignac (1865–1943). At these he was presented with many opportunities to hear and discuss music.²³¹

There are several images that show Cocteau ‘in performance’ with musical instruments.²³² The first one dates from 1925, where Cocteau is seated at a piano with two friends standing alongside—Arthur Honegger and his wife, Andrée Vaurabourg (see Figure 2.18). The picture appears posed, as do Cocteau’s hands on the keyboard. Honegger’s presence gives Cocteau musical credibility. The second photograph (Figure 2.19) was taken on the same day but the protagonists have changed places, as if enacting a different performance. It is unclear whether Cocteau was even able to play the violin, or if he was just posing with it—as part of a musical tableau. He is not holding the instrument as a violinist would. Figure 2.20 shows Cocteau improvising or playing the piano from memory, at the fiftieth anniversary celebration of Maxim’s restaurant. The image shows Cocteau’s poor posture at the piano which is not conducive to a good piano playing technique.

Cocteau was also a tenacious percussionist and had performed several times on drums. One of his first performances was on 15 June 1919 in Milhaud’s newly composed *Choéphores*.²³³

²³¹ Léon Dile Milorad, ‘Introduction à La Patience de Penelope’, in *Cahiers Jean Cocteau no. 9* (Paris: Gallimard, 1981), 9–23.

²³² All these photographs cited in Haine, ‘Jean Cocteau.’

²³³ Darius Milhaud, *Ma vie heureuse* (Paris: Belfond, 1973), 85.

Figure 2.18 Jean Cocteau at the piano with Arthur Honegger and Andrée Vaurabourg (holding the violin) (1925).²³⁴

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Figure 2.19 Andrée Vaurabourg at the piano with Arthur Honnegger and Jean Cocteau (holding the violin), Paris 1925.²³⁵

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

²³⁴ Boris Lipnitski, Photograph, in Willy Tappolet, *Arthur Honegger*, trans. Helene Breuleux (Neuchâtel: Baconnière, 1939), plate VI opposite 184.

²³⁵ Boris Lipnitski, Photograph, accessed 28 October 2018, www.gettyimages.co.uk

Figure 2.20 Cocteau playing the piano at the fiftieth anniversary celebration of Maxim's restaurant (1949).²³⁶

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Milhaud asked him to play the drums but he soon realised that he was not a good-enough player: he tried to count the beats, so much so that he misheard the passage where the murmuring choir and the solo singer rhythmically recite the text. He admitted to his lack of proficiency and his inability to follow the performance because of it.²³⁷

Cocteau sometimes improvised jazz, playing drums at *Bar Gaya*. Picabia (1879–1953) organised a concert on 9 December 1920 at the Galerie de la Cible for the opening of a retrospective of his own paintings.²³⁸ Poulenc and Auric performed at the piano. Cocteau joined them spontaneously and they then played as a trio. Steven Moore Whiting describes Cocteau's 'amateur virtuosity [that] he had acquired on a variety of instruments', including 'the drum, the bass drum, castanets, drinking glasses, the

²³⁶ *Libération* (numéro hors-série, no. 8 112–8310 (October 1983), 80–81, accessed 10 February 2020, <https://boutique.liberation.fr/collections/anciens-numeros>

²³⁷ Cocteau, *Carte Blanche*, 69: 'Je voudrais vous rendre compte des Choéphores de Darius Milhaud... Mais Milhaud m'avait demandé de tenir le tambour dans sa batterie. Comme je ne sais pas jouer et que j'essayais de compter les mesures, j'ai mal entendu le curieux passage où le chœur chuinte et où la cantatrice déclame le texte, accompagnée par des rythmes'.

²³⁸ Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 1624.

mirliton and a klaxon'.²³⁹ However, 'Cocteau's jazz performances were not universally appreciated. Satie was irritated by 'Cocteau's latest pose: he now fancied himself a jazz drummer'!²⁴⁰ Camfield's description is of Cocteau's 'infernal jazz band'.²⁴¹

As a result of such impromptu improvisations, the Surrealist Louis Aragon (1897–1982) named Cocteau '*le poète-orchestre*' (the poet-band).²⁴² Cocteau participated in another trio, this time with Auric on piano and Milhaud on violin.²⁴³ Cocteau, on percussion, made a strange mix: this time he added kazoo and horn to his instruments. According to Auric, they played *Adieu New York* (which was popular at the time), as well as sambas from *Boeuf sur le toit*.²⁴⁴ They also played jazz at a Dada reunion in December 1920.²⁴⁵ However, Sanouillet is disparaging when observing that Cocteau 'Randomly take[s] a few performers, make[s] them play a popular foxtrot, add[s] a variety of sounds, place[s] a poet on the desk, and there it is'.²⁴⁶

Although many of Cocteau's contemporaries believed he was unable to read music, he acted as a page turner for a performance of Tailleferre's *Pastorale*, though he could not concentrate on listening to her performance whilst doing this.²⁴⁷

The fourth picture (Figure 2.21) shows Cocteau playing drums, probably during an improvised jam session in 1955. He was attracted to jazz percussion. Indeed, he felt more at ease playing in the jazz genre because it liberated him from the strict regularity of, and lack of expertise in, classical music.²⁴⁸ Cocteau explained how 'drumming both

²³⁹ Steven Moore Whiting, *Satie the Bohemian: From Cabaret to Concert* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 505.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ William A. Camfield, *Francis Picabia: His Art, Life and Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 157–158.

²⁴² Whiting, *Satie the Bohemian*, 505.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ Auric, *Quand j'étais*, 172–174.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 172–174.

²⁴⁶ Michel Sanouillet, *Dada à Paris* (Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1965), 73: 'prenez au hasard quelques exécutants, faites-leur jouer un fox-trot populaire, ajoutez-y des bruits divers, placez un poète au pupitre, et voilà'.

²⁴⁷ Jean Cocteau, *Carte-Blanche* [XVIII/28 July 1919] in *Le Rappel in Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 9, 136.

²⁴⁸ Haine, 'Jean Cocteau,' 270.

relaxed him and provided a connection to poetry'.²⁴⁹ It enhanced his exploration of rhythms in language.²⁵⁰

Figure 2.21 Cocteau on drums, probably during an improvised jam session in 1958.²⁵¹

Image removed for copyright reasons

Cocteau was photographed with *Les Six* (see Figure 2.22): he was a mentor to them and certainly considered himself to be the seventh member of the group. *Les Six*: from left to right, Darius Milhaud, Georges Auric (absent, but drawn by Cocteau), Jean Cocteau, Arthur Honegger, Germaine Tailleferre, Francis Poulenc and Louis Durey.

²⁴⁹ Jean Cocteau 30 March 1921 letter to his mother in Cocteau, *Lettres II*, 102: 'je me suis le plus souvent possible distrait en jouant de cet instrument qui me passionne pour plusieurs raisons dont la poésie n'est pas exempte'.

²⁵⁰ Taylor, 'La Musique,' 103.

²⁵¹ Jean Cocteau in 1958, photograph by Jean Mainbourg, Gamma-Rapho 120450407, accessed 1 September 2019, www.gettyimages.co.uk/photos/jean-cocteau-photos?page=2&phrase=jean%20cocteau%20photos&sort=mostpopular

Image removed due to copyright reasons

It is evident that, although he lacked any formal musical training, Cocteau could play by ear and improvise humorous imitations on piano or drums.²⁵³ He certainly did not lack the confidence to perform. Jane Bathori, director of Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier between 1917–1919, organised a performance of Reynaldo Hahn's *Pastorale de Noël* (1901), a favourite musical work of the time, and was thrilled to include Cocteau as a member of the choir—even though he insisted on making up his own words.²⁵⁴ Maurice Sachs remembers evenings hosted by Coco Chanel when Cocteau sang *mélodies* by Reynaldo Hahn, Federico de Madrazo and Emmanuel Chabrier, accompanied on the piano by Marcelle Meyer (Pierre Bertin's wife).²⁵⁵ Sachs never commented on Cocteau's style or technique but Jean Wiener confirmed that the poet 'sang with a beautiful tenor voice, and could master opera, comic opera and

²⁵² Jean Cocteau and *Les Six*, photograph by Roger Viollet, accessed 1 September 2019, www.gettyimages.co.uk/photos/jean-cocteau-photos?page=8&phrase=jean%20cocteau%20photos&sort=mostpopular#license

²⁵³ *Les Six* are grouped around their mentor Cocteau, seated at the piano.

²⁵⁴ Linda Laurent and Andrée Tainsy, 'Jane Bathori et le Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier (1917–1919)', *Revue de Musicologie* 7, no. 2 (1984), 229–257.

²⁵⁵ Haine, 'Jean Cocteau,' 269.

assorted melodies'.²⁵⁶ He often sang Offenbach songs, especially *La Belle Hélène*, with his adopted son Édouard Dermit.²⁵⁷ Cocteau considered Offenbach a 'musicien de génie' (musical genius).²⁵⁸ Cocteau wrote to Milhaud in August 1921; there he described how his mother played *Le Boeuf sur le toit* on the piano, whilst he 'sang the right-hand part'.²⁵⁹ The phrase is ambiguous. Either Cocteau played the melody line on the piano or he sang the melody. Auric puts Cocteau's transdisciplinary approach into perspective. He highlights the poet's lack of any music composition ability yet acknowledges his singing ability. In his interview with André Fraigneau, Auric observed:

It is obvious that Jean, who was above all a poet, a novelist, an essayist, a playwright, a cinematograph, and at the same time a painter, draughtsman, creator of frescoes in churches or public buildings, and what seems extraordinary, is that he did not compose music, because he never learnt music. I'm certain that if he had had the vaguest notion of what harmony was, he would have written music, but he did not know how. He had never learnt the piano. What he did have, in fact, was a perfect musical memory. He could sing you anything he wanted to. He would go to the piano, never having learnt the piano, and I remember hearing him play passages from Stravinsky's *Petrouchka*. What was very curious for a musician, is how he managed to give an adequate performance. Not as well as some [African American] who play jazz without knowing a single note of music, yet he still performed quite well. But what is more peculiar [...] he could only play in one key. Everything he played was in F major. He could not play what seemed the easiest in C, where there were no black keys. He only played in F major.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁶ Leon Dile Milorad, 'Témoignage de Jan Wiener', in *Cahiers Jean Cocteau, no. 7 Avec les musiciens* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), 84–85: 'd'une voix de ténor ravissante...le répertoire de l'Opéra et de l'Opéra-Comique, Offenbach, Lecocq, les mélodies de Chabrier et de Massenet'.

²⁵⁷ Haine, 'Jean Cocteau,' 269.

²⁵⁸ Cocteau, *Le Passé*, 1: 371

²⁵⁹ Pierre Caizergues and Josianne Mas, eds., *Correspondance Jean Cocteau-Darius Milhaud* (Montpellier: Université Paul Valéry, 1999), 47 (letter no. 20): 'chante la main droite'.

²⁶⁰ André Fraigneau, 'Témoignage de Georges Auric', in *Cahiers Jean Cocteau, no. 7 Avec les musiciens* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), 70–71: 'Il est évident que Jean, qui était avant tout un poète, un romancier, un essayiste, un auteur dramatique, un auteur cinématographe a été en même temps peintre, dessinateur, auteur de fresques dans les églises ou les bâtiments publics, et cela paraît extraordinaire, il n'a pas composé de musique, parce qu'il avait eu les plus vagues notions de ce peut être un accord il aurait écrit de la musique mais il ne savait pas, il n'avait jamais appris le piano. Et ce qu'il avait en effet une parfaite mémoire musicale, il pouvait chanter n'importe quelle chose qu'il avait l'intention d'évolution devant vous. Il se mettait au piano, et lui qui n'avait pas appris le piano, je me souviens de l'avoir entendu jouer des passages de *Petrouchka* de Stravinski. Ce qu'il y avait de très curieux pour un musicien c'est qu'il arrivait à s'en sortir pas si mal que ça, pas aussi bien que certains Américains noirs qui jouent du jazz sans savoir une note de musique, mais tout de même il s'en servait assez bien. Mais plus curieux, c'est qu'il ne pouvait jouer [...] il ne pouvait jouer que dans un ton. Tout ce qu'il jouait était en *fa* majeur. Il ne pouvait pas jouer ce qui paraissait le plus simple en ut, où il n'avait rien à la clé. Il ne jouait qu'en *fa* majeur'.

Cocteau's perfect musical ear did not escape the attention of many of his musician friends. Denise Duval, the unforgettable performer of Cocteau's text in Poulenc's *La Voix humaine* (1959),²⁶¹ remembered how Cocteau assimilated the whole work by ear at the first rehearsal.²⁶² Igor Markevitch (1912–1983), also commented on Cocteau's improvisational talent. He observed how:

Cocteau loved to do imitations on the piano, for example he played accompaniments to the news of the silent cinema.... Jean played the piano with a lot of ease and we sometimes played duets together.²⁶³

Cocteau and Jazz

Even though Cocteau's initial experience of jazz was through 'white interpreters',²⁶⁴ it still had long-lasting impact on his creativity and shaped his artistic activity. When he heard jazz for the first time, he declared that he had just recognised or sensed what was to become his definitive sound formula.²⁶⁵ His response to jazz was extremely visceral and he found the improvisational nature of jazz, with its free syncopated rhythms, exceedingly liberating. Milhaud also referred to jazz in similarly visceral terms and adopted Cocteau's use of metaphor when he described:

The importance of syncopated rhythms and melodies, superimposed on a background of inconspicuous regularity, as essential as the heartbeats or pulsations are to the circulation of blood.²⁶⁶

²⁶¹ Haine, 'Jean Cocteau,' 269.

²⁶² Bruno Berenguer, 'Denise Duval et Francis Poulenc: une amitié intime à la base d'une étroite collaboration artistique', in *Poulenc et ses amis*, ed. Danièle Pistone, (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1994). 'dès le lendemain de leur première séance, [Cocteau] possédait mentalement l'oeuvre qu'il avait intégrée d'oreille'.

²⁶³ Leon Dile Milorad, 'Témoignage d'Igor Markevitch', in *Cahiers Jean Cocteau, no. 7 Avec les musiciens* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), 79: 'Cocteau adorait faire des imitations au piano, par exemples les musiques accompagnent les actualités au cinéma muet... Jean jouait du piano avec beaucoup de facilité et nous avons quelquefois fait du quatre mains ensemble'.

²⁶⁴ Bernard Gendron, 'Fetishes and Motorcars: Negrophilia in French Modernism', *Cultural Studies* 4, no. 2 (1990), 141.

²⁶⁵ Jean Cocteau, 'Danger secret du rythme noir in Jean Cocteau', in *Écrits sur la musique*, eds. David Gullentops and Malou Haine (Belgium: VRIN, 2016), 394: 'Je venais de reconnaître ou même de renifler une formule sonore que, peu après, je déclarai définitive'.

²⁶⁶ Darius Milhaud, 'L'Évolution du jazz-band et la musique des nègres du Nord', in *Notes sur la musique*, ed. Jeremy Drake (Paris: Harmonique Flammarion, 1982), 99: 'L'importance de la syncope dans les rythmes et dans les mélodies, posées sur un fond d'une régularité sourde aussi essentielle que la circulation du sang, que les battements du cœur ou les pulsations'.

Like Cocteau, Milhaud adopted the use of French words such as *dessins* (drawings), and *intérieure* (interior), in his description of jazz. Both terms metaphorically introduce the idea of a spatiality within music. He commented how ‘The stripped melody is supported by very distinct and moderate rhythmically drawn patterns, with a more and more imperceptible interior percussion’.²⁶⁷ However, Cocteau found he could better adapt the more angular features of jazz—such as fractured rhythms, irregular pulses and silences—into his poems (see *La toison d’or*, discussed below, and *Le Cap de Bonne-Espérance*, discussed in Chapter four). He adapted these qualities for his poetic compositions as part of his transdisciplinary artistic practice. He recognised a new musical method for his creativity. Both Jean Wiéner (1896–1982) and Georges Auric praised his drumming. Wiéner wrote:

Cocteau at one point, sat down, made a small thump with the drumstick, and executed a big kick on the bass drum. Then, the beautiful ladies, the surrealists, and everyone else, applauded. It was a triumph.²⁶⁸

Auric viewed the improvisation as ‘unbelievably assured and beautifully realised’.²⁶⁹

Cocteau was unmistakably positive about his jazz talent and declared:

I am boasting that I play jazz very well; alongside drawing it is *my violon d’Ingres* [...] jazz intoxicates me more than alcohol, which does not suit me. Twenty arms propel you in jazz: one becomes god of sound’.²⁷⁰

Cocteau was always ready to build up his achievements as part of his agenda of self-promotion. Marcel Jouhandeau (1888–1979) observed how ‘Cocteau played intuitively and invented jazz before even having learnt it’.²⁷¹ The verb *apprendre*, in this context can be interpreted in two ways, either as ‘Cocteau learnt jazz’, or he ‘learnt about jazz’.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.: ‘La mélodie dépouillée, soutenue par des dessins rythmiques très nets et très sobres, la percussion à peine sensible, de plus en plus intérieure’.

²⁶⁸ Milorad, ‘Témoignage d’Igor Markevitch,’ 86: ‘Cocteau à un moment donné, s’est assis, a fait un petit ‘floc’ avec une baguette, et à tapé un grand coup de pied sur la grosse caisse. Et alors, les belles dames, et les surréalistes, et tout le monde, ont applaudi. Ça a été un triomphe’.

²⁶⁹ Auric, *Quand j’étais*, 164: ‘Une assurance inconcevable’, et qui devait opérer à merveille’.

²⁷⁰ Steegmuller, *Cocteau*, 277, quoted in Haine, ‘Jean Cocteau,’: ‘je joue très bien du jazz et je m’en vante; c’est avec le dessin, mon violon d’Ingres[...] le jazz me grisait mieux que l’alcool que je supporte mal. Au jazz vingt bras vous poussent: on est dieu du bruit’.

²⁷¹ Marcel Jouhandeau, *Jean Cocteau: l’amitié faite home* (Liège, Dynamo 1963), 14: ‘musicien, Cocteau inventa le jazz avant de l’avoir appris’.

However, Jouhandeau's comment is somewhat overstated as Cocteau certainly did not invent jazz.

Cocteau became involved in promoting 'Parisian jazz', as it came to be known, with the opening of the *Bar Gaya*, where the Parisian smart set could be introduced to jazz rhythms played by a pianist, Jean Wiener, and the African American saxophonist and banjo player Vance Lowry. Not only did Cocteau organise jazz performances, but he also took every opportunity to play percussion in jazz trios.²⁷²

In a poem, *Embouchures des pensées divines*, he included his recollections of the hot Parisian jazz evenings as a drummer, and again referred to the jazz drum as his *violon d'Ingres*, which was a recurring metaphor for Cocteau.²⁷³ The saying derives from the painter Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), friend of various eminent musicians, including Paganini (1787–1840), the virtuosic violinist. Ingres was known to take a break from painting and play his violin. Since his death, the saying came to refer to any hobby at which someone excels, even though they are known for a completely different activity. The English equivalent is equally musical: having a second string to one's bow. Cocteau desired to be '[the] *Paganini du violon d'Ingres*, but he believed such a situation could not exist: 'One takes a rest from one instrument by means of another'.²⁷⁴ On the one hand, Cocteau described the unachievable and, on the other, he attributed equal importance to each of his individual creative methods. He wanted to excel at several creative activities.

After jazz's initial impact on Cocteau, which irrevocably changed his aesthetic perspective, jazz continued to act as a potent musical force. It represented rebellion, freedom from pre-war European values, and it fuelled Cocteau's determination to break

²⁷² Jeffrey H. Jackson, *Making Jazz French: Music and Modern Life in Interwar Paris* (Durham, USA: Duke University Press, 2003), 119.

²⁷³ Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 332: 'Le tambour du jazz-band est mon violon d'Ingres'.

²⁷⁴ Jean Cocteau, *En Verve: Présentation et choix de Pierre Chanel* (Paris: Pierre Horay, 1973), 29: 'Je voudrais être le *Paganini du violon D'Ingres*. Mais en vérité il n'y a pas de violon d'Ingres. On se repose d'un véhicule par l'emploi d'un autre'.

away from German-based music. Jazz helped re-define the French musical identity, despite its American origins.²⁷⁵ It also fuelled his dislike of the elitist high-art tradition because it was somehow exclusive, yet populist at the same time. In *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* he united the popular sources of 'music-hall, circus [and] African American orchestras', that informed his aesthetic for an everyday music.²⁷⁶ But he believed that such popular music genres were not art per se, but sources of artistic inspiration.²⁷⁷ They all excited him like 'machines, animals, nature, and danger'.²⁷⁸

Nevertheless, as previously stated, Cocteau was profoundly affected by his first experience of jazz during the premiere of the 1917 revue *Laisser-les tomber* (Let Them Drop) at the inauguration of the newly renovated Casino de Paris.²⁷⁹ The musical extravaganza represented a turning point for Cocteau, noteworthy enough to be documented in *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*.²⁸⁰ Milhaud and Cocteau processed the jazz influences in their 1920 ballet collaboration, *Le Boeuf sur le toit* (after which the bar was named). But Cocteau was not at all interested in recreating American culture. He was proud to proclaim the ballet as 'an American farce, written by a Parisian who has never been to America'.²⁸¹ He recognised the potential for a new music in the 'shocking foreign music [that] was to be felt, not judged, according to traditional standards and academic rules'.²⁸² The moment was significant in a broader context because jazz contributed to the evolution of France's post-war cultural identity. However, on a personal level, Cocteau immediately recognised jazz as the music for which he had long

²⁷⁵ Taylor, 'La Musique,' 91.

²⁷⁶ Cocteau, *Le Coq* (1979), 64: 'Le music-hall, le cirque, les orchestres américains de nègres...'

²⁷⁷ Taylor, 'La Musique.'

²⁷⁸ Cocteau, *Le Coq* (1979), 64: 'Ils excitent comme les machines, les animaux, les paysages, [et] le danger'.

²⁷⁹ Matthew F. Jordan, *Le Jazz: Jazz and French Cultural Identity* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 41.

²⁸⁰ Cocteau, *Le Coq* (1979), 55: 'une certaine danse américaine que j'ai vue au Casino de Paris'.

²⁸¹ Steegmuller, *Cocteau*, 241–242.

²⁸² Jordan, *Le Jazz*, 41.

been waiting.²⁸³ The intensely visceral beat of jazz resonated for him, it was more the ‘pulse of the brain than with that of the heart’.²⁸⁴ By pointing out the difference between the head over heart, Cocteau highlighted how jazz directly catalysed his poetic output. Yet in his preface to Gaston Criel’s (1913–1990) book on jazz, *Swing*, he expressed a much more profound reaction to jazz. It was about ‘holding the pulse of the muse. Feeling the beat of her red blood. It emanated from the heart. It terrified. It reassured’.²⁸⁵ This vivid metaphor represents a much more physical response and very strongly connects music (jazz in particular) with Cocteau’s creative ‘single red line’, that is *poésie* (see Chapter four).

Cocteau attended a dance performance given by Gaby Deslys (1881–1920) and her American partner Harry Pilcer (1885–1961), at the Casino de Paris, in 1918.²⁸⁶ Together they presented a new form of theatrical spectacle whilst endorsing an original orchestral jazz-band, that particularly appealed to Cocteau.²⁸⁷ He was overwhelmed by the pulsating, percussion-driven syncopated rhythms of the African American jazz idiom, previously unheard in France.²⁸⁸ He was also fascinated by other unusual sounds, technical effects and instrumentation, and immediately saw that jazz could offer greater expressive freedom.²⁸⁹ The impact on him was such that he even described the event, in some detail, in his book *Le Coq et l’Arlequin*, published the following year.²⁹⁰

²⁸³ Gaston Criel, *Swing*, Preface by Jean Cocteau (Paris: Vrac, 1982), 7: ‘La première fois que j’ai entendu un jazz...Je reconnaissais la musique tant désirée par moi et tant attendu’.

²⁸⁴ Yannick Séité, ‘Cocteau Jazzman’, in *Lire Cocteau*, ed. Claude Burgelin and Marie-Claude Schapira (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1992), 136: ‘le pouls du cerveau que celui du cœur’.

²⁸⁵ Criel, *Swing*, 7: ‘Ma certitude vint de ce que le jazz était mieux qu’un rythme: une pulsation. Je tenais le pouls de la Muse. Je sentais battre son sang rouge. Il venait du cœur. Il effrayait. Il rassurait’.

²⁸⁶ Cocteau, *Le Coq* (1979), 25: ‘l’extraordinaire numéro de M. Pilcer et de mademoiselle Gaby Deslys’.

²⁸⁷ After 10 March 1918, the original dancers left the show for New York and were replaced by French artists Mistinguett (1875–1956) and Maurice Chevalier (1888–1972). See Olivier Roueff, *Jazz, les échelles du plaisir* (electronic book: 2013), chap. 3.2, accessed 25 May 2015, www.plaisirsdujazz.fr/chapitre-deux-sommaire/un-succes-inaugural-la-revue-laisse-les-tomber-1917/

²⁸⁸ Some earlier compositions made reference to jazz, for example Debussy’s *Golliwog’s cake-walk* (1908) and Satie’s *Ragtime du paquebot* (1917), but could these be classified as Jazz? See Séité, ‘Cocteau Jazzman,’ 136.

²⁸⁹ Haine, ‘Jean Cocteau,’ 271.

²⁹⁰ See description in *Le Coq et l’Arlequin, Notes autour de la musique* (Paris: Stock, 1918; reprinted 1979 and 2009), 55, n. 1: ‘Viola comment était cette danse: Le band américain l’accompagnait sur les

The combination of photographs, poetry and dance contributed to an intoxicating performance which Cocteau compared to the effects of a cocktail. He extended the metaphor when he described the same lightheaded, drunken feeling that he felt when he first heard jazz because of the mix of instruments (see further discussion on metaphor in Chapter four). The reference is given even more significance because of its inclusion in Cocteau's manifesto. Here he indicated how significant jazz was to the sonority and structure of his texts.²⁹¹

The discovery of a new and unusual music provoked in Cocteau a personal need to experiment. Because jazz had captivated him as much as poetry,²⁹² it was inevitable that he would attempt to juxtapose the two elements. He wanted to put into practice (and experience) a new musico-poetic interaction so as to understand its creative potential. Jazz had such an impact, that its rhythms and sonorities significantly permeated and shaped his poetry, as well as informing his aesthetic conception of *poésie*. His interart method and the process of *poésie* gave him the means to introduce musical features across and between images and texts (as demonstrated throughout this chapter). Jazz was another example of his ability to borrow and transform new ideas, making them his own.

The first example of Cocteau participating in a musical poetry recital was at a *spectacle de théâtre bouffe* (comic theatre performance) that he jointly organised with

banjos et dans de grosses pipes de nickel. À droite de la petite troupe en habit noir il y avait un barman de bruits sous une pergola dorée, chargée de grelots, de tringles, de planches, de trompes de motocyclette. Il en fabriquait des cocktails, mettant parfois un zeste de cymbale, se levant, se dandinant et souriant aux anges.

M. Pilcer, en frac, maigre et maquillé de rouge, et mademoiselle Gaby Deslys, grande poupée de ventriloque, la figure de porcelaine, les cheveux de maïs, la robe en plumes d'autruche, dansait sur cet ouragan de rythmes et de tambour une sorte de catastrophe apprivoisée qui les laissait tout ivres et myopes sous une douche de six projecteurs contre avions.

La salle applaudissait debout, déracinée de sa mollesse par cet extraordinaire numéro qui est lié à la folie d'Offenbach ce que le tank peut être à une calèche de 70'.

²⁹¹ Cocteau, *Carte Blanche*, 104–111.

²⁹² Séité, 'Cocteau Jazzman,' 132.

Pierre Bertin (1891–1984), on 24 May 1921 (see Figure 2.23).²⁹³ The recital was very much a jazz-orientated programme and, during the interval, Cocteau performed his poem to music composed and played by Milhaud, in the form of a mock shimmy called *Caramel mou*.²⁹⁴

According to Milhaud, the title wittily refers to the ‘soft caramel’ sweets that were traditionally sold between two halves of a theatre performance.²⁹⁵ Milhaud’s aesthetic aim was to transfer the jazz idiom from dance to concert halls, which he subsequently achieved with his work *La Création du monde* (1922–1923).²⁹⁶ Cocteau wanted the reverse: he wanted a more accessible French music, ‘music of the everyday’—derived from popular musical styles—to revitalise French music.²⁹⁷ According to Valis Hill, Cocteau saw circus, music-hall and jazz music as ‘holding the keys to a new theatrical poetic’.²⁹⁸

During the performance of *Caramel mou*, the African American dancer Johnnie Gratton danced badly, whilst Cocteau shouted the words through a megaphone to the syncopated rhythms of Milhaud’s music.²⁹⁹ ‘Gratton’s indecisive shuffling’ reduced the performance to nothing short of a farce.³⁰⁰ As Milhaud described, he intended to produce a ‘portrait of a shimmy, rather than a photograph’, making the point that he wanted to interpret and transform, rather than imitate.³⁰¹ He added how Cocteau’s

²⁹³ Malou Haine, ‘Jean Cocteau, impresario musical à la croisée des arts’ in *Musique et modernité en France: 1900–1945*, ed. Sylvain Caron (Montreal: Les Presses de l’Université de Montréal, 2006), 100.

²⁹⁴ The shimmy was a dance which originated in Chicago’s African American nightclubs and was characterised by rapid shoulder and torso gyrations. It became fashionable in Paris during the early 1920s. *Caramel mou* from *Les Six: Selected Works 1915–1945*, Original Recording Remastered, LTM 2533, 30 October 2009. 2 CD set: disc 1, track 13.

²⁹⁵ See Darius Milhaud, *Caramel Mou*, accessed 9 October 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=MJqPIWlJlw4. This film also contains Mme. Milhaud translating the text into English, a performance of the song, accompanied by a jazz band consisting of clarinet, trumpet, trombone, drums and piano.

²⁹⁶ Caizergues and Mas, *Correspondance Jean Cocteau-Darius Milhaud*, 100–101.

²⁹⁷ Cocteau, *Le Coq* (1979), 62.

²⁹⁸ Constance Valis Hill, ‘Jazz Modernism’, in *Moving Words: Re-writing Dance*, ed. Gay Morris (London: Routledge, 1996), 237.

²⁹⁹ Haine, ‘Jean Cocteau, impresario,’ 100.

³⁰⁰ Bernard Gendron, *Between Montmartre and the Mudd Club: Popular Music and the Avant-garde* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 111; Hill, ‘Jazz Modernism,’ 230.

³⁰¹ Milhaud, *Caramel Mou* (YouTube).

Dadaist style poem made their song more of a portrait. The video shows Milhaud, who introduces *Caramel mou* and his wife reads an English translation, which is followed by a performance of the song.³⁰²

The elements of danced cross-rhythms in counterpoint with musical and vocal accenting, provided ‘the improvisational framework of jazz musicians’.³⁰³ Cocteau even described how: ‘Gratton had composed a false modern dance on a false modern dance’. Cocteau’s phrase describes how Gratton’s false shimmy choreography was superimposed on Milhaud’s parody of shimmy music.³⁰⁴

It was an important occasion, not only because it gave Cocteau the opportunity to experience (rather than perceive) the interaction between his words and Milhaud’s music, but also because Jazz was transposed from bar and club venues to the theatre, and became established as part of a mixed-genre presentation.³⁰⁵ The potency of jazz’s cross-medial influence was manifest much later in Henri Matisse’s (1869–1954) book, *Jazz* (1947).

³⁰² Milhaud, *Carmel Mou* (YouTube).

³⁰³ Hill, ‘Jazz Modernism,’ 230.

³⁰⁴ Cocteau, *Écrits sur la musique*, 199: ‘Gratton a composé sur la fausse danse moderne une fausse danse moderne’.

³⁰⁵ Haine, ‘Jean Cocteau, impresario,’ 99.

Figure 2.23 Théâtre-Bouffe programme, from Théâtre Michel, May 1921.³⁰⁶

Image removed due to copyright reasons

³⁰⁶ Private collection, reproduced in Cocteau, *Écrits sur la musique*, 198.

*Caramel mou*³⁰⁷

Prenez une jeune fille
Remplissez-la de glace et gin
Secouer le tout pour en faire une androgyne
Et rendez-la à sa famille

Allo, Allo, mademoisel(le) ne coupez pas...
'demoisel(le), ne coupez pas..
'moisel(le) ne coupez pas...
'sel(le) ne coupez pas...
'sel(le) ne coupez pas...ne coupez pas...
pez pas pas

ah! oh! oh! comme c'est triste
d'être le roi des animaux
personne ne dit mot
oh oh l'amour est le pire des maux
Prenez une jeune fille
Remplissez-la de glace et gin
mettez lui sur la bouche un petit peu d'angostura
secouez le tout pour en faire une androgyne
Et rendez-la à sa famille

j'ai connu un hom(me) très malheureux en amour
qui jouiat les noctun(nes) de Chopin sur le tambour
Allo, Allo, mademoisel(le) ne coupez pas
je parlais au...
Allo, Allo, personne ne dit mot.
Prenez une jeune fille
Remplissez-la de glace et gin
ne trouver-vous pas que l'art est un peu...
secouez le tout pour en faire une androgyne
Et rendez-la... et rendez-la...
Et rendez-la à sa famille
On dit à l'enfant La(ve) toi les mains
on (ne) lui dit pas la(ve) toi les dents
Caramel mou

³⁰⁷ Darius Milhaud, *Caramel mou* (Paris: Max Eschig, 1983).

*Take a girl.
Fill her with ice and gin
shake it all about
to turn her into an androgyne
And send her back to her family*

*Hello, hello, miss don't hang up...Miss don't...don't hang up...
Ah! Oh! Oh! How sad it is to be King of the Beasts,
Nobody there.
Oh, Oh, love really sucks.*

*Take a girl.
Fill her with ice and gin
Put a drop of angostura on her lips, shake it all about
To turn her into an androgyne
And send her back to her family*

*I once knew a guy, very unlucky in love
Who played Chopin nocturnes on the drum.*

*Hello, hello, miss don't hang up, I was talking to...
Hello, hello, nobody there*

*Take a girl.
Fill her with ice and gin
Don't you find that art is a little...?
Shake it all about,
To turn her into an androgyne
And send her back to her family.*

*You say to your child, 'wash your hands',
You don't say, 'wash your teeth'.*

Soft caramel.

Matisse wrote some text, but only after the images were completed. He explained how:

These images, with their lively and violent tones, derived from crystallisations of memories of circuses, folktales and voyages. I've written these pages to mollify the simultaneous effects of my chromatic and rhythmic improvisations; pages forming a kind of sonorous ground that supports them, enfolds them, and protects them, in their peculiarities.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁸ Translation is based on the one by Deborah Mawer, *French Music and Jazz in Conversation: From Debussy to Brubeck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 102–3.

³⁰⁹ Henri Matisse, *Jazz*, trans. Sophie Hawkes (New York: George Braziller, 1983), xi.

He cut out fragments of painted paper which he used to compose ‘chromatic and rhythmic improvisations’, terms which have both visual and musical connotations. His musical intention to create a sonorous grounding is noticeably clear. Indeed, he introduced his drawings as ‘syncopated compositions’. They consist of black-on-white pictures interspersed with splashes of colour and act as his interpretation of ‘the visual counterpoint [and improvisational nature] of jazz music’.³¹⁰ According to Matisse: ‘Jazz is rhythm and meaning’.³¹¹ He did not mean this in any literal sense but referred to the rhythms and contours of his lines, with which he built motifs and juxtaposed them with references to circuses, folktales and voyages—this was the way that he communicated meaning. Matisse’s *Jazz* resonates with those of Cocteau and Auric that embrace all aspects of popular culture.

Although seductive, the comparison can be semantically problematic. How can visual compositions that are laid out in book form function contrapuntally? Or how can music, which is abstract, have meaning? Can Peter Dayan’s model of one art form functioning as another and a work of art ‘asserting’ something be applied here?³¹² The elemental differences between media become less important, because the way they work is more important than what they are, and it is those differences that create the necessary tension for the function of *poésie*. Peter Dayan’s fifth interart aesthetic law states that ‘the only way to convey the incalculable relations [...] between media, is to describe work in one medium as if it were operating in another—as if all arts work in the same way [...] poetry as music’.³¹³ The transformative potential of *poésie* is equivalent to this fifth law. Poetry functions as music and vice versa. In 1894, James Whistler (1834–1903)—seemingly ahead of his time with his view on interart exchange—wrote: ‘As

³¹⁰ Hill, ‘Jazz Modernism,’ 239.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Dayan, *Art as Music*, 3.

³¹³ Ibid.

music is the poetry of sound, so is painting the poetry of sight'.³¹⁴ The transmedial semantic issues still need to be addressed.

Another possible hypothesis is that temporal linearity can be subverted: the drawings can be experienced in real time and, retrospectively, in relationship to each other through memory and imagination. Ultimately, Matisse's drawings have the potential to express a visual counterpoint of rhythms, colours and contours.

Eight years after *Caramel mou*, in 1929, Cocteau again experimented with poetry and jazz interplay.³¹⁵ Any project was more innovative then, because of the advent of the phonograph. Cocteau was able to record extracts from his collection of poems *Opéra* in the Columbia studios in Paris.³¹⁶

He recited the first six poems unaccompanied but then introduced Dan Parrish's jazz orchestra³¹⁷ to play during his interpretation of the two spoken poems, *La Toison d'or* (The Golden Fleece) and *Les Voleurs d'enfants* (The child stealers).³¹⁸ Daniel Nevers, musical director and author described this as 'a dramatic turn of events from *l'enfant terrible*'.³¹⁹

Apparently, the artistic directors struggled with the idea but went along with it, believing the tracks would never be released.³²⁰ Cocteau recognised Vance Lowry from the *Bar Gaya* years. He happened to be playing banjo with the Parrish Orchestra at the studio. Cocteau was spellbound by the 'delicious African American [who was] a real demon of harmony'.³²¹ Cocteau had finished recording the first six poems and, realising

³¹⁴ James Whistler, *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies* (London: Heinemann, 1892, reprinted 1994), 127.

³¹⁵ Séité, 'Cocteau Jazzman,' 131.

³¹⁶ *Opéra* (1927) in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 517–550.

³¹⁷ The orchestra comprised Dan Parrish (piano), Vance Lowry (banjo), Crockett Smith (trumpet), James Shaw (clarinet, soprano and alto saxophones) and Dave Peyton (drums). See David Gullentops and Malou Haine, eds., *Jean Cocteau: textes et musique* (Sprimont: Mardaga, 2005), 214, numbers 137 and 138.

³¹⁸ *Opéra* (1927) in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 527 and 538, respectively. Recording at *Cocteau Anthologie*, CD 1, tracks 15 and 14, respectively.

³¹⁹ Daniel Nevers, quoted in Séité, 'Cocteau Jazzman,' 134: 'un coup de théâtre de l'enfant terrible'.

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Jean Cocteau, 'La Jeunesse et le scandale', lecture given 27 February 1925, reproduced in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 9 (Geneva: Marguerat, 1950), 330: 'un nègre délicieux, vrai démon de l'harmonie, appelé Vance'.

the band was recording next, arranged (on the spur of the moment) to record the last two poems with the jazz band. According to Pilmer Taylor, it was Cocteau who seemed to be directing the session—because he believed that he was a jazz expert.³²²

According to Nevers, '[Cocteau] read his poems accompanied by the house orchestra',³²³ implying that the musicians were available by chance. Note Nevers's use of the word 'accompanied' which completely misrepresents Cocteau's artistic aim for a more balanced music/text performance (where primacy is not given to either element). Cocteau was developing his artistic practice in performance. Indeed, he experimented with the sonority of his delivery, according to his response to the improvisatory nature of jazz. It was a new and exciting experience for Cocteau; one that liberated him to enact his transdisciplinary orientation in practice.

Abbott identifies how the 'exchange between poetry and music is always complicated by disruptions, irregular patternings and disappearances'.³²⁴ She uses the word 'complicated', which has negative connotations, whereas the word 'complex' more positively describes the potential multiplicity of processes. Cocteau relies on those characteristics and exploits them 'to elicit a particular aesthetic response'.³²⁵ Surely more than one aesthetic response is possible in this situation?

Cocteau's experience of recordings and performing *La Toison d'or* and *Les Voleurs d'enfants* is based on his finding a common affinity between text and music—which was the essence of jazz. I aim to establish that relationship in the analysis that follows. Albright, Dayan and Cook have opened the dialogue that categorises various types of potential of interart interfaces, which they theoretically describe as discreet processes. I believe that a range of interactions are possible.

³²² Jean Cocteau, quoted in Taylor, '*La Musique*,' 102.

³²³ Daniel Nevers, quoted in Séité, 'Cocteau Jazzman,' 134: 'lu ses poèmes accompagnés par l'orchestre-maison'.

³²⁴ Abbott, *Between Baudelaire*, 9.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

Cocteau wanted to satisfy several of his preoccupations; at that time, these were music, poetry, music with poetry, and exoticism. He also sought to experiment with his new-found formula of sonority in shaping the words and structure of his poem, and subverting temporality. During these recordings he was able to experience and respond directly to the sonority of his own voice and the improvisations of the jazz musicians, so as to explore their connections.

La toison d'or: A Recorded Jazz Performance

At the Columbia Studios on 3 December 1929, most of the other poems recorded were prose-style, but sometimes rhymed. However, *La toison d'or*³²⁶ is distinctive because of its prosodic structure.³²⁷ It is a poem shaped by sonority rather than narrative content. The stresses are mainly on the offbeat at the end of words and resemble syncopated jazz rhythms. There are no rhymes but repeated assonances that set up strong rhythmic patterns (which are inherently musical). The phonetic 'é' recurs in different words, generating repetitive and mutable motifs, which give the text definition. In a way, the use of the recurring 'é' functions sculpturally to structure the text.³²⁸ In other words, Cocteau's use of 'e' syllable is a practical example of Cook's 'cross-sensory correspondence'.³²⁹ The images, evoked imaginatively (in this instance), are combined with sound which, according to Cook, 'contextualises, clarifies, and in a sense analyses the music. It instigates a new, or at any rate a deepened, experience of music'.³³⁰ By setting up a series of internal rhythmic patterns, Cocteau has composed a verbal version of a contrapuntal, layered musical text. This is in the form of organised sounds—something akin to jazz. Séité described Cocteau's process as *écrire jazz* (writing jazz).³³¹

³²⁶ *Cocteau Anthologie*, CD 1, track 15: 'Paroles et Musique de Jean Cocteau'.

³²⁷ Séité, 'Cocteau Jazzman,' 136.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 138.

³²⁹ Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, 75.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

³³¹ Séité, 'Cocteau Jazzman,' 137.

The repetitious style creates momentum, builds tension and, at the same time, disrupts the linearity of meaning. The initial aural perception is of ‘a ballet of sounds, always the same, yet never similar, without any precise sense’.³³² The dynamic tension is provoked by this apparent paradox, and the conceptual spaces created by the dissonances form the gaps of music-ready text, as previously described.

The result is characterised as more rhythmic than lyrical, reflecting Cocteau’s attraction to drumming. The recording of *La Toison d’or* is important because it is a direct source that reveals Cocteau’s creative experimentation with his own responses to text-music exchanges during an improvised performance, which would inform his subsequent compositions.

La Toison d’or is a collage of references to the Greek myth of the Golden Fleece. Sometimes Cocteau’s words have double meanings. *Bouclée* can mean ‘buckled or curly’.³³³ Using such a literary device, Cocteau sets up textual rhythms, introducing semantic multiplicity. The ambiguity requires the reader/listener to imaginatively activate the historical details and participate in the evolving creative process of the work. This connects with Christopher Small’s term ‘musicking’ which designates music as a process rather than as an object.³³⁴ Here, Cocteau puts his concept of *poésie* into practice (see Chapter four). The interpretive fluidity of the text imparts an improvisatory feel to the poem and has the effect of extending the music’s evocative range, which parallels that of the genre of jazz. The music is shaped through the poem and vice versa. Cocteau re-examines the Greek myth with a modern perspective. By juxtaposing the Golden Fleece myth against a modern jazz idiom, Cocteau generates a flow of seemingly unconnected images that disrupt any linearity. This defies temporal logic. The experience of timelessness is re-enforced by the continuous sonority of the repeated

³³² Ibid.: ‘un ballet de sons, toujours les mêmes et jamais semblables, sans qu’un sens précis se dégage’.

³³³ Taylor, ‘*La Musique*,’ 104.

³³⁴ Christopher Small, *Musicking, The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 1998).

‘é’ syllables.³³⁵ Cocteau creates a moment of tension at the word ‘tête’. He stretches the word with a long pause and further prolongs time. He extends the last phrase of first verse with a structural unit of eight syllables thereby prolonging its temporal dimension and shaping the text. He uses the same technique at the conclusion, but this time he stretched the phrase to twenty-three syllables (see below).

There is another connection between text and music: The allegorical voyage described in the myth is compared to the less aspirational journey suggested by the original title of the music, *Holidays*, composed by Dan Parrish.³³⁶

***La toison d’or* (1929)**

Bouclée, bouclée,/l’antiquité./Plate et roulée,/l’éternité.
 Plate et bouclée,/et cannelée,/j’imagine/ l’antiquité./Haute du nez./bouclée du pied./Plissée de la tête aux pieds./
 Plate et roulée,/l’éternité./Plate, bouclée,/l’antiquité./
 Plate, bouclée/et annelée;/ annelée et cannelée./Ailée, mou-
 lée, moutonnée./La rose mouillée,/festonnée,/boutonnée et
 déboutonnée./La mer sculptée et contournée./La colonne
 aux cheveux frisés. Antiquité, bouclée, bouclée: Jeunesse
 de l’éternité.

***The Golden Fleece* (1929)³³⁷**

Curly, curly, /antiquity/flat and rolled/eternity.
 flat, curly/and fluted/I imagine/antiquity/Top of the nose/ curl of the
 foot/pleated from head to toe/
 Flat and curly/eternity/flat, curly/antiquity/
 flat, curly/and corrugated/ corrugated and fluted/winged, moulded,
 frizzy. The wet rose, /festooned, /budded and unbuttoned. /
 By-passing the carved sea/ the curly haired pillar. Antiquity, curly, curly:
 Youth of eternity’.

The poem scans as shown below.³³⁸ The first line is made up of two, 2 syllable units, plus one 4 syllable unit, accented on the last syllable of each (shown in red).

Sometimes, however, Cocteau introduced a less pronounced second accent in the third syllable (shown in blue).

³³⁵ Taylor, ‘*La Musique*,’ 102.

³³⁶ See Dan Parrish, *Holidays* (transcription), score for voice and piano (Paris: Dan Parrish, 1924), accessed 8 December 2018, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k391794t/f1.image>

³³⁷ The English translation is only for an understanding of the French. The analysis of the rhythms and sonorities do not apply to the English version.

³³⁸ Séité, ‘Cocteau Jazzman,’ 137.

Bouclée, bouclée/ l'antiquité./ Plate et roulée./
 [1-2], [1-2], / [1-2-3-4]. / [1-----2-3-4]

Cocteau constructed his poem using other combinations of single, double, triple and quadruple syllabic units. He formulated the variations in his patterns of rhythm and sonority (see below). By altering the combination and distribution of syllabic groupings, he was able to disrupt the vocal stresses.

Bouclée, bouclée./l'antiquité./Plate et roulée./l'éternité.
 1-2 1-2 / 1-2-3-4 / 1 1 1-2 / 1-2-3-4

Plate et bouclée./et cannelée./j'imagine/ l'antiquité./Haute du
 1 1 1-2 / 1 1-2-3 / 1-2-3 / 1-2-3-4 / 1 1

nez./bouclée du pied./Plissée de la tête aux pieds./
 1 / 1-2 1 1 / 1-2 1 1 1 1 /

Plate et roulée./l'éternité./Plate, bouclée./l'antiquité./
 1 1 1-2 / 1-2-3-4 / 1 1-2 / 1-2-3-4 /

Plate, bouclée/et annelée;/ annelée et cannelée./Ailée, mou-
 1 1-2 / 1 1-2-3 / 1-2-3 1 1-2-3 / 1-2 1-
 lée, moutonnée./La rose mouillée./festonnée./boutonnée et
 2 1-2-3 / 1 1 1-2 / 1-2-3 / 1-2-3 1

déboutonnée./La mer sculptée et contournée./La colonne
 1-2-3-4 / 1 1 1-2 1 1-2-3 / 1 1-2

aux cheveux frisés. Antiquité, bouclée, bouclée: Jeunesse
 1 1-2 1-2 1-2-3-4 1-2 1-2 1-2

de l'éternité.
 1 1-2-3-4

Because of the prosodic fluidity of *Le toison d'or*, Cocteau is able to experiment with improvisation of speech rhythms accompanied by music, within the jazz setting. Séité calls the recitation 'swing text'.³³⁹ Cocteau established rhythmic patterns, nearly always starting words on the beat but sometimes changing his vocal rhythm depending on word and syllabic repetitions. For example, *annelée et cannelée* has a fixed rhythm arrangement 1-2-3/1-2-3 (with the accents shown in red), but he doubles the metre in

³³⁹ Ibid., 138: 'texte qui swingue'.

the last phrase of the line *plissée de la tête aux pieds*, a technique often found in jazz.

The second verse is similarly structured.

The poem strikingly echoes the melodic repetitions and variations found in, and based on, the jazz motifs of Dan Parrish's *Holidays* (1924),³⁴⁰ which became its theme.³⁴¹ Dan Parrish composed *Holidays*, a song and fox-trot, to be used as general repertoire for his orchestra.³⁴² It is not proposed that Cocteau consciously wrote a 'jazz poem',³⁴³ but the fact is, he used a combination of repetitive and rhythmic structures to construct a 'text with swing' before he had even heard jazz.³⁴⁴ The use of repetitive rhythmic structures, similar enough but slightly different, is reminiscent of the oral storytelling tradition of Greek mythology. Homeric texts relied upon repeated verbal formulae, such as the repetitive use of the phrase the 'wine-dark sea' found in the *Iliad*.³⁴⁵ Apart from the potent expressive quality of the words, the narrator uses such structures, as a rhetorical device, to navigate his storytelling and to give himself time to vary his delivery. Each time the words recur there is more of an intuitive response to evoke meaning. The listener cannot process the language as fast as it is heard, and the recurring axiom assists in memorising the story as it develops—by retrospectively signposting the narrative and making anterior connections. The repetitions, if closely placed, contribute to the build-up of tension, which is comparable to the use of rhythmic, melodic or harmonic repetitions in musical compositions.

In the recording, Cocteau assumes the role of principal soloist. These solo improvisations are found between the opening and closing occurrences of theme A. He followed the saxophone and trumpet solos: he participated in a similar improvisational

³⁴⁰ Parrish, *Holidays*.

³⁴¹ Séité, 'Cocteau Jazzman,' 135.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 140.

³⁴³ My terminology.

³⁴⁴ Séité, 'Cocteau Jazzman,' 138.

³⁴⁵ See Milman Parry, 'Studies in the Epic Technique of Oral Verse-Making: I. Homer and Homeric Style', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 41 (1930), 73–148.

space. He likened the saxophone to the human voice, describing how ‘[it heaved] a long human sigh’.³⁴⁶ Apart from literally ‘giving voice’ to his text with this performance, he also liberated his authorial voice.³⁴⁷ In terms of Cocteau’s solo, the word improvised is not an obvious choice. First, as a non-musician, improvisation was a less natural technique for him. Second, Cocteau’s vocal improvisation was severely limited by the repetitious rhythmic momentum of the text, compared to the musical freedom within jazz instrumental sections. Yet, at the same time, the improvisational style of the sound he experienced whilst recording with jazz musicians, encouraged him to experiment with his delivery of the words. A creative tension is set up between the constraints of regular rhythms overlaid by a more floating rubato-style rhythmic layer. Jazz was unique in the musical scene of that time because of its improvisational style, whereby new melodies were spontaneously created over repetitive cycles of chord changes that varied according to melodic contour or harmonic changes. The guitar, piano, bass and drums can all act as solo instruments and, in turn, produce improvised melodic, harmonic or motivic variations as structural phrases and statements. Cocteau subverted the rhythms of word and syllabic stresses to create off beats in the same way that jazz syncopation alters the rhythmic emphasis of music. The vocal and musical renditions of *Le toison d’or* were aesthetically divergent. Yet, the conflict,³⁴⁸ as a ‘figure of dissonance’,³⁴⁹ could provoke a more dynamic interaction between the words and music, which was new to Cocteau’s aural landscape.

Cocteau was less experienced in music and, therefore, unable to adopt the essential hearer/heard reciprocal performance process—a fundamental characteristic of instrumental improvisation.³⁵⁰ Hearing the orchestra, and being heard by them, was

³⁴⁶ Cocteau, *Carte Blanche*, 105: ‘le saxophone qui pousse un long soupir humain’.

³⁴⁷ See Edward T. Cone, *The Composer’s Voice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).

³⁴⁸ Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, 103.

³⁴⁹ Albright, *Panaesthetics*, 210.

³⁵⁰ Séité, ‘Cocteau Jazzman,’ 140: ‘écoutant/écouté’.

fundamental to the freedom of responsive play during jazz solos, and ensured a continuous creative evolution of the music. The solo, given on any instrument, would be a free response to what was heard from the orchestra, usually in a question and answer pattern. Similarly, the orchestra would improvise in response to the solo. The vocal replies are harder to deliver, because of the very nature of words; nevertheless, the call and response patterns are not quite relinquished. There are indications that the band responded to Cocteau's recitation by regularly shortening the '32-bar period by two measures'³⁵¹ (made up of two sixteen-bar phrases), so that the music coincided with the vocal entries and was played more softly when Cocteau entered as soloist. In turn, the poet modified certain spoken passages according to the musical structure. He announced *bouclée, bouclée* with no music, and began *l'antiquité* on the downbeat, then adapted *j'imagine l'antiquité* to finish on the last bar of that musical phrase. These are examples of the musico-poetic dialogue in the recording. Cocteau's introduces the poem, with no musical accompaniment for 6 seconds: 'Un poème d'*Opéra*, dit par l'auteur, *La Toison d'or* (a poem from *Opéra* spoken by the author, *La Toison d'or*).'³⁵²

There was a revision of text at the time of recording, which accommodated the original final phrase, *Antiquité, bouclée, bouclée: Jeunesse de l'éternité*, which asserts itself as the conclusion. Cocteau modified the last phrase of the poem by repeating the word *bouclée*, to restore the pattern of the first line four-syllable units. He framed the poem by reversing *bouclée, bouclée, antiquité* from the start so that he concluded with *antiquité, bouclée, bouclée*. He also demonstrated his response to the musical sonority by intuitively providing gaps for the music and adjusting his reading so that it was music ready. He indicated an intuitive response to the music which compensated for his

³⁵¹ Taylor, 'La Musique,' 105.

³⁵² Jean Cocteau, *La Toison d'or*, accessed 31 December 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=9qQ-nvLbcD4

lack of experience. I maintain that it was more the improvisatory experience of the recording that was important for Cocteau than to classify his performance as jazz.

What began as an experimental studio recording was transformed into a live performance at the Salle Gaveau, in December 1929, as part of a concert celebrating the tenth anniversary of *Les Six* (See Figure 2.24).³⁵³ The piece was performed as an interlude and was very reminiscent of Cocteau's first attempt at a musico-poetic recital with *Caramel Mou* in 1921. The *Huit poèmes de Jean Cocteau* were sung in the first half, before the premiere of *La toison d'Or*. Consequently, Cocteau was able to hear Auric's musical setting of his poems prior to his own response and interpretation of text in dialogue with the jazz.

³⁵³ Carl B. Schmidt, *Entrancing Muse: A Documented Biography of Francis Poulenc* (Hillsdale, N.Y.: Pendragon Press, 2001), 174.

Table 2.1 Analysis *La Toison d'or*.³⁵⁴

Introduction	Cocteau's introduces the poem, with no musical accompaniment for 6 seconds: 'Un poème d' <i>Opéra</i> , dit par l'auteur, <i>La Toison d'or</i> ' (a poem from <i>Opéra</i> spoken by the author, <i>La Toison d'or</i>).
Exposition of theme A (16 bars)	Tutti. This section is characterised by crescendos and decrescendos not usually present in jazz. They prepare for Cocteau's vocal entry.
Repeat exposition of theme A (16 bars)	Tutti playing melody then saxophones foregrounded. This instrumental phrase rhythmically replicates the speech rhythms. Melodic change in call and response pattern. ³⁵⁵
Transition (6 bars)	Tutti mirrors speech rhythms but less prominent in mix.
Exposition Theme B (16 bars)	Saxophones still prominent in the mix. Then trumpet takes up melody, in penultimate bar of second 8 bars, the band drops out and prepares for Cocteau's vocal entry, that begins <i>bouclée, bouclée</i> . Cymbals prominently maintain beat, and rest of the band orchestrates imminent change of vocal entry. The trumpets solo resumes, accompanied by band that plays quietly, in second section. Cocteau begins with <i>l'antiquité</i> on downbeat and finishes with <i>la tête aux pieds</i> . [1] The trumpet melody plays continuously with Cocteau, occasionally playing staccato imitating his delivery. Second 8 bar section has 2 silent beats, prior to Cocteau's entry.
Transition (6 bars)	Cocteau continues <i>plate et roulée</i> to <i>bouclée et annelée</i> , soft tutti.
Theme B (16 bars)	Saxophone then takes up the melody, for 14 bars. There is a half bar's silence followed by Cocteau's entry. He recites <i>annelée et cannelée</i> to <i>aux cheveux frisés</i> . The orchestra, especially the saxophones, play a

³⁵⁴ This analysis is developed from Taylor, 'La Musique,' 106; and Séité, 'Cocteau Jazzman,' 138–139. I also acknowledge my discussion with my colleague Irene Babsky.

³⁵⁵ The terms call and response are terms used in the context of folk and jazz music. They are the equivalent of antecedent and consequent when applied to classical music.

	countermelody to Cocteau's voice which is foregrounded. He interrupts his recitation on the word <i>frisés</i> (fourth bars of this section) and on reading, he reconstructs the strophic structure of the poem from the printed one.
Theme A (16 bars)	[2] Cricket Smith plays solo trumpet, the melody is extended by elongated, legato notes. Cocteau drops out. Trumpet plays a long drawn out legato melody, in contrast to Cocteau's rapid punctuated declamatory style. Cocteau resumes his recitation (seventh to tenth bars) in an emphatic tone which announces <i>antiquité bouclée, bouclée: jeunesse de l'éternité</i> , as the conclusion. He felt the need at this point of musico-poetic intersection, to establish a sort of textual coda. He repeats <i>bouclée</i> to re-establish to the four-syllable rhythmic pattern of the start.
Coda (6 bars)	Tutti finishing on 7 th .
	The above sections [1][2], were developed to play in rhythmic counterpoint.

Figure 2.24 Concert programme Salle Gaveau, 18 December 1929.³⁵⁶

WEDNESDAY, 18 DECEMBER 1929 CONCERT		
"Le Groupe des Six"		
<i>Album des Six</i>	Auric, Durey, Honegger Milhaud, Poulenc, Taille- ferre	Andrée Vaurabourg, piano
Sonata for Violin and Piano	Tailleferre	Robert Kretly, violin Tailleferre, piano
<i>Huit poèmes de Jean Cocteau</i>	Auric	Suzanne Peignot, so- prano; Auric, piano
String Quartet no. 2	Milhaud	Krettly Quartet
Intermède: <i>La Toi- soin d'Or</i>	Cocteau	Cocteau (first per- formance)
Sonatine for Flute and Piano	Durey	Marcel Moyse, flute A. Vaurabourg, piano
Sonata for Cello and Piano	Honegger	André Navarra, cello A. Vaurabourg, piano
Trio	Poulenc	Roger Lamolrette, ob. Gustave Dhérin, bsn. Poulenc, piano
<i>Six mélodies</i>	Auric, Durey, Honegger Milhaud, Poulenc, Taille- ferre	Peignot, soprano the authors, piano

The juxtaposition of *Le Toison d'Or* and *Huit poèmes de Jean Cocteau* in performance represents a (musico-poetic) intersection of the transdisciplinary function of *poésie*, as a practical application of the theoretical concept proposed in Part II.

³⁵⁶ From *Le Guide du Concert et des théâtres lyriques* (16 December 1929), 289, cited in Schmidt, *Entrancing Muse*, 175.

Chapter 3: Georges Auric (1899–1983): Cocteau’s Musical Collaborator

Introduction

In Chapter two I discussed the constant significance of music in Cocteau’s life and artistic work. This chapter centres on the collaboration between Georges Auric and Jean Cocteau, particularly in terms of their shared transdisciplinary aesthetic, and primarily looking from the perspective of their musical sensibilities. Auric was considered a ‘visual composer’, well suited to the medium of film.³⁵⁷ Primary sources provide an insight into the way their collaboration worked. The letters that they exchanged and subsequent detailed descriptions of their collaboration, found in interviews given by both men, reveal the nature of their evolving creative partnership as experienced through cinematic sound and music.³⁵⁸ Both men found that the film genre satisfied their shared transdisciplinary aesthetic and enhanced their musical collaboration. The interviews, which I critique here, detail Cocteau and Auric’s working method for film music (from both their perspectives). These establish a collaborative pattern that can then be applied to their joint earlier projects in other genres. Cocteau completely trusted Auric with the musical composition part of the project and did not want to hear any music prior to the completion of filming. Indeed, he preferred the element of surprise.³⁵⁹ Their collaboration appeared to function better from a distance. Once the film score was complete, Auric handed over a recording to Cocteau who then edited the images with the music. Cocteau used the specific technique of accidental synchronisation when

³⁵⁷ James Deaville and Simon Wood, ‘Synchronisation by the Grace of God? The Film/Music Collaboration of Jean Cocteau and Georges Auric’, *Canadian University Music Review* 22, no. 1 (2001), 106.

³⁵⁸ See Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*; Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film*; and Auric, ‘Témoignages,’ 57–71.

³⁵⁹ Jean Cocteau, “*La Belle et la bête*”: *journal d’un film* (Monaco: Rocher, 1958), 240: ‘Voici le jour de la musique. J’ai refusé d’entendre ce que Georges Auric composait. J’en veux recevoir le choc sans préparatifs. Une longue habitude de travailler ensemble m’oblige à lui faire une confiance absolue’.

editing both image and sound.³⁶⁰ He understood early on, after seeing *Le Sacre du printemps*, how much he preferred asynchronicity in film, so much so, that he commented in *Le Coq et l'arlequin*:

I have heard *Le Sacre* again without the dances; I would like to go over them again. In my memory, the impetus and the method balanced each other, as in the orchestra. The defect consisted in the parallelism of the music and the movement, in their lack of interplay, of counterpoint.³⁶¹

Thus, he identified the absence of interplay (that he called parallelism), between the gestures and sounds of the ballet, as a deficiency in any work, long before he had edited his first film.³⁶²

Pierre Caizergues reveals how, ‘from the beginning, there was a reciprocal admiration and emotional collaboration that was to nourish their friendship’.³⁶³ Indeed, he identifies an added emotional dimension to their close working association. The two men sustained a fifty-year friendship, as well as an enduring professional partnership. Auric was intelligent, cultured and very intellectually aware. He was well-read in poetry and literature, and he was interested in film and cinematography.³⁶⁴ He shared a mutual multidisciplinary approach with Jean Cocteau but Auric was better trained and more proficient in music than Cocteau. Previously unpublished interviews between Auric and Stéphane Audel in 1955 were transcribed by Malou Haine. They provide a rich source of first-hand thoughts, reminiscences and other details. These are particularly valuable because there is little available primary material on Auric. The correspondence between Auric and Cocteau, collated by Pierre Caizergues, also reveals much about their

³⁶⁰ Laura Anderson, ‘The Poetry of Sound: Jean Cocteau, Film and Early Sound Design’ (PhD thesis, Royal Holloway University of London, 2013), 111.

³⁶¹ Cocteau, *Le Coq* (1979), 92: ‘J’ai réentendu *Le Sacre* sans les danses; je demande à les revoir. Dans mes souvenirs l’impulsion et la méthode s’y équilibrent, comme dans l’orchestre. Le défaut consistait dans le parallélisme de la musique et du mouvement, dans leur manqué de jeu, de contrepoint.’

³⁶² Jean Cocteau, *La Difficulté d’être* (1946; repr., Monaco: Rocher, 1983), 196: ‘De longue date, je cherchais à employer, autrement que par le cinématographe, le mystère du synchronisme accidentel’.

³⁶³ See ‘préface’ in Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 5: ‘dès le départ, sont présentes l’admiration réciproque, la complicité affective qui vont nourrir cette amitié’.

³⁶⁴ Schmidt, *Écrits*, 1:4.

friendship, mutual encouragement, and discussions about projects.³⁶⁵ Auric and Cocteau, together and singly, contributed significantly to the Parisian, post-World War I, artistic revolution—their involvement in the development of a new identity for French music should not be underestimated. Auric was ten years younger than Cocteau, who therefore initially acted as his mentor (alongside Erik Satie), and became one of the most active members of *Les Six*.

Auric's Early Influences

Although Auric was a prolific composer, his interests were not limited to music. From 1911, he had unlimited access to the personal library of Louis Combes (1873–1924) which enabled him to broaden his knowledge of literature and poetry.³⁶⁶ He came to appreciate painting and literature as much as music.³⁶⁷ Auric's conception of the complete artist resonated with Cocteau's idea of a 'universal athlete'.³⁶⁸ Intellectually, the two had so much in common that the potential for the future success of their collaboration—before the two had even met—is predictable and convincing (even at such an early stage). Auric understood how his early introduction to other art forms, by Combes, influenced his entire career. He explained: 'I was—and I remain—a composer in search of painters and writers'.³⁶⁹ He believed it was his discovery of literature that, at such a young age, aroused his interest in vocal music and setting poems to music.

More specifically, he wrote:

I became a composer, you understand, possibly because of all the literature I discovered at the same time as music. My first compositions were not small piano pieces, but short *mélodies*, because when I took home poetry anthologies belonging to my teacher, in the evening, I wanted to set them to music [...] I tried to accumulate collections of

³⁶⁵ Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*.

³⁶⁶ Auric, *Quand j'étais*, 14: 'il m'a largement ouvert la bibliothèque où, lecteur passionné lui-même, il réunissait les auteurs essentiels de son temps'.

³⁶⁷ Auric, 'Entretiens,' 30: 'Non seulement cet homme était un musicien et un artiste merveilleux, mail il était un artiste complet Non seulement il aimait la musique, non seulement il adorait la musique, mais en même temps, il aimait la peinture, il aimait la littérature'.

³⁶⁸ See Jean Cocteau, Preface to *Les Mariées de la tour Eiffel* (1922) in *Théâtre complet*, ed. Michel Décaudin (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), 34–38.

³⁶⁹ Auric, *Quand j'étais*, 37: 'J'étais—et je demeure—un compositeur a la recherche des peintres et des écrivains, perdus avec trop d'autres compagnons de travail sur la route qui ne fut pas toujours facile'.

mélodies and that is how, I think, I decided in a much more precise way, what my career would be.³⁷⁰

The French ‘mettre en musique’ (literally, to put into music) better expresses the idea of an active transformation from text to music. The English equivalent, ‘to set to music’, implies a more passive juxtaposition of one against the other. This is relevant and significant in the light of Auric’s transdisciplinary compositional method, discussed in more specific detail in Chapters six and seven.

Auric made another very important connection when he met Léon Vallas in 1913.³⁷¹ Vallas arranged a performance of some of Auric’s songs in Paris—this was before Auric had even left Montpellier. So Auric’s reputation preceded his arrival.³⁷² Vallas’s influence also extended to Auric’s literary talent. He assisted in the publication of the young musician’s first articles in *Revue française de musique*.³⁷³

Auric, Cocteau and Satie

Satie was very influential in Auric’s musical life. The latter was fascinated by Satie’s music—to such an extent that he was keen to meet Satie as soon as he arrived in Paris, in 1913.³⁷⁴ Auric stated: ‘our poet [Cocteau] as early as 1914, would meet, understand and love, a musician, someone I had also loved and understood, as a child, long before meeting him’.³⁷⁵ Cocteau and Auric shared a recognition of Satie’s uniqueness.³⁷⁶

³⁷⁰ Auric, ‘Entretiens,’ 31: ‘Je les découvrais et c’est peut-être un peu cela qui m’a donné à cet âge, l’envie de mettre en musique quelques-uns de leurs poèmes. Je suis devenu compositeur, voyez-vous, peut-être un peu à cause de toute la littérature que je découvrais en même temps que la musique. J’ai composé tout d’abord, non pas des petits morceaux de piano, mais de petites mélodies, parce que quand j’emportais chez moi un des recueils que j’avais trouvés chez mon professeur—eh bien, le soir venu, j’avais envie de les mettre en musique [...] j’ai essayé d’accumuler des recueils de mélodies et, de cette façon—je crois que c’est décidé d’une façon beaucoup plus précise que ce qu’allait devenir ma carrière’.

³⁷¹ Leon Vallas, musicologist and music critic. He founded *La Revue Musicale de Lyon* in 1903, which became *Revue Française de Musique* in 1912. It was known as *Nouvelle Revue Musicale* between 1920–1925.

³⁷² Schmidt, *Écrits*, 1:8.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 1:9.

³⁷⁴ Auric discovered Satie’s *Trois Sarabandes* (nos. 2 and 3, 1887) which were published in *Musica (Album Musica)*, no. 103 (April 1911). See Robert Orledge, *Satie the Composer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 270.

³⁷⁵ Auric, *Quand j’étais*, 75: ‘notre poète allait—dès 1914—rencontrer, comprendre et aimer un musicien, celui qu’enfant j’avais aimé moi-même et compris avant de le connaître’.

³⁷⁶ Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 6.

It is important to evaluate the impact that Auric, Cocteau and Satie had on the development of the new French musical aesthetic and to reassess them in the light of their shared fundamental transdisciplinary creative approach. This is represented by:

1. Cocteau's musical manifesto, *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*, and his other writings and drawings (see Chapter two).
2. Satie's innovative musical compositions, which are made up of simple, clear melodic lines and an unembellished style, alongside his interart sensibilities, as demonstrated by his scores.³⁷⁷
3. Auric's written articles, his word settings (especially *Huit poemes de Jean Cocteau*, the case study here) and those of his musical works which endorse popular culture, such as music-hall, circus and jazz music.³⁷⁸

As Cocteau stated in *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*, Satie's compositions pioneered this new aesthetic. He described how 'Satie teaches us the ultimate boldness of our time: simplicity. Has he not proved that he could refine better than anyone? He clears, he strips the rhythm bare'.³⁷⁹ All three were associated with the group of young composers known as *Les Six*. Auric was its most active member, and Cocteau and Satie acted as the group's promoters and mentors. It is evident that, despite their age difference (Auric was only 20, Cocteau 30 and Satie 53), all three men were intellectually and musically interconnected. They held each other in high esteem. Auric wrote that:

I had the right to a sort of permanent commentary of the two collaborators' work. I was lucky enough to be quickly adopted by the poet.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁷ See Caroline Potter, ed., *Erik Satie: Music, Art and Literature* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).

³⁷⁸ Georges Auric, 'Mais, adieu New York!...Le Bonjour Paris' (1 April 1920), in *Écrits sur la musique de Georges Auric*, ed. Carl B. Schmidt (Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen Press, 2009), 1:195: 'In the meantime, we have had the circus, the music hall, street parades, and American orchestras How can one forget the Casino de Paris or the little circus on the Boulevard Saint-Jacques with its trombones and drums? It's been an awakening'.

³⁷⁹ Cocteau, *Le Coq* (2009), 61: 'Satie enseigne la plus grande audace à notre époque: être simple. N'a-t-il pas donné la preuve qu'il pourrait raffiner plus que personne ? Or, il déblaie, il dégage, il dépouille le rythme'.

³⁸⁰ Auric, *Quand j'étais*, 75: 'Quant à moi, j'avais droit à une sorte de récit permanent du travail des deux complices [Cocteau and Satie] ayant eu la chance d'être très vite adopté par le poète'.

Satie acknowledged Cocteau's role in ending the 'the provincial boredom and dogma of musical impressionism',³⁸¹ and was explicit in his praise of Auric. Satie was pivotal in uniting Auric and Cocteau, and his influence would shape future collaborations between them (of which the *Huit poèmes de Jean Cocteau* was the first published example). They acknowledged the difficulty of their chosen aesthetic journey. Auric and Cocteau used different metaphors to represent what they regarded as a continuous artistic struggle. Auric's was 'a difficult road',³⁸² and Cocteau's was 'a line of combat [which] runs through my work'.³⁸³

Auric and Cocteau

Auric's exposure and acceptance into Parisian social and artistic life was meteoric. The impact he had on both musical and literary worlds was all the more remarkable because he was mixing with people so much older and more experienced than him, and yet, he made a great impression upon them. Despite his age, he was a musical and literary force to be reckoned with.

Auric indicated that he first became aware of Cocteau in 1914 at an event at the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier.³⁸⁴ Catherine Miller pinpoints the date that Auric and Cocteau met as June 1915 at the home of Valentine Gross.³⁸⁵

Auric questioned, 'How could one possibly not want to discover more about this man?'³⁸⁶ A few weeks later, he again caught sight of Cocteau; this time with Stravinsky at Pierre Monteux's Casino de Paris production of *Le Sacre du Printemps* (1914),³⁸⁷ when he finally heard *Le Sacre*. Prior to that, Auric had only heard reports

³⁸¹ Volta, *Satie/Cocteau*, 86, n.119: 'Remercions Cocteau de nous aider à sortir des habitudes d'ennui provincial et professoral des dernières musiques impressionnistes'.

³⁸² Auric, *Quand j'étais*, 37: 'sur la route qui ne fut pas toujours facile'.

³⁸³ Cocteau, *La Difficulté* (Rocher), 160: 'une ligne de combat traverse mes ouvrages'.

³⁸⁴ Auric, *Quand j'étais*, 74.

³⁸⁵ Miller, *Jean Cocteau*, 8: 'C'est chez [Valentine Gross] que Cocteau fait la connaissance d'Arthur Honegger et de Georges Auric, en juin 1915'.

³⁸⁶ Auric, *Quand j'étais*, 74: 'comment ne pas essayer de le mieux découvrir?'

³⁸⁷ Auric, 'On the Diaghileff Ballet', 1:151.

about the infamous ballet (premiered at Théâtre des Champs-Élysées on 29 May 1913), that had provoked a musical and theatrical revolution. With its avant-garde choreography by Nijinsky and with Stravinsky's music—constructed from dissonant harmonies and strident repetitive rhythms—the production caused a sensation. Auric was thrilled by merely hearing about the performance, and his excitement was exacerbated because *Le Sacre* was being performed in what was 'already a music-hall'.³⁸⁸ It fulfilled his populist ambition to subvert the system of elitist music venues; he noted, in *Quand j'étais là*, how 'the Casino de Paris, on that day, became a very elite music venue'.³⁸⁹ Auric shared Cocteau's fascination with 'popular Parisian entertainment venues that included cabarets, music halls, the Cirque Médrano and street fairs'.³⁹⁰ *Le Sacre* represented the 'living art' during a time of cultural change,³⁹¹ precipitated by the turbulence of its reception. Auric anticipated how both he and Cocteau were on the threshold of a new era—personally, artistically and historically. He expressed what was to become the basis of their aesthetic journey. He declared that:

There is perhaps one thing about [Cocteau] in particular, which will never cease to astonish me. This is the indisputably unrivalled part he has unceasingly and how brilliantly played since he, too, experienced the revelation of all that would one day be almost generally acknowledged as the authentic 'living' art of a century...Jean Cocteau *possessed* the talent, the genius—very special, very rare and very persuasive—of bringing to light, talent and genius not yet recognised. Our poet would readily become musician, painter, sculptor in turn—as well as dramatist, film director or choreographer... He never learnt to sing, but I have heard him play the piano with disconcerting and irresistible authority! I am sure that, had he wished, he would have been a composer of music—a composer, no doubt, as skilful, inspired and bold as one might expect... For me it was enough to meet him and see him again and soon become one of his friends; he only had to chat with me, attempting to 'pin-point' some of the essential problems of my art, in the days which followed the volcanic and intensely preoccupying discovery of *Le Sacre*... Yes in future we were to pay tribute—and how gratefully!—to the brilliant Stravinsky!³⁹²

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

³⁸⁹ Auric, *Quand j'étais*, 74: 'dans un Casino de Paris devenu ce jour-là un très haut lieu de la musique'.

³⁹⁰ Schmidt, *Écrits*, 1:4.

³⁹¹ Auric, 'On the Diaghileff Ballet', 1:153.

³⁹² Ibid.

The above extract from Auric’s 1940 article *On the Diaghilev Ballet and Jean Cocteau* is revealing on many levels.³⁹³ He clearly remembered the strong impression made by Cocteau that evening at the Casino de Paris. Auric showed incredible maturity in his confident predictions of the friendship and collaborative possibilities that would follow. Auric’s esteem did not decline over the years. Their mutual admiration is evident: indeed, Auric praised the way that Cocteau brought ‘to light, talent [...]’.³⁹⁴ Cocteau’s version is that Auric ‘illuminated’ his texts (see Figure 3.1). It is interesting how they both use the metaphor of light as symbol of exposing talent or creative process: something was being illuminated or brought forth which had otherwise been hidden. Figure 3.2 is a facsimile of the original letter, in Cocteau’s own hand. Antoine Goléa, added the following caption to the letter, in his book:

This adorable and profound text, like all those that emerge from Cocteau’s pen, resonating with the newest, and sincerest of friendships, was sent by the poet to the Munich Theatre, to be inserted into the programme of the [Auric’s] creation of *Chemin de lumière*.³⁹⁵

Chemin de lumière was a one act Ballet scenario, written by Antoine Goléa, set to music by Auric, and first performed in 1951.

Figure 3.1 Letter from Jean Cocteau to Georges Auric (1952).³⁹⁶

Where there is more brilliance, more enthusiasm and more tenderness. Where there is more lightness more weight, more gravity, without that thoughtful look that fools’ souls, there is Georges Auric and his pen that tears, pierces and caresses the manuscript paper. We have always worked together. He has always illuminated my texts and my images with a sudden light or the burning of bonfires whose shadows dance.

I send him my brotherly salutation.
Jean Cocteau

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 152.

³⁹⁵ Goléa, *Auric*, opposite 32: ‘Ce texte adorable et profond, comme tout ce qui sort de la plume de Cocteau, vibrant de la plus sincère, la plus jeune des amitiés, a été envoyé par le poète au théâtre de Munich, pour être inséré dans le programme de la création de *Chemin de lumière*’.

³⁹⁶ Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 130: ‘Ce qu’il y a de plus vif, de plus aigu, du plus tender. Ce qu’il y a de plus léger et de plus lourd, de plus grave qui trompe les âmes, voilà Georges Auric

Figure 3.2 Facsimile of Letter from Jean Cocteau to Georges Auric, 1952.³⁹⁷

Image removed due to
copyright reasons

In the original edition of *Carte Blanche* (1920), Cocteau described Auric as ‘his favourite musician’.³⁹⁸ The comment is particularly striking because their association was so new, but Cocteau may only have written what he thought Auric wanted to hear, in order to impress him. But the extent of his regard for Auric is consistent and clear from other letters and articles: indeed, Pierre Caizergues reveals how ‘from the beginning, there was a reciprocal admiration and emotional collaboration that was to nourish their friendship’.³⁹⁹ He identifies an added emotional dimension to their close working association. Cocteau showed an ongoing confidence in Auric, evidenced by him calling on Auric to contribute to all of his film projects between 1930 and 1960. He

et sa plume qui déchire, troue et caresse le papier à musique. Nous avons toujours travaillé ensemble. Et toujours il a éclairé mes textes et mes images d’une lumière brutale ou de cet embrasement des feux de joie dont les ombres dansent’.

³⁹⁷ Goléa, *Auric*, opposite 32.

³⁹⁸ Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 69: ‘à mon cher Georges Auric, le musicien que je préfère’.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 5: ‘dès le départ, sont présentes l’admiration réciproque, la complicité affective qui vont nourrir cette amitié’.

also recommended that Auric participate in musical collaborations in films for which Cocteau wrote the scripts but did not direct.⁴⁰⁰

Auric complimented Cocteau on his musical ability; so much so that he felt he could discuss problems of his own music with him. His description of Cocteau as an able and convincing musical performer, whilst speculating on his potential as a composer, raises the question as to why, in fact, Cocteau did not choose to become more proficient in music. After all, he used all other forms of creative expression: despite a demonstrable musical affinity, he never composed any music.

It is my hypothesis that the missing element of musical composition was mitigated for Cocteau, to some extent, through his long-term association with Auric. The latter provided Cocteau with musical knowledge and ideas. Cocteau recognised in Auric shared artistic sensibilities, although their working methods differed.

The connections between Auric and Cocteau are rich and complex, and they evolved over time.⁴⁰¹ Cocteau admired Auric, and he never stopped supporting him.

He publicly declared the birth of their friendship in his dedication of *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* to Auric in 1918. Auric was working on the musical setting of the *Huit poèmes de Jean Cocteau* around this time.⁴⁰² Auric confirmed, how important and relevant it was to read Cocteau's treatise to achieve an understanding of the musical works of the time, in his 1979 preface to *Le Coq*.⁴⁰³

Auric understates his conviction that Cocteau was an innovator and promoter of ideas, with the word 'persuasive'.⁴⁰⁴ But not everyone was convinced of Cocteau's creative brilliance. Indeed, one poet, bookseller and commentator of the time, Adrienne

⁴⁰⁰ Deaville and Wood, 'Synchronisation,' 107.

⁴⁰¹ Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 7.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁰³ Catherine Miller, 'Lectures du *Coq et l'Arlequin* par le Groupe des Six au travers de quelques mélodies inspirées par Jean Cocteau' in *Jean Cocteau: textes et musique*, ed. David Gullentops and Malou Haine (Sprimont: Mardaga, 2005), 16.

⁴⁰⁴ Auric, 'On the Diaghileff Ballet'.

Monnier (1892–1955), proposed a different perspective when she wrote ‘It is never he that first mounts the breach, but it always he that plants the flag’.⁴⁰⁵ Cocteau’s talent for self-promotion meant that he was attributed for innovations that were not necessarily his. The idea is reinforced by author Truman Capote (1924–1984), who declared:

But it is in the guise of catalytic agent that he has been most capable: as an innovator for, and propagandist of, other men’s ideas and gifts—from Radiguet to Genet, Satie to Auric, Picasso to Berard, Worth to Dior. Cocteau has lived absolutely inside his time, and more than anyone else, formed French taste in the present century.⁴⁰⁶

However, Capote acknowledges Cocteau’s artistic role as a creative force who influenced the development of a new French identity during a radical time of change.

Auric felt it necessary to protect his friend when he stated that ‘I would not like to say or write anything about him that may be taken as ingratitude or denial’.⁴⁰⁷ Auric was aware of the negative view many people had of Cocteau and he did not want anything he expressed to be misconstrued. He wanted his readers to become as devoted to Cocteau as he was. He continued: ‘I loved him, I admired him, and I wish that all his ever-increasing readers become in turn, his friends’.⁴⁰⁸ Auric’s devotion was unconditional and yet at times, Auric chose to distance himself from certain projects once he had composed the music.⁴⁰⁹ However, he was true to his word and never publicly criticised his colleague and friend. At the beginning, their relationship resembled that of father and son, because of the ten-year age gap; but Auric later became more independent, and Cocteau depended on Auric for support in the musical sphere.

⁴⁰⁵ Adrienne Monnier, *The Very Rich Hours of Adrienne Monnier*, trans. Richard McDougall (New York: Scribner, 1976), 90.

⁴⁰⁶ Truman Capote, *The Dogs Bark: Public People and Private Places* (New York: Random House Books, 1973), 12.

⁴⁰⁷ Auric, *Quand j’étais*, 74: ‘Je ne voudrais rien dire, rien écrire à son sujet qui pût être interprété comme une ingratitude ou un reniement’.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid. ‘Je l’aimais, je l’admirais et je souhaite que, devenus de plus en plus nombreux, ses lecteurs deviennent à leur tour ses amis’.

⁴⁰⁹ See Colin Roust, *Georges Auric: A Life in Music and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 103.

In his aptly named chapter, 'Birth of a friendship',⁴¹⁰ Auric wrote 'Jean Cocteau was very closely intermingled in my life'.⁴¹¹ He also sensed, at the time, that they were on the brink of an artistic revolution to which they would all contribute. Auric identified the moment when:

the name of Jean Cocteau, associated with those of Satie and Picasso, was rapidly to become famous. This was the beginning of a far-reaching aesthetic controversy (which is far from ended) and which was soon to be more clearly stated in a sort of manifesto, *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*, published shortly afterwards by our friend.⁴¹²

It is rather surprising that Auric's admiration for Cocteau did not impact negatively on his own creativity. Quietly self-confident, Auric was still able to assert his own voice within the collaborative relationship because he invariably maintained his distance during their collaborations. Cocteau was more of an extrovert and was involved in more self-promotion than Auric but, nevertheless, the latter maintained his own artistic identity, not only in musical terms but in the other art forms as well. Auric acknowledged that they both gained access to places because of Cocteau's reputation: 'the prodigious activity of *our* poet, whose devotion, affection and friendship rapidly gained us admittance to the most inaccessible places'.⁴¹³ Cocteau, in turn, declared his admiration for Auric, in his dedication of *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* (a work he considered exceedingly important). It was a public declaration of his commitment to their future friendship and fruitful collaboration.⁴¹⁴ He further praised Auric's creative courage as:

a musician of your age announces the richness and grace of a generation, which no longer winks, no longer shields or hides itself, is not in denial, nor fears to love or defend that which it loves.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., 74–76.

⁴¹¹ Ibid., 74: 'Jean Cocteau a été mêlé très étroitement à ma vie'.

⁴¹² Auric, 'On the Diaghileff Ballet', 1:154.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ Cocteau, quoted in Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 5.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.: 'Un musicien de votre âge annonce la richesse, la grâce d'une génération qui ne cligne pas l'œil, qui ne se masque pas, ne renie pas, ne se cache pas, ne craint ni d'aimer, ni de défendre ce qu'elle aime'.

Cocteau regarded Auric as the forerunner of a new, bold generation that was not afraid to break with tradition and be artistic innovators. It is astonishing how, from the outset, the very young Auric immediately recognised and understood the profound artistic connection he would share with Cocteau. He proclaimed:

What impassioned me, impassioned us, our common enthusiasms, our common restraints, I can evoke without even needing to close my eyes: the essential remains, accompanied of course by a series of the poet's dreams around my art, at the edge of some works of art, of some geniuses.⁴¹⁶

Is he suggesting that their work and ideas were not initially accepted, or was he modestly underestimating the influence of their collaborations on other works and artists? Auric was remarkably intuitive in predicting that their mutual vision and passions would result in a synergistic interaction between their respective arts. Significantly, he envisaged the essence of his music as encompassed and mediated by Cocteau's imaginative creativity. He regarded his works as compositional objects, surrounded by other artistic elements in an integrated way, rather than merely as accompaniments. Is Cocteau walking around Auric's music in the same way that their hero, Erik Satie, walked around his? Satie stated: 'before I compose a piece, I walk round it several times, accompanied by myself'.⁴¹⁷ In this context, the term is a metaphor for the way Satie considered the music in his imagination and inserted himself into the work, as part of his compositional process. The suggestion of being able to move around a piece of music as an object, endows it with a spatial dimension.

This opens the possibility of metaphorical space around music—which exists within a text. Why is it important to attribute this spatial dimension to both Auric's music and Cocteau's written texts? I maintain that it is precisely the existence of such a

⁴¹⁶ Auric, *Quand j'étais*, 78–79: 'Ce qui me passionnait, nous passionnait, nos communs enthousiasmes, nos communes mises en garde, nul besoin pour les évoquer de fermer à mon tour les yeux: l'essentiel en demeure, accompagné, bien sûr, d'une série de rêveries du poète autour de mon art, en marge de quelques chefs-d'œuvre, de quelques génies'.

⁴¹⁷ Orledge, *Satie the Composer*, 142.

conceptual space which gives the *poésie* model its credibility—that is, as an analytical framework for the *Huit poèmes de Jean Cocteau*.

Auric needed to be involved in other art forms in order to expand his musical creativity. Those opportunities were made available through his close association with Cocteau. It was a reciprocal arrangement because Cocteau, similarly, needed Auric to adequately satisfy his multidisciplinary orientation. Auric was a ‘visual composer’ and Cocteau a ‘musical writer’—they both had a transdisciplinary artistic perception that was not limited to any particular art form, as described by Dayan’s fifth interart law.⁴¹⁸ Therefore, the collaborative process was their chosen preference. Cocteau encapsulated his idea for his ‘groupe amical’ in a 1922 preface for his multidisciplinary ballet, *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel* (1921). His aspiration was for how:

A play should be written, decorated, costumed, accompanied by music, played, danced by a single man. This complete athlete does not exist. It is therefore important to replace the individual with what most closely resembles an individual: a friendly group. There are many chapels, but few of such groups. I have had the chance to train a group of young musicians, poets and painters. The *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel*, is the vision of a poetic idea of which I am proud to have already greatly contributed.⁴¹⁹

Artistically, Cocteau wanted to be completely autonomous, but he realised his vision was unattainable. He did, however, get closer to his artistic ideal when he discovered the medium of film. Through film, he could harness the fundamentals of time, space, motion, speed and sound. He was deeply interested in these aspects and become the complete artist—which he called the *cinématographe*. Nevertheless, he still needed Auric—to compose the music for the films—and so their collaboration continued.

⁴¹⁸ Dayan, *Art as Music*, 3.

⁴¹⁹ Cocteau, *Les Mariées* (Décaudin), 38: ‘Une pièce de théâtre devrait être écrite, décorée, costumée, accompagnée de musique, jouée, dansée par un seul homme. Cette athlète complète n’existe pas. Il importe donc de remplacer l’individu par ce qui ressemble le plus à un individu: un groupe amical. Il existe beaucoup de chapelles, mais peu de ces groupes. J’ai la chance d’en former un avec quelques jeunes musiciens, poètes et peintres. *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel*, en bloc, sont l’image d’un état d’esprit poétique auquel je suis fier d’avoir déjà beaucoup contribué’.

Carl B. Schmidt, who has catalogued both Auric's writings and music, confirms that Auric was the inspiration for the 'non-musician Cocteau'. Indeed, Auric shared discussions that galvanised Cocteau into 'compos[ing]' *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*, a work entirely concerned 'with the state of serious music'.⁴²⁰ Schmidt effectively juxtaposes the terms 'non-musician' and 'composed' which sets up a tension, because composition is normally associated with music and the visual arts, rather than written texts.⁴²¹ It also indicates that Cocteau's musical sensibility is acknowledged by other commentators, notably David Gullentops, Malou Haine and Lyn Van de Wiele.

Auric documented the exact moment that *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* was conceived and developed at Cocteau's home, at rue d'Anjou, in 1917. He wrote how:

on the eve of, as on the day after *Parade*... Cocteau and I began long discussions which inevitably resulted in an understanding [article] to which I was quickly converted, namely *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*.⁴²²

I consider the work as collaborative (the musical content of the book was based on Auric's input), and even though Cocteau did not name Auric as co-author, the dedication to Auric formalised his contribution to it—as a tribute to the composer. Auric was pleased to be included and acknowledged as part of the project, as he confirmed:

Warmly, generously *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* was dedicated to me, I was content as the young boy that I was, to imagine what my senior could mean by this genial thought.⁴²³

Because of such conversations, Cocteau was able to articulate, in no uncertain terms, the new ideal that he, Satie and Auric had sought to achieve—because of their musical

⁴²⁰ Schmidt, *The Music*, 1:xxiii.

⁴²¹ The semantic distinction is stronger in English than in French.

⁴²² Auric, *Quand j'étais*, 78: 'rue d'Anjou, à la vielle comme au lendemain de *Parade*... nous commencions, Cocteau et moi, de longs dialogues qui s'achevaient obligatoirement par une lecture à laquelle je fus vite convié, celle du *Coq et l'Arlequin*'.

⁴²³ Auric, *Quand j'étais*, 79: 'Chaleureusement, généreusement, *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* m'était dédié: pour le jeune garçon que j'étais alors, il est aisé de concevoir ce que représentait la si cordiale pensée de mon aîné'.

discussions. Their aim was to '[describe] the everyday world musically'.⁴²⁴ This was a crucial factor that contributed to the conception of a new French musical aesthetic. Cocteau always assumed the role of mentor,⁴²⁵ whilst Satie and Auric composed the music. Cocteau relied on Auric. He respected him and deferred to his greater musical knowledge. He particularly sought Auric's opinion with respect to *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*. He wrote to Auric in 1918, saying: 'I am impatient to know your opinion of the musical axioms'.⁴²⁶

The very simple and idea of a 'quotidian' music, and music from popular culture, was developed as a vital characteristic of *poésie*, both in terms of text and music, by Cocteau, as specified in *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*. He states that 'We need music of the earth, everyday music'.⁴²⁷ The same influences informed Auric's compositions and word settings. Both Cocteau and Auric wrote about the importance of the 'circus, the music hall, street parades, and African-American orchestras',⁴²⁸ as an essential life-force in their creativity. The music played there personified that of *L'Esprit nouveau* (the new spirit), as it became known. Aesthetically, 'the new spirit teaches us to aim for an emotional simplicity, a firmness of expression, a kind of lucid affirmation of sounds and rhythms with a precisely accentuated pattern'.⁴²⁹ Cocteau (and, by implication, Auric) makes two references which connect the line of drawing to the simple melodic line, as envisaged in the some of the new music. It is evident that, for them both, there is a creative correlation between the two artforms. Although, there is no evidence that

⁴²⁴ Schmidt, *The Music*, 1:xxiii.

⁴²⁵ Auric, *Quand j'étais*, 28: 'Conseille par Cocteau (toujours lui)!'.

⁴²⁶ Letter from Cocteau to Auric, 1918 in Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 24: 'Très inquiet de savoir votre avis sur les axiomes Musique'. This was Cocteau's reference to *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*.

⁴²⁷ Cocteau, *Le Coq* (2009), 62: 'il nous faut une musique de sur la terre, une musique de tous les jours'.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, 64: 'Le music-hall, le cirque, les orchestres américains de nègres, tout cela féconde un artiste au même titre que la vie'; Auric expressed the same sentiments in Auric 'Mais, adieu,' 1:195: 'In the meantime, we have had the circus, the music hall, street parades, and American orchestras How can one forget the Casino de Paris or the little circus on the Boulevard Saint-Jacques with its trombones and drums? It's been an awakening'.

⁴²⁹ Cocteau, *Le Coq* (2009), 30: 'L'esprit nouveau enseigne à se diriger vers la simplicité émotive, vers la fermeté d'expression, sorte d'affirmation lucide de sonorités et de rythmes au dessin précis accentué'.

Auric drew pictures, he did actively respond to visual spatiality, as indicated by his letters to Cocteau. Auric and Cocteau both disrupted the linearity of their written texts using extended horizontal and expanded vertical spacing to introduce a spatial dimension.⁴³⁰ Auric translated spatiality into his musical process when word setting: he extended the syllabic linearity of the text and opened the vertical registral spacing in the music (see analysis in Chapters six and seven for greater detail).

In *Les Six*, Cocteau recognised the potential for advancing the new aesthetic. He promoted them in *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* and acknowledged the innovative artistic changes that they were pioneering. He wrote: 'The new spirit of my young friends today, demonstrates an opposition today of that we clearly claimed yesterday'.⁴³¹ In fact, *Les Six* were never considered as an aesthetic group but, instead, all believed it was friendship that held them together.⁴³² Apart from their artistic goals, Auric, Cocteau and *Les Six* were keen to effect political changes. They pursued an agenda that was intended to destabilise the elitist status quo in the arts. According to Fulcher, '*Les Six* [and their generation] sought to articulate values that were different from that of the world that disappeared with the war'.⁴³³ They wanted to subvert 'bourgeois institutions and academies'.⁴³⁴ They had all been artistically educated in the pre-war 'dominant culture' and they were, therefore, influenced by modernist trends. It could be argued that *Le Sacre du printemps* and *Parade* were part of this trend and as such, had a significant impact on them.⁴³⁵ Indeed, '[they] all rejected the moral idealism, narrow nationalism, and concomitant fetishization [*sic.*] of selected 'great' musical figures or

⁴³⁰ Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*.

⁴³¹ Cocteau, *Le Coq* (2009), 32: 'L'esprit nouveau de mes jeunes amis d'aujourd'hui se démontrant pour l'instant opposé à celui que, hier, nous revendiquions clairement'.

⁴³² Auric, 'Entretiens,' 38: 'Les six n'a pas été un groupe esthétique. Nous n'avons jamais voulu défendre une doctrine véritablement précise'.

⁴³³ Fulcher, *The Composer*, 154.

⁴³⁴ Robert Wohl, 'Heart of Darkness: Modernism and its Historians', *Journal of Modern History* 74, no. 3 (September 2002), 614.

⁴³⁵ Fulcher, *The Composer*, 154.

icons within the dominant musical culture'.⁴³⁶ They also rebelled against the existing pre-war artistic values, which had been politically controlled by the establishment to promote its own political agenda during the war. They refused to accept 'the official conservative and exclusive conception of the classic',⁴³⁷ but instead created experimental relationships to form new patterns of meaning. The period following the First World War was dominated by the desire for musical and artistic change. Cocteau and Auric were prominent in shaping a 'radical cultural change'.⁴³⁸

As Pasler states, 'one could say that the spirit of the new in every period is the highest form of the spirit of contradiction'.⁴³⁹ Cocteau certainly made each successive work more provocative and contradictory than the last, because he believed originality emerged from the contradiction of preceding expressions—the role of the creator was to contradict his predecessors. That is why Cocteau chose Auric and Satie, amongst others, as composers with whom to work, and why he found jazz and popular idioms particularly appealing as new creative techniques. By extension, subversion and provocation were fundamental to Auric's aesthetic as Cocteau's musical collaborator. Sometimes, however, Cocteau used shock tactics just for the sake of it. However, Auric was far less vocal about such rebellion.

Auric and Cocteau as Collaborators

The aim here is to ascertain how the collaboration functioned in practice. Was it an equal partnership? Was it always a positive process? Cocteau believed, without a doubt, that he and Auric—as collaborators—were destined to be the leaders of the post-war artistic revolution. He wrote that 'We were born to be followed and not to follow. If

⁴³⁶ Ibid., 155.

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ Ibid., 154.

⁴³⁹ Jann Pasler, 'Paris: Conflicting Notions of Progress' in *The Late Romantic Era: From the Mid-19th Century to World War I*, ed. Jim Samson (London: Macmillan, 1991), 408.

[people] did not like it, too bad for them'.⁴⁴⁰ Cocteau tended to write grandiose statements to gain attention and to promote himself. The closest collaborative period between Auric and Cocteau was 1918–1926, with 1918 as the most productive, although their collaborations lasted until 1965.⁴⁴¹ Their collaborations are listed below as Table 3.1. Of the thirty, collaborative works, eleven were never realised (six of these were rejected by Auric but it is unclear why the remaining five were abandoned).

Auric's collaborative interactions with Cocteau were very different from those between Cocteau, Satie and Picasso during the making of *Parade*, where the poet was not allowed to have his own way, although the ballet was Cocteau's idea and he instigated the collaboration. There were artistic differences and Cocteau found that Satie and Picasso went behind his back.⁴⁴² As far as the music was concerned Cocteau had envisaged the music as a background to evoke sounds of sirens, typewriters, and motors.⁴⁴³ Satie objected to the inclusion of these 'noises' in his score and indeed most of them had to be omitted due to circumstances (the pace of rehearsals) and technical difficulties.⁴⁴⁴ Which is why Satie had no need to argue the point with Cocteau, despite his irritation. Nevertheless, Cocteau was still disappointed in the final version of *Parade* which was not the one he had imagined. He declared that '*Parade* was: 'so far from what I would have wanted that I wouldn't go to see it in the hall'.⁴⁴⁵

In a later collaboration, Cocteau and Stravinsky worked on *Oedipus Rex* in 1926–1927. Cocteau was similarly artistically dominated by Stravinsky. The composer dictated both the story and the tone of the project, he rejected Cocteau's first two

⁴⁴⁰ Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 2: 'Nous sommes nés pour qu'on nous suive et pas pour suivre. S'ils ne le sentent pas tant pis pour eux'.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁴² Arnaud, *Jean Cocteau*, trans. Elkin and Mandell, 180.

⁴⁴³ Cocteau, *Le Coq* (2009), 67: 'La partition de *Parade* devait servir de fonds musical à des bruits suggestifs, tels que sirènes, machines à écrire, avions, dynamos'.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*: 'Difficultés matérielles et hâte des répétitions empêchèrent la mise au point de ces bruits. Nous les supprimâmes presque tous'.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*: 'Notre *Parade* était si loin de ce que j'eusse souhaité, que je n'allai jamais la voir dans la salle'.

versions and ensured he got what he wanted.⁴⁴⁶ Pasler describes a situation with Auric that was entirely different, explaining that ‘In Auric, Cocteau found a composer willing to accommodate his desires, but there was still very little interaction between the two’.⁴⁴⁷ Their apparent lack of interaction was not necessarily because of any disinterest from Cocteau, but demonstrated the poet’s confidence in Auric’s compositional ability as well as his understanding of what kind of music Cocteau wanted. As Auric revealed in an interview with André Fraigneau, ‘I realise that Jean Cocteau trusted me implicitly with respect to film, the first one we worked on together which was, *The Blood of a Poet*’. Auric pointed out that neither he nor Cocteau had any cinematic experience or ideas as to what would constitute a good film score.⁴⁴⁸

Cocteau showed his subversive persuasion with the unusual description of his works in a musical context. For example, he described his ballet *Phèdre* as a ‘Tragédie chorégraphique’ (choreographic tragedy). The multimedial work *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel*, for which Auric wrote two of the movements, was called a ballet—even though it featured dialogue, not normally found in a ballet. He created works that defied genre titles and, at the same time, he was provocative and expected active audience interpretation. It was a way for Cocteau to introduce characteristics of *poésie* (see Chapter four). Because of his collaboration in so many of these productions, Auric showed the same creative aspirations as part of the new aesthetic movement. Together, Auric and Cocteau transformed single ideas into different forms, such as musical theatre to dance and then to a film version—clearly a manifestation of their collaborative transdisciplinary approach.

⁴⁴⁶ Pasler, ‘New Music,’ 273.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁸ Auric, ‘Témoignages,’ 67–68: ‘Je me rends compte que Jean Cocteau m’a fait, au fond, profondément confiance quand il s’agissait d’un film, et je pense au premier auquel nous avons travaillé ensemble qui est *Le Sang d’un poète*’.

Table 3.1 Collaborative works of Georges Auric and Jean Cocteau.⁴⁴⁹

Key

Works in blue = those never realised, the majority were rejected by Auric.

Work in green = the only text not written by Cocteau, but he was involved in its production, in one way or another.

*=Titles given by Auric were not Cocteau's original ones.

<i>Table listing</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Genre</i>	<i>Catalogue number</i>	<i>Notes</i>
1	1915	<i>Songe d'une nuit d'été</i>	Musique de scène	540	
2	1917	<i>Cette nuit tous les immeuble*</i>	Mélodie	56	In a letter to Cocteau, dated Summer 1917, Auric wrote of his intention to set an unnamed poem to music. It is identified because Auric includes the first two verses, 'Cette nuit, tous les immeubles? Poses de travers n'importe où'. (see annotation A, 1917 Auric letter addressed to Cocteau, Figure 3.3). Caizergues, <i>Correspondance Georges Auric</i> , 17.
3	1917–1918	<i>Basse-cour</i>	Mélodie	32	The project was abandoned by Auric. See letter in Caizergues, <i>Correspondance Georges Auric</i> , 32.

⁴⁴⁹ All the details of these works are taken from Malou Haine's catalogue of Cocteau's texts set to music in Gullentops and Haine, *Jean Cocteau: textes*, 167–291.

<i>Table listing</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Genre</i>	<i>Catalogue number</i>	<i>Notes</i>
4	1917–1918	<i>Huit poèmes de Jean Cocteau</i>	Méodies	181	The cycle was sung by Jane Bathori in 1917 but does not correspond exactly to the published version. They were performed in a different order and some titles were changed. 1. <i>Hommage à E. Satie</i> ; 2. <i>Reveil</i> ; 3. <i>École militaire [École de guerre]</i> ; 4. <i>Biplan le matin</i> ; 5. <i>Marie Laurencin</i> ; 6. <i>Aglaé</i> ; 7. <i>Soir de Paris [Place des Invalides]</i> ; 8. <i>Portrait d'Henri Rousseau</i> .
5	1918	<i>Crabe (Le)</i>	Méodie	110	This project was abandoned by Auric.
6	1918	<i>Hirondelles (Les)*</i>	Méodie	179	Performance planned for Théâtre du Vieux Colombier, end of 1918–start 1919. The performance was cancelled.
7	1918	<i>USAnge de New York</i>	Musique de ballet	597	The project was never realised. A fox-trot version, dedicated to Cocteau, was published in Paris (Éditions La Sirène, 1920). It in the course of its planning, this work had several titles <i>Symphonie américaine</i> . <i>U.S.A./L'Ange/Atlantique</i> , <i>symphonie chantée/USAnge de New York-transatlantique</i> .
8	1918	<i>Mademoiselle Caouppa</i>	Méodie	258	The project was abandoned by Auric.

<i>Table listing</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Genre</i>	<i>Catalogue number</i>	<i>Notes</i>
9	1918–1919	<i>Roméo et Juliette</i>	Musique de scène	510	This was an adaptation of Shakespeare's work by Cocteau, who asked Auric to compose the music for ten pieces. 1. <i>Petite Ouverture</i> ; 2. <i>Petite Marche nuptial</i> ; 3. <i>Petite Marche funèbre</i> ; 4. <i>Thème de Roméo</i> ; 5. <i>Thème de Juliette</i> ; 6. <i>Thème bouffe des entrées de la nourrice</i> ; 7. <i>Petite Marche du Prince l'orsqu'il entre et sort</i> ; 8. <i>Le Bal capulet</i> ; 9. <i>Une danse de clown 5 minutes</i> ; 10. <i>Air genre Claire de lune de Werther</i> . Jean Cocteau, <i>Théâtre complet</i> , ed. Michel Décaudin (Paris: Gallimard, 2003), 320–382. The project was abandoned by Auric.
10	1919	<i>Fête du Duc (La)</i>	Mélodie	169	Performed by Pierre Bertin (singer) and Ricardo Viñes (piano) at the Salle Huygens, 5 April 1919. Poem incorrectly featured in the <i>Vocabulaire</i> (1922) series instead of <i>Poésies</i> (1917–1920) in Cocteau, <i>Oeuvres poétiques</i> , 344–345.
11	1920	<i>Petite Surprise de jour de l'an</i>	Mélodie	415	The song was dedicated to painter Irène Lagut, with whom Auric was in love. It was performed on 1 September 1920. <i>Vocabulaire</i> (1922) Cocteau, <i>Oeuvres poétiques</i> , 1616.

<i>Table listing</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Genre</i>	<i>Catalogue number</i>	<i>Notes</i>
12	1921	<i>Mariés de la Tour Eiffel (Les)</i>	Musique de spectacle, ballet	261	1. <i>Ouverture Le 14 Juillet</i> (Auric); 2. <i>Marche nuptiale</i> (Milhaud); 3. <i>Discours du Général</i> (Polka) (Poulenc); 4. <i>La Baigneuse de Trouville</i> (Poulenc); 5. <i>La Fugue du massacre</i> (Milhaud); 6. <i>La Valse des Dépêches</i> (Tailleferre); 7. <i>Marche funèbre</i> (Honegger); 8. <i>Quadrille</i> ; 9. <i>Ritournelles</i> (Auric); 10. <i>Sortie de la noce</i> (Milhaud). Louis Durey was the only member of <i>Les Six</i> who did not contribute to this work. Synopsis and choreography were by Cocteau. Ballet was performed Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, 18 June 1921 by la Compagnie des Ballets suédois de Rolf de Maré.
13	1921–1922	<i>Épouse injustement soupçonnée (L')</i>	Opéra-comique	157	In a letter to Jean Hugo, October 1922, Cocteau asked if Auric was writing the music for this opéra-comique. This work was abandoned by Auric. Brigitte Borsano and Pierre Caizergues eds., <i>Correspondance Jean Cocteau-Jean Hugo</i> (Montpellier: Université Paul Valéry, 1995), 52.

<i>Table listing</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Genre</i>	<i>Catalogue number</i>	<i>Notes</i>
14	1922	<i>Pauvre Matelot (Le)</i>	Musique de scène	413	Jean Hugo was due to produce the costumes and the set. Project rejected by Auric. In July 1923 Cocteau sent the scenario to Auric, who said it lacked inspiration and rejected. Cocteau then wrote to Poulenc, saying ‘Auric found the ending too dramatic and not to his taste. He asked me for another scenario. I refused. He sulked. I really can’t give him scenarios to try on like shoes’. Gullentops and Haine, <i>Jean Cocteau: textes</i> , 262: ‘Auric découvre que la fin serait trop dramatique et pas dans ses cordes. Il me demande un autre livret. Je résiste. Il boude. Je ne peux vraiment pas lui donner des livrets à essayer comme des bottines’. Cocteau then sent the scenario to Milhaud, who composed the score. This gives another view on what appeared to have been a harmonious collaborative relationship. It appears that Cocteau resented Auric for refusing his scenario and he obstinately refused Auric’s request for another one to work with. It must be said, however, that we only have Cocteau’s version of events, and he was renowned for his artistic moodiness and large ego.
15	1924	<i>Fâcheux (Les)</i>	Ballet		The flypage lists Cocteau in the description of the Ballet: ‘Théâtre de Serge de Diaghilew, <i>Les Fâcheux</i> . Georges Braque, Jean Cocteau, Louis Laloy, Georges Auric. Gullentops and Haine, <i>Jean Cocteau: textes</i> , 222.

<i>Table listing</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Genre</i>	<i>Catalogue number</i>	<i>Notes</i>
16	1925	<i>Matrone d'Ephèse (La)</i>	Opéra-comique	289	Cocteau abandoned the project in October 1925, but the work was presented, without music, in 1936 with the title <i>L'Ecoles des Veuves</i> .
17	1930	<i>Sang d'un poète (Le)</i>	Musique de film	515	Premiered at the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier, 5 January 1932.
18	1943	<i>Eternel Retour (L')</i>	Musique de film	164	Paris, Cinéma Colisée, 13 October 1943.
19	1945	<i>Belle et la Bête</i>	Musique de film	39	Premiered at the Cannes Film Festival, October 1946.
20	1946	<i>Aigle à deux têtes (L')</i>	Musique de scène	5	Jean Cocteau, <i>Théâtre complet</i> , ed. Michel Décaudin (Paris: Gallimard, 2003), 1057–1143. Work was performed in Théâtre Hébertot, Paris on 12 December 1946.
21	1947	<i>Aigle à deux têtes (L')</i>	Musique de film	6	Film version of earlier theatre piece, premiered at the Venice Biennial, 21 August 1948.
22	1947	<i>Ruy Blas</i>	Musique de film	514	Scenario adapted by Cocteau from Victor Hugo's novel. Film shown in Paris, 18 February 1948.
23	1948	<i>Noces de sable</i>	Musique de film	334	Commentary by Cocteau. Film shown in Paris on 5 May 1949.
24	1948	<i>Parents terribles (Les)</i>	Musique de film	377	Film version adapted by Cocteau from his 1938 play. Film shown in Paris, 1 November 1948.

<i>Table listing</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Genre</i>	<i>Catalogue number</i>	<i>Notes</i>
25	1949	<i>Phèdre</i>	Tragédie chorégraphiques, Musique de Ballet	416	Jean Cocteau, <i>Théâtre complet</i> , ed. Michel Décaudin (Paris: Gallimard, 2003), 73–76. Script, curtain, set and costumes all by Cocteau. Performed at Opéra, Palais Garnier, Paris, 14 June 1950.
26	1950	<i>Eternel Retour (L')</i>	Musique Radiophonique	165	Text written and performed on radio by Cocteau, Paris, R.T.F., 20 January 1951.
27	1954	<i>Phèdre</i>	Suite Symphonique	417	Symphonic Suite from ballet (Salabert 1954), played by the Orchestre du Conservatoire, conductor Georges Tzipine, and recorded on 6 January 1959 at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées.
28	1950	<i>Orphée</i>	Musique de film	363	Film version by Cocteau from his 1926 play. He wrote the script, directed and produced the film. Shown at Cannes Film Festival, 1 March 1950 and in Paris, 29 September 1950.
29	1951	<i>Orphée</i>	Musique de Ballet	364	Jean Cocteau, <i>Le Passé défini</i> , vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), 24. Cocteau called the ballet <i>Fin d'Orphée</i> . It was intended for the dancer Tamara Toumanova. Scenario, costumes and set were by Cocteau. He considered it as the end of a trilogy, after his play and film versions, but the project was never realised.

<i>Table listing</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Genre</i>	<i>Catalogue number</i>	<i>Notes</i>
30	1965	<i>Thomas l'imposteur</i>	Musique de film	554	Cocteau adapted his book and wrote the scenario and script together with Raphael Cluzel (1932–1996), who was the adopted son of composer Henri Sauguet. The film was shown in Paris on 3 May 1965.

What does collaboration mean in the present context of Auric and Cocteau's relationship, their creative development, and the prevailing artistic trends? Thomas Jensen Hines states that 'Collaboration can be considered from two perspectives, that of the creative act, and the creative outcome'.⁴⁵⁰ Collaboration requires a contribution by more than one creator, as with Auric and Cocteau. A collaboration also exists between component elements of a hybrid artwork when two or more elements intersect within it beyond the artistic association. *Poésie* is also dependent on hybridity in order to function in any work, concomitant with its transdisciplinary, metaphorical and transformative characteristics (an aspect addressed in Chapters six and seven). That Auric and Cocteau collaborated is evident, but the question is to what extent and how did the collaboration work in practice?

Throughout the thesis, I have designated *Huit poèmes de Jean Cocteau* as their first collaboration. However, at the same time as Auric was working on the *mélodies*, he participated in informal musical discussions with Cocteau, which ultimately contributed to the content of *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* and other projects. Indeed, that book should also be regarded as a collaborative work, because Auric contributed some of the musical content.⁴⁵¹ Such discussions would have influenced Auric's compositions—even though the *Huit poèmes* were published before Cocteau's seminal work. Cocteau first mentioned *Le Coq* in his letter to Auric dated 28 January 1918. He described how he was 'taking the opportunity to write a little book'.⁴⁵²

How then did the song series evolve collaboratively? From their correspondence it can be deduced that their collaboration was not dependent on them meeting. The letters give an insight into their working relationship. Auric often encouraged Cocteau

⁴⁵⁰ Thomas Jensen Hines, *Collaborative Form: Studies in the Relations of the Arts* (Kent, Ohio, and London: Kent State University Press, 1991), 4.

⁴⁵¹ See Auric, *Quand j'étais là*, 78.

⁴⁵² Letter from Cocteau to Auric, 27 January 1918, in Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 24: 'J'en profite pour écrire un petit livre'.

towards new projects, saying: ‘I think about you and the work’.⁴⁵³ By ‘the work’, he means a common creative goal, in general terms, rather than a specific work. Cocteau concluded the letter with a somewhat ambiguous comment. The French ‘sans patience’ is translated can be translated in two ways: does Cocteau mean ‘I have no patience’ or ‘I am impatient to see your work’ or ‘I have no patience for your work’?⁴⁵⁴ Does he imply that he is so engrossed in his own work, at that moment, that he cannot even think about Auric’s, or is he saying that he has no patience for Auric’s work as a whole? The former seems more likely. His wording could also mean he could not wait hear Auric’s compositions.⁴⁵⁵ The tone of his letters indicates this latter interpretation applies.

Auric relied on Cocteau to lift his mood: ‘We need you... I would like to see you... You would give me strength, if you were here’.⁴⁵⁶ In another letter he demanded that Cocteau write to reassure him. He wrote: ‘Write. You will comfort me’.⁴⁵⁷ He emphasised how much he depended on their correspondence because he repeated the phrase in the same sentence: ‘I need your letters. The roles are reversed. I need your letters too’. He implied that he needed Cocteau, for a change.⁴⁵⁸ He had previously admitted that he needed Cocteau—emphasised in his May 1918 letter by the underlining the word *besoin* (need).⁴⁵⁹

Auric wished Cocteau well and hoped that ‘[he] would return to Paris without any pains and full of huge and powerful [ideas].⁴⁶⁰ Cocteau praised Auric—in no uncertain terms—in a letter from Grasse at the end of January 1918. He declared that ‘I

⁴⁵³ Ibid.: ‘Je pense à vous et au travail’.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.: ‘Je suis sans patience pour votre œuvre’.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., 23: ‘Nous avons besoin de vous...Moi, je voudrais bien vous voir...Si vous étiez là, vous me donneriez des forces’.

⁴⁵⁷ Letter from Auric to Cocteau, May–June 1918, in Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 36: ‘Ecrivez. Vous me consolerez’.

⁴⁵⁸ Letter to Cocteau, July 1918, in Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 37: ‘J’ai besoin de vos lettres. Le mécanisme se retourne, Moi aussi, j’ai besoin de vos lettres’.

⁴⁵⁹ Letter to Cocteau, May-June 1918, in Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 33: ‘J’ai besoin de vous’.

⁴⁶⁰ Letter from Auric to Cocteau, January 1918, in Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 23: ‘J’espère que vous reviendrez sans douleurs et plein de choses énormes et fortes’.

am helping you with all my strength, because I think about what your music will become, at least 10 times a day'.⁴⁶¹

In his letter dated Summer 1917 (See C, Figure 3.3), Auric showed himself to be leading the *Huit poèmes* project (see A, Figure 3.3).⁴⁶² He twice requested that Cocteau send him poems, which he then worked on—away from the poet. He pressurised Cocteau, and demanded that he, 'Send more poems, straight away, I am relying on you' (see C, Figure 3.3).⁴⁶³ Auric tried to show that he needed Cocteau to act. In a postscript he asked Cocteau to 'send the first poem of the *Suite Satie-Rousseau* and another, but not the one published in the Huyghens programme, that I already have' (see E, Figure 3.3).⁴⁶⁴ The younger Auric was not at all daunted to reject Cocteau's texts; this happened if he did not like them or if they did not suit his word setting. Auric referred to the song series as *Suite Satie-Rousseau* (see E, in letter, Figure 3.3) and gave prominence to the subjects of the poems rather than their author. Cocteau wrote several poems inspired by the artist Henri Rousseau as a tribute to Satie.⁴⁶⁵ In turn, Cocteau was not averse to making written comments or suggestions. Indeed, in 1918 he wrote that '[Bertin] should leave you to write *la Symphonie américaine*. *U.S.A.* is not a bad title. What do you think.'⁴⁶⁶ He followed this with an update of his own progress; he wrote, 'I am editing the drafts and will get to work on the *Poème*'.⁴⁶⁷ According to Caizergues, Cocteau referred to the drafts for *Le Potomak* (which was not published until May

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., 25: 'Je vous aide de toute mes forces, car je pense bien 10 fois par jour à ce que sera votre musique'.

⁴⁶² Letter from Auric to Cocteau, Summer 1917, in Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 17.

⁴⁶³ Ibid.: 'envoyez encore des poèmes, sans hésiter. J'y compte'.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.: 'Envoyez le 1^{er} poème de la *Suite Satie-Rousseau* et un autre (mais pas celui imprimé dans le programme Huyghens que j'ai déjà).

⁴⁶⁵ Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 147, n.5.

⁴⁶⁶ Letter from Cocteau to Auric, 1 January 1918, in Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 20: 'Mais qu'il vous laisse écrire *la Symphonie américaine*. *U.S.A.* comme titre ne serait pas mal. Que croyez-vous...'. See entry 7 in Table 3.1.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.: 'Je corrige les épreuves et va me mettre au *Poème*'.

1919) and the *Poème* is probably *Secteur 131*, which would become *Le Discours du grand sommeil*.⁴⁶⁸

What is astonishing is how Auric took the initiative in requesting some of Cocteau's poems for a song series, recorded in Auric's letter to Cocteau (dated Summer 1917, see C, Figure 3.3). Note how Auric used the same style as Cocteau's in spatial manipulation of the text, an indication of their shared transdisciplinary method. Auric mentioned four titles here:⁴⁶⁹ *Biplan le matin*, *Portrait de Rousseau* and *Marie Laurencin* and *Basse-cour*, (The penultimate song was included as number four in the *Huit poèmes* series, whilst the last one did not feature).⁴⁷⁰ However, Auric was inspired by this poem and wrote a *mélodie* setting of it for voice, string quartet, flute and clarinet. He later abandoned the project.⁴⁷¹ Auric asked Cocteau more than once to send poems urgently. In May 1918, he underlined his demand: 'send me the poems, it is urgent'.⁴⁷² At the end of June he repeated this urgent request.⁴⁷³ Auric seemed more motivated in this collaboration, because it is evident from his letters that he needed to chase Cocteau for the poems. Cocteau's apparent lack of enthusiasm and action clearly frustrated Auric. He repeated his request for the same poems in July 1918, when he wrote:

I ask you again for poems—short or long, but suitable for music (music as we love it) (*Le crabe*, etc). I need them. You can do it! Copy them. Don't make me wait. [The waiting] bothers me, weighs heavy and paralyses me'.⁴⁷⁴

He did not mind how long or short the poems were, so long as they were suitable for the music to which they both aspired. He even tried to encourage Cocteau to 'work on new

⁴⁶⁸ Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 148, n.12 and 13, respectively.

⁴⁶⁹ Georges Auric, *Huit poèmes de Jean Cocteau* (Paris: Max Eschig, 1963, first published Paris, E. Demets, 1920).

⁴⁷⁰ Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 147, n.1.

⁴⁷¹ Gullentops and Haine, *Jean Cocteau: textes*, 195 (no.32).

⁴⁷² Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 34: 'Envoyez d'urgences les poèmes'.

⁴⁷³ Ibid., 36: 'Copiez d'urgence les poèmes'. Again, Auric does not identify the poems.

⁴⁷⁴ Letter, July 1918, in Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 37: 'Je vous réclame à nouveau des poèmes—courts ou longs, mais pour la musique (la musique ainsi que nous l'aimons) (*Le crabe*). 'J'en ai besoin. Du courage. Copiez. Ne faites pas attendre. Cela gêne et pèse et paralyse'.

things'.⁴⁷⁵ Nevertheless, Auric wanted to extend the collaboration after he had finished the *Huit poèmes* series: despite his frustration with Cocteau's apparent apathy, he asked Cocteau for more poems. He explained:

I would like to set 3 or 4 very short poems to music, with string quartet, flute and clarinet (*Basse-cour, le colimaçon sur la feuille de lilas...*, *le crabe*—and any others you may have). Send me copies with any longer ones as well, to make a new series.⁴⁷⁶

In this same letter, Auric noted that he hoped Cocteau would hear many melodies 'on an Autumn day, whilst in Paris' (see D, Figure 3.3).⁴⁷⁷ In French, the observation appears ambiguous. Does Auric want Cocteau to listen to as much new music as possible in Paris? Or is he encouraging Cocteau to write more poems that are inspired by and shaped using the tunes in his head? This is an important distinction to consider because Auric acknowledges the way Cocteau asserts music through text. I believe the latter is more likely, especially given the context of their shared transdisciplinary understanding.

In a subsequent letter, Auric referred to *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* and encouraged Cocteau to push for its publication.⁴⁷⁸ He also asked Cocteau about the location of the drafts for the *Huit poèmes*—'their' only copies of the *mélodies*. Indeed, they both seem to have been rather casual about this matter. If the Bertins had them, then Auric and Cocteau needed to get them back, because it would be stupid and hopeless to have lost them, according to Auric.⁴⁷⁹ It is strange that there would only be one copy and that it would be lent out to the actor Bertin, especially as Auric seems to have lost his address. He confirmed this when he asked Cocteau to: 'Give me the Bertins' address. They have the only complete copy of the *melodies*. It would be a misfortune for me, if they lost

⁴⁷⁵ Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 17: 'travailler à de nouvelles choses'.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., 36: 'Je voudrais faire 3 ou 4 petits poèmes très courts (*Basse-cour, le colimaçon sur la feuille de lilas...*, *le crabe*—et d'autres si vous en avez) avec accompagnement de quatuor à cordes, flûte et clarinette. Copiez-les avec d'autres plus longs qui composeraient une autre série'.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Letter, July 1918, in Ibid., 37: 'Il faut que les livres—malgré tout—paraissent. *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*—Poussez'.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., 38: 'Où se trouve la copie de nos *8 Poèmes*? Si ce sont les Bertin qui l'ont il faudrait tâcher de l'avoir. Je n'ai que cet exemplaire, pas de double. Ça serait bête et inutile de perdre cela'. Actor Pierre Bertin (1891–1984) and his wife Marcelle Meyer (1897–1957), pianist.

it’!⁴⁸⁰ Auric was more concerned about the composition drafts than Cocteau, who did not mention them.

Despite being ten years younger, Auric was confident and persistent in asking for poems from Cocteau: Cocteau was much more artistically experienced and domineering than his younger collaborator and was generally regarded as dominant during the early part of the relationship, though the early letters contradict this. Yet, Cocteau did relentlessly pursue other composers about other projects, often without success. Indeed, he actively promoted the idea of *Parade* to Satie, who praised him as the ‘man with ideas. Bravo!’⁴⁸¹ Throughout their correspondence, Auric and Cocteau continue to encourage each other, express concerns about each other’s health, and exchange ideas and comments about ongoing projects. They also complained about delayed replies and consistently admitted to missing each other when apart. They revealed how they were reliant on one another to be cheered up when their spirits were low. Auric and Cocteau continued to collaborate on various works (as listed in Table 3.1).

Auric identified the advent of sound in film as a turning point in his musical career and his collaborative relationship with Cocteau.⁴⁸² He wrote:

I discovered a form of expression that at that time seemed completely preposterous to most of my best friends and the best French musicians: it was simply the cinema, known as sound cinema. We left the silent cinema, and there was this invention that obviously seemed rather exasperating; and I must say that for me, it was the starting point of a whole new career.⁴⁸³

⁴⁸⁰ Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 36: ‘Donnez l’adresse des Bertins. Ils ont la seule copie complète des mélodies. S’ils la perdaient ce serait un malheur pour moi!’

⁴⁸¹ Satie, *Correspondance*, 239: ‘Vous êtes l’homme aux idées. Bravo!’

⁴⁸² Auric incorrectly recalls the date as 1932, in his interview with Stéphane Audel. His first film was *Le Sang d’un poète* in 1930. See Auric, ‘Entretiens,’ 53.

⁴⁸³ Auric, ‘Entretiens,’ 53: ‘J’ai découvert une forme d’expression qui à ce moment-là paraissait complètement saugrenue à la plupart de mes meilleurs amis et des meilleurs musiciens français: c’était tout simplement le cinéma, ce qu’on appelait le cinéma sonore. Nous sortions du cinéma dit muet, et il y avait cette invention qui paraissait quelque chose, évidemment, d’assez affolant; et en tout cas, je dois dire que ça a été pour moi le point de départ de toute une autre carrière’.

It was a new form of expression that both artists were enthusiastic to experiment with as collaborators. Auric went on to explain that he was so attracted to the idea of film music that he no longer thought about composing for theatre.⁴⁸⁴

Interestingly, we learn more about Cocteau and Auric's collaborative process from writings about their film work. The first film they worked together on was *Le Sang d'un poète* (The Blood of a Poet). This, according to Laura Anderson, was: 'A project of close collaboration'.⁴⁸⁵ Anderson suggests that 'the soundscape was a key consideration for Cocteau from the conception of [their] very first film'.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid. 'Mais je crois que c'est là l'explication du silence que j'ai eu pendant plusieurs années: j'ai été attiré par cette nouvelle façon de m'exprimer et je ne songeais plus guère au théâtre'.

⁴⁸⁵ Anderson, 'The Poetry of Sound,' 92.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

Figure 3.3 Auric's letter addressed to Cocteau, Issoire, Summer 1917.⁴⁸⁷

GA à JC

32 Boulevard de la Halle Issoire [été 1917]
Puy de Dôme

Mon cher Cocteau,
Que devenez-vous?
Êtes-vous à Paris?

moi,
me voilà à Issoire
pays calme
– et où il pleut entre deux
arc-en-ciel

Jusqu'ici impossible de travailler
mais je viens d'écrire
RÉVEIL
(Bouche grave des lions...etc.) A

et j'ai dans la tête Biplan le matin, Basse-cour, et pour
'chœur' le Portrait de Rousseau et Marie Laurencin
Il n'y a qu'à écrire cela.

Puis B
j'écirai
Cette nuit, tous les immeubles
Posés de travers n'importe où*
et Mlle Caouppa,

mais envoyez encore des poèmes, sans hésiter. C
J'y compte
Et travailler à de nouvelles choses

M. Sadi† m'a envoyé une belle lettre.

À PARIS D
Un jour d'automne Vous entendez je 'espère
Des tas de mélodies

de
votre

Georges Auric

Envoyez le 1er poème de la suite Satie-Rousseau et une autre
(Mais pas celui imprimé dans le programme Huyghens que j'ai
déjà) E

* These are the first two verses of a poem called *Retour*. 'That night, all the buildings, laid across anywhere'. It was originally to be included in *Embarcadères* but remained unpublished until the Fata Morgana 1986 posthumous edition. See Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 147, n.2.

† Satie often used this pseudonym himself.

⁴⁸⁷ Letter from Auric to Cocteau, Summer 1917, in Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 17. The underlined text is in the original letter.

Yet he described a less collaborative approach in a 1930 letter to Auric, when he wrote about his desire to insinuate ‘himself’ into the film through its sound.⁴⁸⁸ What did he mean by this? He believed he could show how inexorably involved he was with the development of the soundtrack by permeating himself into the film using sound effects. He went so far as to commit to ‘record my lungs, my blood vessels, my heart, this evening. I can’t wait to see Labrély’s face. This work must be protected, we must mix ourselves up in it until we can no longer bear it’.⁴⁸⁹

Anderson identifies an ‘unusual professional equality between Cocteau and Auric in this first film’.⁴⁹⁰ She draws her conclusion from letters to ‘film office in France’, which were signed by both Cocteau and Auric.⁴⁹¹ These letters came at a time when it was unusual for the composer to be listed immediately after the author in the opening credits.⁴⁹² Her conclusion is ‘that music was valued above other considerations such as décor and even the selection of actors, and had been from the beginning of the film’s production’.⁴⁹³ Cocteau confirmed his view—that Auric’s music was as important as his screenplay—in a speech he gave at the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier:

When I was working, let me say again, I wasn’t thinking of anything, and that is why one must let the film act like Auric’s noble accompanying music. Music gives nameless nourishment to our emotions and memories, and if each of you finds your own personal meaning in this film, then I will have achieved my ambition.⁴⁹⁴

Cocteau also showed a clear understanding of how the soundscape of a film contributed significantly to the impact of a film on its viewers and their individual interpretation.

Cocteau was creatively drawn to music because of its abstraction and because of his

⁴⁸⁸ Anderson, ‘The Poetry of Sound,’ 106.

⁴⁸⁹ Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 120: ‘J’enregistre ce soir mes poumons, mes branches, mon cœur. On verra la gueule de Labrély. Il faut sauver ce travail, s’y mêler jusqu’à ce que l’audition devienne pénible’.

⁴⁹⁰ Anderson, ‘The Poetry of Sound,’ 102.

⁴⁹¹ See correspondence held in box twenty-five, BHVP (accessed by Anderson, September 2009).

⁴⁹² See credits listed for *Le Sang d’un poète* in Jean Cocteau, *Two Screenplays: The Blood of a Poet, The Testament of Orpheus*, trans. Carol Martin-Sperry (London, Marion Boyars, 1970), 7.

⁴⁹³ Anderson, ‘The Poetry of Sound,’ 102.

⁴⁹⁴ ‘Postscript’ for *Le Sang d’un poète* in Cocteau, *Two Screenplays*, 66.

cinematic abstraction. He wrote that ‘Music gives nameless nourishment to our emotions and memories, and if each of you finds your own personal meaning in this film, then I will have achieved my ambition’.⁴⁹⁵ This is important because the Cocteau believed the abstraction of film and music provide conceptual spaces that allow for individual interpretation by the viewer on multiple levels. The abstraction also creates tension (dissonance) and enables subsequent interaction between image and music. These are conditions necessary to activate the condition of *poésie* (see P2, P3 and P10 from ‘Principles of *Poésie* in Cocteau’s Own Words’ in Chapter four).

According to Deaville and Wood, once the soundscape was finished, Auric handed it over to Cocteau who then randomly cut and rearranged the images to sound, or vice versa (see below).⁴⁹⁶ Cocteau was then artistically free to introduce his *poésie cinématographique* at the intersection of the music/image interface, through visual and sonorous rhythmic interactions of the soundscape—but in a contrapuntal way, in order to eliminate ‘any musical and narrative synchronisation’.⁴⁹⁷ In other words, he wanted to subvert the linearity of the film narrative to allow for the viewer’s interpretive participation. He created a musicality in the work: Lily Pons describes the film as a ‘great piece of French visual music’.⁴⁹⁸ In other words, from an transdisciplinary point of view, the close interaction between image and music is an example of one art form acting as if it were operating in another, as proposed by Peter Dayan.⁴⁹⁹

He did not only use the technique in films. It was his creative choice to incorporate what he later described as accidental synchronicity, wherever possible, in mixed art forms, with the proviso that all elements have an equivalent status (neither being dominant). He stated: ‘I have long been trying to make use of, other than in films,

⁴⁹⁵ Anderson, ‘The Poetry of Sound,’ 103.

⁴⁹⁶ Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film*, 72–73.

⁴⁹⁷ Deaville and Wood, ‘Synchronisation,’ 105.

⁴⁹⁸ See translator’s note in Jean Cocteau, *The Blood of a Poet: A Film*, trans. Lily Pons (New York: Bodley Press, 1949).

⁴⁹⁹ See Dayan’s five interart aesthetic laws in Dayan, *Art as Music*.

the mystery of accidental synchronisation. For music interacts, not only with any individual element, but also in any plastic work with which it is confronted, provided this work is of the same calibre'.⁵⁰⁰

Cocteau's solution was to avoid the juxtaposition of the image and the music in any predictable way. He believed that such synchronisation inhibited flexibility and interplay between elements. Instead, as André Fraigneau observed, Cocteau hoped for 'accidental synchronism'.⁵⁰¹ Cocteau further explained that he and Auric did not always see eye to eye on this: 'I provoke it. Very often Auric disagreed, but he always ends by agreeing with what I've done'.⁵⁰² Cocteau always got his own way and was explicit about it. Did Auric really agree with him or did he just accede?

Cocteau described their work:

We recorded from nine o'clock in the morning until five o'clock in *la Maison de la Chimie*. This process is the most moving of all. I repeat, it is only on the musical element that this film can take off [...] here is the genius of this synchronisation, which is not one, since Georges Auric avoided it, at my request, and then it must only happen by the grace of God.⁵⁰³

According to Deaville and Wood, Auric did not compose the score in a predictable way. Instead, he created cues that were then reorganised—either by Auric and Cocteau, or by Cocteau alone (there are conflicting reports about who was responsible for the editing at this stage).⁵⁰⁴ Cocteau implied that his restructuring of the cues shaped the music/image

⁵⁰⁰ Cocteau, *La Difficulté* (Rocher), 163: 'De longue date, je cherchais à employer, autrement que par le cinématographe, le mystère du synchronisme accidentel. Car une musique se trouve non seulement des réponses dans chaque individu mais encore dans une œuvre plastique avec laquelle on la confronte, si cette œuvre et du même registre'.

⁵⁰¹ Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film*, 72; and Cocteau, *Entretiens autour*, 58: 'pouvez-vous espérer le synchronisme accidentel'?

⁵⁰² Ibid.: 'Je le provoque. Il arrive souvent qu'Auric en prenne de l'humeur, mais il m'approuve toujours dans la suite'.

⁵⁰³ Cocteau, "*La Belle et la bête*", 240: 'Nous enregistrons de neuf heures du matin dans la Maison de la Chimie. Cette opération est la plus émouvante de toutes. Je le répète, ce n'est que sur l'élément musical que ce film peut prendre le large [...] et voici le prodige de ce synchronisme qui n'en est pas un puisque George Auric l'évite, à ma demande, et qu'il ne doit se produire que par la grâce de Dieu'.

⁵⁰⁴ Deaville and Wood, 'Synchronisation,' 109.

relationships according to their creative ambition. Auric admitted to Ned Rorem after the making of *Le Sang d'un poète* (1930), how he:

[composed] love music for love scenes, game music for game scenes, funeral music for funeral scenes. Cocteau had the bright idea of replacing the love music with the funeral, game music with love, funeral with game. And it worked.⁵⁰⁵

Cocteau wanted his asynchronicity to be apparent. This idea contributes to the basis of *poésie* and the interart aesthetic, whereby exchange and interplay are more fertile through intuitive displacement between the different elements. He sometimes found that:

by re-shuffling... I shifted and reversed the order of music in every single sequence. Not only did the contrast heighten the relief of the images, but I even found at times that the 'displaced' music adhered too closely to the gestures and seemed to have been written on purpose.⁵⁰⁶

Cocteau believed that some of the reorganised music 'worked too well', although he gave no specific details.⁵⁰⁷

Both men were inexperienced with respect to sound film and it was inevitable that Cocteau would assume control—and that such experimentation would lead to a difference of opinion. But after several years, Cocteau became so knowledgeable that he was able to discuss all aspects of cinema with the various technicians as an equal. Auric realised that he should defer to Cocteau.⁵⁰⁸

Auric also struggled with the technical restrictions put on him by Henri Labrely (sound engineer).⁵⁰⁹ Auric was critical in later comments:

The technical means of recording were completely different [in *le Sang*] from what they have become since and I always feel extremely self-conscious [about those early scores]. The "sound engineer," an essential person, seemed to us much more formidable than he really was. Before I even began my work, I was convinced that all sorts of constraints should be observed: this instrument recorded poorly, that other (by contrast) should have been chosen without hesitation. Such a "high" would never "come out" and such "lows" were going to be sacrificed, if one did not

⁵⁰⁵ Rorem, 'Cocteau and Music,' 169.

⁵⁰⁶ Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film*, 72–73.

⁵⁰⁷ Deville and Wood, 'Synchronisation,' 109.

⁵⁰⁸ Auric, 'Témoignages,' 69: 'il connaissait la technique de son métier, il pouvait discuter d'une façon irréfutable avec un technicien, on ne pouvait plus le tromper sur ce qui se passait'.

⁵⁰⁹ Colin Roust, 'Sounding French: The Film Music and Criticism of Georges Auric, 1919–45' (PhD thesis, University of Michigan, 2007), 43

rigorously follow the advice of our technicians. Thus, I decided to omit the “strings” from my orchestra and form a sort of village band: the epitome (I was convinced of it!) of what was imposed on me by film and that famous “mike”.⁵¹⁰

The final instrumentation for the score was ‘single winds, percussion and dominated by the piano’.⁵¹¹ The resulting music had a cabaret, music hall quality that was very much apparent in Auric’s theatre and ballet music, and was in line with the propensity, of both men, for popular music that they had promoted at the time of *Le Coq et l’Arlequin*.

The technological restrictions, along with Cocteau’s preoccupation with accidental synchronisation, explain why Auric detached himself from the project after his initial proactive contribution.⁵¹² Auric was marked by his experience on working with Cocteau on *Le Sang*, because of his desire to achieve accidental synchronisation. Indeed, he felt that his music had been dissected and reorganised ‘against his wishes’.⁵¹³ In a 1962 interview about his film collaboration with Cocteau, Auric admitted the reservations about his own unrealistic expectations. He did not believe that a symphonic score could work successfully in counterpoint with the visuals. He also confessed how the method of ‘accidental synchronization’ had made him (Auric) particularly uncomfortable.⁵¹⁴ He demonstrated a difference of opinion with Cocteau about ‘asynchronisation’. But in a later interview with André Fraigneau, he described his participation in the making of their film. He portrayed a different, more positive version of their working process:

So, we both worked constantly on this *Blood of a Poet*. I went to the edge of the Seine, at Joinville, where we were shooting at that time. I watched the film projections, almost every day and I wrote my music as I watched them. There are few films on which I have worked so closely. But Jean Cocteau obviously trusted me, immediately. He simply said to

⁵¹⁰ Georges Auric, ‘Préface’ to Jacques Bourgeois, *René Clair* (Geneva: Roulet, 1949), 10–11.

⁵¹¹ Deaville and Wood, ‘Synchronisation,’ 109.

⁵¹² Roust, ‘Sounding French,’ 44.

⁵¹³ Max Pinchard, “Georges Auric et la musique de film,” *Musica Disques* 90 (1962): 47: ‘Je conçus la partition comme une symphonie, ce qui était ambitieux, trop, peut-être, du point de vue de l’union de la musique et de l’image... Déjà, a cette époque, Cocteau pratiquait le « synchronisme accidentel », qui me donna des sueurs froides’.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid.

me: 'In this passage, I imagine that type of music'. That's as far as he went. When I was playing, and when he heard my music, there was no discussion between us. He was happy with what I had done, which was very important because it was my first experience of cinema, which was called sound cinema or talking cinema, at that that time. So, we were amazed at the idea that we could record sounds or make images talk.⁵¹⁵

There is some discrepancy in the two accounts of their working relationship in film, which varied over time. Auric was seemingly uncomfortable with Cocteau's obsession with accidental synchronisation because it meant that a great deal of his music was rearranged. However, Cocteau believed, ultimately, that the composer liked the result: Auric must have come to terms with Cocteau's editing techniques because he provided the music for ten of Cocteau's films. Despite this, Auric often distanced himself from the film's production once his composition part was finished.⁵¹⁶

In their next film, *La Belle et la Bête* (1946), Cocteau found organising Auric's music as problematic as he had in *Le Sang d'un poète*. In *Le Sang*, he cut and pasted, and inverted musical motifs to give impact to the images and disrupt the linearity of the music. Cocteau acknowledged that he found it difficult to edit Auric's music, even though the composer had adopted Cocteau's idea and composed the score in counterpoint with the images. Cocteau liked the music so much that he did not want to disrespect his co-collaborator by editing it, as he had done with *Le Sang*. Finally, Cocteau spontaneously recognised Gluck's music as a perfect frame for Heurtebrise's entrance. He then needed reassurance that Auric would approve of the manipulation of the composition for the final soundscape. *La Belle et la Bête* was in fact his favourite

⁵¹⁵ Auric, 'Témoignages,' 68–69: 'Eh bien nous avons donc travaillé à ce Sang d'un poète tous les deux d'une façon constante, moi j'allais au bord de la Seine où l'on tournait à ce moment-là, à Joinville. J'allais presque tous les jours assister aux projections du film. J'ai écrit ma musique au fur et à mesure des projections que je voyais. Il y a peu de films auxquels j'ai travaillé aussi près. Mais très spontanément Jean Cocteau m'a évidemment fait confiance. Il me disait simplement évidemment: à tel passage, j'imagine une musique de tel caractère, enfin ça s'arrêtait là. Quand je jouais, quand il entendait ma musique, il n'a eu aucune espèce de discussion entre nous. Il était content de ce que j'avais fait, pour moi ça a été très important car cela était mon premier contact avec le cinéma, ce qu'on appelait à ce moment-là le cinéma sonore ou le cinéma parlant, tellement nous étions émerveillés à l'idée qu'on pouvait enregistrer des sons ou fait parler des images'.

⁵¹⁶ Roust, 'Sounding French,' 44. Roust refers to specifically to *Le Sang d'un poète* but it is not unreasonable to assume that the working methods stayed the same in subsequent films.

film. He found it particularly touching, especially from a musical point of view, and this is why he regarded the score as important.⁵¹⁷ According to Cocteau:

For *La Belle et la Bête*, Auric wrote his score to match the images, which made it almost impossible for me to break a single rhythm without being discourteous to the composer. The music was so beautiful that I felt that Auric, who is against explanatory music, had deliberately used the method of contrasts, slow choruses fastened on quick action, and so on. But on the other hand, when with *Orphée* (1950) I picked up, after twenty years' interval, the thread of *Le Sang d'un poète* in which I played the same theme with one finger as it were (I know I'm repeating myself, but I can't help that), I took the most irreverent liberties with the composer. I recorded Auric's music without the images (to a chronometer) and for example put the scherzo he had composed for the comic home-coming scene into the chase through the deserted house. Or, even better, I recorded Eurydice's lament, by Gluck, meaning to use it only for the wireless in the cottage. But when I cut into Auric's music at the first shot of Heurtebrise's entrance, I noticed that the first and last note of Gluck's music fitted exactly with the first and last images of the scene, and I shamelessly took advantage of that miracle... I am telling you this because I heard Auric say on the radio that he approved of what I'd done and recognised these director's cuts gave added force and presence to his music.⁵¹⁸

Cocteau cut sections of Auric's film music to connect his Orphic trilogy, which he then combined with quotations from other composers such as Gluck. He gives himself credit for the perfect editing of Gluck's excerpt with Heurtebrise's entrance.⁵¹⁹ Auric clarified his perspective of their joint contribution:

⁵¹⁷ Auric, 'Témoignages,' 69: 'Je pense par exemple à un film qui personnellement au point de vue musical me touche particulièrement, qui est *La Belle et la Bête*, où il y a une partition très importante'.

⁵¹⁸ Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film*, 73–74; and Cocteau, *Entretiens autour*, 58: 'Je change les musiques de place. J'ai usé de cette méthode dès *Le Sang d'un poète*, où j'ai déplacé et inversé les musiques de toutes les séquences. Non seulement ce contraste donnait du relief à l'image, mais encore il arrivait que ces musiques déplacées collaient trop étroitement avec les gestes et semblaient écrites exprès. Pour *La Belle et la Bête*, la musique de Georges Auric est faite à l'image. Il m'était donc presque impossible de rompre un rythme sans manquer de respect au compositeur. La musique était si belle qu'on eût dit qu'Auric, adversaire de la musique explicative, eût volontairement usé de la méthode des contrastes: chœurs lents, sur des actions rapides, etc. Par contre, dans *Orphée* où je renouai, à vingt ans de distance, avec *Le Sang d'un poète* où j'orchestrai en quelque sorte le thème, joué jadis avec un doigt (je sais que je me répète, mais je ne peux pas faire autrement), j'usai vis-à-vis de mon collaborateur des libertés les plus irrespectueuses. J'enregistrai sa musique sans image (au chronomètre) et plaçai, par exemple, le scherzo écrit pour la scène comique du retour à la maison sur la poursuite à travers la ville déserte. Mieux, j'enregistrai les plaintes d'Eurydice, de Gluck, comptant ne m'en servir que pour la radio du chalet, coupai la musique d'Auric à la première entrée de Heurtebrise chez Eurydice et, m'apercevant que la première et la dernière note de Gluck correspondaient avec la première et la dernière image de cette scène, je profitai lâchement de ce petit prodige... Si je le raconte, c'est que j'ai entendu Georges Auric déclarer à la radio qu'il m'approuvait et reconnaissait que ces coupes de metteur en scène donnaient à sa musique plus de force et plus de présence'.

⁵¹⁹ Anderson, 'The Poetry of Sound,' 243.

Jean Cocteau trusted me implicitly. The music for *La Belle et la Bête* was recorded before he had even heard a single note and on hearing it, he experienced the revelation of my music. If I may say without boasting, he had the revelation, during the recording that took place on completion of the film, as we continued with this last work. It was an agonising moment, as you can imagine, because nothing is more worrying than to hear one's work in orchestral form, after only hearing the piano version. But to hear the orchestra combined with the images for which this music is intended, it becomes something deeply disturbing and scary, troubling. Well, I remember these recordings of the *La Belle et la Bête* where we were perfectly in agreement, graciously united, without any disagreement.⁵²⁰

It was originally Auric's idea to use Gluck's motifs but it was Cocteau who decided where and how to cut them into Auric's score.⁵²¹ Despite their different approaches, the two men achieved a practical collaborative process, because they trusted each other and understood their shared aesthetic across the different arts.

Conclusion

It is evident that Auric and Cocteau shared a mutual admiration, respect and friendship from the outset. Their exchange of letters and, later, interviews about the films they made together reveal the way that their partnership worked in practice. The primary source material that relates to their work on films is more informative than any other sources concerned with *poésie*, and so it is particularly useful when trying to understand the way that earlier collaborations operated. They tended to work separately. Auric renounced his further involvement in the process, and this is somewhat indicative of their creative differences, especially in contrast to their shared aesthetic. The collaborations marked the path of an artistic alliance that was characterised by an

⁵²⁰ Auric, 'Témoignages,' 69: 'Jean Cocteau m'a fait absolument confiance. On a enregistré la musique la musique de *La Belle et la Bête*, il n'avait pas entendu une note de ce que j'avais composé et il a eu la révélation de ma musique, si je puis dire sans l'avoir l'air un peu fat, il en a eu la révélation, pendant l'enregistrement qui a eu lieu quand le film a été achevé et qu'on procédait à ce dernier travail. Un travail qui était pour moi un moment angoissant que vous pouvez imaginer, car rien n'est plus troublant déjà que d'entendre une œuvre de soi à l'orchestre quand on ne la connaît par sa version pianistique, mais quand il s'agit de l'entendre en plus à l'orchestre et accompagnée des images auxquelles cette musique est destinée, ça devient quelque chose de profondément inquiétant et angoissant, troublant. Eh bien je me souviens de ces enregistrements de *La Belle et la Bête* où nous étions parfaitement d'aplomb, cordialement unis, sans la moindre querelle'.

⁵²¹ Anderson, 'The Poetry of Sound,' 270.

experimental curiosity, common cross-disciplinary interests, and a unified aim to find a new French identity and musical aesthetic as was reflected in their many diverse joint works (some of which were aborted, mainly by Auric). Roust describes Auric as:

a musical and intellectual titan who was involved in shaping, promoting and preserving art and artists through world wars, technological revolutions, and the blurring of distinctions between ‘classical’ and ‘popular’ music... Auric not only composed for genres made possible by new technologies, but also shaped the politics of their musical reception.⁵²²

And Schmidt identifies Auric as ‘a man of great intelligence, uncommon intellectual curiosity and immense culture’.⁵²³ Cocteau showed his esteem for Auric and the confidence he had in his precocious talent, which never faltered.⁵²⁴ He made artistic choices accordingly and chose Auric as a long-term collaborator, not only because he was his favourite musician (who represented the musician he longed to be) but also because they had so much in common. But Auric was ten years younger than Cocteau and they were very different personalities. Cocteau was volatile, egocentric, self-promoting and impatient. He cared about what people thought and was often upset by negative public reaction to him and his works. His collaborations were often tempestuous, because of creative differences, and he sometimes lacked perseverance. Whereas Auric was a far more consistent, modest and self-sufficient man.

The exact extent and nature of their collaboration is often ambiguous, which is not surprising where Cocteau is concerned. For the *Huit poèmes*, Auric repeatedly requested poems from Cocteau and he composed the music away from the poet. Cocteau completely trusted the composer. He believed that ‘no film music is more beautiful or original than Georges Auric’s’.⁵²⁵ Cocteau wanted to be surprised by Auric’s music and expected that the element of chance would always shape the

⁵²² Colin Roust, ‘Foreword’ in Schmidt, *Écrits*, 1:xv.

⁵²³ Schmidt, *Écrits*, 1:4.

⁵²⁴ Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 8:

⁵²⁵ ‘Preface’ in Cocteau, *Two Screenplays*, 4: ‘il n’y a pas de musique de film plus belle ou originale que celui de Georges Auric’.

music/image dialogue. Nevertheless, once the composition was finished, Auric distanced himself from any further collaboration. Auric was uncomfortable with Cocteau's manipulation of the music and his obsession with 'accidental synchronisation', because inevitably, it involved extensive editing of his score.⁵²⁶ Cocteau offered another insight on Auric's negative attitude. He believed the composer might have tried to develop his own version of accidental synchronisation in his score, in order to thwart Cocteau's dissection of it.

As stated by Cocteau earlier:

The music was so beautiful that I felt that Auric, who is against explanatory music, had deliberately used the method of contrasts, slow choruses fastened on quick action, and so on.⁵²⁷

Auric also deferred to Cocteau because the latter was more experienced in the multidimensional aspect of collaborative productions, and therefore more dominant.

The collaboration is best summed up in their own words. Cocteau declared:

This new universe troubles me, disturbs me, captivates me. I had made a music without realising it, and the waves of the orchestra contradict it. Little by little Auric overcame my uneasiness. My music gives way to his. This music marries the film, permeates it, exalts it, finishes it. *La Belle et la Bête* lulls us to sleep and the spectacle of this dim sound is the dream of our sleep.⁵²⁸

Although Cocteau refers specifically to *La Belle et la Bête*, he articulates his passion for music and his belief in the role that it plays in the enhancement and cohesion of the work. He identifies the synergy of their combined creative efforts. In turn, Auric validated Cocteau with his comment: 'You are my Schiller and I am Beethoven'.⁵²⁹

⁵²⁶ Cocteau, *La Difficulté* (Rocher), 163: 'De longue date, je cherchais à employer, autrement que par le cinématographe, le mystère du synchronisme accidentel'.

⁵²⁷ Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film*, 73–74; and Cocteau, *Entretiens autour*, 58: 'La musique était si belle qu'on eût dit qu'Auric, adversaire de la musique explicative, eût volontairement usé de la méthode des contrastes: chœurs lents, sur des actions rapides, etc'.

⁵²⁸ Cocteau, "*La Belle et la bête*", 241: 'Cet univers nouveau me trouble, me dérange, me captive. Je m'étais fait une musique sans m'en rendre compte, et les ondes de l'orchestre le contredisent. Peu à peu Auric triomphe de ma gêne absurde. Ma musique cède la place à la sienne. Cette musique épouse le film, l'imprègne, l'exalte, l'achève. L'enchantement de *la Bête* nous endort et le spectacle de cette pénombre sonore est le rêve de notre sommeil'.

⁵²⁹ Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 5: 'Vous êtes mon Schiller et moi je suis Beethoven'.

Beethoven identified with many of Schiller's poetic and philosophical ideas, believing that it was the role of an artist to be a sort of cultural prophet. Beethoven believed that for him, 'music was not only a manifestation of the beautiful—an art—it was akin to religion. He felt himself to be a prophet, a seer'.⁵³⁰ Cocteau similarly considered *poésie* in religious terms. He believed he was called to the 'priesthood of poetry'.⁵³¹ Auric was still very much in tune with Cocteau's ideas and named him as one of two significant influences on his creative life. He noted his recollection in 1940: 'I have certainly forgotten nothing. From the Diaghilev ballet to Jean Cocteau has been a fascinating journey. The miracle is to have been able to make it with such companions'.⁵³² This is an unequivocal confirmation on the part of both artists of their successful shared collaborative transdisciplinary process and method.

Here, and in Chapter two, I have established the context for Cocteau and Auric's collaborative transdisciplinary working relationship. I claim that their shared aesthetic facilitated a successful and productive artistic relationship, despite very different personalities and creative methods. In Part II, Chapter four, I identify and re-define Cocteau's unifying concept of *poésie* from his writings, and apply his ideas in order to interrogate his seminal work, *Le Potomak*, in Chapter five.

⁵³⁰ Alexander Wheelock Thayer, 'Beethoven' in Harry Edward Krehbiel, *Music and Manners in Classical Period: Essays* (New York: C Scriber's Sons, 1898), 237.

⁵³¹ Jean Cocteau, *Le Requiem* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), 10: 'À l'âge de vingt ans, après quelques graves erreurs de jeunesse, je suis entré dans la poésie comme on entre dans les ordres'.

⁵³² Auric, 'On the Diaghileff Ballet', 1:155.

Part II: Establishing the Methodology

Chapter 4: Constructing an Analytic Method: *Poésie* as Cocteau's Creative Practice and Auric's Use of *Poésie*

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to formulate a method of analysis based on Cocteau's concept of *poésie* as presented in his writings (discussed in Chapter one). It will then be applied to Auric's musical setting of the *mélodies*, *Huit poèmes de Jean Cocteau*—their first collaborative work.⁵³³ My alternative approach focusses particularly on the musico-poetic relationship within the songs, and this forms the foundation for different analytical parameters rather than purely musical ones.⁵³⁴ *Poésie* is, without doubt, a complex concept. Cocteau had his own theoretical approach, but he never gave it any organised structure. My aim, therefore, is to apply his theory in conjunction with my interpretation of it. I present *poésie* as a new structured analytical method situated within a wider theoretical context.

Poésie became the embodiment of Cocteau's creative output. It developed throughout his work as a recognisable and unique authorial presence, and it intersected, connected and shaped his entire artistic production from 1909 until his death in 1963. I claim that *poésie* was the ultimate expression of his transdisciplinary method and process. Such distinctions are essential to understand the complexity of his aesthetic. *Poésie* must show consistently recognisable corroborating principles in order to establish the model that supports my research hypotheses. They are set out here in general terms and then tested more specifically in the next chapter—where I suggest that *Le Potomak* (1916) was the first significant example of *poésie*. The method is then applied to two case studies in Chapters six and seven.

⁵³³ I have already stated that Cocteau and Auric engaged in many discussions on music. These resulted in the publication of *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* in 1918 (the same year as the melodies). On this basis, I consider the book a collaborative work—though not in the strict sense, because Cocteau claimed sole authorship (though he dedicated the book to Auric to acknowledge the composer's contribution).

⁵³⁴ My methodology requires an analysis of the songs that is formulated from an interart perspective.

The methodology is necessarily formulated here—that is, after Cocteau and Auric’s biographical, historical and cultural backgrounds—to ensure a detailed understanding of Cocteau’s working context prior to the critical application of his concept and process. What follows (in Part three) is an analysis of the *mélodies* as a collaboration; this draws upon my reading of Cocteau’s *poésie* as detailed below.

It is first necessary to decode Cocteau’s concept of *poésie*, and then present it as a practical and relevant analytical tool. I identify it as a working method and process because it reveals two key issues: first, the continuity of Cocteau’s practice, regardless of artistic media or collaborative partner; and second, Auric’s shared approach to Cocteau’s aesthetic. Although Auric did not specifically refer to the broader concept of *poésie* as a creative method, his works do reflect similar transdisciplinary interests and sensibilities.

Roots of *Poésie*

Cocteau uses the word poet in the Greek sense; that is, as a creator. The idea stems from Ancient Greek: *poiētēs*, meaning poet, author or maker.⁵³⁵ According to Amberg, Cocteau envisaged the poet:

as not just an author who writes poetry: a poet is a creator endowed with a particular vision and sensibility that magically transform the world of experience into works of art, of many kinds.⁵³⁶

Cocteau highlights the significance of the magical and transformative potential of *poésie*, regardless of its form of expression. For him, the primary aim of *poésie*, through creativity, was to understand one’s inner world.

The word *poésie* has a common root in the Greek *poesis* which means ‘bringing forth’;⁵³⁷ that is, creating something that did not exist before. Today the term ‘new’ has

⁵³⁵ See ‘poet’ in *Lexico Dictionary*, accessed 12 February 2020, www.lexico.com/en/definition/poet

⁵³⁶ George Amberg, ‘Preface’ in Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film*, v.

⁵³⁷ ‘Heidegger draws attention to one form of bringing forth directly associated with *poesis*. That is the bringing forth into existence that the poet (and anyone who produces things) practices. The products of this activity are brought forth by something else [*en alloi*—from the Greek meaning ‘in another’], that is,

different connotations. Firstly, it can be applied to a work that previously did not exist. Second, the term can refer to a pre-existing work that has been modified or transformed. Jean Cocteau's poems have some identifiable qualities of *poésie*, but they are then converted into the *mélodies*, *Huit poèmes de Jean Cocteau* (1918), through Auric's musical settings. In their new form, they demonstrate additional characteristics of *poésie*—particularly through word/music relationships that were not previously present. Third, the term 'new' can be applied to each manifestation of the work. It might be the artist's idea, the text, the score, or any individual reading or performance (which is ephemeral, and never the same). All these applications of the term increase the potential for more interactions that can be considered as functions of *poésie*.

Cocteau's *Poésie*

How can this elusive concept of *poésie* be identified and applied as a method? Why have I chosen this as my analytical approach to discussing Cocteau and Auric's collaboration in the *mélodies*? How did *poésie* inform Auric's transdisciplinary perspective and how has he adapted his compositional process to reflect Cocteau's *poésie* as a shared aesthetic, albeit subconsciously (see Chapters six and seven)? From an outside perspective, *poésie* can be understood to operate as an object, a thought, an idea, as imagination and as an act, whereby one is able to see, hear, sense, be, reflect and experience. I propose that *poésie* fulfils the criteria of an integrated intellectual, conceptual and artistic framework, and is applicable to both the creation and reception of any multimedial work.

Cocteau functioned creatively in many ways: his thoughts, ideas and perceptions were filtered through an inherently transdisciplinary and subconscious pathway.

Inevitably he had to devise a concept that not only addressed and accommodated his

the poet makes the poem...'. The salient point of *poiesis* is that something that was not present is made a new reality. See 'Guide to Martin Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology'', University of Hawaii, accessed 22 June 2012, www2.hawaii.edu/~zuern/demo/heidegger/guide3.html

diverse aesthetic ambitions but would also develop and enhance his creative legacy. Cocteau referred to his ‘courbe’ (curve) or his ‘ligne’ (line) in a letter to André Gide in June 1912. He wrote: ‘[*The dance of Sophocle*] still represents a phase of my curve’.⁵³⁸ His idea may have begun with *La Danse de Sophocle* in 1912, but it was not until 1913, when he wrote *Le Potomak*, that *poésie* took on a mature form. His use of the word ‘curve’ suggests that he did not envisage a straight trajectory for the development of his unifying concept. However, he did sometimes interchange ‘line’ for ‘curve’. His metaphorical ‘single red line’ is synonymous with and was achieved through *poésie*. Cocteau declared: ‘if only the critics could take the trouble, they would find this single red line crossing all my works’.⁵³⁹

The ‘single red’ line, in this context, describes Cocteau’s philosophical and creative evolution. (This is further discussed in ‘*Poésie* as a Conceptual Framework’, below.) The line is analogous with a vein which is organic and provides nutrients—it describes the continuity in the development of diverse works in Cocteau’s career. As such, this line develops and changes over the course of his life but is ever present. The Belgian poet Robert Goffin (1898–1984) uses the same metaphorical physiological language. He writes how: ‘*poésie* is the fertilising principle which nourishes all Jean Cocteau’s endeavours’.⁵⁴⁰ It is unclear whether Goffin is referring simply to poetry or to *poésie* as envisaged by Cocteau in its broadest sense.

Cocteau decided to eliminate any reference to his early works—that is, those published before 1909—because of their superficiality. He considered them part of his frivolous past. Cocteau fought his reputation for frivolity but, nevertheless, it suited him

⁵³⁸ Letter from Jean Cocteau to André Gide, June 1912, Doucet Y547.5, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris: ‘[*La Danse de Sophocle*] représente malgré tout une phase de ma courbe’.

⁵³⁹ Jean Cocteau, *Journal 1942–1945* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), 412–413: Si les critiques se donnaient la moindre peine, ils retrouveraient dans mes œuvres ce fil unique, rouge—et qui les traverse’.

⁵⁴⁰ Robert Goffin, ‘Métabolisme poétique de Jean Cocteau’, *Empreintes* (May–July 1950), 28: ‘La poésie est le principe fécondant qui alimente toutes les activités de Jean Cocteau’.

to hide behind it on occasions.⁵⁴¹ In such a contradiction, Cocteau found another way of creating tension and invisibility, as well as being provocative—an essential part of a constructed persona. His conception of *poésie* marked the start of a serious artistic practice that defined him. Finally, he wanted to ensure that *poésie* would confirm his artistic legacy.

Yet, for Cocteau, *poésie* was far less discernible, even though his thoughts around it were dispersed throughout his writings (albeit sometimes ambiguously). For example, he insisted that *poésie* ‘stops at the idea. All ideas kill it’.⁵⁴² So, is *poésie* dead and alive at the same time? The paradox is equivalent to that of Schrödinger’s cat. The allegory is used to illustrate how scientific theory, particularly quantum physics, works. Any scientific theory cannot be described as right or wrong until it can be tested and proved.⁵⁴³ There is an equivalent in terms of *poésie*, which can be understood as simultaneously dormant and active. The constituent elements of *poésie* can exist in an undifferentiated form within Cocteau’s creative context. He describes this as a ‘fabulous fluid [matrix]’.⁵⁴⁴ The elements could be derived internally from his imagination and process, or externally through outside influences—or a combination of both. The ‘fabulous fluid’ suggests the potential for a homogenous matrix of elements to be constituted into a recognisable artistic form. This apparent contradiction goes to the very heart of *poésie*: once the idea of it is established in any work, it is complete and no more is required from the creator. Beyond that, the work assumes a life of its own and it

⁵⁴¹ Jean Cocteau addressed the apparent contradiction of being elected to the *Académie Française*, in view of his reputation for frivolity, in his acceptance speech. See J Discours de réception ean Cocteau, ‘Discours de réception à l’*Académie Française*’, in *Poésie Critique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), 2:139–171.

⁵⁴² Jean Cocteau, ‘Coupures de presse’, in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 10 (Geneva: Marguerat, 1950), 346: ‘La poésie cesse à l’idée. Toute idée la tue’.

⁵⁴³ Philip Ball, ‘New Pursuit of Schrödinger’s Cat’, *Prospect*, 21 September 2011, www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/science-and-technology/quantum-theory-paradox-philip-ball-new-pursuit-of-schrodingers-cat

⁵⁴⁴ Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 189: ‘ce fluide fabuleux’.

becomes the responsibility of the receiver and other interpreters to sustain its viability and integrity. In an interview with André Fraigneau, Cocteau stated that:

a work of art, once it has detached itself from us, begins to live according to its readers or its audiences, who distort it for their own use. And we ourselves undergo a transformation and change into the readers or spectators of a work which at that moment we would be incapable of creating. We look at it from the outside and it surprises us.⁵⁴⁵

His vision was for a completed work to assume a life of its own—continually evolving through the receiver’s interpretation. He wanted readers and audiences to breathe life into an artwork or, as he put it, they would ‘distort’ it. His implication was negative and implied that there was a lack of understanding. He absolves himself from his own responsibility as an artist and unreasonably puts it onto the receiver, in order to satisfy his artistic ego. Other factors feed into his commentary, such as self-promotion and possible commodification of his work. With his ambiguous attitude, Cocteau wants to relinquish his authorship *and* retain some control. His specific choice of the word ‘distort’ is deliberately provocative. There is another possible reading, however, which perceives spectator participation as a positive characteristic. The reception process is necessarily subjective and, as such, cannot be prescribed by the creator. This raises the question of an open work as opposed to a closed one, discussed by Lawson and explained later in the chapter.⁵⁴⁶

In effect, Cocteau activates *poésie* through creative processes and then receivers enact the interpretive and transformative aspects of it. Once a work was finished, he underwent a personal and artistic transformation before letting it go. At the moment of crossover, from artist to receiver, Cocteau separated himself from the work. He reassessed it from an alternative perspective, not exactly as a receiver does, but

⁵⁴⁵ Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film*, 50; and Jean Cocteau, *Entretiens sur le cinématographe*, ed. André Bernard and Claude Gauthier (Monaco: Rocher, 2003), 40: ‘Lorsqu’une œuvre se détache de nous, elle commence à vivre selon les lecteurs ou les spectateurs qui la déforment à leur usage. Il en va de même pour nous, qui nous transformons et devenons des lecteurs et des spectateurs d’une œuvre que nous serions, à cette minute, incapable de faire. Elle nous étonne, avec le recul’.

⁵⁴⁶ See Hilary Lawson, *Closure: A Story of Everything* (London: Routledge, 1992).

differently. Through *poésie*, the work continues to evolve and fertilises other works. It lives on in different manifestations and contributes to his legacy.

Poésie is presented as Cocteau's unique artistic conception. It was an expression of his transdisciplinary creative practice. I have distilled eleven principles that define its characteristics. These are now itemised here for clarity, and will be referred subsequently in the text, as follows:

- P1. The work must be regarded as a new reality
- P2. The work must be open with potential for multiple interpretations.
- P3. The work must be heterogenous and incorporate asynchronicity between various interfaces as a catalyst to active transformation.⁵⁴⁷
- P4. The work must be original, enigmatic and beyond classification.
- P5. The work must enact interdisciplinarity.
- P6. The work must be understood through metaphor.
- P7. The work must conceal, confuse and 'illuminate'.
- P8. The work must mediate and project.
- P9. The work must provoke and be contradictory.
- P10. The work demands active interpretation.
- P11. The work must act to subvert the time-space barrier.

I will now relate my listing of the principles of *poésie* to Cocteau's conception of it (his own words are in red). His poem *Par Lui-même* (1925) is an expression of what *poésie* meant for him.⁵⁴⁸ He regarded *poésie* as a means of creating works that exposed the 'invisible'. He prioritised the visual: to 'unveil' the unseen became his main concern. Cocteau used his ideas of *poésie* to explore the mysterious within himself and the outside world. He saw his role as a mediator—discovering the essence of things that are concealed in and behind reality.

Principles of *Poésie* in Cocteau's Own Words

[P1. The work must be regarded as a new reality]

There is no such thing as a precursor.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁷ Dissonance, in the present context, does not refer to harmonic dissonance in music but implies a friction between dissimilar elements within a work that creates tension.

⁵⁴⁸ 'Par Lui-même, Opéra' (1925–1927) in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 517.

⁵⁴⁹ Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 202: 'un précurser ne saurait exister'.

In essence, every work is a new reality. Cocteau's poems are transformed by music into the *mélodies* which constitute a new reality.⁵⁵⁰ The new reality is a combination of Cocteau's work and someone else's response to it.

[P2. The work must be open with potential for multiple interpretations]

*Poésie is an enormous pun. The poet associates, dissociates, reverses the world's syllables. But very few people know this. Very few people are flexible enough to jump from one plane to another and to follow the electrifying manoeuvre of relationships.*⁵⁵¹

The open work is constructed from multiple elements forming a web of relationships and allowing for multiple interpretations. Cocteau's word 'electrifying' suggests an active, exciting and experiential process. He encompassed a breadth of ideas that inform his perception of his own creative process, functioning through *poésie*. He referred to deconstruction and subversion of form and content: a method that liberated a potential space within which *poésie* can exist and activate multiple processes. The electrifying network of relationships describes multi-layered interactions within the art object. He arrogantly believed that few people possessed the mental agility to understand his ideas. Such exchanges are the source of tension at the elemental interface: they evoke a sense of energy and movement. Indeed, Cocteau harnesses metaphor, with its potential for conceptual blending spaces. Here there can be an image-text-music interaction and exchange through connection and clash between images, be they actual or imagined.

[P3. The work must be asynchronous and incorporate dissonance between various interfaces as a catalyst to active transformation]⁵⁵²

I have long been trying to make use of, other than in films, the mystery of accidental synchronisation. For music interacts, not only with any

⁵⁵⁰ What constitutes the work? A work can encompass the idea, text, score. Each presentation is a new manifestation in whatever format—idea, text, performance, CD, DVD recording, discourse, review—as well as the response of other artists.

⁵⁵¹ Cocteau, *Carte Blanche*, 72–73: 'La poésie est un vaste calembour. Le poète associe, dissocie, retourne les syllabes du monde. Mais peu de personnes le savent. Peu de personnes sont assez souples pour sauter d'un plan sur l'autre et suivre la manoeuvre foudroyante des rapports'.

⁵⁵² As stated previously, dissonance, in the present context does not refer to harmonic dissonance in music but can be understood as tension created through contest or struggle between media.

individual element, but also in any plastic work with which it is confronted, provided this work is of the same calibre.⁵⁵³

This connects with [P2] as the ‘**electrifying manoeuvre of relationships**’ that are the source of creative tensions required for active interart exchange and transformation.

[P4. The work must be original and defy classification]

An original artist is unable to copy.⁵⁵⁴

An original work transcends artistic boundaries. Cocteau’s *Les Mariées de la Tour Eiffel* (1921) has been variously described as musical spectacle, musical theatre, and ballet. Cocteau subverted the audience’s expectation of a ballet by including dialogue.

[P5. The work must enact interdisciplinarity]

Cocteau questioned his own transdisciplinary practice:

Why do you write plays? I am asked by the novelist. Why do you write novels? I am asked by the dramatist. Why do you make films? I am asked by the poet. Why do you draw? I am asked by the critic. Why do you write? I am asked by the draughtsman. Yes, why? I wonder. Doubtless so that my seed may be blown all over the place... It is not inspiration, it is expiration, one should say.⁵⁵⁵

That music, painting, sculpture, architecture, dance, poetry, dramaturgy and that Muse that I nicknamed the cinema, the tenth Muse are traps in which man tries to capture our use of *poésie*.⁵⁵⁶

He was even more explicit about his transdisciplinary imaginative processes, particularly relevant with respect to *Le Potomak* (see Chapter five):

⁵⁵³ Cocteau, *La Difficulté* (Rocher), 163: ‘De longue date, je cherchais à employer, autrement que par le cinématographe, le mystère du synchronisme accidentel. Car une musique se trouve non seulement des réponses dans chaque individu mais encore dans une œuvre plastique avec laquelle on la confronte, si cette œuvre et du même registre’.

⁵⁵⁴ Cocteau, *Le Coq* (1979), 77: ‘Un artiste original ne peut pas copier’.

⁵⁵⁵ Cocteau, *La Difficulté* (Rocher), 47: ‘Pourquoi faites-vous des pièces ? me demande le romancier. Pourquoi faites-vous des romans ? me demande le dramaturge. Pourquoi faites-vous des films ? me demande le poète. Pourquoi dessinez-vous ? me demande le critique. Pourquoi écrivez-vous ? me demande le dessinateur. Oui, pourquoi ? je me le demande. Sans doute pour que ma graine vole un peu partout. Le souffle qui M’habite, je le connais mal, mais il n’est pas tendre. Il ignore la fatigue. Il profite de mes aptitudes. Il veut donner sa part. Ce n’est pas inspiration, c’est expiration qu’il faut dire’.

⁵⁵⁶ Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 202: ‘Que musique, peinture, sculpture, architecture, danse, poésie, dramaturgie et cette muse que je surnommiais *Cinéma dixième muse*, sont des pièges en qui l’homme essaye de capter la poésie à notre usage’.

I am a draughtsman. It is quite natural for me to see and hear what I write, to endow it with plastic form. When I am shooting a film, every scene I direct is for me a moving drawing.⁵⁵⁷

Transdisciplinarity harnesses the potential for each art form to come together whilst still retaining their specific characteristics. This results in a greater creative tension (resonating with Cook's idea of contest).⁵⁵⁸

[P6. The work must be experienced through metaphor]

Cocteau freely admitted how, for him, '[metaphor was] the only language possible'.⁵⁵⁹

Metaphor is a conceptual device that enables transfer, mediation, transformation and dialogue between image, music and text. It is also the only means of communication between the senses. In order to clarify *poésie* and its functions, it is important to decipher the metaphors.

[P7. The work must conceal, confuse and 'illuminate']

In his own words, he wrote: 'Here I renounce the mystery. I illuminate everything, I underline everything'.⁵⁶⁰ But he also declared how: 'Every poem is a coat of arms. It must be deciphered'.⁵⁶¹ Although he uses the word poem rather than *poésie*, he uses the symbol of a coat of arms to represent his works and the components of his aesthetic. This is an example of Cocteau using symbolic language to encourage active individual receiver interpretation. Cocteau described his expectation as to how *poésie* 'illuminates':

This is the role that *poésie* performs. It unveils in the fullest sense of the word. It lays bare and rouses the mind from its lethargy, to illuminate all

⁵⁵⁷ Cocteau, *Entretiens sur le cinématographe*, 18: 'Je suis dessinateur. Il m'est naturel de voir et d'entendre ce que j'écris, de le douer d'une forme plastique. Lorsque je tourne un film, les scènes que je règle deviennent pour moi des dessins qui bougent'.

⁵⁵⁸ Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, 103.

⁵⁵⁹ Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 198: C'est pour moi le seul langage possible'.

⁵⁶⁰ Preface to Cocteau, *Les Mariées* (Décaudin), 34: 'Ici, je renonce au mystère. J'allume tout, je souligne tout'.

⁵⁶¹ Jean Cocteau, *Le Sang d'un poète* (Paris: Rocher, 1983), 14: Tout poème est un blason. Il faut le déchiffrer'. Cocteau projected this in the opening credits of the film.

the surprising things by which we are surrounded, and which our senses registered mechanically.⁵⁶²

He suggests that the role of *poésie* is to expose and stimulate the receivers from their complacency and reveal alternative perspectives of the ordinary every day. Cocteau applied the term 'illuminate' when he described Auric's contribution of texts for their collaborations. Cocteau used the metaphor of light to represent a talent or creative process that illuminated or brought forth something hidden. Cocteau wrote: 'He has always illuminated my texts and my images with a sudden light'.⁵⁶³ With *Le Potomak*, he explained how: 'I concealed the drama of war underlying *Le Potomak* under a thousand jokes, just as one sings in the dark to keep one's spirit's up'.⁵⁶⁴ Cocteau set up a contradiction between the tragedy of war through the experience of humour. He revealed a positive perspective 'to keep one's spirit up' and yet confused the receiver with his ambiguity.

Cocteau encapsulated his idea of *poésie* in his poem. He explained that: 'All my *poésie* is here: I trace the invisible (invisible to you)'.⁵⁶⁵ Moment by moment the experience of the receiver changes.

[P8. The work must mediate and project]

Cocteau wrote: 'a masterpiece is not hailed as such, but it transforms everything'.⁵⁶⁶

In this context, the transformation is more of a mediation whereby there is some form of projection from the creator to the receiver, as with Cook's notion of emergent

⁵⁶² Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 188: 9 'Voilà le rôle de la *poésie*. Elle dévoile, dans toute la force du terme. Elle montre nue, sous une lumière qui secoue la torpeur, les choses surprenantes qui nous environnent et que nos sens enregistraient machinalement'.

⁵⁶³ Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 130: ' Et toujours il a éclairé mes textes et mes images d'une lumière brutale'.

⁵⁶⁴ Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 198: 'J'ai masqué le drame [de guerre] du *Potomak* sous mille farces. Ainsi chante-t-on pour se donner du cœur dans le noir'.

⁵⁶⁵ 'Par Lui-même, Opéra' (1925–1927) in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 517: 'Toute ma poésie est là : Je décalque L'invisible (invisible à vous)'.

⁵⁶⁶ Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 161: 'un chef-d'œuvre n'est pas appelé un chef-d'œuvre, mais il transforme tout'.

meaning.⁵⁶⁷ Furthermore, Cocteau is very descriptive and explicit with his view of the transformative potential of *poésie*:

Take something commonplace, clean it and polish it, light it so that it produces the same effect of youth and freshness and originality and spontaneity as it did originally, and you have done a poet's job.⁵⁶⁸

Metamorphosis is the main characteristic of Cocteau's creative world and it is enabled by *poésie*.

[P9. The work must provoke and be contradictory]

Cocteau described how meeting Stravinsky and Picasso showed him how to use defiance as part of his art. He wrote how:

a form of art that broke with the habitual, was anti-conformist. It was when I knew Stravinsky, and later, when I knew Picasso, that I understood that rebellion is indispensable in art, and that the creator always rebels against something if only instinctively; in other words, that the spirit of creation is the highest form of the spirit of contradiction. It is the breakthrough of appearances toward an unknown reality.⁵⁶⁹

He believed that rebellion and provocation were fundamental components of the creative act, which was another way of exposing a concealed reality. He confirmed how:

When I write, I disturb. When I show a film, I disturb. When I exhibit my painting, I disturb, and I disturb if I don't. I have a knack for disturbing.⁵⁷⁰

[P10. The work demands active interpretation]

Cocteau stated how:

⁵⁶⁷ Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, 51.

⁵⁶⁸ Cocteau, *Le Rappel in Oeuvres complètes*, 188: 'Mettez un lieu commun en place, nettoyez-le, frottez-le, éclairez-le de telle sorte qu'il frappe avec sa jeunesse et avec la même fraîcheur, le même jet qu'il avait à sa source, vous ferez œuvre de poète'.

⁵⁶⁹ Jean Cocteau, 'Disque Perry', Autobiographical monologue recorded privately under the direction of M. Jacques Perry, 1958, unpublished, cited in Steegmuller, *Cocteau*, 87. French version in Francis Steegmuller, *Cocteau*, trans., Marcelle Jossua (Paris: Buchet/Chastel, 1973), 67–68: '*Le Sacre du Printemps* était pour moi la révélation d'une forme d'art opposé aux habitudes et anti-conformiste. C'était quand j'ai connu Stravinsky [et plus tard, quand je connaissais Picasso] que j'ai compris que la [rebellion] était indispensable dans l'art, et que l'homme qui créait se révoltait contre quelque chose même instinctivement, c'est-à-dire que l'esprit de création était la plus haute forme de l'esprit de contradiction'. Le créateur se rebelle toujours contre quelque chose si seulement'.

⁵⁷⁰ Cocteau, *Journal*, 115: 'Si j'écris, je dérange. Si je tourne un film, je dérange. Si je montre ma peinture, je dérange et je dérange. Si je ne la montre pas. J'ai la faculté de dérangement.'

A work of art should also be an object difficult to pick up. It must protect itself from vulgar pawing, which tarnishes and disfigures it. It should be made of such a shape that people don't know which way to hold it, which embarrasses and irritates the critics, incites them to be rude, but keeps it fresh. The less it's understood, the slower it opens its petals, the later it will fade. A work of art must make contact, be it even through a misunderstanding, but at the same time it must hide its riches, to reveal them little by little over a long period of time. A work that doesn't keep its secrets and surrenders itself too soon exposes itself to the risk of withering away, leaving only a dead stalk.⁵⁷¹

He maintained that the artwork should be mysterious so that the receiver actively participates in the interpretive process. If the innate meaning of the works is accessed slowly then the receiver's interpretive experience evolves over time and contributes to the continually evolving work.

[P11. The work must act to subvert the time-space barrier]

Cocteau very succinctly explained to Andre Fraigneau that:

What I would find more fascinating... would be to speak about Time and Space, Film art is the only art form that allows us to dominate both... and shooting is very rarely carried out in the right temporal sequence. We are free to manipulate a world in which nothing seems to allow a man to overcome his limitations. Not only does our situation resemble that of a painter, who tries to transpose the three-dimensional world he inhabits, into two dimensions, whereas, in films these two dimensions express more than three, for we overcome time as another dimension, and we can therefore say without fear of ridicule, that we function in the fourth.⁵⁷²

Cocteau was preoccupied with the space-time distortion and confirmed the intersection as the fourth dimension. He envisaged the spatiotemporal crossover through the

⁵⁷¹ Cocteau, *Entretiens sur le cinématographe*, 25: 'Un œuvre doit être un objet difficile à ramasser. Elle doit se défendre contre les atouchements vulgaires, les tripotages qui la ternissent et qui la déforment. Il faut ne pas savoir par quel bout la prendre, ce qui gêne les critiques, les agace, les pousse à l'insulte, mais préserve sa fraîcheur. Moins elle est comprise, moins vite elle ouvre ses pétales et moins vite elle se fane. Une œuvre doit prendre contact fût-ce par malentendu, et cacher ses richesses qui se livreront peu à peu et à la longue. Une œuvre qui ne garde pas de secret et se donne trop vite, risque fort de s'éteindre et de ne laisser d'elle qu'une tige morte'.

⁵⁷² Cocteau, *Entretiens sur le cinématographe*, 90: 'Ce qui me passionnerait C'est de parler avec vous de l'espace et du temps. L'art cinématographique est le seul qui permette qu'on les domine... Rare que l'on tourne dans l'ordre. Je vous le répète, on en use à sa guise avec un monde où rien ne semble permettre à l'homme de vaincre ses limites. Non seulement cela relève de la peinture, où l'artiste s'acharne à traduire les trois dimensions dans lesquelles il se meut par l'entremise de deux dimensions, mais encore cet emploi des deux dimensions, au cinématographe, en exprime plus que trois, puisqu'il bouleverse le temps qui est une dimension et que l'on pourrait dire sans ridicule qu'il travaille dans la quatrième'.

transdisciplinary component of *poésie* whereby: ‘Here space plays the part of time’.⁵⁷³

This principle represents the intersection of the audio-visual sensory experience, as well as the barrier that separates the creative and receptive interface.

These principles are not listed in any hierarchical order. Some refer to the creative processes whilst others refer to the receptive experience. There is, however, some overlap—they are not all discreet examples but may show characteristics of both. How the principles function will be discussed later in the chapter.

My formulation of *poésie* as an analytical method uses Dayan’s five essential interart laws as a starting point.⁵⁷⁴ I summarise them here in a very basic form. Dayan’s first law [D1] specifies that the artwork ‘should be a new object’, with no expectation of clarification from the artist.⁵⁷⁵ Stravinsky similarly described ‘a new reality’.⁵⁷⁶ As Dayan explains, ‘the value is not in what it says, but in what it is’.⁵⁷⁷ His second law [D2] demands that interart relationships ‘must always be incalculable... there can be no direct translation and no unproblematic collaboration’.⁵⁷⁸ Is he describing ‘direct translation’ as a kind of consonance, building on Daniel Albright’s notion of ‘figures of dissonance’,⁵⁷⁹ whereby the individual elements within collaborative works retain their distinctive qualities and interactions create tension, as with *poésie*?

The third law [D3] restates how ‘the common property [of all artworks] exists; but it cannot be defined, it can only be asserted’.⁵⁸⁰ He further proposes that whatever commonality does exist among different genres, should transcend words and defy classification. But discourse is, by its very nature, semantic and inevitably must use

⁵⁷³ Cocteau, *La Difficulté*, 32: ‘L’espace joue là le rôle du temps’.

⁵⁷⁴ Dayan, *Art as Music*, 1–8.

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵⁷⁶ Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Expositions and Developments* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992. First published Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1962), 102.

⁵⁷⁷ Dayan, *Art as Music*, 2.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵⁷⁹ Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent*, 181–363.

⁵⁸⁰ Dayan, *Art as Music*, 3.

language to describe the characteristics of any genre. How does Dayan overcome the problem that this idea creates? Dayan's proposition is problematic because he just substitutes one word for a different one in order to accommodate his theory. Contrary to Dayan's third law, however, I claim that *poésie* can act as a carrier of meaning.⁵⁸¹ His fourth law [D4] relates to the common property found in all artworks that define them. He explains how 'they are all different, all unique, all original'.⁵⁸² He repeats the phrase 'a new reality', but in a different context from that of his first law. This means that artworks retain their individual characteristics, regardless of interart exchange. The fifth law [D5] proposes that an artist selects 'one medium as if it were operating in another' and moves away from a preferred art form. Surely this represents a type of translation that he refutes with his second law?⁵⁸³

As with Dayan's model, it is not what *poésie* is that is relevant and important but how it functions.⁵⁸⁴ Cocteau acknowledged how elusive *poésie* was and accepted his responsibility to 'grasp the intangible, [as far as possible]'.⁵⁸⁵ The idea corresponds to Dayan's second law whereby interart relationships must always be 'incalculable'.⁵⁸⁶ Both Cocteau and Dayan's propositions appear problematic because if they are 'un-analysable' (Myers's translation) they cannot be interrogated.⁵⁸⁷ The fundamental challenge is in the English translation of 'saisir l'insaisissable'. I find other possibilities more appropriate in terms of understanding: intangible, impalpable or elusive are more nuanced and allow some access to a concept whereas un-analysable does not. The whole point for Cocteau and his concept is to be mysterious rather than impenetrable.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid.

⁵⁸² Ibid.

⁵⁸³ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁵ Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 189: Mais il nous reste à étudier, autant qu'il est possible de saisir l'insaisissable...'.

⁵⁸⁶ Dayan, *Art as Music*, 3.

⁵⁸⁷ Cocteau, *A Call* (Myers), 159: 'So far as it is possible to analyse the un-analysable'.

Cocteau rather refers to an action, an application and an understanding of his creative philosophy, which works across, between and within his diverse forms of artistic expression. He designates all his creative processes as ‘transformations’.⁵⁸⁸ This resonates strongly with Dayan’s proposition that universality exists within any art form which facilitates its ‘metamorphosis’ across permeable interart boundaries.⁵⁸⁹ *Poésie* as object, functions across the creative and receiving processes, and as such enables it to ‘assert’ any interart characteristics. The inherent transformative potential of *poésie* is possible because it is understood through metaphor. Dayan nominates a ‘common property’ which is equivalent to Cocteau’s ‘single red line’.⁵⁹⁰ This is the recurring metaphor that Cocteau nominates as describing the continuity of his aesthetic links between his diverse works (see later in the chapter for a more detailed explanation).

In keeping with the characteristics of *poésie*, Cocteau created open works with intrinsic multiplicity that allowed for many possible interpretations [P2]. He was confrontational and wanted to provoke an unexpected audience awareness [P9]. Cocteau’s view was that the reader/viewer was too complacent and should engage in a much more imaginatively active and audacious way with the work [P10]. The implication is that an individual’s way of imagining or perceiving art is far more important and should go beyond any single artist’s means of expression in order to ensure a continually evolving work.⁵⁹¹ Therefore, both creative and interpretive dimensions are consigned to the act and outcome of *poésie*. If *poésie* is mediated through the new object [P1],⁵⁹² it becomes part of the act of creation and reception: it

⁵⁸⁸ Francis Steegmuller, ‘Jean Cocteau: 1889–1963 A Brief Biography’, in *Jean Cocteau and the French Scene*, ed. Doré Ashton (New York: Abbeville, 1984), 15.

⁵⁸⁹ Dayan, *Art as Music*, 3.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁹¹ Jean Cocteau, *Le secret professionnel*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 9 (Geneva: Marguerat, 1950), 201.

⁵⁹² As early as 1981 Roland Barthes observed how ‘Interdisciplinary consists in creating a new object, which belongs to no one’. See Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 72.

underpins Cocteau's aesthetic triad (artist, artwork, audience).⁵⁹³ I maintain that these are the very characteristics at the core of Cocteau's creative process: they underpin and shape his transdisciplinary perspective.

These principles show how *poésie* can function in several ways. I have designated it as an idea, a process, a method, a concept or a framework. The characteristics of *poésie* are listed and compared to Dayan's laws in Table 4.1. They are necessarily listed as separate principles, but they are not always present simultaneously. Where more than one principle exists, they may overlap because certain characteristics intersect within the process and cannot always be separated. The very nature of *poésie* is that it is transient and fluid and sets up nuanced relationships in any combination (dependent on the context). [P1] designates that the work must be a new reality (after Dayan, D1, see below). Cocteau always aimed to create open works [P2], as described by Lawson, with potential for multiple interpretations that demand active reader interpretation [P10].⁵⁹⁴ As Gullentops summarises:

Cocteau never stopped multiplying perspectives; in the same way he multiplied his work across various arts [P5]. No reality is ever just one, since it implies a multitude of elements. Each point of view is multiplied in space and time. But this multiplication remains embedded in a non-repetitive situation.⁵⁹⁵

The interpretive process involves the spectator [P10]; its interplay between elements is unstable and in a state of flux. The experience will be different for each individual spectator at any one moment: it presents the uniqueness of a new reality. Cocteau subverts the spatial and temporal dimensions within his works as a function of his transdisciplinarity [P11]. He incorporates vertical and horizontal spaces into his texts which impacts on the sonority. The spaces are equivalent to musical pauses and disrupt the temporal linearity because of a different reading of the words and syllables:

⁵⁹³ Lydia Crowson, *The Esthetic of Jean Cocteau* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1978), 2.

⁵⁹⁴ Lawson, *Closure*, 67.

⁵⁹⁵ David Gullentops and Ann Van Sevenant, *Les Mondes de Jean Cocteau: Poétique et Esthétique. John Cocteau's Worlds: Poetics and Aesthetics* (Paris: Non Lieu, 2012), 386.

Cocteau used the spacing of the text to activate its spatial dimension. He wrote: ‘here we see how the secret, inner forms of poetry resemble nothing that can be explained’.⁵⁹⁶ By using the multi-dimensional terminology of ‘form’ referring to *poésie* he is specifically assigning spatial characteristics to it.

He introduced the idea of reciprocity and transformation: the author becomes spectator and can stand outside the work and reassess it. He identifies the significant moment when a work is finished—when he becomes *other*. Again, he presents himself in the third person (see Chapter five).

He trusts ‘this *other*, this stranger that we become a few minutes after completing a work’.⁵⁹⁷ Cocteau ensures the continuity of his works and his ongoing personal legacy through the revelation of what was to become his *poésie* concept after *Le Potomak*’s publication.

⁵⁹⁶ Cocteau, *Le secret*, 168: ‘et voilà où le dessin secret de la *poésie* ne ressemble à rien qui s’explique’.

⁵⁹⁷ Jean Cocteau, *28 autoportraits écrits et dessinés*, ed. Pierre Caizergues (Paris: Ecriture, 2003), 144: ‘je fais confiance à cet *autre*, à cet étranger que nous devenons quelques minutes après avoir créé un ouvrage’.

Table 4.1 Comparison of characteristics of *poésie* and my interpretation, with Dayan's interart laws.

No.	Cocteau's <i>poésie</i>		No.	Dayan's laws
P1	It is a new reality	As a new object, or a transformed one	D1 D4	New reality
P2	It is an open work	Multiple interpretations are possible		
P3	It includes asynchronicity	Multiple elements create dissonance	D4	One common property exists but all artworks retain their individual characteristics.
P4	It is original and enigmatic	Beyond classification	D2 D3	Second law 'incalculable'. Can only assert
P5	It enacts transdisciplinarity	Multidimensional	D5	
P6	It is understood through metaphor	Conceptual	D5	
P7	It masks and reveals			
P8	It transforms and mediates		D5	All the arts work in the same way
P9	It provokes			
P10	It demands active interpretation	Stimulates reader participation		
P11	It subverts the space-time barrier			

Cocteau's tombstone bore the epitaph 'I stay with you' (see Figure 4.1).⁵⁹⁸ He believed each transformation was a 'renaissance', which he thought of as 'a history of a shedding'.⁵⁹⁹ Death was a recurring theme. He believed that through death he could achieve perfection.⁶⁰⁰ He described his symbolic death, at the time of *Le Potomak*, as 'the other J.C. dead, after a brilliant but derisory poetic career without *poésie*'.⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹⁸ Enrico Coccozza, 'The Poetic Imagery and Existential Dilemma of Jean Cocteau' (PhD thesis, University of Strathclyde, 1979), 56: 'je reste avec vous'.

⁵⁹⁹ Jean Cocteau, 'Plan du Potomak', *Dans L'Impair, Histoire d'une mue par Jean Cocteau*, manuscript Les fonds Madame Louis Solvay, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, FS IX 1141 C 1, reproduced in Jean-Jacques Kihm, Elizabeth Sprigge and Henri C. Béhar, ed., *Jean Cocteau, l'homme et les miroirs* (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1968), 409.

⁶⁰⁰ Coccozza, 'The Poetic Imagery,' 56.

⁶⁰¹ Milorad, 'La Poésie selon Cocteau,' 13: 'un autre J.C., mort après une brillante mais dérisoire carrière poétique sans *poésie*'.

Cocteau referred to himself in the third person as though he had transformed into someone else. This explains his statement in *Le Testament d'Orphée* (1958):

The poet, by composing poems, uses a language that is neither dead nor living, that few people speak, and few people understand.⁶⁰²

Cocteau felt vilified and misunderstood by the public because he wrote of things beyond their comprehension. He visualised himself as existing between two worlds, neither dead nor alive. Gullentops states: 'If he were already dead, he would be a ghost to the living. If he were still alive, he would be a shadow to the dead'.⁶⁰³ The poet belongs to both worlds: 'The mirror as a gateway to death, allows Cocteau to visualise the door to other worlds'.⁶⁰⁴

Figure 4.1 Epigraph on Jean Cocteau's tombstone.⁶⁰⁵

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Gullentops's idea of the shadowy and ghostly evokes a sense of an 'in between' interface where there is a directionality between two worlds which Cocteau inhabited and functioned artistically. This correlates with and justifies his idea of *poésie* as something simultaneously dormant and active. Its locus of energy is situated in the 'in

⁶⁰² Jean Cocteau, *Le Testament d'Orphée* (Paris: Rocher, 1983), 71: 'Le poète, composant des poèmes, use d'une langue ni vivante ni morte que peu de personnes parlent et que peu de personnes entendent'.

⁶⁰³ Gullentops and Sevenant, *Les Mondes de Jean Cocteau*, 383.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁵ 'Jean Cocteau', accessed 28 October 2019, www.findagrave.com/memorial/6629/jean-cocteau

between’ with the potential for active differentiation and transformation at a moment of intersection. Not only does *poésie* underpin Cocteau’s creativity but also his interior world—it is the means through which he connects to the outside world and other worlds beyond.

The idea was so significant for Cocteau that he devised the unique expression of ‘being without being’ as a chapter title in *The Difficulty of Being*.⁶⁰⁶ This was connected to his first and main experience of phoenixology.⁶⁰⁷ Cocteau borrowed the term from Salvador Dalí.⁶⁰⁸ He believed in the idea of resurrection, and that death and rebirth are a means of transformation in perpetual motion: ‘Poets never die’.⁶⁰⁹ Cocteau believed that:

That is to say that poets die and live again. Dalí invented a very beautiful science: phoenixology. Phoenixology, means that people die often to be reborn. It is the rebirth of the phoenix. Burn, burn to change into ashes, and in their turn the ashes become oneself. One becomes oneself through this phenomenon of phoenixology.⁶¹⁰

Dalí’s concept was important for Cocteau because it resonated with his belief in transformation through ongoing creative production. *Poésie* provided the means for this continual renaissance. Cocteau wanted his artistic legacy to be defined by the transcendence of his works rather than by their actuality. His transformations consisted of a complex combination of personal, spiritual and artistic changes.

The determining factor in developing a methodology by which to reassess the *Huit Poèmes* concerns how *poésie* functions in all aspects of Cocteau’s creative method,

⁶⁰⁶ Cocteau, *La Difficulté* (Rocher), 129: ‘d’être sans être’.

⁶⁰⁷ Milorad, ‘La Poésie selon Cocteau,’ 13.

⁶⁰⁸ Martin M. Winkler, *Classical Literature on Screen: Affinities of Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 52.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁶¹⁰ Jean Cocteau, *Jean Cocteau, journal sonore du Testament d’Orphée*, Roger Pillaudin, Jean Cocteau, Grandes Heures Radio France/Ina, 5 February. 2016, original release date, 20 May 1998, track 5: interview ‘La renaissance du poète’. Translated version in Winkler, *Classical Literature*, 53: ‘C’est à dire que les poètes meurent et revivent. Dalí a inventé une science très belle: la phénixologie. La phénixologie, cela veut dire que les personnes meurent souvent pour renaître. C’est la renaissance du phénix. Brûle, brûle pour se changer en cendres, et à leur tour cendres se changent en soi-même. On devient soi-même a travers ce phénomène de la phénixologie’.

and how Auric assimilated some aspects of the concept into his compositional process. *Poésie* acts as a conduit from the relational situation of the creative artist through, and by which, the artwork emerges as a feature and act of *poésie*.⁶¹¹

I have now established the context and use of *poésie* from Cocteau's writings, and compiled a list of eleven principles based on Dayan's five laws. The aim here is to reaffirm *poésie* as a recognisable and consistent component of Cocteau's artistic practice and to evaluate Auric's compositional approach to *poésie*—particularly in terms of their shared transdisciplinary orientation. The elements of the continuum, shown in Figure 4.2, illustrate how *poésie* evolves over time and is shaped by the relevant influences of Cocteau's oeuvre.

Whilst the principles of *poésie* have been explored in some detail, it is helpful to summarise them according to their mode of function. This leads to a greater understanding of the concept in practical terms and to its application in analysis. The eleven principles can be divided into three categories:

1. Nouns: three principles of *poésie* refer to objects or ideas.
2. Adjectives: three principles act descriptively.
3. Verbs: five principles present actions.

These grammatical categories set out the basis of potential interactions between and across the different creative processes. They detail the naming (noun), the description (adjective), the action (verb), and the progressions that connect them—all are synonymous with *poésie*. Figure 4.3 illustrates the interactive relationships between different functions of each principle through the intersecting dynamic line of the continuum. The nodes of impact are the location and source of creative energy required for the creative transformative act that underpins *poésie*.

⁶¹¹ David Bancroft, 'Some Notes on the *Album des Eugènes* in Cocteau's *Potomak*', *Australian Journal of French Studies* 8, no. 1 (1964), 41.

Functions of *Poésie*

Poésie as noun: nouns classify things. In this context, *poésie* is an abstract noun in that it cannot be perceived by any of the senses. It represents the what in the system.

However, in practical terms, for *poésie* to be realised and identified in artworks, it must fulfil the following criteria:

- The work must be regarded as a new reality [P1].
- The work must be open with potential for multiple interpretations [P2].
- The work must incorporate dissonance between interfaces as a catalyst that activates transformation [P3].

Poésie as adjective: adjectives qualify nouns and specify why *poésie* can be attributed to the artwork.

- The work must be original, enigmatic and beyond classification [P4].
- The work must enact interdisciplinarity [P5].
- The work must be understood through metaphor [P6].

Poésie as verb: verbs describe actions, states or occurrences where process is central to the function of *poésie*. They represent the how of *poésie*. Cocteau's theory is that *poésie* is activated from what he describes as fluid matrix (that he also called *poésie*) and through its transformation and differentiation, it then shapes the outcome, as illustrated:

Fluid matrix	process	outcome
<i>poésie</i>	<i>poésie</i>	<i>poésie</i>

The core of *poésie* then traverses the multiple spatio-temporal intersections and can be activated at any point (place) or moment (time) along its axis, as illustrated in the continuum (Figure 4.2) and nexus (Figure 4.3) diagrams that follow. The elements of space and time are necessarily interlinked by the transdisciplinary [P5] and time/space [P11] principles of *poésie*. It is typical of Cocteau's provocation to propose such a strange and confusing conundrum whereby the origin, process and product are all identified as the same.

Alternative groupings based on process rather than syntax are possible and these show fluidity at the level of classification and the enacting of *poésie*. The process of *poésie* as an interface is illustrated in Figure 4.3. For example:

- Each work, as a new reality [P1], will be open to multiple interpretations [P2] and necessarily require active participation [P10] by the receiver.
- If the work enacts interdisciplinarity [P5] then it must incorporate heterogeneous [P3] and the space-time dynamic [P11] will be subverted. If it is understood through metaphor [P6] then it will be mediated and transformed [P8]
- The work must defy classification [P4]. It will mask and reveal [P7] and provoke [P9].

Both Cocteau and Dayan insist that works continually evolve through time with various performances and in various manifestations as new realities. With the *Huit poèmes*, this is achieved through Auric's musical settings as *mélodies*. Cocteau believed that once a work was created and put into the public domain its ties with the artist were cut and it developed a life of its own.⁶¹²

Multiplicity within any work (not necessarily specific to Cocteau's works), is illustrated in the *poésie* continuum diagram (see Figure 4.2). The many factors involved at a spatio-temporal intersection represent a unique but transient interpretation at a moment and point of impact. I designate this as the node of creative exchange. As depicted in the continuum, *poésie* emerges from the source, subject to a conducive set of conditions and, through its actions and processes as described, the outcome is achieved. This outcome embodies the experiences of both creator and receiver. It is the nature of *poésie* that it is dormant and yet can be activated and activate as part of its own processes.

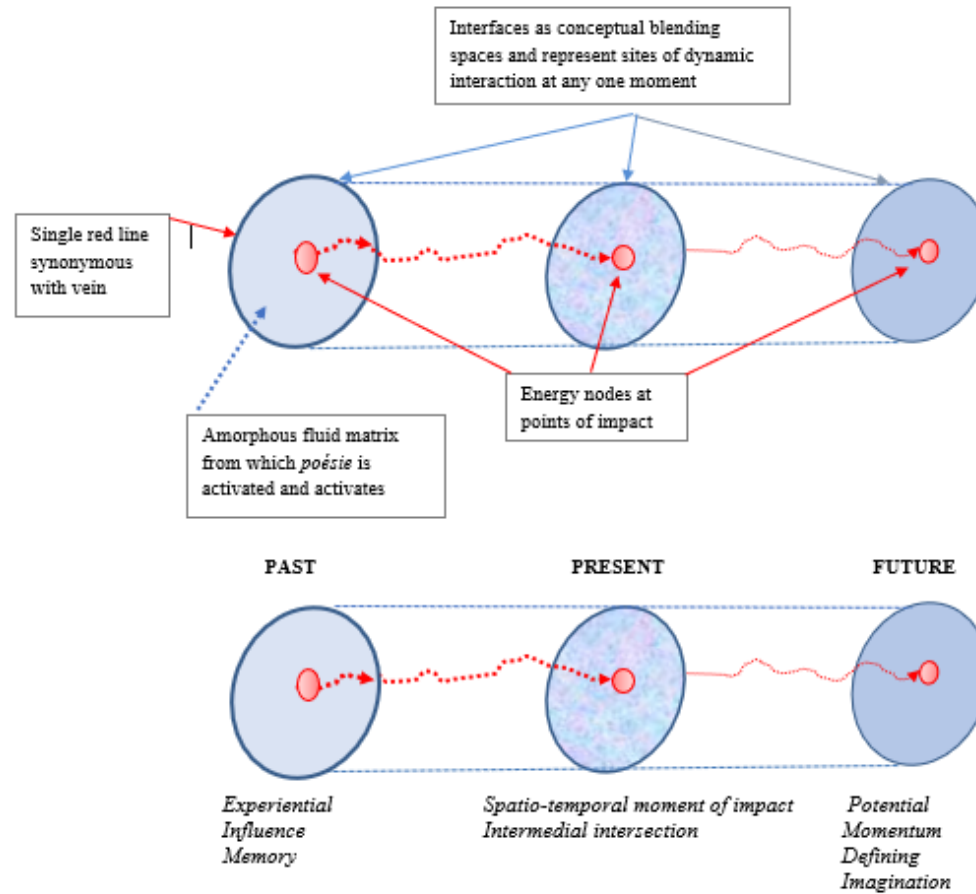
⁶¹² Cocteau, *A Call* (Myers), 153–154: 'A poem should be made to cast off, one by one, all the ropes attaching it to whatever was the source, or motive, of its creation. Each time the poet cuts a rope his heart beats. When he has cut the last one, the poem detaches itself, and rises, unaided, like a balloon, carrying its own beauty with it, having severed all connection with the earth'. See also Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 184: 'Un poème doit perdre une à une toutes les cordes qui le retiennent à ce qui le motive. Chaque fois que le poète en coupe, son cœur bat. Lorsqu'il coupe la dernière, le poème se détache, monte comme un ballon, beau en soi et sans autre attache avec la terre'.

Poésie constructs a relational interart dimension, in which the various elements interact and approximate—although none are prioritised. The process is reciprocal and, therefore, the work is itself transformed, mediated and refracted. For interart exchange to occur, there needs to be tension across and between multiple elemental interfaces of a work, which is activated through asynchronicity.

During such interaction, despite transformation, the individual elements still retain their own characteristics. Cocteau musicalises and spatialises his poetry, so that it can assert music and visual art (as with Dayan’s fifth law: ‘art as poetry, poetry as music, music as art, [in] all possible combinations’).⁶¹³






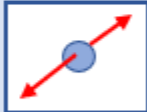

⁶¹³ Dayan, *Art as Music*, 3.

Figure 4.2 Space-time continuum as ‘single red line’, showing *poésie* as node of impact across multiple potential interfaces.⁶¹⁴



⁶¹⁴ The single red line is shown as an irregular one because it does not follow a direct line of due to the various influences that impact on its direction.

Figure 4.3 Nexus of functions of *poésie*: arrows indicate verb as interface.

NOUN	VERB INTERFACE	ADJECTIVE
1. Work is a new reality 	1. Work masks, reveals and illuminates	1. Work is original 
2. Work is an open work 	2. Work transforms and mediates	2. Work enacts interdisciplinarity 
3. Work includes asynchronicity 	3. Work must provoke 	3. Work is understood through metaphor 
	4. Work demands active interpretation	
	5. Works acts to subvert space/time barrier	

Cocteau's multidimensional sensibility propelled him towards an exploration of a fourth dimension. Film provided the perfect medium for him to manipulate spatial and temporal dimensions. David Gullentops expands the idea of *poésie* in action to include another dimension—that of a space.⁶¹⁵ He indicates how, for Cocteau:

[*poésie*] was and would always remain a place where external forces intervene. The creative act is first and foremost a liberator of alternative visions, of yet unknown perspectives.⁶¹⁶

What kind of place or space is he describing? (The terms are not interchangeable, but equally applicable in this context.) It is actual, conceptual, metaphorical or collaborative, or any combination of these.

It is salient to mention here how a metaphorical dimension can be recognised as integral to both transdisciplinarity and, by extension, *poésie*. Jennifer Hatte states that 'an author will express verbally, those images of metaphor which tend to inhabit his visual imagination'.⁶¹⁷ The processes that underpin *poésie* are translation, transformation, transcription and adaptation, as set out in Zbikowski's theory of conceptual blending and mapping.⁶¹⁸ *Poésie* can also be symbolic and, contrary to Dayan's concept, I believe *poésie* can be a carrier of meaning or express an idea. Other qualities of *poésie* require that the work be enigmatic and beyond classification [P4]. For example, *Le Potomak* is stylistically unique and innovative. The cartoon images in *L'album des Eugènes* are surrounded by the text—rather than being dispersed through it—which makes them interactive rather than illustrative.

⁶¹⁵ Gullentops and Sevenant, *Les Mondes de Jean Cocteau*.

⁶¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 373.

⁶¹⁷ Jennifer Hatte, *La langue secrète de Jean Cocteau: La mythologie personnelle du poète et l'histoire cachée des Enfants terribles* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007), 20: 'La métaphore, qui repose souvent sur l'imagination visuelle de l'auteur dont les images sont exprimées (dans les œuvres écrites) de façon verbale'.

⁶¹⁸ Zbikowski, *Conceptualising Music*.

Poésie masks and yet reveals at the same time [P7]. Cocteau explains how ‘The drama underlying *Le Potomak* I concealed under a thousand jokes’.⁶¹⁹ He simultaneously reveals the genesis of *les Eugènes*, one group of protagonists within the story, and includes a commentary on the development of the book itself. Cocteau wants *poésie* to ‘elucidate and to accentuate everything’.⁶²⁰ He insists that, through *poésie*, he ‘shed[s] light on the nakedness that shakes the inertia, the surprising things that surround us and that we mechanically register with our senses’.⁶²¹ He is angered by public complacency, which he calls an ‘indolence’.⁶²² However, because of this, he made sure that provocation became a fundamental component of his works [P9]. He reinforces his perversity by purposely ‘cultivating’ that for which he was criticised.⁶²³ Arguably, interaction exists in the reception of any artwork, but I maintain that it is fundamental to Cocteau’s artistic process that his work be both confrontational and challenging [P9]—allowing it to provoke the maximum response. This exposes the way that any number of the principles of *poésie*, in any combination, can function within a work as part of the process and product of *poésie*. The more complex the work, the greater the potential for interart relationships and exchanges, as the embodiment of *poésie*.

The basis of this unique and exciting method is the extent to which it forces the unpacking of the unseen and unheard within a work, and reveals a perception of one

⁶¹⁹ Jean Cocteau, *Le secret professionnel*, in *Poésie Critique*, vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), 60: ‘J’ai masque le drame du *Potomak* sous mille farces’.

⁶²⁰ Preface to *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel* in Jean Cocteau, *Antigone, suivie Les mariés de la Tour Eiffel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), 64: ‘ Ici, je renonce au mystère. J’allume tout, je souligne tout...’

⁶²¹ Cocteau, *Le secret*, 188: ‘Voilà le rôle de la poésie. Elle dévoile dans toute la force du terme. Elle montre nue, sous une lumière qui secoue la torpeur, les choses surprenantes qui nous environnent et que nos sens enregistraient machinalement’.

⁶²² Cocteau, *A Call* (Myers), 28: ‘The public does not like dangerous profundity; it prefers surfaces... The indolence of the public... The public is ready to take up no matter what new game so long as you don’t change it, when once it has learned the rules’; and Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 34: ‘Le public n’aime pas les profondeurs dangereuses; il préfère les surfaces... L’indolence du public... Le public est prêt à adopter n’importe quel nouveau jeu pourvu qu’on ne change plus, une fois qu’il en connaît les règles’.

⁶²³ Jean Cocteau, *The Cock and the Harlequin: Notes Concerning Music*, trans., Rollo H. Myers (London: Egoist Press, 1921), 29: ‘what the public reproaches in you, cultivate it, that’s who you are’; and Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 33: ‘Ce que le publique te reproche, cultive-le, c’est toi’.

thing, as seen through the lens of another. Metaphor is pertinent and vital to Cocteau and Auric's transdisciplinary collaborative method and processes. Not only is *poésie* understood through metaphor but it is also a metaphor for Cocteau's creative practice.

Auric never explicitly mentions *poésie* by name but he does refer to numerous conversations and discussions, where they (and Satie) were involved, which that led to the development of their new musical aesthetic, later to be documented in *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*. Their creative compatibility is also confirmed by a fifty-year collaborative relationship. This leads to an understanding of how their innovative approach forms and functions a foundation of my applied analytical methodology.

Cocteau is unequivocal in presenting his ideas on the nature of *poésie*, as vital to the evolution of his creative method, with his statement, encapsulated in *Le Rappel à l'Ordre* (*A Call to Order*). Here, Cocteau provokes and summons *poésie* as his artistic vision, in terms of the past, present and future components that shaped his creative output. He wrote in *Le Rappel à l'Ordre*:

But what we have to examine now (as far as it is possible, to analyse the un-analysable),⁶²⁴ is that miraculous fluid in which the poet is immersed—a fluid that is latent in him and around him like a sort of electricity, a veritable element in suspense, the force of which is proved by the history of humanity every time an artist succeeds in concentrating it and building a vehicle for it. And when we come into contact with one of the best constructed of these vehicles—a picture, a piece of sculpture or music, a poem—do we not feel a poetical shock as if we were holding the handles of an electrical apparatus?⁶²⁵

Cocteau believed that he was surrounded by the fluid that he named *poésié*, and that a fluid was also dormant within him. He identified the origin of two sources of his creativity, one deep from his internal subconscious, and the other from his external

⁶²⁴ There are multiple readings of the French word *saisir*: it can also mean 'to grasp', in terms of understanding (the mysterious).

⁶²⁵ Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 189: 'Mais il nous reste à étudier, autant qu'il est possible de saisir l'insaisissable, ce fluide fabuleux où baigne le poète, fluide qui préexiste en lui et autour de lui comme une électricité, véritable élément dormant dont l'histoire de l'humanité prouve la force lorsqu'un artiste le concentre et lui fabrique un véhicule. Au contact de quelques-uns de ces véhicules les mieux faits : tableau, sculpture, musique, poème, ne ressentons-nous pas une secousse de poésie, comme en tentant les poignées d'un appareil électrocuteur'.

experiences and influences. These are both metaphorically described as fluid matrices. *Poésie*, as a purely subliminal manifestation, would be ‘killed’ by conscious intention. However, according to Cocteau, it was only through the process that *poésie* could survive the idea. The implication is that Cocteau regarded *poésie* as more intuitive than mindful. He continued and explained further: ‘Yet, *poésie* is itself an idea. It would only know how to express one, by becoming poetic, that is without extinguishing itself’.⁶²⁶ He appears to contradict himself in the same sentence—in his typically ambiguous way. In fact, he masks the idea [P7], forces active participation from the reader, in reference to reception [P10] and simultaneously provokes [P9] and confuses the reader. He also wants to reveal and illuminate some sort of alternative perspective contained within the work [P7]. With his definition of *poésie*, he is acting out its very form, function and process.

He used the metaphor of electricity to reflect an energy potential that is transmitted along a wire, equivalent to the single red line. *Poésie* is the energy and life that is activated by, and in turn activates, the artwork—as a reflexive transdisciplinary and transformative process. The experiences of both creator and receiver are embodied within the process. He formalised the commonality of *poésie* across his artistic practice as an ongoing force which evolved dependent on context.

Cocteau also specified: ‘what is important with *poésie*, is neither what is said, nor how it is said, nor its meaning, nor its music. Other things matter, those which cannot be analysed’.⁶²⁷ Cocteau’s reference to ‘its music’ is very significant because he indirectly introduced his transdisciplinary idea of a ‘*poésie* of music’ and exposed the ever-present influence of music as part of his creative process. Cocteau articulated his concept of *poésie* specifically as a transdisciplinary vehicle, as he confirmed in the

⁶²⁶ Jean Cocteau, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 10 (Geneva: Marguerat, 1950), 346: ‘La poésie est elle-même une idée, elle ne saurait en exprimer une sans devenir poétique, c’est-à-dire sans s’anéantir’.

⁶²⁷ Ibid.: ‘En poésie ce qui importe, ce n’est ni ce qui est dit, ni la manière dont c’est dit, ni le sens, ni la musique. Autre chose importe et qui ne s’analyse pas’.

opening pages of *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* by stating that 'a work of art must satisfy all the Muses—that is what I call *proof by 9*',⁶²⁸ referring to the nine goddesses who comprised the muses of Greek and Roman mythology.⁶²⁹

For *poésie* to be identifiable, one of its principles is that it must be elusive. If so, how can the concept be interrogated? He liked to hide behind an air of mystery and create works that were enigmatic. However, he has left enough clues in his writings to enable his concept to be decoded.

Other ideas of *poésie* are summarised by Cocteau within his other writings. He considers it a dormant homogenous matrix that is activated by an external catalyst: differentiated in such a way that it can be experienced through different forms of artistic expression. The very activation process releases an energy at the point of musico-poetic intersection which reflects the reciprocal nature of *poésie*. Cocteau maintained that his inspiration, or rather expiration, as he preferred to call it, came through a superior force—when his artistic ideas emerged from his inner depths. He declared:

I am not responsible for my poems, I am just an intermediary, a conduit, an instrument, as are all poets, mediums and instruments of this mysterious force that inhabits them... I do not speak of inspiration... [which] should be called expiration. It is something that emerges from our innermost beings.⁶³⁰

⁶²⁸ Cocteau, *Le Coq* (1979), 47: 'Une œuvre d'art doit satisfaire toutes les muses. C'est ce que j'appelle: 'preuve par 9''.

⁶²⁹ They were the daughters of Zeus, lord of all gods, and Mnemosyne, who represented memory. Memory was important for the Muses because in ancient times, when there were no books, poets had to carry their work in their memories. The muses are listed as Calliope, the muse of epic poetry, Clio, the muse of history, Erato, the muse of love poetry, Euterpe, the muse of music, Melpomene, the muse of tragedy, Polyhymnia, the muse of sacred poetry, Terpsichore, the muse of dance, Thalia, the muse of comedy and Urania, the muse of astronomy. See 'muse', accessed 2 May 2019, www.wordreference.com/definition/muse

⁶³⁰ Jean Cocteau, *Mon testament pour l'an 2000*, collected by Pierre Laforet, MC20 173, Disque Vogue-Contrepoint 1963: 'Je ne suis pas responsable de mes poèmes, je ne suis qu'un intermédiaire, un conduit, un instrument, tout comme tous les poètes, les médiums et les instruments de cette force mystérieuse qui les habite. Je ne parle pas d'inspiration, [qui] devrait être appelé expiration. C'est quelque chose qui sort de nos êtres les plus intimes'.

Cocteau is specific and unambiguous with the choice of the words ‘sleep’ and ‘deep’, when he refers to *poésie*. With his very visceral description he confirms how *poésie* lies dormant in his innermost being and is expelled by his breath.

Préambule: *Le Cap de Bonne-Espérance* (1919).⁶³¹

Mon encre encoche et là		My ink indents and there	
et la		and there	
	et là		and there
et là		and there	
dort la profonde <i>poésie</i>		sleeps the deep <i>poésie</i>	

Poésie in Relation to Other Interart Concepts

Poésie has been set up as an analytical interart methodology, but how does it relate to other models in the wider theoretical discourse? Cocteau’s *poésie* shows similarities to the work of Dayan, Albright and Cook but then there is divergence from and some overlap of earlier ideas. This leads to the advancement of the wider interart discourse. Neither Cocteau nor Dayan believe that artworks should be explained.⁶³² For Cocteau, *poésie* has to be elusive, un-analysable, and beyond words; Dayan requires that any relationship between the arts be ‘incalculable’.⁶³³ According to Cocteau, *poésie* requires decoding even though it is beyond words (in common with Dayan’s idea).

Similarly, both men recognise it is how an art form works that is more important than what it is. Yet, *poésie* differs from Dayan’s interart laws because he refutes ‘any

⁶³¹ Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 15.

⁶³² See Jean Cocteau, ‘Interview’, *Newsweek*, 16 May 1955: ‘an artist cannot speak about his art any more than a plant can discuss horticulture’; and Dayan, *Art as Music*, 2: ‘The artist does not have the right to tell us what [the work] means, and we should not ask him’.

⁶³³ Dayan, *Art as Music*, 3.

direct translation',⁶³⁴ as in one art form imitating another, which rather contradicts with his fifth law where he describes 'a work in one medium as if it were operating in another'.⁶³⁵ My analysis shows how the *poésie* of Cocteau's texts is enacted as musicality, derived from the sonority and rhythmic patterns of the words. Auric adopts this aspect of *poésie* by structuring his compositions in the mode of literary prose and he attributes the rhythmic characteristic of syncopation to certain syllables in his setting of the text.

Poésie has been compared to Dayan's and Albright's interart theories. Cook's notion of medial signification through qualities of internal difference, conflict and flux is also important in that context.⁶³⁶ This sets them apart from others that focus on similarities rather than variants between art forms. *Poésie*, therefore, integrates aspects of Cook (medial differences), Albright (figures of dissonance), and Dayan (not what an art form is but how it works).

That *poésie* is understood through metaphor means that it relates to Lakoff and Johnson's work, as well as to Zbibowski's model based on conceptual blending. *Poésie* has been applied specifically as an analytical method, similar to Cook's model, whereas Dayan and Albright's style tends to be descriptive and relates more to the 'critical reception' of their chosen case studies.⁶³⁷ I claim, therefore, that *poésie* develops the interart aesthetic discourse even further. *Poésie* introduces additional perspectives which are superimposed on the similarities it has with other theories.

Cocteau's extensive writings on *poésie* establish him as a pioneer in terms of advancing contemporary interart dialogue. His work predates Calvin S. Brown's ground-breaking publication *Music and Literature: A Comparison of the Arts* (1948) by

⁶³⁴ Ibid.

⁶³⁵ Ibid.

⁶³⁶ Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, 103.

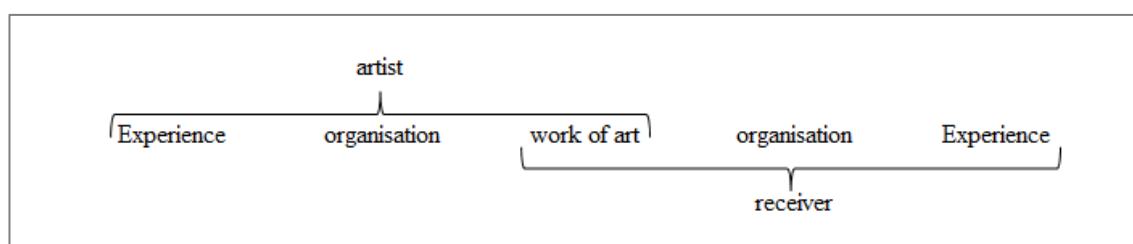
⁶³⁷ Helen Julia Minors, 'Review of *Art as Music, Music as Poetry, Poetry as Art, from Whistler to Stravinsky and Beyond*, by Peter Dayan', *Ars Lyrica* 20 (2015), 129.

several decades. The book became a standard in its field. As the title suggests, Brown focusses on the relationship between words and music, limiting his study to vocal music. Cocteau's concept encompasses all art forms, as do the more contemporary theoreticians mentioned in this research, but he makes some general observations that are relevant here. He states that the 'scholarly understanding' that results from interart research 'does not change [the] artistic impact' of any art object.⁶³⁸ In common with Cocteau, he sees the artistic process as only one half of the creation of an artwork. The other half depends on the receiver contribution.⁶³⁹ He maintains that:

It is now the task of the recipient to reverse the process of the artist: he takes the 'work of art', perceives its structure, relationships, and 'meanings', and comes finally to an experience of his own which is nearly as possible the same as the experience of the artist.⁶⁴⁰

He illustrates his understanding of the reciprocal relationship between creator and receiver (see Figure 4.4, below). Brown's expectation that the receiver's experience of the artwork will match that of the creator, as far as possible, is unrealistic and questionable. *Poésie* diverges from Brown's proposition, however, in that Cocteau demands a far more active and personal involvement from the receiver [P10].

Figure 4.4 Diagram of reciprocal relationship between creator and receiver.⁶⁴¹



Unlike Brown, he does not want any interpretations to reflect his own artistic aspirations. He wants his works to be constantly evolving through ongoing receiver participation in the creative continuum (see Figure 4.2). Brown's theory has another

⁶³⁸ Calvin S. Brown, *Music and Literature: A Comparison of the Arts* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, reprinted Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1987), xi.

⁶³⁹ *Ibid.*, 4

⁶⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴¹ *Ibid.*

limitation with respect to *poésie*: he restricts the possibility of any fluidity in the spatio-temporal relationship between the visual arts and music, with his description of how:

the visual arts are static and have their extension, development, and relationships in space. The auditory arts are dynamic and have their extension, development, and relationships in time.⁶⁴²

Brown classifies the visual and aural arts to their specific characteristics of spatiality and temporality, respectively. Whereas with *poésie*, the interart exchange functions at the spatio-temporal intersection where text and music crossover, as shown in Auric's musical setting of Cocteau's poems (for more specific examples see Chapters six and seven). His technique enables 'time to be metaphorically conceptualised in terms of space', as described by Lakoff and Johnson.⁶⁴³ Cocteau makes *poésie* stand out from the other models by naming the concept. He distinguishes between 'poems, *poésies* and *poésie* [as] different things'.⁶⁴⁴ Goffin summarises how 'only *poésie* can judge *poésie* in the name of *poésie*'.⁶⁴⁵ In other words, *poésie* must speak for itself. How can *poésie* speak? It does speak, in one way, as it represents Cocteau's authorial voice. The music-word theorist Peter Dayan, in a similar vein, integrates the idea in both his first [D1] and fourth [D4] laws of the interart aesthetic. He identifies the common denominator in all works of art: 'they are all different, all unique, all original [all created] a *new* reality'[D3].⁶⁴⁶ *Poésie*, by its very nature is transformative and experiential, so is equally applicable to and connects with, any pre-existing work that has been modified or transformed into another.

Later in his book, Dayan emphasises the condition that clarifies: 'nothing in one artistic medium be derived in any analysable way from anything in another medium'[D3].⁶⁴⁷ He is referring here to Stravinsky's use of versification in the

⁶⁴² Ibid., 10.

⁶⁴³ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors*, 147.

⁶⁴⁴ Cocteau, *Le secret*, 203: 'Que les poèmes, les poésies et la poésie sont choses différentes'.

⁶⁴⁵ Goffin, 'Métablisme,' 29: 'Seule, la poésie peut juger la poésie au nom de la poésie'.

⁶⁴⁶ Dayan, *Art as Music*, 3.

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid., 119.

generation of his musical motifs.⁶⁴⁸ My proposition of *poésie* as an analytical method, however, diverges from Dayan's concept at this point (for comparison see Table 4.1). The construction of an understanding of Cocteau's critical thinking and aesthetic approach to his own artistic practice is crucial in the formulation of *poésie* as an analytical tool. For example, Cocteau wrote extensively about *poésie* as the realisation of his creative aspirations; such primary source material informs a meaningful analysis of Auric's word setting in a transdisciplinary and collaborative context.

Cocteau regarded the transformation of everyday life and popular culture, as '*poésie* and the miracle of the everyday'.⁶⁴⁹ Cocteau saw magic in the artistic transposition of such realism, through *poésie*, as did Auric. In practice, Auric imitated French music-hall performances, inspired by such popular singers, such, as Maurice Chevalier and Mistinguett.⁶⁵⁰ Auric parodied their more fluid song styles with his freer prosody.⁶⁵¹ Auric shows an understanding of Cocteau's *poésie* in these songs. (see Chapters six and seven for a more detailed analysis). Cocteau's influence on Auric in terms of his interart orientation and his early concept of *poésie* is apparent here. Later, these would form part of their evolving collaboration, as a shared aesthetic. They both explored the transmedial potential of *poésie* as a creative method. Indeed, Auric continued to include spatial dislocation as a compositional feature, as evidenced in his musical settings of *Huit poèmes*.

According to Roust, Auric had already started to incorporate 'several arching arpeggios that change', in an unpublished song composed by Auric at the age of twelve,

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁹ Cocteau, *Antigone*, 64: 'poésie est miracle de la vie quotidienne'.

⁶⁵⁰ Nancy Perloff, *Art and the Everyday: Popular Entertainment and the Circle of Erik Satie* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 153–161.

⁶⁵¹ Nancy Perloff describes how Chevalier's prosody impacted directly on Poulenc's text setting of Cocteau's poem *Toréador*. Cocteau commissioned Poulenc to compose the song as a tribute to music halls in September 1918. See Francis Poulenc, *Correspondance, 1915–1963*, ed. Hélène de Wendel (Paris: Seuil, 1967), 21: 'Du reste, faites-la selon votre coeur, car l'ironie serait déplacée dans un hommage au Music-Hall'. It was the composer's first song setting.

using a Marcel Schwob (1867–1905) text (see Part I).⁶⁵² The setting was ‘entirely syllabic’. Auric moved away from totally syllabic relationships in his later settings of *Huit poèmes*. He revealed his own technique of horizontal and vertical spatial manipulation by varying rhythmic patterns and extending pitch separations. He experimented with syllabic settings and stress patterns that deviated from the usual spoken French language. In other words, he subverted the temporality of the music by elongating the space within parts of the text (see Example 4.1). It is relevant to mention here that the use of terms such as ‘space’, when applied to music, is inevitably metaphorical and forms yet another link with *poésie*. How is this spatio-temporal intersection possible? As Lakoff and Johnson explain how:

We speak [and read] in linear order [...] Since speaking [and reading are] correlated with time and time is metaphorically conceptualised in terms of space; it is natural for us to conceptualise language metaphorically in terms of space.⁶⁵³

They state that: ‘Because we conceptualise linguistic form in spatial terms, it is possible for certain spatial metaphors to apply directly to the form of a sentence, as we conceive it spatially’, thereby connecting form and content.⁶⁵⁴ The spatialisation of words adds to their content and rationalises the spatio-temporal intersection. For example, in the ninth and tenth lines of *Portrait d’Henri Rousseau*, number eight in the song series, Auric introduces a similar spatialising technique into his word setting:

[bar 45] Bi- / - - / plan [across 4 bars]
 [bar 49] so- - / - - / - / -leil [across 4 bars]
 [bar 62] Pâ- - / - / - / - / -ques [across 6 bars]
 [bar 56] Clo - / - - - / - - / -ches [across 5 bars]
 [bar 62] Pâ- - / - / - / - / - / -ques [across 6 bars].

⁶⁵² Private correspondence (Colin Roust, 12 July 2017). Roust described his discovery of two unpublished songs in the personal archive held by Auric’s widow.

⁶⁵³ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors*, 126.

⁶⁵⁴ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors*, 126: ‘we spatialise linguistic form. Spatial metaphors apply to linguistic form as it is spatialised. Linguistic forms are themselves endowed with content by virtue of the spatialisation of metaphors’.

He created rubato with syllabic elongations and longer vocal note values against a quaver and semiquaver piano part. He incrementally added a bar to the intrasyllabic spaces of successive words, gradually building up the effect of increased sound because of the reverberation that is imaginatively experienced and aurally perceived. Auric shows a different structural approach to his song form as early as 1911. Roust writes, ‘[Schwob’s] text is in prose, not verse, and the musical characteristics change from one sentence to the next’.⁶⁵⁵ In his search for a new compositional method, Auric juxtaposes different musical motifs using their differences to evoke a response and create form, rather than relying developing the material. Caizergues recognises Auric’s awareness of spatial manipulation in Cocteau’s original text of his poem *Cap de Bonne-Espérance* (*The Cape of Good Hope*),⁶⁵⁶ composed between 1915 and 1917.⁶⁵⁷ He writes how:

[Auric] was one of the first to appreciate the novelty of the layout of the *Cape of Good Hope* and he was particularly struck by the unusual arrangement of the text on the space of the page. So, now he also used and exploited the unrestricted and irregular spacing in the letters that he wrote to the poet, to prove he has learnt his lessons.⁶⁵⁸

***Poésie* as a Conceptual Framework**

My premise that *poésie* acts as a transformative concept is informed by Cocteau’s declaration: ‘if only the critics could take the trouble, they would find this single red line crossing all my works’.⁶⁵⁹ *Poésie* is, therefore, identified here as central in a process that works across, through and between the permeable boundaries that separate different art forms, and it acts polysensorially. The interface is important because it is the locus

⁶⁵⁵ Private correspondence (Colin Roust, 12 July 2017). Roust described his discovery of two unpublished songs in the personal archive held by Auric’s widow.

⁶⁵⁶ Cocteau gave his first reading of this work to Misia Sert, Picasso, the actor Pierre Bertin and André Breton at Valentin Gross’s in 1917. See Anne de Margerie, *Valentine Hugo, 1887–1968* (Paris: Damase, 1983), 15.

⁶⁵⁷ Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 6.

⁶⁵⁸ Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 8: ‘Celui-ci a été l’un des tout premiers à découvrir la nouveauté du *Cap de Bonne-Espérance* et il a été frappé plus particulièrement par la disposition singulière du poème dans l’espace de la page. Du coup, voilà qu’il se met à user et à abuser de blancs intempestifs et injustifiés dans les lettres qu’il écrit au poète comme pour lui prouver qu’il a retenu ses leçons’.

⁶⁵⁹ Cocteau, *Journal 1942–1945*, 412–413: ‘Si les critiques se donnaient la moindre peine, ils retrouveraient dans mes œuvres ce fil unique, rouge—et qui les traverse’.

of interart exchange and/or transformation (within a conceptual space), where *poésie* activates and is activated within a network of conceptual integration.⁶⁶⁰ How can two different elements combine and interact to form a new structure whilst still retaining their original characteristics?⁶⁶¹

⁶⁶⁰ Conceptual integration or blending is a mental process whereby words, images and ideas are blended in a network of 'mental spaces' to create meaning.

⁶⁶¹ See Margaret Boden, 'Précis of The Creative Mind: Myths and Mechanisms', *Behavioural and Brain Sciences* 17 (1994), 519–570.

Example 4.1 Auric, *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau*, bars 49–67.⁶⁶²

Removed due to copyright restrictions

⁶⁶² Auric, *Huit poèmes* (1963), 26.

Exchange between the arts does occur, but how and where it happens needs exploring, in order to advance the theory. One possible explanation focusses on the interface, previously identified as the ‘in-between’, and a site of interart activity.⁶⁶³ The ‘in-between’ emerges as a vital characteristic of *poésie* from the perspective of its transdisciplinary function. The ‘in-between’ can either be intra—operating between constituent elements within any individual art form, such as words and music in song—or as interart, across different arts forms. In other words, certain conditions need to be present to qualify as the ‘in-between’, which are:

1. Different elements or different art forms.
2. Transient, unstable space at interface.
3. Energy at node of intersection which activates movement.

These ideas also resonate with Cook’s notion of contest. He demonstrates: ‘Connected media relate dynamically through internal difference; it is the divergence between different media that gives meaning to their juxtaposition’.⁶⁶⁴ Contest is an essential feature of *poésie* but is described in terms of tension created through dissonance [P3], which is how the energy of *poésie* is activated. He would later develop this aspect of *poésie* with his technique of asynchronicity between image and sound in his films. Cook further iterates how:

the term *contest* is intended to emphasise the sense in which different media are, so to speak, vying for the same terrain, each attempting to impose its own characteristics upon each other.⁶⁶⁵

It is with *poésie* that Cocteau could mediate one art in terms of another—to address his transdisciplinary sensibility. Cook explains that for his notion of contest ‘each medium strives to deconstruct the other, and so create space for itself’.⁶⁶⁶ The intermedial

⁶⁶³ Jürgen E. Müller, ‘Intermediality: A Plea and Some Theses for a New Approach in Media Studies’ in *Interart Poetics: Essays on the Interrelations of the Arts and Media*, ed. Ulla-Britta Lagerroth, Hans Lund and Erik Hedling (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1997); cited in Jasper Sluijs and Anneke Smelik, ‘Interactivity and Affect in Intermedial Art: Theorizing Introverted and Extraverted Intermediality’, *Intermediality: History and Theory of the Arts, Literature and Technologies* 13 (2009), 178.

⁶⁶⁴ Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, 51.

⁶⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

principle of *poésie* functions in the same way. The transgression across permeable intermedial borders at a moment of impact reflects an intersection of time, place, or character. *Poésie* represents a situational snapshot that is shaped by various influences, with a potential interface for interart exchange. It is mediated by external experiential factors and internal processes of memory and imagination. For the process of *poésie* to be valid, two essential criteria have been identified. There must be a dynamic interaction between different elements at a point and moment of intersection. The ‘in-between’ is the defining factor of all such exchanges and relationships.⁶⁶⁷

According to Deleuze and Guattari, the ‘in-between’ is the most significant and complex interface for the activation of *poésie* within space and time. It enables the formation of multiple possible intermedial interactions that are fluid and unpredictable. It functions as an unstable space in a constant state of flux ‘where things pick up speed’.⁶⁶⁸ The dynamic interaction ‘produces an altogether new experience’,⁶⁶⁹ which is greater than that ‘of the individual media that prefigure it’.⁶⁷⁰ The idea is ‘that movement is perceived and experienced between and across the media, rather than being something within the isolated medium itself’.⁶⁷¹ According to Santini, ‘it is the experience of movement [that] creates intermediality’.⁶⁷² In keeping with the criteria of intermediality, the temporal dimension of movement has a spatial component, inasmuch as movement has a directionality. It is momentum and duration, rather than speed, that are important with directionality. Long periods of time may elapse without loss of momentum during any progression.

⁶⁶⁷ Müller, ‘Intermediality,’ 295–304.

⁶⁶⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans., Brian Massumi (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), 28; cited in Sluijs and Smelik, ‘Interactivity,’ 179.

⁶⁶⁹ Sluijs and Smelik, ‘Interactivity,’ 179.

⁶⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷¹ The notion of the mystery of substantial movement (‘le mystère du mouvement substantial [...]’) is discussed in Sylvano Santini, ‘La Perception du mouvement entre disparition et apparition: réminiscence mallarméenne de l’intermédialité’, *Intermédialités* 10, ‘Disparaître’ special issue (Autumn 2008), 45; cited in Sluijs and Smelik, ‘Interactivity,’ 179.

⁶⁷² Santini, ‘La Perception,’ 45.

Directionality clarifies not only intermedial relationships, but also those between the intermedial object and the receiver.⁶⁷³ Movement can either be ‘introverted [or] extraverted’.⁶⁷⁴ This is relevant because it is the directionality that determines the interart exchange and its individual mediation by the receiver as a function of *poésie* [P10]. Inward movement serves to maintain and accentuate the characteristic elemental differences between art forms: these are essential to qualify for the process of *poésie*. ‘Introverted intermediality is directed inward, in that it draws attention to its own principle of intermediality as an ‘in-between’ of different media’.⁶⁷⁵ It emphasises internal, reciprocal interactions, whilst ‘extraverted intermediality is directed outwards and accentuates ‘its expressive features’.⁶⁷⁶ The extroverted intermedial relations spread out and are the stimulus for audience reaction, which is applicable in terms of active spectator interpretation [P10]. The division and relationship between them are not fixed, like *poésie*, where transience and instability are necessary components in the construction of emerging relationships. Similarly, the interart transformative potential of *poésie* resonates with Jürgen E. Müller’s inter-medial theory that:

A media-product becomes an *inter*-media-product if a *multimedia* coexistence of different media-quotations and elements is transformed into a *conceptual intermedia* coexistence, the aesthetic refractions and faults (*Verwerfungen*) of which open new dimensions of experience to the recipient.⁶⁷⁷

In other words, there is: ‘a conceptual fusion of media, resulting in a distinctly new dimension and experience not present in separate media’.⁶⁷⁸ ‘Conceptual fusion’, in this context, should not be mistaken for synthesis. For *poésie* to exist, the elements must maintain their distinctiveness otherwise no dissonance or exchange can occur.

⁶⁷³ Sluijs and Smelik, ‘Interactivity,’ 180.

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁷ Müller, ‘Intermediality,’ 298. The formatting is as in the original text.

⁶⁷⁸ Sluijs and Smelik, ‘Interactivity,’ 180.

Poésie has much in common with ideas about the ‘in-between’ and with an alternative emergent interdisciplinary theory—that of ‘collision’—⁶⁷⁹ because it acts metaphorically.⁶⁸⁰ According to Cecchetto et al:

the productive struggle between two or more art forms or disciplines is described as a radical exteriority, suggesting continual movement and negotiation while resisting any final unity or acceptance of one form’s dominance over another.⁶⁸¹

The whole tone of the proposition is one of a highly dynamic, directional, unstable, oppositional and indeterminate system of an ‘in-between’ as a conceptual ‘plane of circulation’, for energising interart exchanges at a point of spatio-temporal intersection.⁶⁸² *Collision* highlights the unsettled nature of the ‘in-between’:

through an engagement with processes by which disciplinary boundaries are ruptured, as well as the interstices that result from these ruptures. This rupturing of boundaries points to the sense in which the term ‘collision’ while maintaining its suggestion of forceful impact between two or more distinct masses moving in different directions, also conveys a potentially productive learning from differences.⁶⁸³

Collision supports *poésie*, and other models discussed here, because it is the movement and impact at the permeable interface—with emphasis on the relationships of difference as fundamental to the act of interart exchange. These are also very relevant in the collaborative context, as well as in the process of reception.

It is questionable whether any complete synthesis between individual media can occur because of the constant mutability of the intermedial process. Indeed, it is a requirement for *poésie* that they retain their individual characteristics at the moment and juncture of impact in order to fuel the tension of dissonant energy. If the intermedial space and process is as unstable as described, then how is ‘meaning constructed’?⁶⁸⁴ Is

⁶⁷⁹ See David Cecchetto, Nancy Cuthbert, Julie Lassonde and Dylan Robinson, eds., *Collision: Interarts Practice and Research* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008).

⁶⁸⁰ Robert Frodeman ed. and Julie Thompson Klein, Carl Mitcham, associate eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, reprinted 2012), 139.

⁶⁸¹ Cecchetto, Cuthbert, Lassonde and Robinson, *Collision*, xiii–xiv.

⁶⁸² *Ibid.*, xiv.

⁶⁸³ *Ibid.*, xv.

⁶⁸⁴ Sluijs and Smelik, ‘Interactivity,’ 180.

it still valid to even consider the notion of meaning as relevant in this context?⁶⁸⁵ As Dayan claims in his first law, ‘the value is not in what it says, but in what it is’.⁶⁸⁶ He follows this with his fifth law, stating that ‘the only way to convey the incalculable relations that pertain between works, or between media, is to describe work in one medium as if it were operating in another’.⁶⁸⁷ The process can be understood as if each medium reframes the other through their interaction. Deleuze also confirms that ‘intermediality is better understood in terms of what it does rather than what it means’.⁶⁸⁸ The dynamic, moveable form and structure of *poésie* as an intermedial concept is more relevant than its meaning. Nevertheless, Cocteau creates open works that allow for multiple interpretations in accordance with *poésie* [P2] (which are experiential and therefore subjective). For him, meaning is still relevant but transient and mutable. For the receiver, each interpretation actively reflects a mental visual snapshot. Cocteau described how ‘form should be understood as meaning mental form, not a way of saying things, but a way of *thinking* them’.⁶⁸⁹ The cross-sensory process is activated in a conceptual space that intersects a moment in time. He declared how:

[the poet] will resort to genuine realism. He will accumulate a collection of internal visions and sensations... and instead of using them immediately... he should leave them undisturbed. In this way, without realising it, a store of unexpected associations of ideas and objects will be accumulated.⁶⁹⁰

Cocteau revealed his need to draw on an assimilated collection of everyday experiences, sensations and influences which are situated within the timeline of past, present and future. These inform his ongoing creative production as the space-time continuum,

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁶ Dayan, *Art as Music*, 2.

⁶⁸⁷ Ibid., 3.

⁶⁸⁸ Gilles Deleuze in Claire Colebrook, *Understanding Deleuze* (Crows Nest, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 2002), xiiv; cited in Sluijs and Smelik, ‘Interactivity.’

⁶⁸⁹ Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 201: ‘Que la forme doit être la forme de l’esprit. Non pas la manière de dire les choses, mais de les penser’.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid., 183–184: ‘[Le poète] usera du véritable réalisme, c’est-à-dire qu’il accumulera en lui des visions, des sentiments... et au lieu de s’en servir à la hâte... les laissera tranquilles. Ainsi se formera peu à peu, un amalgame, un magasin de rapports inattendus’.

illustrated in Figure 4.2. The space-time continuum is equally applicable to the reception of any artwork but will still be a function of *poésie*.

The idea of an ‘in-between’ situates the potential activation process of *poésie* at the active interface as described. How is such a process possible? The conceptual integration theory pioneered by Giles Fauconnier and Mark Turner is a viable model.⁶⁹¹ It is based on a cerebral process that involves a system of interconnected mental spaces. These form new blended spaces, with potential for the construction and transfer of meaning in any situation—particularly relevant here, in the context of interart dialogue (see Figure 4.5, below).

The diagram below shows the simplest network consisting of four mental spaces: a generic one, two inputs and the resulting a new space, within which the blend forms the basis of new meanings.⁶⁹² The image does not illustrate stages in the process, but shows a sequence of interconnected events.⁶⁹³ Fauconnier and Turner describe it as a ‘snapshot of an imaginative and complicated process that can involve deactivating previous connections, reframing previous spaces and other actions’.⁶⁹⁴ The two input mental spaces have corresponding elements that can interact and selectively move towards a newly formed integrated conceptual space. The addition of more complicated integration networks [multiple blends] allow multiple input spaces and successive blending, in which blends at one level can be inputs at another. Thus, multiple networks of potential interaction are created, as a requirement for *poésie* [P2].⁶⁹⁵ Fauconnier and Turner describe how:

⁶⁹¹ See Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*.

⁶⁹² *Ibid.*, 47.

⁶⁹³ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁶⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁶⁹⁵ Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, ‘Conceptual Blending in Form and Meaning’, *Recherches en communication*, 9 (2003), 61. This presents a synopsis, put together by Pierre Fastrez, of work on language, form and meaning in conceptual integration theory. It consists of excerpts and summaries from Gilles Fauconnier, ‘Conceptual Blending’, in *The International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioural Sciences*, ed. Neil Smelser and Paul Baltes (Oxford: Elsevier, 2000); Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, ‘Blending as a Central Process of Grammar’, in *Conceptual Structure, Discourse and*

Mental spaces are small conceptual packets constructed as we think and talk, for purposes of local understanding and action—they are very partial assemblies containing elements, structured by frames and cognitive models. It has been suggested that the capacity for complex conceptual blending (double-scope integration) is the crucial capacity needed for thought and language.⁶⁹⁶

Selective mental projections develop from a generic space via two different input spaces. This cross-mapping generates a new blended space with reconstructed connections and new meanings. Complex conceptual blending, as described above, explains a process whereby complicated cross-sensory networks contribute to the formation of interart relationships.

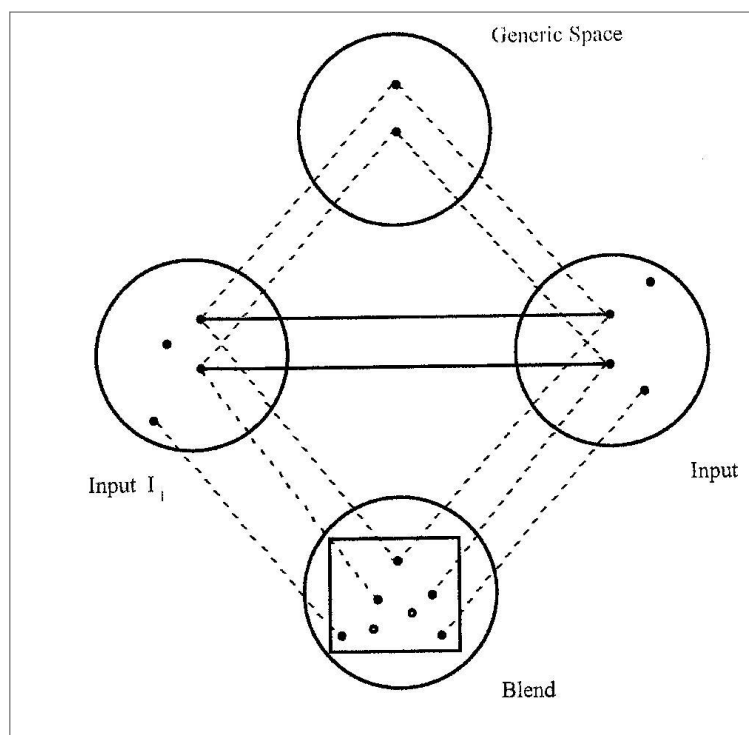
Other theorists in the field, such as Lakoff and Johnson explain that ‘such event-structure concepts [are] abstract and understood metaphorically in terms of space, motion and force’.⁶⁹⁷ They are necessarily experiential (a concept illustrated in the continuum diagram, Figure 4.2).

Language, ed. Adele Goldberg (Stanford, CSLI Publications, 1996); Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*; and, Mark Turner and Gilles Fauconnier, ‘Conceptual Integration and Formal Expression’. *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity* 10, no. 3 (1995). See also Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors*; and Zbikowski, *Conceptualising Music*.

⁶⁹⁶ Fauconnier and Turner, ‘Conceptual Blending,’ 58.

⁶⁹⁷ Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 46.

Figure 4.5 Basic conceptual integration network.⁶⁹⁸



Although these ideas are derived from linguistic theory and classified as cognitive semantics, they are equally applicable to *poésie*—because they underpin the rationale for the function of *poésie* as an interart model, and explain how Cocteau was able to construct new meanings across any form of artistic expression, based on his concept of *poésie*.

Because these are abstract image schemas, any potential semantic problems that arise from a transdisciplinary point of view are avoided. For example, certain terms, such as colour or space, are used descriptively in both visual art and music, but they cannot mean the same thing in different contexts. Equivalence is not exact. Metaphorical and other conceptual integration processes offer a practical way to overcome such difficulties.⁶⁹⁹

Lawrence Zbikowski's theories of metaphor are equally applicable in this context, as Cocteau's language was highly metaphorical. Zbikowski specifies two types

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁹ See Zbikowski, *Conceptualising Music*. Zbikowski proposes theories of conceptual slippage, at 105–161, and conceptual blending, at 17–18.

of metaphor: conceptual and linguistic.⁷⁰⁰ He defines the former as ‘a cognitive mapping between two different domains’,⁷⁰¹ and the latter as ‘an expression of such a mapping through language’.⁷⁰² It is a distinction that resonates with Cocteau’s need to ‘let the images speak for themselves’.⁷⁰³ Cocteau’s visual preferences, as evidenced earlier in his textual layouts, need to be considered in interpreting his wording. He articulated the tenth principle of *poésie*, whereby he expected the reader to reach their own conclusions. His observation referred to film but is equally applicable to any of his images, especially his drawings from *L’Album des Eugènes* in *Le Potomak*, which have their own narrative completely independent from that of the text.

The red connotation of Cocteau’s ‘single red line metaphor’ might even be understood as a warning to collaborative artists (and perhaps to himself) to maintain a consistent aesthetic—that of *poésie*. Cocteau re-enforces the same metaphor elsewhere, by asserting how the poet leaves after death, not only of the ‘heart’s red blood but of the soul’s white’.⁷⁰⁴ He not only unites the physical as red, with the spiritual as white, but also delineates the unique trace of his artistic aesthetic—consistent across his works as *poésie*. He describes this in terms of ‘the successive deaths’ through which a poet must pass before he becomes,⁷⁰⁵ in that admirable line from Mallarmé: ‘tel qu’un lui-même enfin l’éternité le change’,⁷⁰⁶ or ‘changed into himself at last by eternity’.⁷⁰⁷ It is the nature of a legacy that it can only be defined retrospectively. On this basis, I identify *poésie* as Cocteau’s legacy.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid., 66.

⁷⁰¹ Ibid.

⁷⁰² Ibid.

⁷⁰³ Cocteau, *Le Sang* (1950), 272: ‘C’est pourquoi je m’arrête et laisse la parole aux images’.

⁷⁰⁴ Jean Cocteau, *Professional Secrets: An Autobiography of Jean Cocteau*, ed. Robert Phelps (London: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1970), 142.

⁷⁰⁵ Williams, *Cocteau*, French Film Directors, 130.

⁷⁰⁶ Stéphane Mallarmé, *Selected Poems*, trans. C. F. MacIntyre (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1957), 88.

⁷⁰⁷ Jean Cocteau, *The Art of Cinema*, ed. Andre Bernard and Claude Gauteur; trans. Robin Buss (London, New York: Marion Boyars, 1994), 158.

Cocteau confirmed *poésie* as his idiom.⁷⁰⁸ He went even further to state that ‘its power goes beyond the sonority or signification of words; it is something [entirely] different.’⁷⁰⁹ For this to happen there must be a conceptual and transactional space within which *poésie* can function. This concept has its origins in literary theory but is equally applicable in an interart context. It was his unique and omnipresent method of expression, as both method and process, that defined his diverse works. Note how explicit he was in expressing *poésie*’s multidimensional potential.

Cocteau adapted the word *poésie* to take it beyond its written form to encompass all his forms of creative expression and to realise his transdisciplinary aspirations. I iterate that, for him, *poésie* was synonymous with his metaphorical single red line—that symbolised the circulating lifeblood of his creativity (discussed above).

As stated earlier, Cocteau’s writings are saturated with metaphor and, as such, generate further mental processes which are analogous with those of *poésie*. Metaphors are problematic because language is insufficient (as noted by Dayan). This renders them open to criticism. Nevertheless, metaphor was an integral part of Cocteau’s language. I claim that metaphor and *poésie* both function within and across the conceptual spaces of the ‘in-between’, which is why and how *poésie* worked as an ideal interart method for Cocteau and his collaborators, as well as for my own methodological research purposes (after my critical interpretation and reassessment). It is noteworthy that Cocteau critically reflected on his own concept and the ways in which he referred to it. In expanding the idea of the red line synonymous with *poésie*, he questions:

What is line? It is life. A line must live on each point of its trajectory in such a way that the artist’s presence is felt [...] By the line, I mean the

⁷⁰⁸ Cocteau, *Le Sang* (1950), ‘La *poésie* est un idiome’. The word idiom is defined as writing, speech, [art] or music that is typical of a particular period, person, or group. See ‘idiom’ in *Cambridge Dictionary*, accessed 22 October 2017, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/idiom>. Late sixteenth century: from French *idiome*, or via late Latin from Greek *idiōma*, ‘private property, peculiar phraseology’, from *idiousthai* ‘make one’s own’, from *idios*, ‘own, private’. See ‘idiom’ in *Lexico Dictionary*, accessed 21 July 2019, www.lexico.com/en/definition/idiom

⁷⁰⁹ Cocteau, *Le Sang* (1950), 271: ‘Son prestige ne réside ni dans la sonorité ni dans la signification des mots. C’est autre chose’.

permanence of personality [...] With the writer; line takes precedence over substance and form. It runs through the words he constructs. It strikes a continuous note unperceived by ear or eye. It is, in a way, the soul's style, and if the line ceases to have a life of its own, if it only describes an arabesque, the soul is absent, and the words die.⁷¹⁰

Although he demonstrates his cross-sensory perspective Cocteau appears to nullify the perceptual component at the same time, with the phrase 'unperceived by ear or eye'. The word 'unperceived' evokes the idea of latency, which is comparable to the dormant state of *poésie*, waiting to be activated.

He used *j'entends* in two ways: 'I hear' relates to the voice and is ephemeral and temporary. 'I mean' denotes the durable continuity of line which represents the permanence of his personality, ensuring the evolution of his personal and artistic legacy. The double meaning is particularly relevant here (but is lost in translation) as it fits in with the sensory connotation of 'a continuous note' being heard (or seen). The initial musical connotation is subverted by the addition of the visual component, as a statement that *poésie*, as a single line transcends those senses to communicate in another way. Not only does this 'line' denote the core that is the very essence of Cocteau—through all his works—but it is also inescapably linked to music because he emphasises his conscious musical orientation with his use of the phrase 'I hear'. Indeed, he sets up the same temporal dichotomy by using different verb conjugations when referring Proust:

To admire Proust's thoughts whilst criticising his style, would be absurd. Nobody else in the world is better able to conquer writing. Nobody else in the world was better able to conquer the voice.⁷¹¹

⁷¹⁰ 'De la ligne' in Cocteau, *La Difficulté* (Rocher), 158: 'Qu'est-ce que la ligne ? C'est la vie. Une ligne doit vivre sur chaque point de son parcours de telle sorte que la présence de l'artiste s'impose d'avantage... Par la ligne j'entends la permanence de la personnalité... Chez l'écrivain, la ligne prime le fond et la forme. Elle fait une note continue que ne perçoivent ni l'oreille ni l'œil. Elle est le style de l'âme, en quelque sorte, et si cette ligne cesse de vivre en soi, si elle ne dessine qu'une arabesque, l'âme est absente et l'écrit mort'.

⁷¹¹ Jean Cocteau, 'La Voix de Marcel Proust' (1923), in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 10 (Geneva: Marguerat, 1950), 242: 'Admirer la pensée de Proust, et blâmer son style, serait absurde. Personne au monde ne fait mieux obéir l'écriture. Personne au monde ne faisait mieux obéir la voix'.

He uses *fait mieux* (is better able), the present tense, for the permanence of writing, against *faisait mieux* (was better), the past imperfect, as the transient past—suggesting the evanescence of the voice. *Poésie* ensures the durability of prose because of the multiple dimensions that are established within it. The text continually evolves because of the interplay of relationships that are created by the reader's personal interpretation. In effect, *poésie* as the 'single red line' metaphorical construct is a process that progresses through time because the linguistic metaphor, when articulated, will inevitably follow as an extension of the conceptual one. With his reference to line, Cocteau is equating life with veins, blood, cells, bone and skin? He linked the physical signifiers associated with life directly with the abstract idea of *poésie*, as the sustenance of his creativity.

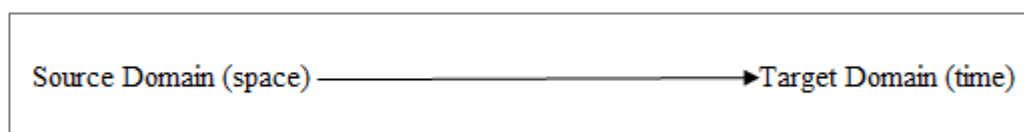
Poésie and metaphor are inexorably linked. They both represent a process of cross-domain mapping located in a moment of a space-time intersection (see space-time continuum, Figure 4.2). Henri Bergson's concept of duration is also a feature here. Duration differs from time in that it defines a time span, whereas time suggests an indefinite progression. Bergson explains how:

We set our states of consciousness side by side in such a way as to perceive them simultaneously, no longer in one another, but alongside one another; in a word we project time into space, we express duration in terms of extensity, and succession thus takes the form of a continuous line or chain, the parts of which touch without penetrating one another.⁷¹²

So, the 'single red line' can be considered as a succession of instances that make up a continuous trace. The motion of shaping influences passing from space (source domain) to time (target domain) is equivalent to the extent and duration of the experiential process, which is relational. The interpreter is located in the present, whilst the

⁷¹² Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will* (New York: George Allen, 1913), 101.

conceptual space—behind the interpreter—represents the past. The conceptual space in front of the interpreter represents the future, as shown below:⁷¹³



Along the space-time continuum there are moments of crossover when energy is released during the activation of *poésie*. This is relevant in the present context as a moment of interart dialogue. My illustration of the space-time continuum implies a certain linearity. It is important to consider that, in reality, the situation is far more complex. A more recent theory proposed by the physicist Carlo Rovelli states that time is not some isolated quality that gently flows.

According to Rovelli, time is ‘part of a complicated geometry woven together with the geometry of space’.⁷¹⁴ He suggests a vision of reality which is just a complex network of events onto which we project sequences of past, present and future. I maintain that the idea is very relevant to the realisation of *poésie* but *poésie*, by definition, exists in the fourth space-time dimension. In the passage of time, events do not follow each other in a well-ordered way but react within a far more chaotic system. The outcome is a situation of interplay, characterised by instability, transience, flux, dilution and contest. Such features lead to friction and tension—all prerequisites for *poésie*. These contribute to the complexity of *poésie* and clarify how such a system is possible. I claim that *poésie* functions in another dimension—between and within space and time. Dayan approaches the same idea from a different perspective. He states how:

The innocent instant is recuperated by the operation of memory, which, before we know it, has begun to work on the music, and lends it a material structure, in imagined space as well as in time.⁷¹⁵

⁷¹³ Based on an idea in Steve Larson, *Musical Forces, Motion, Metaphor, and Meaning in Music* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012), 65.

⁷¹⁴ Carlo Rovelli, *The Order of Time*, trans. Erica Segre and Simon Carnell (London: Allen Lane, 2018), 3.

⁷¹⁵ Peter Dayan, *Music Writing Literature, from Sand via Debussy to Derrida* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 89.

He identifies the significant moment of impact between time and space as a transformative memory. This is a defining feature of his interart aesthetic. Cocteau's asserts that:

music supplies an anonymous nutriment to our feelings, to our memories'.⁷¹⁶

This resonates with Dayan's statement, in that there is a reciprocal relationship between music and our individual retrospective experiences. It was Cocteau's aim to activate this process in others. Both men identify memory and music as crucial constituents in the transformative intermedial process when space and time intersect, but from opposite perspectives. Cocteau describes music as providing the amorphous (anonymous) element to feed and evoke memories that result in personal interpretations and encapsulate the very process of a *poésie* of music. Memory converts the temporality of music into a spatial visual image. Whereas Dayan suggests that it is through memory that we transform and characterise our experience of music. It is the dynamic process which takes priority over the individual static constituents.⁷¹⁷ Dayan refers to Swann's memory which 'transcribes the music, translating its temporal progression into a visual representation, in other words Swann 'sketched in his mind'.⁷¹⁸ Dayan differentiates between the French *étendue* and *inétendues*.⁷¹⁹ The former refers to the notion of the span of music and conceives it as 'the imagined physical space occupied by the mental representation of the remembered music'.⁷²⁰ The latter, is a technical term in mathematics and theology, normally translated as 'having no extension' and designates

⁷¹⁶ Cocteau, *Professional Secrets*, 147.

⁷¹⁷ Another way of saying 'how something works' is more important than 'what it means'.

⁷¹⁸ Dayan, *Music Writing Literature*, 89: Dayan uses Proust's character of Swann in *À la recherche du temps perdu* as an example.

⁷¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 89: 's'en représentait l'étendue'.

⁷²⁰ *Ibid.*

‘that which occupies no material space’.⁷²¹ The distinction is important because confirms the idea of spatialisation of time.

Whether the starting point is music (according to Cocteau) or memory (as with Dayan), the process involves the spatialisation of time through visual imagination and is informed by an individual’s experience. My interpretation is that the dynamic is reciprocal and that such mental events do not progress in a linear fashion but, instead, can bounce backwards and forwards in a continuous loop of associations and relationships—as another example of conceptual integration. Goffin uses the alimentary metaphor—and applies it to *poésie*—in order to extend Cocteau’s idea of the nourishing and experiential potential of music.⁷²² He calls *poésie* a ‘poetic metabolism’, and he evokes a metaphorical description for all of Cocteau’s artistic processes.⁷²³

The Concept of Openness

The idea of an open work [P2] is fundamental to *poésie*. *Le Potomak* is assessed later, in Chapter five, as a comprehensive example of Cocteau’s concept. It is an original work in form, structure and content—and in its generative process. Cocteau has made it very complex so that it functions on many levels—which qualifies it as an open work; an essential quality in the context of *poésie*, so that there is space for individual receiver interpretations.

The process of closure shapes the undifferentiated space and constructs meaning, identity, language, consciousness, ideas and understanding. *Poésie* and closure have much in common. They are both transformed from the homogenous to the heterogenous and both theories are subject to ambiguities. *Poésie*, as an undifferentiated condition, can only emerge where the work is open, but it is the process of *poésie* that

⁷²¹ Ibid.

⁷²² Goffin was a friend of Cocteau’s. He was also a lawyer and author and was credited with writing the first ‘serious’ book on Jazz. See Robert Goffin, *Aux Frontières du Jazz* (Paris: Sagittaire, 1932).

⁷²³ Goffin, ‘Métablisme,’ 28: ‘La poésie est le principe fécondant qui alimente toutes les activités de Jean Cocteau’.

makes closure possible. Closure, by its very nature, needs stability, albeit transient, yet it arises from the space of openness which is necessarily unstable. Closure is, however, an important function of *poésie* in that it emerges from and exists in a state of flux.⁷²⁴

It is because of Cocteau's use of *poésie*, with its transformative properties, that he can be said to work as a writer, an artist and a musician, regardless of the skills applied: it is the critical process behind the works which is significant. Cocteau reveals that:

the uniqueness of the entirety of my work is that sections follow one another without any preliminary drafts and without margins. I only accept a perfect work with precise contours.⁷²⁵

He designated the process of *poésie* as a unifying and shaping force that produces individual fully formed, yet specifically designed, works no matter what genre.

However, he was also determined that none of his works would be bound by any restrictions of classifications. I agree with Jennifer Hatte's observation that 'Cocteau considered his entire oeuvre as *poésie*'.⁷²⁶ Hatte uses the term *poésie* in its wider context in-keeping with Cocteau's concept.⁷²⁷ That is, the individual works constitute the whole and the shaping force that unifies them. I believe *poésie* is synergistic, greater than the sum of its parts. Furthermore, I propose that he considered each work to be connected by *poésie*. Cocteau confirmed: 'in order to be of any value, an individual work has to be part of a greater whole'.⁷²⁸ In effect, he envisioned *poésie*, not only as the sum of all his compositions (the greater whole), but also as the creative link between them—part of an ongoing continuum.

⁷²⁴ Lawson, *Closure*, 17.

⁷²⁵ Cocteau, *Le Passé*, 5:577: 'ce qui unique dans l'ensemble de mon œuvre c'est que des blocs s'y succèdent sans ébauches préalables et sans franges. Je n'admets une besogne que parfaite et précise de contours'.

⁷²⁶ Hatte, *La langue secrète*, 17: 'Cocteau considérait son œuvre entier comme de la poésie'.

⁷²⁷ *Ibid.*, 17–32.

⁷²⁸ Cocteau, *Professional Secrets*, 133: 'Une œuvre ne vaut que si elle s'intègre dans un œuvre'.

It is through *poésie* (Cocteau's defining artistic method), that he expressed his unique authorial voice. My research assesses the concept as a recognisable and structured model for the first time. I go even further and maintain that *poésie* is the very personification of Cocteau in his work.

The notion of identity is embedded in Cocteau's concept of *poésie*; therefore, no other intermedial concepts are comparable.

He described his artistic transformation in an early plan for *Le Potomak* (1913–1914) as 'the odd history of a moulting'.⁷²⁹ However, the development necessitated more than a mere shedding of his old skin to reveal a new persona. He needed to redefine himself and his creativity through *poésie*. He showed his early experimentation with *poésie* in the spatial layout of the title in the manuscript (see Figure 5.14):

Dans L'Impair
Histoire
d'une
mue
par
*Jean Cocteau*⁷³⁰

He wrote: 'So, I didn't turn my jacket inside-out, I turned my skin, which was not easy'.⁷³¹ In fact, he was conforming to his own perverse character of constantly changing and contradicting himself, which did not benefit him.⁷³² He believed he would stagnate if he did not change, which is why he needed to avoid repetition.⁷³³ Cocteau had to formulate a transformative method, as part of a new aesthetic, in order to satisfy the need for such continuous change. As a result, Cocteau continued to be provocative through art, partly to answer his critics and partly to be subversive. He wrote that:

⁷²⁹ Early plan for *Le Potomak* (1913–1914) from manuscript in Le fonds Madame Louis Solvay, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, reproduced in Kihm, Sprigge and Béhar, *Jean Cocteau*, 409: 'Dans L'Impair/ Histoire/ d'une/ mue/ par/ Jean Cocteau'.

⁷³⁰ Ibid.

⁷³¹ Letter to François Mauriac (1950) in Touzot, *Jean Cocteau*, 292–293: 'J'ai donc, non pas retourne ma veste, mais retourne ma peau, ce qui n'est pas facile'.

⁷³² Arnaud, *Jean Cocteau*, trans. Elkin and Mandell, 125; Arnaud, *Cocteau*, 119: 'contre son intérêt parfois'.

⁷³³ Ibid.: 'Fuir, pour échapper à l'enfer de la répétition'.

A work of art should also be an object difficult to pick up. It must protect itself from vulgar pawing, which tarnishes and disfigures it. It should be made of such a shape that people do not know which way to hold it, which embarrasses and irritates the critics, incites them to be rude, but keeps it fresh. The less it is understood, the slower it opens its petals, the later it will fade. A work of art must make contact, be it even through a misunderstanding but at the same time it must hide its riches, to reveal them little by little over a long period of time. A work that doesn't keep its secrets and surrenders itself too soon exposes itself to the risk of withering away, leaving only a dead stalk.⁷³⁴

It is very significant that he encompassed a breadth of ideas that inform his perception of his own creative process, functioning through *poésie*. This quotation reveals a great deal about Cocteau's aspirations for his artworks. He required them to be elusive and refined and he wanted their form to be mysterious—that is, to defy classification and reveal their content slowly over time (this was the secret of their longevity). He was happy to be controversial, provoke the critics and be constantly innovative. His use of the term 'contact' is significant because it implied a visceral connotation.

There is extensive literature concerning Cocteau and his various works, but none interrogates his transdisciplinary approach, nor attempts to explore *poésie* as intrinsic to the shaping of his creative process. How does it evolve and authenticate Cocteau as a unique transdisciplinary artist?

Cocteau needed to experiment with many different forms of expression and to collaborate with other artists, especially musicians, all of which shaped his artistic evolution. Why was this? Three key issues arise from this question:

1. His need to be taken seriously as an artist. He gained credibility by association with respected artists. He was determined to be recognised as a serious, innovative artist. *Le Potomak* (1913–1914) marked a defining moment, not only because it established his reputation as a serious writer 'in effect there are two Jean Cocteau[s], one before, the other after *Le Potomak*'.⁷³⁵

2. His ongoing creative experimentation. His intuitive transdisciplinary method required constant testing against various art forms. He wrote,

⁷³⁴ Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film*, 30.

⁷³⁵ Milorad, 'La Poésie selon Cocteau,' 12: 'en effet, il y a deux Jean Cocteau, l'un d'avant, l'autre d'après *Le Potomak*'.

‘When I was seventeen, and charged with electricity—of a poetry without form—for which I was incapable of forging a transmitting apparatus....’ This indicates that he was searching for a vehicle for his creativity, beyond poetry in its narrowest sense.⁷³⁶ He goes on to explain ‘when we come in contact with one of the best constructed of these vehicles—a picture, a piece of sculpture or music, a poem—do we not feel a poetical shock as if we were holding the handles of an electrical apparatus’?⁷³⁷

3. His experiments with new methods of artistic construction. He had to devise different structural methods in his compositions to break away from established forms and satisfy the crossover of his visual, word-based, and above all, his musical practice. He needed to be liberated from recognised forms of expression to accommodate his concept of *poésie*. His aim was to establish a new form of artistic expression, not only to satisfy personal aspirations but nationalistic ones, in developing a new French identity in the arts.⁷³⁸

Cocteau insisted on breaking away from the imposed restrictions of specific art forms. For example, he wanted to subvert and transform the limitations of the written word by introducing spatial and musical features into his texts, to produce flexible new forms.

Early *Poésie* in *Cap de Bonne-Espérance* (1919)

Before exploring *Le Potomak* in the next chapter, it is helpful to look at Cocteau’s poem *Le Cap de Bonne-Espérance* as a much more accessible example of *poésie* in an early form. Goffin called *Le Cap de Bonne-Espérance* a ‘lyrical drawing’ (*dessin lyrique*).⁷³⁹

He recognised the cross-sensory potential of the poet’s text by identifying how:

‘Cocteau sings life, with the impressive speed of the lyrical relationships which are, as physical as the sensation transmitted through his poetry’.⁷⁴⁰ Note Goffin’s use of the

⁷³⁶ Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 11: ‘A dix-sept ans, chargé d’électricité, je veux dire de *poésie* informe, incapable de fabriquer un appareil de transmission’.

⁷³⁷ Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 189: ‘Au contact de quelques-uns de ces véhicules les mieux faits: tableau, sculpture, musique, poème, ne ressentons-nous pas une secousse de poésie, comme en tentant les poignées d’un appareil électrocuter’.

⁷³⁸ See David Bancroft ‘Cocteau’s Creative Crisis, 1925–1929; Bremond, Chirico, and Proust’, *The French Review* 45, no. 1 (Oct 1971), 14: ‘Cocteau’s creative existence was dedicated to the experience of poetry and to the communication of that experience by giving it artistic form’. I substitute the word *poésie* in its broadest sense for Bancroft’s use of the term poetry because it is more relevant in the present context.

⁷³⁹ Goffin, ‘Métablisme,’ 33.

⁷⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 31: ‘Cocteau chante la vie, sa vie, à la vitesse étourdissante des rapports lyriques qui sont, à travers sa *poésie*, aussi physiques que la sensation même. Il a résolu le passage de la sensation au mot’!

word ‘sings’ whereby he extends *poésie* beyond its narrow context of poetry—‘as a translation of a mysterious personal metabolism that prose is unable to express because of the deficiencies of its verbal mechanism’.⁷⁴¹

Cocteau’s interart orientation was also generally acknowledged when some of Cocteau’s drawings and sculptures were exhibited under the title *Des Poèmes Plastiques* (Plastic Poems), at the Galerie des Quatre-Chemins in Paris, in 1926.⁷⁴²

Cocteau gives insight into his process, as he explained: ‘that is why I stop using words and let the images speak.’⁷⁴³ Not only does he clearly express a preference for the visual dimension, but he also shows how the visual perspective is integral to his written texts as a transdisciplinary feature—though he does not mention any aural component. *Le Cap de Bonne-Espérance* was dedicated to the aviator Roland Garros, who was Cocteau’s friend from before the war.⁷⁴⁴ He took Cocteau flying in his Morane-Borel monoplane.⁷⁴⁵ The experience inspired a large part of the poem *La Cap de Bonne-Espérance* (1919), in which Cocteau describes the aviator’s spiral descent and fatal crash in 1918. The subsequent loss of his friend was not the only effect that flying had on Cocteau. As Arnaud explains: ‘The freefalls produced extreme sensations in Cocteau’.⁷⁴⁶ Such in-flight disorientation significantly impacted his artistic sensibility. His space-time reference points vanished and ‘[he] found himself in familiar territory: that between-space where neither left nor right, neither up nor down exists, and from which landscapes flash by’.⁷⁴⁷ His aeronautical experience of speed and height stimulated Cocteau to write: ‘and now, let us look for an imaging for squadrons,

⁷⁴¹ Ibid., 29: ‘La *poésie* est la traduction d’un mystérieux métabolisme personnel que la prose se refuse à exprimer à travers les déficiences de son mécanisme verbal’.

⁷⁴² See Fonds Jean Cocteau, ‘Jean Cocteau unique et multiple, université Paul-Valéry Montpellier III’, accessed 28 June 2018, <https://cocteau.biu-montpellier.fr/index.php?id=525>

⁷⁴³ Cocteau, ‘Coupures,’ 272: ‘C’est pourquoi je m’arrête et laisse la parole aux images’.

⁷⁴⁴ They met in 1913. See John Flower, *Historical Dictionary of French Literature* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2013), 143.

⁷⁴⁵ Kihm, Sprigge and Béhar, *Jean Cocteau*, 83.

⁷⁴⁶ Arnaud, *Jean Cocteau*, trans. Elkin and Mandell, 145.

⁷⁴⁷ Ibid.

because the old formulae are no longer adequate to express the exploit of 1918'.⁷⁴⁸ He searched for a way to translate the speed and distance of his flight into a new form of text. Through *poésie* he conveys both the spatiality of the imagery and the temporality of the aural experience of his flight. His idea here is of a poem 'not being written in the language used by the poet. *Poésie* is a separate language which is untranslatable into any other, even that in which it seems to have been written'.⁷⁴⁹ For Cocteau, *poésie* was a personal dynamic, transformative, transdisciplinary and visceral experience of musical and visual relationships through text.

The spatiality of the text in *Cap de Bonne-Espérance* (see Figure 4.6), associated with the free verse form, is indicative of Cocteau's early attempt at *poésie* in this collection. Cocteau asserted the visual and aural through the design of his text. In this early example of Cocteau's transdisciplinary experimentation, the spatial dislocation subverts the temporal and spatial linearity of the poem. Syllabic repetition and patterning create rhythms. Indeed, the resulting unexpected phonetic reading of the text introduces a melodic quality that will be different with each interpretation. Through his process of *poésie* Cocteau attributed spatial qualities to his written words and included musical qualities within their delivery.

⁷⁴⁸ Jean Cocteau, *Lettres à sa mère: 1898–1918*, eds. Jean Touzot and Pierre Chanel (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), 512: 'et maintenant, cherchons une imagerie pour escadrilles, puisque les anciennes formules ne parviennent plus à exprimer les prouesses de 1918'.

⁷⁴⁹ Cocteau, 'Coupures,' 345: 'Un poème n'est pas écrit dans la langue que le poète emploie. La poésie et une langue à part et ne se peut traduire en aucune autre langue, même pas en celle où elle semble avoir été écrite'.

Figure 4.6 Préambule, *Le Cap de Bonne-Espérance* (1919).⁷⁵⁰

Désengluons-nous de nos rêves	let us disengage from our dreams
le grain de seigle sans babil d’herbe et loin des arbres orateurs	the grain of rye without the chatter of grass and far from speaking trees
je	I
le	
plante	plant it
il germera	it will sprout
mais renonce aux noces champêtres	but renounce the country feasts
car le verbe explosif tombe sans faire de mal éternel à travers les générations compactes et sinon toi	for the explosive verb falls harmlessly eternal through the compact generations and if not you
rien	nothing
ne percute	will detonate
sa mélinite embaumée	its fragrant melinite
Hoïo	Hoïo
j’écarte l’éloquence	I discard eloquence
la voile creuse	the hollow sail
et la voile grosse	the inflated sail
qui font dévier le vaisseau	that causes the ship to deviate

Cocteau introduced cinematic devices in *Le Cap de Bonne-Espérance*.⁷⁵¹ He ‘literally cuts, directs, edits and mixes his story’.⁷⁵² His manipulation of the textual layout is reminiscent of long shots, close ups and wide angles. He organised a series of unexpected sonorities, which created the linear and vertical spatial distortions as a soundscape.

⁷⁵⁰ Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 14–15.

⁷⁵¹ Henri Langlois, ‘Jean Cocteau et le cinématographe’ in *Cahiers Jean Cocteau*, no. 3 (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), 30: ‘[Le cinéma] est partout dans *Le Cap de Bonne-Espérance*...’.

⁷⁵² Cocteau, *The Art of Cinema*, 18.

He began work on the poem *Le Cap de Bonne-Espérance* in 1915,⁷⁵³ and he explained his method in writing it, completely contradicting his reluctance to explain his work. He stated: ‘For *Le Cap*, I have used a simple line which breaks up, then slots together, undulating in small masses and prevents the inattentive look from glancing along too easily. It requires an individual punctuation’.⁷⁵⁴ In this way, he subverts the predictable reading of verses made up of regular uninterrupted lines of text.

He specified how he needed to get away from fixed forms and not to resort ‘to the vague rhythms of free verse, thus obliging the poet to find an individual method’.⁷⁵⁵ Cocteau wrote: ‘The margin does not frame the text. It is dispersed inside’.⁷⁵⁶ The spatial layout of the text disrupts, distorts and redistributes the external frame by its internal shaping. Cocteau elaborated how: ‘it is this hidden architecture, this underlying play of equilibrium, which harmonises the apparently unbalanced work’.⁷⁵⁷ Again, Cocteau couched his statement in multidimensional terms, giving spatial form through the idea of internal architecture and introducing the musical feature of harmony.

In the second section of the poem, *Tentative d'évasion* (see extract shown below), he enhanced the aural dimension. He did this in two ways. First, he mentioned *le bol éolien* (the aeolian bowl) and referred directly to the singing bowls used in Buddhist healing and meditation chanting rituals. Second, he portrayed them visually in the layout, using linear and vertical spacing (see Figure 4.7). He described the circular movement of his wet finger around the rim of the bowl to ‘awake a star’.⁷⁵⁸ The description evokes the sound.⁷⁵⁹ The mental image is so vivid that it immediately

⁷⁵³ Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 7.

⁷⁵⁴ Ibid.: J’ai employé pour LE CAP une ligne sèche qui se brise, s’emboîte, ondule par petites masses, empêche le regards distrait glisser trop mollement, l’invite à ponctuer seul’.

⁷⁵⁵ Ibid.: ‘Se libérer de la forme fixe (à moins qu’on ne s’abandonne aux rythmes vagues du vers libre) oblige le poète à une méthode individuelle’.

⁷⁵⁶ Ibid.: La marge n’encadre pas le texte. Elle se trouve à l’intérieur, distribuée parmi’.

⁷⁵⁷ Ibid.: ‘C’est cette architecture cachée, ce jeu d’équilibres en dessous, qui donnent à l’œuvre, boiteuse en apparence, une harmonie’.

⁷⁵⁸ Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 31: ‘mon doigt mouillé éveille un aître’.

⁷⁵⁹ Milorad, ‘La Poésie selon Cocteau,’ 24.

evokes the specific sound as well. He then created the chant-like aeolian sounds through syllabic sonority by composing various vowels combinations, such as éo – ié, – iu – ié – é – é – ié – io – ié – ui – ui – io – ié – aéoé – iaoé, and this makes the reader articulate his own prosody using irregular and unexpected linear spacing (as shown below). Not only is the reader led to visualise the shape of the bowl through the layout of the text but should also hear the characteristic intonations emanating from combinations of syllabic sonorities and rhythms. This is how Cocteau affirmed his version of musicality in *Le Cap*. Furthermore, Cocteau makes other musical references when he writes about ‘the musical voice’ of *poésie*.⁷⁶⁰ He equates ‘the musical voice’ of *poésie* with his own authorial voice. He made the musical analogy even more striking by distancing *poésie* further from language, and stated how its prominence ‘does not reside in either the sonority nor in the signification of words’.⁷⁶¹ Cocteau is contradictory because it is the very sonority of the words, together with the rhythmic patterns in his poems, that enable them to replicate musicality and enact *poésie*.

Décaudin describes how the words *bol éolien* are followed by ‘long vocal variations’.⁷⁶² Cocteau described Roland Garros as: ‘the thick-fingered hero [who] relentlessly disentangles the melody’.⁷⁶³ He made other allusions to his own voice, stating that he: ‘smothered a cry/where/the soprano moults/ I sing... myself’.⁷⁶⁴ The use of such terminology not only infuses a musicality into the text and specifies his shedding—associated with his artistic transformation—as a result of *Le Cap*.

⁷⁶⁰ Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 187: ‘[elle] a une voix musicale’.

⁷⁶¹ Cocteau, *Oeuvres complètes* (vol. 10), 271: ‘son prestige ne réside ni dans la sonorité ni dans la signification des mots’.

⁷⁶² Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, xxi: ‘les mots *bol éolien* entraînent une longue variation vocalique’.

⁷⁶³ Jean Cocteau, *Le Cap de Bonne-Espérance suivie de Discours du Grand Sommeil*, pref. by Jacques Brosse (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), 95–96: ‘Le héros aux doigts touffus/s’acharne/pour désengluer la melodie’.

⁷⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 65–66: ‘étouffe un cri/ où/le soprano mue/moi... je chante’.

The poem is a new reality, as prescribed by *poésie* [P1]. Pestureau attributes musical characteristics to the poem when he describes an image of Garros's plane in vivid terms of sound. He writes:

Like the swing of the plane, the tam-tam of the engine, the mechanical rhyme of the rods, the pistons and the blades, are heard like the fertile, contrasting sounds of the rhythms and syncopations of ragtime.⁷⁶⁵

Pestureau has identified the percussive quality in the sonority of Cocteau's text with the sounds he imagined were made by the engine. He connected both with jazz—a major influence for Cocteau. Cocteau incorporates at least three more principles of *poésie* into this small section. The text features a visual musico-poetic intersection [P5], demands active interpretation [P10], and subverts dimensions of space and time [P11].

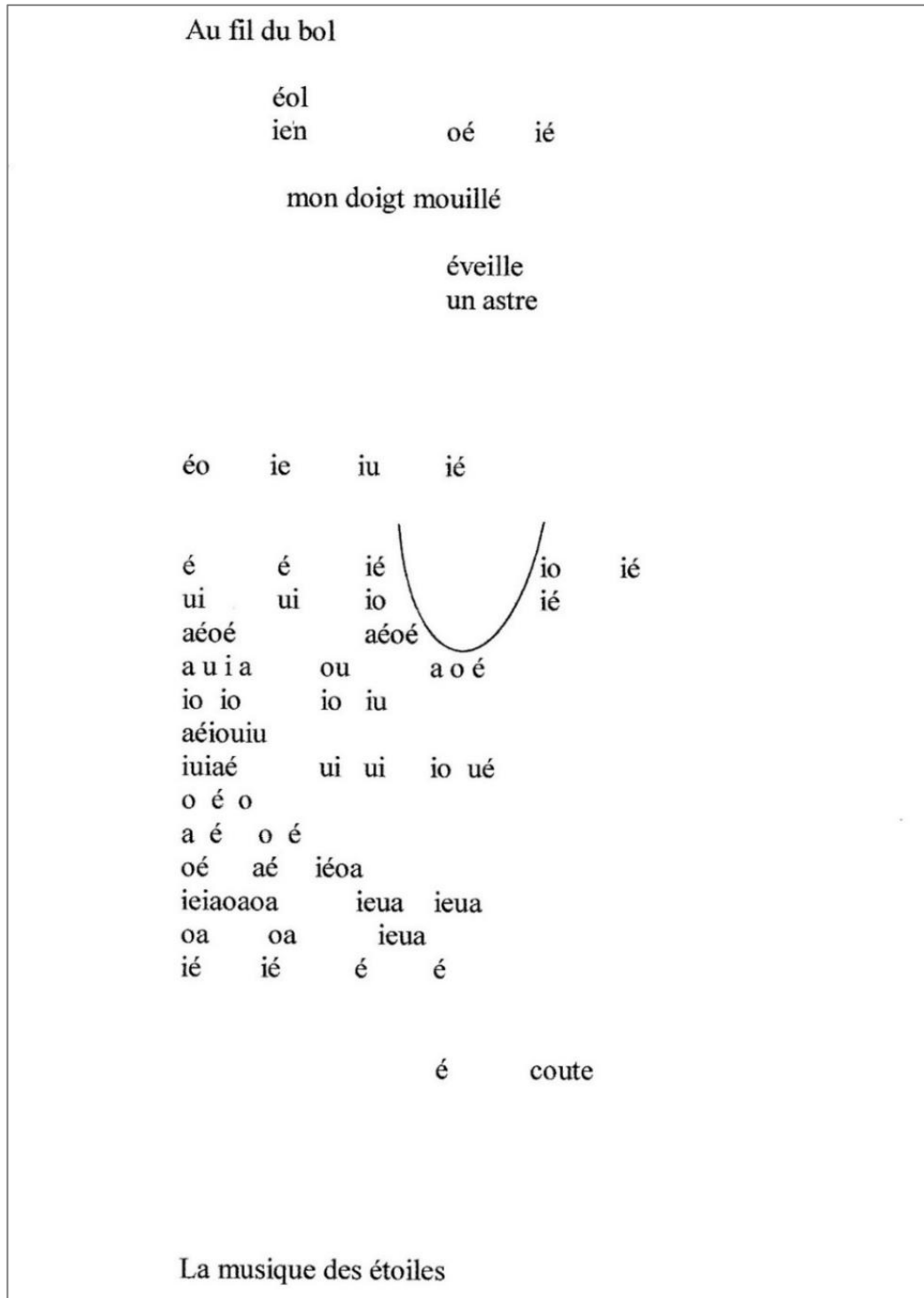
In *Journal d'un inconnu* he clarified his ideas on the construction of text:

Abandon the music of a sentence to communicate only its rhythm. Leave this rhythm with only an irregular pulse. Strip rhyme from prose, because rhyme blurs its edges. Or intentionally rhyme it, in quick succession. We need to support our language, overrun with *which's* and *what's*, that flows too fast. To counteract this with discordant interaction between consonants, as well as the syncopation of phrases that are too long or too short. To sense whether a short or long pause should precede a comma or a full stop.⁷⁶⁶

⁷⁶⁵ Pestureau, 'Le Cap,' 32: 'le tam-tam du moteur, la rime mécanique des bielles, des pistons et des pales, le rag-time s'y exprime en sons, contrastes, féconds, rythmes et syncopes'.

⁷⁶⁶ Cocteau, *Journal*, 126: 'Eviter la musique d'une phrase pour ne lui communiquer que le rythme. Laisser à ce rythme l'irrégularité d'une pulsation. Dérimer la prose, parce que les rimes y amollissent les angles, ou la rimer exprès coup sur coup. Tasser par des *qui* et des *que*, notre langue sujette à couler trop vite. L'endiguer par le contact de consonnes ingrates, par les syncopes de phrases trop longues, et des phrases trop courtes. Sentir qu'une brève ou qu'une longue, doit précéder la virgule ou le point'.

Figure 4.7 *Tentative d'évasion, Cap de Bonne-Espérance* (1915–1917).⁷⁶⁷



This gives an insight into Cocteau's prescription for *poésie*: that is, to assert music and the visual within text [P5, P8]. He uses the idea of music, with respect to sentences of text, to show his polysensorial awareness [P5]. He found the rhyme in poetry a semantic

⁷⁶⁷ Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 31–32.

distraction and restrictive to its sonority. He described grammatical devices, particularly the elimination of consonants and use of masculine or feminine word endings as upbeats or downbeats. He elongated, contracted or reversed words and phrases as a method of poetic syncopation, and he incorporated irregular rhythms, all of which subvert the linear reading of the poem [P11]. He accentuated his preference for ‘discordant interaction’ of textual elements [P3]. He used repetition of syllables and words as a structural method, as well as ‘an effect of mechanical reiteration’, to evoke chanting.⁷⁶⁸

The style of incantation indicates Cocteau’s continued spiritual awareness, which is first evident as early as 1915 in *Tentative d’évasion* (with his reference to the Aeolian bowl). Cocteau used incantation to seize or pacify the mysterious forces in which he, as the poet, is absorbed.⁷⁶⁹ Cocteau was drawn to mystical sonorities and found literary means—such as syllabic repetitions, reversals and horizontal/vertical spatial dislocations—to transpose them into his text (in accordance with the P5 and P11 principles of *poésie*).

It is useful, at this point, to consider *poésie* in more general terms. The word *poésie* (poetry) cannot literally be subjected to an intra- or inter-lingual translation: it does not simply refer to poetry—definitions of which include ‘the art of writing verse [...] every poetic genre [...] a piece of verse [...] quality of something that touches, elevates, charms [...]’.⁷⁷⁰ The first idea (‘the art of writing verse’) is too specific, whilst the last (‘quality of something that touches, elevates, charms’) is too nebulous.⁷⁷¹ However, *poésie* can be translated intersemiotically, because it functions by translation from one sign system to another through symbols and/or metaphors. For example, a literary text can be transformed into music and/or art or vice versa. Yet, what was

⁷⁶⁸ Neal Oxenhandler, *Scandal and Parade: The Theater of Jean Cocteau* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1957), 34.

⁷⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁰ *Le nouveau petit Larousse* in Milorad, ‘La Poésie selon Cocteau,’ 11: ‘Art de faire des vers[...]chaque genre poétique[...]pièce de vers[...] caractère de ce qui touché, élève, charme[...]’.

⁷⁷¹ Léon Dile Milorad, *Le nouveau petit Larousse* in ‘La Poésie selon Cocteau,’ 11.

Cocteau's conception of *poésie*? He does give importance to the precise use of terminology, as stated in the opening page of the text of *Le coq et l'arlequin*: 'at the start of every book, it would be a good idea to formulate a special glossary that consigns the exact meaning to each term, in order to avoid misunderstandings'.⁷⁷² He habitually uses familiar expressions and adapts them to reflect his own special meaning without feeling any need to explain.⁷⁷³ Yet, he maintains that the word *poésie* was devalued because it was used to describe anything seemingly poetic.⁷⁷⁴ The word *poésie* was defined in 1900 as the 'art of composing works in verse form, descriptive of different types of poems (poetry), various materials in verse form'.⁷⁷⁵ The inclusion of the phrase 'various materials' in this early definition gives Cocteau the opportunity to broaden his interpretation of *poésie*. Specifically, he is not interested in merely restricting 'verse form' to purely literary genres but is searching for a way of transforming it across other art forms. In this context, Cocteau comments that Leonardo da Vinci mistakenly believes painters have the advantage over poets. He wrote: '[Leonardo] does not realise that he is a poet and that *poésie* is not restricted to the art of verse'.⁷⁷⁶ Cocteau applies his concept and methodology to the work of other artists.

The Alexandrine Form

Initially, he wrote poetry as versification, in accordance with the generally accepted meaning of the French equivalent at that time. The Alexandrine was the classical French style of prosody. The Alexandrine normally consists of twelve syllables per lines. The sixth and twelfth syllables are accented and the line is divided into two hemistiches

⁷⁷² Cocteau, *Le Coq* (1979), 45: 'En tête des livres il conviendrait d'établir un lexique spécial grâce auquel, assignant sa valeur à chaque terme, on éviterait bien des méprises'.

⁷⁷³ Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 170: 'J'ai l'habitude, sans doute détestable, d'employer des termes usuels dans un sens que je leur attribue et sans y joindre d'éclaircissements'.

⁷⁷⁴ Cocteau, 'Coupures,' 346: 'on abuse beaucoup du mot poésie, on l'emploi pour tout qui semble poétique'.

⁷⁷⁵ *Dictionnaire de la langue française* (Paris: Éditions universitaires, 1900), 880: 'Art de faire des ouvrages en vers, se dit des différents genres de poèmes, et des différents matières traitées en vers'.

⁷⁷⁶ Jean Cocteau, *Essai critique indirecte* (Paris: Grasset, 1932), 101: 'Léonard [da Vinci] énumère les avantages du peintre sur ceux du poète. Il ignore qu'il est un poète et que la *poésie* ne se limite pas au métier de vers'.

(half-lines) by a medial caesura (pause).⁷⁷⁷ For example, in the poem *Vocabulaire* (1922):

L'aube était dans ce vieux // journal plié en deux, 6 + 6
Froide et difficile à // reconnaître Madam 6 + 6⁷⁷⁸

Arnaud comments on how 'Alexandrine quatrains came to [Cocteau] spontaneously, as if the constraint of versification freed him'.⁷⁷⁹ How can any constraint be liberating? With his usual approach, Cocteau used the Alexandrine form and made it his own.⁷⁸⁰ His method was to adopt the strict poetic form and disrupt it in different ways 'as if the Alexandrine rhythm has been broken and was being reconstructed in its own way'.⁷⁸¹ He created a tension, which facilitated the activation of *poésie*. He constantly re-invented himself through experimentation because the most important thing for him was 'not to stay in a fixed place'.⁷⁸² Yet, he used Alexandrine not to promote established styles, but to be subversive against the 'preservers of old anarchies'.⁷⁸³ Cocteau continued to incorporate Alexandrine form into various works; including, for example (and amongst other poems), *Leone* in 1945 and *Le chiffre sept* in 1952. In 1941 he wrote *Renaud et Armide*,⁷⁸⁴ a play in strict Alexandrine form, for dramatic effect.⁷⁸⁵ He united the Alexandrine in form and content in *Le Cap de Bonne-Espérance*. He declared: 'and none/ better than you Igor/ none/ better than Picasso the anatomy/ none better than me the / arithmetic/ Alexandrine'.⁷⁸⁶ He emphasised the significance of the form and at the

⁷⁷⁷ See 'Alexandrine' in *Britannica*, accessed 11 February 2018, www.britannica.com/art/alexandrine

⁷⁷⁸ Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 329.

⁷⁷⁹ Arnaud, *Jean Cocteau*, trans. Elkin and Mandell, 126.

⁷⁸⁰ See Gérard Purnelle, 'Camouflage et dislocation de l'alexandrin au vers libre chez Breton et Cocteau' and David Gullentops, 'Présences de l'alexandrin dans *Embarcadères*' in *Jean Cocteau 4: Poésie critique et critique de la poésie*, ed. Monique Bourdin (Paris and Caen: Minard, 2003).

⁷⁸¹ Wallace Fowlie, ed., *The Journals of Jean Cocteau* (London: Museum Press, 1957), 160; Cocteau, *Journal*, 53: 'comme si le rythme alexandrin se cassait et se reconstituait à sa guise'.

⁷⁸² Arnaud, *Jean Cocteau*, trans. Elkin and Mandell, 271; Arnaud, *Cocteau*, 242: 'l'essentiel, pour lui, est de ne pas se figer'.

⁷⁸³ Arnaud, *Jean Cocteau*, trans. Elkin and Mandell, 271; 'Documents, Poésies 1916–1923' in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 1647: 'des vieilles anarchies'.

⁷⁸⁴ Jean Cocteau, *Renaud et Armide* (Paris: Gallimard, 1943).

⁷⁸⁵ David Bradby, *Modern French Drama 1940–1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 17.

⁷⁸⁶ Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 21: 'et nul/ mieux que toi la fugue Igor/ nul/ mieux que Picasso l'anatomie/ nul mieux que moi l'arithmétique/ l'alexandrine'.

same time articulated what he secretly believed: that, as part of the ‘trinity’, he was to literature what Stravinsky and Picasso were to music and art, respectively.⁷⁸⁷

Cocteau’s creative existence was devoted to the experience of *poésie* in terms of its expression through different artistic forms.⁷⁸⁸ However, he disapproved of ‘false poems’;⁷⁸⁹ that is, those poems which are merely a type of rhythmic prose laid out as poetry and by which the public were seduced. In contrast, Cocteau’s *poésie* reflected a more nuanced form which was constructed using both stable and disrupted rhythms through the process of *poésie*.⁷⁹⁰ He understood how it was only through the deconstruction of recognisable regular forms that he would be able to initiate *poésie* as his new aesthetic process. He further explained how ‘a poem is not written in the language employed by the poet’. He clarified that ‘*poésie* has its own language that cannot be translated into any other, not even the one in which it seems to have been written’. What language or whose language is it written in? What does he mean by this enigma?⁷⁹¹ Cocteau is deliberately obscure so as to confuse the reader. This may go some way towards explaining Cocteau’s need for *poésie* as an all-encompassing interart method. There is a resonance with Dayan’s third law—that is, that an art object ‘asserts’ its place across media and across languages.⁷⁹² Others have used Cocteau’s classification of *poésie* [*de roman*] of literature, [*critique*] of criticism, [*plastique*] of

⁷⁸⁷ Arnaud, *Jean Cocteau*, trans. Elkin and Mandell, 187.

⁷⁸⁸ Bancroft, ‘Cocteau’s Creative Crisis,’ 14.

⁷⁸⁹ Cocteau, ‘Coupures,’ 346: ‘on appelle souvent poème sorte de prose rythmée, machinée en forme de poème. Ces faux poèmes séduisent toujours le public. Un poème est fait d’équilibres et de ruptures d’équilibre si subtiles...’.

⁷⁹⁰ Cocteau, *Oeuvres complètes* (vol. 10), 346: ‘on appelle souvent poème sorte de prose rythmée, machinée en forme de poème. Ces faux poèmes séduisent toujours le public. Un poème est fait d’équilibres et de ruptures d’équilibre si subtiles’.

⁷⁹¹ Cocteau, *Oeuvres complètes* (vol. 10), 346: ‘Un poème n’est pas écrit dans la langue que le poète emploie. La poésie est une langue à part et qui ne se peut traduire en aucune autre langue, même pas en celle où elle semble avoir été écrite’.

⁷⁹² Dayan, *Art as Music*, 3.

sculpture, [*cinématographique*] of cinema.⁷⁹³ However, Cocteau was more concerned with ‘the adaptable expression of *poésie*’.⁷⁹⁴ Indeed, he proposed:

that music, painting, sculpture, architecture, dancing, poetry, the drama, and that muse I call ‘cinema, tenth muse’ are all so many traps in which man endeavours to capture poetry for our use.⁷⁹⁵

Cocteau struggled to find the right vehicle for his creativity—one that went beyond poetry, in its narrowest sense, which would satisfy his transdisciplinary perspective. His aim was to break away from the constraints imposed by the specificity of the different art forms and to establish an active interface with interart dialogue that did not compromise or reduce any individual defining characteristics. He wanted, above all else, to demonstrate ‘a clarity of purpose’ and, at the same time, impose his individual method across all his diverse works, that influenced his artistic journey.⁷⁹⁶ Which artwork would represent the epitome of *poésie* as his unique aesthetic? He did insist that the medium of theatre was a potent and effective vehicle for his expression of *poésie*.⁷⁹⁷ He is specific and unambiguous about the role of *poésie* in his musical spectacle, and makes an important distinction between *poésie du théâtre* (*poésie* of theatre) and *poésie au théâtre* (*poésie* at the theatre). He specified how:

With *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel* I found a powerful transmitter for *poésie*, which I adapted to theatrical presentation. In this piece, I claim to have shown for the first time—despite an absolute and universal failure, even on the part of my admirers, to grasp what I was aiming at—a true *poésie* in terms of the theatre.⁷⁹⁸

He established the important criteria necessary for *poésie* of the theatre to be present.

Poésie must mask, mediate and communicate in a way that is beyond image and

⁷⁹³ Williams, *Cocteau*, French Film Directors, 5; Milorad, ‘La Poésie selon Cocteau,’ 12 and 35; and Clancier, ‘l’auteur de *Plain-Chant*.’

⁷⁹⁴ Cocteau, Preface to *Les Mariés*, 17: ‘l’expression plastique de la *poésie*’.

⁷⁹⁵ Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 200: ‘Que musique, peinture, sculpture, architecture, danse, poésie, dramaturgie et cette muse que je surnommait *Cinéma dixième muse*, sont des pièges en qui l’homme essaye de capter la poésie à notre usage’.

⁷⁹⁶ Williams, *Cocteau*, French Film Directors, 5.

⁷⁹⁷ Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 201: ‘le théâtre est un gros véhicule pour la poésie’.

⁷⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 222: ‘Avec *les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel*, j’ai construit à la poésie un gros appareil de transmission pour les planches. Je me vante d’y avoir montré pour la première fois, au milieu d’une incompréhension absolue et même de celle d’admirateurs, une poésie *de théâtre*’.

language. He is again contradictory because he simultaneously complained (at once) that the audience did not understand his work whilst expecting the receiver to actively participate in the performative experience through individual interpretation. He gave primacy to form over content, as Laura Doyle Gates observes: ‘Jean Cocteau concerned himself almost exclusively with plastic and architectural aspects of the theatre as opposed to literary or psychological ones’; that is, form over content.⁷⁹⁹ He was explicit when he described how his transdisciplinary creativity influenced his writing process:

Without my realising it, painting has completely changed my method of working as a writer. Instead of writing *Bacchus* from the beginning, I’m picking on scenes to the right and to the left, as if I was covering a canvas. I keep retouching and reworking them to proceed using values instead of proceeding by lines. Little by little, the ensemble takes shape and relief. The dormant work comes alive and I will nurture it until it can survive alone.⁸⁰⁰

He described his writing method through the lens of a process painting. He used words such as canvas, values and relief—which all pertain to visual art.⁸⁰¹ These expose the ideas shaped his writing in terms of painting and sculpture. With *poésie*, Cocteau created a new syntax to enable his transdisciplinary practice.

He continued to develop his ideas and, when he discovered the medium of film, he found the most liberating ‘transmitting apparatus’ for *poésie*. He believed that the *poésie* of films emanated from the unusual relationships between events and images.⁸⁰² For *poésie* to be activated, Cocteau aimed for asynchronicity (equivalent to dissonance)

⁷⁹⁹ Laura Gates Doyle, ‘Jean Cocteau and “la poésie du théâtre”’, *Romance Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (1988), 435.

⁸⁰⁰ Extract from Jean Cocteau, *Le Passé défini*, 16 July 1951, in *Cahiers Jean Cocteau no. 2* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), 19: ‘Sans m’en aperçoive, peindre a complètement changé ma méthode de travail écrivain. Au lieu d’écrire Bacchus du debut, je m’acharne sur des scènes à droite et à gauche, comme si je devais couvrir une toile. Je les retouche et les recouvre sans cesse. Je procède donc par valeurs au lieu de procéder par lignes. Peu à peu, l’ensemble prend forme et relief. La pièce encore couchée ajuste ses membres. Lorsqu’elle vivra, je la soignerai pour qu’elle se lève et marche toute seule’.

⁸⁰¹ Value, as applied to visual art, is defined as the relative lightness or darkness of a colour. It defines form and creates spatial illusions. Contrast of value separates objects in space, while gradation of value suggests mass and contour of a contiguous surface. Whereas relief is a sculptural technique where the sculpted elements remain attached to a solid background of the same material, the term relief is from the Latin verb *relevo* (to raise). A sculptural relief is one in which the sculpted material has been raised above the background plane. It adds a spatial dimension.

⁸⁰² Jean Cocteau, *Du cinématographe* (Paris: Rocher, 2003), 36: ‘La poésie des films vient des rapports insolites entre les événements et les images’.

within his films. He also aimed for ‘[a] peculiar balance between control and chance’. With his first film, *Le Sang d’un Poète*, he wanted to film poetry and, on completion, he declared the work to be a cinematic poem.⁸⁰³ He specified ‘what chiefly characterises *Le Sang d’un Poète*... [is] its concern, instead, to construct a vehicle for *poésie*, whether utilised or not’.⁸⁰⁴ This was an essential component for his concept in *Du Cinématographe* where he explains:

instead of losing all control as happens in dreams, I celebrate the marriage of the conscious and unconscious that gives birth to this terrible and delicious monster called *poésie*.⁸⁰⁵

He evoked an image of a monster that has negative connotations, but the Latin derivation suggests a whole different meaning:

monstrare, meaning ‘to demonstrate’, and *monere*, ‘to warn’. Monsters, in essence, are *demonstrative*. They reveal, portend, show and make evident, often uncomfortably so.⁸⁰⁶

He turned the monster into a more positive symbol and set up a tension. As stated previously, Cocteau is intentionally contradictory. His numerous writings demonstrated a desire to explain his works and processes but, at the same time, he declared how: ‘an artist cannot speak about his art any more than a plant can discuss horticulture’.⁸⁰⁷ This resonates strongly with Dayan’s proposition that art is beyond words.⁸⁰⁸ Yet, Cocteau also asserted how ‘a work of art must be a difficult object to pick up’,⁸⁰⁹ meaning that the process of *poésie* made the artwork inaccessible. He accorded the public the right to ask questions but then stated that these ‘ought to be answered by works, not

⁸⁰³ Cocteau, *Professional Secrets*, 143:

⁸⁰⁴ *Ibid.*; Cocteau, *Le Sang*, iii–iv: ‘[je] voulais créer [mon] propre style cinématographique, [ma] propre *poésie* à l’écran; and ix: ‘j’ai tourné ma *poésie* propre’. Pasolini borrowed Cocteau’s concept which he developed ‘as the cinema of poetry’.

⁸⁰⁵ Williams, *Cocteau*, French Film Directors, 163; Jean Cocteau, *Du Cinématographe*, ed. André Bernard and Claude Gauthier (Paris: Belfond, 1988), 150: ‘au lieu de perdre tout contrôle comme il comme il arrive dans le rêve, je célèbre les noces du conscient et de l’inconscient qui mettent au monde ce monstre terrible et délicieux qu’on appelle *poésie*’.

⁸⁰⁶ Natalie Lawrence, ‘What is a monster?’, 7 September 2015, accessed 11 February 2018, www.cam.ac.uk/research/discussion/what-is-a-monster

⁸⁰⁷ Cocteau, ‘Interview.’

⁸⁰⁸ Dayan, *Art as Music*, 3/

⁸⁰⁹ Cocteau, *Entretiens sur le cinématographe*, 25: ‘un œuvre doit être un objet difficile à ramasser’.

manifestos'.⁸¹⁰ However, Cocteau did subsequently write *Le coq et l'arlequin* as a musical manifesto and continued to write many critical essays explaining his philosophy and his ideas.

Cocteau's *Poésie* and Personal Mythology: The Invisibility of his Creative Process

As part of the process of *poésie*, Cocteau chose to simultaneously mask and illuminate his own creative process. He wrote multiple texts and gave many talks in which he often explained his aims and theories. Yet, he insisted on hiding himself and his creative aspirations behind what he called 'the invisibility by the artist'.⁸¹¹ He constructed a personal mythology, not only as a way of protecting the very essence of his creative processes and influences, but to hide his insecurities and perceived shortcomings as well.⁸¹² He achieved this through 'photographs and publicity' because he was so good at self-promotion.⁸¹³ With his usual ambiguity, he embraced this invisibility but also chose to write extensively about himself, his ideas and his works, albeit sometimes somewhat enigmatically. He translated the idea of invisibility into his concept of *poésie*. He symbolised *poésie* as 'a veiled woman'.⁸¹⁴

There are many recurring symbolic themes that feature in Cocteau's various works—such as mirrors, masks, angels and messengers from beyond.⁸¹⁵ *Poésie* acts as a metaphor for those themes. He uses the transformative potential of *poésie* as a means of self-exploration through artistic expression for these fundamental motifs through the following themes:

T1. According to Williams, Cocteau maintained artistic invisibility in order to mask his true self. Cocteau participated in the fabrication of a false personal mythology. It offered him protection from the problem of celebrity status. 'The more visible the man, the greater invisibility of the

⁸¹⁰ This quote appears in the English edition. See Cocteau, *The Cock*, 12.

⁸¹¹ Steegmuller, *Cocteau*, 6.

⁸¹² Hatte, *La langue secrète*.

⁸¹³ Steegmuller, *Cocteau*, 6.

⁸¹⁴ Cocteau, *Le Rappel in Oeuvres complètes*, 187: 'commeun dame voilée'.

⁸¹⁵ Geoffrey O'Brien, 'Introduction', in *Jean Cocteau, The Difficulty of Being*, trans., Elizabeth Sprigge (Brooklyn and London: Melville House, 2003, originally published in French 1947). 4.

artist and the more authentic the work'.⁸¹⁶ *Poésie* masks and reveals, in terms of both the author and the work [P7]. He also wrote: 'And I think my visibility, built from ridiculous legends, protects my invisibility, a thick, glittering armour surrounds, and protects me from the blows, with impunity'.⁸¹⁷ He used rose petals symbolically in the context of invisibility and longevity. In his poem *Locutions* (1917–1920), he described how: 'All roses lose their petals/on the rug how many masks?'⁸¹⁸

T2. The poet as a conduit of creative inspiration, or expiration as he preferred to call it. Cocteau thought his creativity came from somewhere deeply within him. *Poésie* is understood through metaphor and is the carrier of meaning [P6].

T3. Death as a form of continuing life, ensuring artistic immortality. Artworks are continually able to evolve into new realities through mediation and active interpretive participation, as identified in *poésie* [P.8, P10].

T4. The manipulation of temporality and the ability to distort perceptions of past, present and future. *Poésie* functions through subversion of a space-time continuum and is active at that point and moment of intersection [P11].⁸¹⁹

T5. Multiplicity within and across his works devolving into collaboration, when necessary.⁸²⁰ *Poésie* as an interdisciplinary method [P2, P5].

T6. No simple concept of inside/outside and interplay of opposites and dualities.⁸²¹

He used any means of expression to conceal himself behind a unique and multifaceted construct that consisted of 'imagery and text, poetry and prose, fact and fiction, realism and fantasy, history and modernity'.⁸²² James A. Williams added another perspective to

⁸¹⁶ Williams, *Jean Cocteau*, 7.

⁸¹⁷ Cocteau, *Journal*, 24: 'Et je pense que ma visibilité, construite de légendes ridicules, protège mon invisibilité, l'enveloppe d'une cuirasse épaisse, étincelante, capable de recevoir impunément le coups'.

⁸¹⁸ 'Locutions' in *poésies* (1917–1920), in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 193: 'Toutes les roses perdent leurs joues/ Sur le tapis combien de masques?'

⁸¹⁹ Just before his death in 1963, Cocteau made his last film, a twenty-five-minute short called *Jean Cocteau's adresse à l'an 2000*. Cocteau left instructions for it not to be viewed until the year 2000. In the film, Cocteau talks to the young people of the future. Temporality is distorted because he communicates simultaneously in 1963 and 2000. '[He] is at once nostalgic for the present that will have passed and prophetic about the future'. Williams, *Cocteau*, French Film Directors, 187; For a transcription of the film's text see Cocteau, *Mon testament pour l'an 2000* texte', ed. Pierre Laforêt (25 August 1962, Santo Sospir) in Cocteau, *28 autoportraits*, 125–140.

⁸²⁰ Gullentops and Sevenant, *Les Mondes de Jean Cocteau*, 386.

⁸²¹ *Ibid.*, 335–272.

⁸²² Richard Misek, 'Jean Cocteau', *Great Directors* (2004), accessed 21 June 2012, <http://sensesofcinema.com/2004/great-directors/cocteau/>

the idea of ‘invisibility’ by suggesting that ‘the more visible the man, the greater the invisibility of the artist and the more authentic the work’.⁸²³ This view is open to questioning. How can the authenticity of any work be assessed when obscured by so much artistic self-promotion? What exactly does authenticity mean in this context?

To clarify such a dilemma, it is necessary to see beyond Cocteau’s mystification and decode his writings. Cocteau has deliberately made the concept of *poésie* enigmatic. Why? It is possible that he did not fully comprehend what it was or how it functioned within his creative practice, as his imaginative response was often intuitive. Also, by masking *poésie* in this way, he was being true to his philosophy of authenticity, as described by Williams. Indeed, Cocteau suggested that ‘the secret inner forms of *poésie* are unlike anything which can be explained’.⁸²⁴ In a short sentence, he describes the characteristics of *poésie* as mysterious and beyond words.

Viewed from another perspective, however, invisibility makes any attempt to define such a complicated and elusive concept inherently problematic. Even so, analogies can be drawn in this context from Dayan and Cocteau. They both state that an art object must ‘speak for itself’.⁸²⁵ In effect, they are both expressing an aesthetic which is predicated on the assumption that the artist should not impose any preconceived meaning on the work: the object asserts and the spectator interprets. The continuum of *poésie* represents a snapshot in time for the spectator so that each interpretation is ‘a new reality’[P1]. *Poésie* is informed and shaped by experience and memory, as well as the imagination.

***Poésie* as Source and Outcome**

As stated previously, *poésie* emerges from the source and is then shaped to become differentiated by interart exchange. *Poésie* begins passively and, given a favourable

⁸²³ Williams, *Jean Cocteau*, 8.

⁸²⁴ Cocteau, *A Call* (Myers), 132; and Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 168: ‘dessin secret de la poésie ne ressemble à rien qui s’explique’.

⁸²⁵ Dayan, *Art as Music*, 3; Cocteau, ‘Interview,’ and Cocteau, *The Cock*, 12.

environment—determined by any number of its defining principles—will become activated at the intermedial interface. This implies an internal-to-external pathway, described earlier as introverted and extroverted intermediality. Direction is prioritised over meaning.⁸²⁶ Not only does *poésie* determine the route from origin to product, but also describes the process.⁸²⁷

***Poésie* Inside/Outside**

Poésie is also uniquely different because of certain ambiguous dualities which render it even more complex and reciprocally active as a transdisciplinary mediator. It acts internally as a powerful shaping force within the continuum formed by Cocteau's artistic endeavours, as well as externally as the overall defining feature that then unifies them across any artistic boundaries. The inside/outside dichotomy informed other aspects of Cocteau's works. He was intrigued by the idea of 'surface obscurity'.⁸²⁸ He stated how:

A work which is clear on the surface but obscured on its underside by all the nightshades of individuality, will today be considered accursed. The solvers of puzzles will imagine that they have seen all round it at a glance. Thus, what our masters did was to conceal the object under their *poésie*.⁸²⁹

The idea shows how Cocteau used ambiguity to promote tension and potential for *poésie*. Indeed, Cocteau was at once critical of public perception that refuted inaccessible works. Yet, he wanted *poésie* to obscure the essence of a work. With the use of the term 'all around' he introduced a temporal dimension to the work, as the walking around occurs—over time—in the imagination; he visualises how 'music

⁸²⁶ Sluijs and Smelik, 'Interactivity,' 177.

⁸²⁷ For other dualities, such as life and death, masculine and feminine, public and private, divine and human, see Arnaud, *Jean Cocteau*, trans. Elkin and Mandell, 438; and Gullentops and Sevenant, *Les Mondes de Jean Cocteau*, 345–361. These are recurrent themes in Cocteau's work but are beyond the remit of this research.

⁸²⁸ Cocteau, *A Call* (Myers), 217; and Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 232: 'cette obscurité de surface intrigue'.

⁸²⁹ Cocteau, *A Call* (Myers), 217; and Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 232: 'Un ouvrage clair à l'endroit, obscur à l'envers de toute la nuit individuelle, sera maintenant maudit. Les déchiffreurs de rebus croiront en avoir fait le tour d'un coup d'œil. Donc nos maîtres cachèrent l'objet sous la poésie'.

revolves around you'.⁸³⁰ The idea of walking around music, as an object, also resonates with how Erik Satie walked around a piece of music before he composed it (accompanied by himself).⁸³¹ The idea is a metaphorical representation for the way Cocteau and Satie mentally considered their works from all perspectives.

Poésie is recognised as Cocteau's unique and omnipresent method of expression, regardless of his choice of medium. Even if it is elusive as a concept, certain consistent characteristics are discernible to authenticate its existence. For Cocteau, it represented the vehicle for and the very essence of his creativity, but did he perceive and mediate everything through the prism of *poésie*? This philosophical question is analogous to one frequently asked with reference to the sculptor Alberto Giacometti (1901–1966). Did Giacometti always see his figures as very tall and thin, or was this an inherent part of his creative process? Was his 'Obsess[ion] with creating his sculptures exactly as he envisaged through his unique view of reality, [the reason] he often carved until they were as thin as nails'.⁸³² It would appear to be a combination of both. Somehow there was an inevitability in the outcome of all his works because his 'figures... severely attenuated... are the result of continuous reworking'.⁸³³ He once said that he was sculpting not the human figure but 'the shadow that is cast'.⁸³⁴ This has resonances with Cocteau's consistent paring down of his texts as part of his process, distilled to an essence of 'simplicity and refinement'.⁸³⁵ So *poésie*, a unifying principle, can also represent an economy of style 'as a simple way of saying [many] complicated

⁸³⁰ Jean Cocteau, *Le Coq et l'arlequin, Notes autour de la musique* (Paris: Sirène, 1918), 52: 'la musique vous tourne autour'.

⁸³¹ Orledge, *Satie the Composer*, 142.

⁸³² Carol Kino, 'The Women of Giacometti', *New York Times*, 20 November 2005.

⁸³³ Nadia Schneider, ed., *Alberto Giacometti: Retrospective Monograph* (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2009), 61.

⁸³⁴ Kino, 'The Women.'

⁸³⁵ Cocteau, *Le Coq*, 43: 'La simplicité', 'le raffinement'.

things’.⁸³⁶ There is a similar quality of inevitability in *poésie*, which must not to be mistaken for predictability.

Poésie should not be considered as merely a theoretical concept. But from a new perspective of inter-medial translation, in practice. Helen Julia Minors writes of:

a shared, often unspoken sense, of the interart aesthetic, establishing it as the conceptual link through which artist, audience, and critics can understand, interpret and experience the work.⁸³⁷

Cocteau regarded the latency of *poésie* as an untapped source of inspiration. *Poésie* operates within that amorphous and transient interart space to mediate, be mediated and differentiated, by both the creator and the receiver. This occurs through various artistic progressions and connections at any one moment. As previously stated, *poésie* needs the tension and friction of dissonance at the intra-art and interart interfaces to become energised. Therefore, it represents both the process and the product. Cocteau states how: ‘for the sake of simplicity, [Let us] call this fluid poetry; and let us call the successful methods we employ to domesticate it art. Herein lies the function of the artist’.⁸³⁸ The word domesticate epitomises the importance of the everyday—as found in popular art forms—for Cocteau. It was an integral part of his aesthetic. The idea of openness and closure is applied to *poésie* and goes a considerable way to explaining how it can represent all the arts and, as such, be so crucial to Cocteau’s artistic aesthetic.

The defining characteristics of *poésie* have now been distilled. The critique of *Le Potomak*, as a primary source text in relation to Cocteau’s other writings, will confirm *poésie* as a workable analytical method. As such, I present a detailed reading of *Le Potomak*, testing the framework before it is applied to the musical and collaborative

⁸³⁶ Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 155: ‘une façon très simple de dire des choses compliquées’.

⁸³⁷ Minors, ‘Review,’ 129.

⁸³⁸ Cocteau, *A Call* (Myers), 162: ‘Nommons donc pour simplifier les choses ce fluide: poésie et: art, l’exercice plus ou moins heureux par quoi on le domestique. Voilà le rôle de notre artiste’; and Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 190.

analysis. I orientate the analysis to highlight those conditions of *poésie* that can be shown to exist in image, text and music and, in combination, as *poésie* in practice.

Chapter 5: *Le Potomak: poésie de roman*

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to examine *Le Potomak* (1916)—the defining work in Cocteau’s artistic development—through his concept of *poésie*.⁸³⁹ *Le Potomak* is the first example of *poésie* in a comprehensive and mature form—an approach that makes my dissertation different from other published works. Cocteau considered *Le Potomak* as his first book, so much so that he rejected all his previous publications because, for him, this one marked the start of his creative transformation.⁸⁴⁰ Despite its significance in terms of Cocteau’s oeuvre, *Le Potomak* has not been extensively studied, for which there are several reasons.⁸⁴¹ It is not an immediately accessible work from an intellectual perspective, mainly because it was partly conceived from Cocteau’s subconscious at a time of personal and artistic crisis. He deliberately made it obscure. Indeed, he incorporated specific symbolic and metaphorical techniques to disguise his ideas and meanings, as determined by his ideas of *poésie*. In so doing, he forced the reader into an active and individual reading.

My identification and reading of *poésie* in the previous chapter is important because it prescribes the analytical framework with which to interrogate *Le Potomak* as an example of *poésie*. It will then be applied in Chapters Six and Seven to Auric’s musical setting of the *Huit poèmes de Jean Cocteau* in a transdisciplinary and collaborative context.

Why was the concept of *poésie* so fundamental to Cocteau’s interart aesthetic and collaborative practice? How does he present *poésie* in his text, and what developments to the term are evident in *Le Potomak*? An examination of the book, in comparison to

⁸³⁹ All bracketed references to principles of *poésie* throughout this text relate to the list found in Chapter 4.

⁸⁴⁰ Arnaud, *Jean Cocteau*, trans. Elkin and Mandell, 132.

⁸⁴¹ Margaret Crosland, ed., *Cocteau’s World: An Anthology of Writings by Jean Cocteau* (London: Peter Owen, 1972), 85.

Cocteau's other writings, reveals significant advances in Cocteau's artistic philosophy and working practice. There are questions to be answered as to why *Le Potomak* proved to be so influential. I see *Le Potomak* as an affirmation of the dialogue between image and text, and an invitation to explore such relationships—an interart manifesto. Because Cocteau was unable to compose musically, he was limited to incorporating textual references and manipulating texts in order to transpose the sonority and rhythmicity of music. He resorted to collaborations with many musicians. *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* is worthy of mention here, as Cocteau's second significant work and his musical manifesto. There were close discussions between Georges Auric and Cocteau prior to its publication and Cocteau dedicated the work to the composer (see Chapter three). Whereas *Le Potomak* was conceived solely by Cocteau, *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* was the result of collaboration between Cocteau and Auric (though it was ultimately written by the former). Nonetheless, *Le Coq* was an important example of Cocteau's preoccupation with music. It was the manifestation of a very early and spontaneous collaborative meeting of minds, which resulted in Auric's fundamental contribution to the moment of conception and development of a new musical aesthetic. Auric acknowledged their shared aspirations. He understood how Cocteau's poetic imagination captured the spirit of his own music. *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* exhibits very few characteristics of *poésie* and is therefore not included in the analysis.

This research centres on *Le Potomak* as the first fully formed example of Cocteau's applied *poésie* and, as such, manifests most of the characteristics of his concept. It originated from an entirely new creative method and the resulting artwork was unique and, therefore, difficult to classify [P4]. The structure, form and content of the book are such that poly-sensorial relationships are established.⁸⁴²

⁸⁴² Christophe Wall-Romana, *Cinepoetry: Imaginary Cinemas in French Poetry* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 99.

Cocteau was explicit but enigmatic in *Le Secret professionnel*: 'I concealed the drama of *Le Potomak* under a thousand jokes'.⁸⁴³ What is the tragedy that he disguises with laughter? *Le Potomak* presents a complex multi-dimensional dynamic of the 'in-between' as part of a broader set of composite intertextual connections from which *poésie* is activated, and it mediates the reader's participation to construct multiple meanings and interpretations, a precondition of *poésie* [P2 and P10 respectively]. He believed that once a work has been created it should be released by the author to take on a life of its own in the public domain. He wrote how:

a poem should be made to cast off, one by one, all the ropes attaching it to whatever was the source, or motive, of its creation. Each time the poet cuts a rope his heart beats. When he has cut the last one, the poem detaches itself, and rises, unaided, like a balloon, carrying its own beauty with it, having severed all connection with the earth.⁸⁴⁴

He fulfilled this idea with his construct of *Le Potomak*. He produced an open, multi-layered text that formed a web of intricate transdisciplinary relationships [P2, P5], within which active-reader interpretation can construct meaning [P2, P9 and P10]. Cocteau embraced the transience and fluidity of artistic production. Indeed, he pushed the idea further, as a prerequisite for *poésie*, and deliberately made his works obscure [P7]. Cocteau recognised the creative potential of the tension between different contrapuntal layers. His manner was to introduce asynchronicity [P3].⁸⁴⁵ This raises questions as to how Cocteau could move towards modernism whilst simultaneously working with postmodern ideologies. In fact, he successfully combined selective aspects of the two philosophies. I favour Barbara Kelly's use of the term 'ultra-modernism', because it widens the debate to encompass ideas of modernity as well as modernism.⁸⁴⁶ She refers to the English composer Duncan Edmondstone (1866–1920),

⁸⁴³ Cocteau, *Le secret* (1959), 60: 'J'ai masqué le drame du *Potomak* sous mille farces'.

⁸⁴⁴ Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 184: Un poème doit perdre une à une toutes les cordes qui le retiennent à ce qui le motive. Chaque fois que le poète en coupe, son cœur bat. Lorsqu'il coupe la dernière, le poème se détache, monte comme un ballon, beau en soi et sans autre attache avec la terre'.

⁸⁴⁵ See 'Poésie as a Conceptual Framework', Chapter four.

⁸⁴⁶ Kelly, *Music and Ultra-Modernism*, 4.

who wrote about ultra-modernists in music as early as 1915 and mirrored Cocteau's creative approach:

Ultra-modernists in music are those daring spirits who put invention and imagination first, and precedent, convention and scholarship last. Their point of view is that of the pioneer; and only the untried absorbs them...

The ultra-modernist composer arrests attention by the singularity of his speech. He means to be heard at any cost. In this matter he is not alone, since on every hand—dramatists, novelists, historians, poets, and painters are doing the same thing—attempting new combinations and defying the old notions of harmony, colour and form.⁸⁴⁷

Edmondstone praised individualism and collaborative practices. He showed his cross-disciplinary perspective, and understood how qualities of harmony, colour and form could be extended beyond the boundaries of their particular art forms. He did not address the semantic difficulties of his ideas when he applied the same terminology in non-analogous contexts. My interpretation of *poésie* overcomes the problem because I establish a conceptual framework that underpins the concept as a working methodology.

Kelly aptly states:

I consider individuals who are heard above the crowd, explore ideas of group identity and identify *the esprit du temps*, [the spirit of the times] which touches a whole generation.⁸⁴⁸

Cocteau embodied these 'ultra-modern' ideals and, with *Le Potomak*, he put them into practice. He was only able to do so because of his conception of *poésie* as the shaping factor of his imaginative centre. Gullentops describes this as being: 'inseparable from his heterogenous creative activity'.⁸⁴⁹

Le Potomak: Cocteau's Defining Moment⁸⁵⁰

⁸⁴⁷ Duncan Edmondstone, *Ultra-Modernism in Music: A Treatise on the Latter-Day Revolution in Musical Art* (London: Winthrop Rogers, 1915), 1–2.

⁸⁴⁸ Kelly, *Music and Ultra-Modernism*, 5.

⁸⁴⁹ David Gullentops and Serge Linares, 'Cocteau sous des angles nouveaux', *Europe* 894 (2003), 4: '...[la poésie] est indissociable [chez Cocteau] de son activité créatrice polymorphe'.

⁸⁵⁰ Unless otherwise stated *Le Potomak* page references in text refer to Jean Cocteau, *Le Potomak précédé d'un prospectus* (Paris: Stock, 1916).

Cocteau's career as a poet before *Le Potomak* was unremarkable. He was critical of his personal shortcomings and lack of artistic commitment. Indeed, he documented this in *Le Potomak*:

When I was nineteen years old, some people celebrated my foolishness, and my youth entreated others. I became ridiculous, wasteful, talkative, mistaking my chatter and my waste for eloquence and for extravagance'.⁸⁵¹

He subsequently accepted his calling to the 'priesthood' of poetry,⁸⁵² along with 'a destiny of cruel suffering', as an epiphany in 1909.⁸⁵³ It is evident that he then accepted *poésie* as his vocation and gave it such importance that he described it in religious terms, with an implied sense of struggle. He confirmed how: 'It was only at the age of twenty that I understood the role of a poet's work and what '*la poésie* actually was'.⁸⁵⁴ It indicates that as early as 1909 he was already formulating a more comprehensive creative concept of *poésie*, beyond its literal sense—some four years before he began *Le Potomak*. It signals the importance of *poésie* but, to develop an interart method, we need to ask: what did he mean by this?

He later explained, in *Le Rappel à l'ordre*, that: 'With *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel* I found a powerful transmitter for *poésie*, in the theatre'.⁸⁵⁵ He believed *Les Mariés* to be: 'an image of a state of poetical spirit'.⁸⁵⁶ In this way, he endowed both visual and spiritual attributes to *poésie*, and identified its very essence. He expanded his idea of *poésie* when he wrote:

Poésie is most real when it exposes reality. It is a mistake to think that *poésie* casts a veil over everything it touches, on the contrary it reveals

⁸⁵¹ Jean Cocteau, *Le Potomak 1913–1914, précédé d'un prospectus 1916* (Paris: Librairie Stock, texte définitif 1950), 8: 'à dix-neuf ans, les uns me fêtèrent par sottise, ma jeunesse plaïda auprès des autres. Je devins ridicule, gaspilleur, bavard, prenant mon bavardage et mon gaspillage pour de l'éloquence et pour de la prodigalité'.

⁸⁵² McNab, 'Personal Mythology,' 1.

⁸⁵³ Cocteau, *La Salle*, 1: 'j'ai compris qu'il fallait se laisser tourmenter'.

⁸⁵⁴ Jean Cocteau, *Entretiens avec André Fraigneau* (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1965), 5: 'Je n'ai compris qu'à vingt ans le rôle d'une œuvre de poète et ce qu'était la poésie'.

⁸⁵⁵ Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 222: 'Avec *les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel*, j'ai construit à la poésie un gros appareil de transmission pour les planches'.

⁸⁵⁶ Jean Cocteau, 'à vol d'oiseau sur les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel, *La Danse*, 9 June 1921: 'l'image d'un esprit poétique'.

things so naked, so fast, that man scarcely has the time to recognise them. It enables us to see and hear, as if for the first time.⁸⁵⁷

Cocteau had previously described *poésie* as ‘a veiled woman’, so he is now contradicting himself by his observation above.⁸⁵⁸ Is he being deliberately contradictory, or has he forgotten or changed his previous comment? Cocteau expressed his aim to mediate the everyday through *poésie* [P8], and to project an alternative perspective as an integral part of his emerging aesthetic.⁸⁵⁹ He revealed in *Le Secret professionnel* (1926) that:

This is the role of *poésie*. It reveals in all its strength of the word. It shakes the inertia, in order to expose the surprising things that surround us and that that we mechanically register with our senses.⁸⁶⁰

He wanted *poésie* to mask the familiar and yet reveal it to people as if for the first time [P7]. His aim was to rouse the public from its complacency. For Cocteau, *Poésie* became synonymous with the very act of creation—an integral part of his imaginative process.⁸⁶¹ Yet, prior to *le Potomak*, it was not immediately apparent exactly what *poésie* meant for Cocteau, nor how it would develop.

Although 1909 was a defining moment in Cocteau’s career, it was merely the first stage in a journey of self-discovery and transformation. As he admitted: ‘Then I set out in search of myself’.⁸⁶² Later, he was more specific when he declared: ‘ever since *Le Potomak* I have been searching for my way, and I will search for it until my death’.⁸⁶³

⁸⁵⁷ Ibid.: ‘La *poésie* est plus vraie que le vrai. Il ne s’agit pas d’envelopper les objets et les sentiments d’un voile, mais au contraire de les montrer si nus, si vite, que l’homme a peine à les reconnaître. Il lui semble voir et entendre pour la première fois’.

⁸⁵⁸ See ‘Cocteau’s *Poésie* and Personal Mythology: The Invisibility of his Creative Process’, Chapter four.

⁸⁵⁹ Williams, *Jean Cocteau*, 85.

⁸⁶⁰ Cocteau, *Le secret*, 188: ‘Voilà le rôle de la poésie. Elle dévoile dans toute la force du terme. Elle montre nue, sous une lumière qui secoue la torpeur, les choses surprenantes qui nous environnent et que nos sens enregistraient machinalement’.

⁸⁶¹ Gullentops and Sevenant, *Les Mondes de Jean Cocteau*, 373.

⁸⁶² Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 11: ‘je partis à ma recherche’.

⁸⁶³ Frédéric Lefèvre, *Une heure avec...* (Paris: Éditions de la nouvelle revue française, 1924), 11: ‘depuis *le Potomak*, je cherche ma route, et je chercherai jusqu’à ma mort’.

Milorad identified the defining moment, suggesting that: ‘in effect there are two Jean Cocteau[s], one before, the other after *Le Potomak*’.⁸⁶⁴

Milorad observed that, as far as Cocteau was concerned, ‘contrary to public opinion, it is not enough to merely write poetry to be a poet, and prior to *Le Potomak*, the first J.C wrote much [poetry] without being regarded as a poet’.⁸⁶⁵ Cocteau wrote about himself in the third person: ‘I stole the papers of a certain J.C. born in M.L. the... dead at the age of 18, after a brilliant career as a poet’.⁸⁶⁶ He wrote his own obituary for his symbolic death and at the same time distanced himself from his previous identity. Cocteau presented a scenario of being simultaneously dead and alive. There is a certain ambiguity in the use of the French word *profane* (see n.851): Milorad gives it a secular connotation. *Profane* can have a religious context and Cocteau emphasises the religiosity with his use of the initials J.C., perhaps associating himself with Jesus Christ. In his typical contradictory way, Cocteau denigrates himself yet simultaneously gives himself a messianic quality.

There are other examples of Cocteau’s use of the third person. The first poem in the collection *Opéra* (1927) is called *Par lui-même* (for himself). *Opéra* is considered to contain some of Cocteau’s finest and most characteristic work.⁸⁶⁷ For Cocteau, the experience of *Le Potomak* as *poésie* was almost sacred. Many years later, in a speech on *poésie* given in front of three thousand people at the exhibition auditorium in Brussels, he described his artistic epiphany as a *baptême de foudre* (lightning baptism), with its religious connotation.⁸⁶⁸

⁸⁶⁴ Milorad, ‘La Poésie selon Cocteau,’ 12: ‘en effet, il y a deux Jean Cocteau, l’un d’avant, l’autre d’après *Le Potomak*’.

⁸⁶⁵ Ibid.: ‘contrairement à l’opinion du profane, il ne suffit pas d’écrire des poésies pour être poète, et, jusqu’au, *Potomak*, le premier J.C. en écrivait beaucoup sans être pour autant poète’.

⁸⁶⁶ *Le paquet rouge* in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 540: ‘J’ai volé ses papiers à un certain J.C. né à M.L. le...mort a 18 ans après une brillante carrière poétique’.

⁸⁶⁷ Coccozza, ‘The Poetic Imagery,’ 136.

⁸⁶⁸ Jean Cocteau, ‘Discours sur la poésie’, in *Poésie Critique*, vol. 2 (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), 212: ‘Voilà, Mesdames, Messieurs, ce que serait la *poésie* sans ce baptême de foudre que les uns reçoivent à leur naissance et d’autres, après coup. Par un choc révélateur’.

He consistently compared the power and energy of *poésie* to that of electricity and declared that, with the creation of *Le Potomak*, '[he] would discover the instruction manual for the use of electricity, which in his eyes embodies *poésie*'.⁸⁶⁹ My assertion is that that *Le Potomak* is his 'instruction manual' and the embodiment of *poésie*. He immediately knew that: 'far from being a game, *poésie* would be my fate'.⁸⁷⁰ But at the time of *Le Potomak*, Cocteau's transformation was not merely creative but simultaneously a spiritual and psychoanalytical transcendence.

Cocteau's creative perspective was irrevocably changed by Stravinsky's ballet *Le Sacre du printemps* (*The Rite of Spring*), premiered on 29 May 1913. He described how deeply 'the experience unsettled [him]',⁸⁷¹ and 'overwhelmed him from top to bottom'.⁸⁷² Later, Cocteau made a direct reference to the ballet, and its riotous reception, in *Le Potomak*. As narrator he describes to the character *Argémone* how:

one night at the theatre a new masterwork was performed. People hissed, laughed, caterwauled, barked. Oh, how I envied that martyrdom! I feared that martyrdom. I was ashamed, feeling unworthy of it. I awaited grace as though it were the egg of an archangel.⁸⁷³

Cocteau then understood the potential for self-promotion in rebellion and provocation, from all the ensuing public outcry. He envisaged:

of a form of art that broke with the habitual, was anti-conformist... It was when I knew Stravinsky and later, when I knew Picasso, that I understood that rebellion is indispensable in art, and that the creator always rebels against something if only instinctively—in other words, that the spirit of creation is the highest form of the spirit of contradiction.⁸⁷⁴

⁸⁶⁹ Milorad, 'La Poésie selon Cocteau,' 13: '[il] découvrira le mode d'emploi de cette électricité que représente à ses yeux la *poésie*'.

⁸⁷⁰ Cocteau, 'Discours sur la poésie,' 212: 'De cette minute, je sus que la *poésie*, loin d'être un jeu, était un *fatum*'.

⁸⁷¹ Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 216: 'Le SACRE DU PRINTEMPS m'avait déraciné'.

⁸⁷² Jean Cocteau, 'Le Discours d'Oxford', in *Poésie Critique*, vol. 2 (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), 187: '*Le Sacre du printemps* de Stravinsky me bouleversa de fond en comble'.

⁸⁷³ Tom Gordon, 'Efforts to Astonish', *Canadian University Music Review* 22, no. 1 (2001), 4: 'un soir, au théâtre on jouait un nouveau chef-d'œuvre. On sifflait, on riait, on miaulait, on aboyait. Ah ! que j'enviai ce martyr! J'enviai, je redoutai ce martyr. J'eus honte de me sentir indigne. En moi, la grâce attendait comme un œuf d'archange'.

⁸⁷⁴ Jean Cocteau, 'Disque Perry', Autobiographical monologue recorded privately under the direction of M. Jacques Perry, 1958, unpublished, cited in Steegmuller, *Cocteau* (trans. Jossua), 67–68: '*Le Sacre du*

Cocteau displayed his mood of provocative defiance in both *Le Potomak* and, later, *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*. He declared: 'what the public reproaches in you, cultivate it, that's who you are'.⁸⁷⁵ As such, he developed an important function of *poésie*, in that he purposely continued to provoke his audience [P9], despite being criticised for it. He reinforced the defiance with yet another ambiguous aphorism. Stating: 'the tact in audacity is to know how far we may go too far'.⁸⁷⁶ It is typical of Cocteau's provocation to juxtapose the idea of tact with that of audacity. Tact implies knowing when to stop and there can be little or no tact when one is audacious.

Le Potomak was a turning point for Cocteau, not only because it established his reputation as a serious writer but also because it was dramatically different from anything he, or indeed anyone else, had previously written. *Le Potomak* is important for several reasons: because it is such a complex work, its significance—in terms of Cocteau's artistic aesthetic and the genesis of *poésie*—needs to be assessed on many levels. Cocteau considered *Le Potomak* as his first serious work: it fulfilled many of his new objectives, especially in terms of the formulation of *poésie* as a concept.⁸⁷⁷ It is original in form, structure and content, as well as in its generative process [P1]. Cocteau can mask many dramas through the complex text and image interplay [P3, P5], which function on many levels in *Le Potomak* as an expression of *poésie*. The work is an autobiographical record of Cocteau's personal and artistic crisis, and a critical reflection of his working process. With his method of provocation [P9, P10], he used the book as a critique of war and the French bourgeoisie. The characters are a biographical creative

Printemps était pour moi la révélation d'une forme d'art opposé aux habitudes et anti-conformiste. C'était quand j'ai connu Stravinsky [et plus tard, quand je connaissais Picasso] que j'ai compris que la [rébellion] était est indispensable dans l'art, et que l'homme qui créait se révoltait contre quelque chose même instinctivement, c'est-à-dire que l'esprit de création était la plus haute forme de l'esprit de contradiction'. le créateur se rebelle toujours contre quelque chose si seulement'.

⁸⁷⁵ Cocteau, *Le Coq* (1979), 71: 'Ce que le public te reproche, cultive-le, c'est toi'; and Jean Cocteau, *Le Potomak* (Paris: Passage du Marais, 2000), 53.

⁸⁷⁶ Cocteau, *Le Coq* (1979), 47: 'le tact dans l'audace c'est de savoir jusqu'où on peut aller trop loin'.

⁸⁷⁷ It is important to point out that *poésie* is not necessarily a conscious creative method for Cocteau but reflects a process that unconsciously shapes his artistic production.

construct that act as the protagonists of a family scenario. They symbolise the psychodynamic relationships within his own family [P6]. The characters are set in a broader historical and cultural context [P7]. From an aesthetic perspective, *Le Potomak* provides an extensive insight into Cocteau's creative processes because it acts as a description of the very nature of its own genesis [P7].

As well as its non-linear narrative component, the work represents a dialogue between images and text, which Cocteau intentionally set up in asynchronous relationships. Essentially, Cocteau designed his version of a comic strip or storyboard. He developed plastic qualities of animation from a flat surface that evoked motion, multi-dimensionality and a subversion of the time/space dimensions [P3, P5, P11]. I regard the book as the primary expression of Cocteau's transdisciplinary sensibility and aesthetic (of *poésie*) and, more generally, it formed a major contribution to the French artistic revolution of that time.

The Genesis of *Les Eugènes*

It is clear that Cocteau was irrevocably changed by his experience of Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*, premiered on 29 May 1913—so much so, that he began working on *Le Potomak* within weeks. In other words, because of the ballet, the idea of *poésie* (as a new creative method) had been implanted in his brain like a 'creative tumour'.⁸⁷⁸ This was something that Cocteau had to assuage.

During 1913, Cocteau spent two months (from 11 August to 16 September, and then from 7 October to 7 November), at Jacques-Emile Blanche's (1861–1942) Offranville house.⁸⁷⁹ The second visit was an important one for Cocteau because it was

⁸⁷⁸ Bancroft, 'Some Notes,' 36.

⁸⁷⁹ Serge Linares in Jean Cocteau, *Oeuvres romanesques complètes*, préface d'Henri Godard, Éditions établie par Serge Linares (Paris: Gallimard, 2006), 888.

the place and moment of an intersection of important influences. He posed for the artist, who painted him a new portrait, and tried to do some painting himself. During the visit, he intended to write ‘an unplayable modern tragedy’,⁸⁸⁰ but instead entertained Blanche’s nephew, the twelve-year-old Georges Mévil, with cartoon drawings. From this inauspicious start, the outrageous *Eugènes* emerged. A few days after the first *Eugène* made its appearance, he met Andre Gide (1868–1951), on the 14 October.⁸⁸¹ Cocteau and Gide were intermittent friends and rivals.⁸⁸² The *Eugène* had invaded his psyche to such an extent that he illustrated the character in his some of his letters to André Gide. According to O’Brien, Cocteau had first seen a copy of Gide’s book, *Paludes* (1895) during a weekend at Blanche’s house in 1912. Cocteau was overwhelmed by the book and O’Brien was struck by the similarities between *Paludes* and *Le Potomak*. Cocteau was criticised by Ghéon and Gide because of ‘his unhomogenised influences’.⁸⁸³ Yet Cocteau was a more talented draughtsman than Gide, a fact of which he took full advantage.⁸⁸⁴ It explains his placement of *Les Eugènes*, as central to the book, and his emphasis on the process of their genesis. He wanted to avoid any possible comparisons and present a completely different work. The inclusion of the early sketches in letters to Gide only served to re-enforce the pictorial advantage of *Le Potomak*. Cocteau’s extract in the note below reads:

Yes—but selenic salad eaten by Wells’s lunar calves, reindeer with crystal antlers, the sylph from this cold ceiling, and: the Eugènes. Urien discerns some on his way. Tityre discovers and notes it, the Mortimers and Menards disregard it.⁸⁸⁵

⁸⁸⁰ Gordon, ‘Efforts,’ 5.

⁸⁸¹ Serge Linares in Cocteau, *Oeuvres romaneques*, 888.

⁸⁸² Arthur King Peters, *Jean Cocteau and André Gide: An Abrasive Friendship* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1973), xiv.

⁸⁸³ Frederick Brown, *An Impersonation of Angels: A Biography of Jean Cocteau* (London: Longman, 1968), 57–59.

⁸⁸⁴ Justin O’Brien, ‘*Paludes* and *Le Potomak*’, in *Contemporary French Literature*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1971), 248.

⁸⁸⁵ Peters, *Jean Cocteau and André Gide*, 153: ‘Oui—mais salade Sélène que mangent les veaux lunaires de Wells, les rennes aux andouillers de cristal, le sylphe de ce froid plafond, et: Les Eugènes. Urien en distingue au passage, Tityre la découverte et la note, Les Mortimer-Menard la négligent’.

Cocteau made another political point when he caricatured *Les Eugènes* as the dull bourgeois stereotype of the time, which he named the *Mortimer-Ménards*. He depicted them as pompous, pot-bellied and complacent in a drawing that he sent to André Gide. Milorad described these as ‘the first automatic drawings’:⁸⁸⁶ they grew out of Cocteau’s subconscious—long before the Surrealists expanded the automatic processes of the Dadaists to include drawing.⁸⁸⁷ In fact, it was in 1924 that the artist André Masson (1896–1987) began the technique of automatic drawing; that is, with no preconceived subject or composition. Even if *Le Potomak* did not formally anticipate Surrealism, it bore a superficial resemblance to it through the associated generative processes that were new to Cocteau.⁸⁸⁸

⁸⁸⁶ Leon Dile Milorad, ‘*Les Potomak*’, in *Cahiers Jean Cocteau no. 8 Le Romancier* (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), 10.

⁸⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 10. ‘La main va dessiner toute seule, en quelque sorte, en dehors de la volonté consciente. Et longtemps avant la célèbre écriture automatique des surréalistes, Cocteau invente ici le dessin automatique’.

⁸⁸⁸ Bancroft, ‘Cocteau’s Creative Crisis,’ 14.

Figure 5.1 First note from Cocteau to André Gide with a *Eugène* (1913).⁸⁸⁹

Image removed due to copyright reasons

Cocteau wrote to Gide:

Keep this talisman under your cape. For the time being he is having fun pouring out liver attacks. Let's take advantage of this lull! I think of our lovely walk, of the Frontine [sic] marshes of Philomen's Jupiter, of the lunar cryptogram, of the secret manor!⁸⁹⁰

⁸⁸⁹ Letter from Jean Cocteau to André Gide, 22 October 1913, Doucet Y547.5, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris. Urien is a character in Gide's *Le Voyage d'Urien* and Tityre is a character from Gide's *Paludes. Les Mortimer-Menard* are characters from Cocteau's *Le Potomak*.

⁸⁹⁰ Peters, *Jean Cocteau and André Gide*, 154: 'Gardez ce talisman sous votre cape. Pour l'heure il s'amuse à répandre des crises de Foie. Profitons de cette accalmie ! Je pense à notre chère promenade, aux marais Frontins[sic] du Jupiter de Philémon, aux cryptogames lunaires, au manoir occulte'!

Figure 5.2 Second Note from Cocteau to Gide with a Eugène.⁸⁹¹

Image removed due to copyright reasons

For the first time, he gained access to his interior world via sleep, dreams and his subconscious.⁸⁹² No doubt such new insights were informed by Sigmund Freud's (1856–1939) psychoanalytical theories. Like the Surrealists, he showed a persistent tendency to disrupt the space/time interface,⁸⁹³ which is a characteristic of *poésie* [P11]. *Le Potomak* was the result of an act of creation from Cocteau's inner vision, which he reconstructed through 'intuitive awareness rather than intelligence'.⁸⁹⁴ This was a vital element of his process. He transformed marginal incidences within the act of creation itself 'to evoke [in the work] a more real world which lay concealed behind superficial actuality',⁸⁹⁵ as determined in the seventh principle of *poésie* (to mask and reveal, to

⁸⁹¹ Letter from Jean Cocteau to André Gide, undated [November 1913], Doucet Y547.7, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris.

⁸⁹² See André Breton, *Manifestes du Surréalisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966). André Breton, leader of a new group of poets and artists in Paris, published a *Surrealist Manifesto* in 1924. He defined it as: pure psychic automatism, by which the real functioning of thought is expressed, verbally, in writing, or in any other way.

⁸⁹³ Bancroft, 'Cocteau's Creative Crisis,' 14.

⁸⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁸⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

obscure and illuminate). He employed the visual images of language to involve the viewer or the listener in an active role of interpretation [P9, P10].

Despite his initial flirtation with Surrealism, Cocteau found their ideas too restrictive because they did not accommodate his instinctive craftsmanship. He was after all, ‘a poet who refused to subordinate his art to any other concept’ [P4].⁸⁹⁶ However, he did acknowledge how the Surrealists at one point ‘had been his only public’.⁸⁹⁷

The *Eugènes* cartoon characters, central to and the catalyst for the text of *Le Potomak*, were the product of automatic drawing. Nevertheless, Cocteau was looking for a new direction to explore the secrets of his ‘inner world’,⁸⁹⁸ by trying to break away from earlier influences. Before *Le Potomak* he had ‘always been awake, hence this was the first outpouring of his sleep’.⁸⁹⁹

There is an apparent contradiction here because an epiphany is more likely to be associated with waking up—rather than falling asleep. Cocteau’s version was that he was ‘falling asleep to the false reality’ of the bourgeoisie.⁹⁰⁰ As such, *Le Potomak* can be read as an unequivocal and ironic critique of that class.⁹⁰¹ He recounted, as the first person narrator, how he was ‘from a bourgeois family, [and is] a bourgeois monster’.⁹⁰² So, he identified himself in the very class of person that he had criticised before his moment of renewal. He surrendered to his new subconscious associations but was tired and in a confused state of mind.⁹⁰³ This contributed to a more fluid interaction between his conscious and subconscious states. He was more susceptible to what has been

⁸⁹⁶ Ibid., 14.

⁸⁹⁷ Cocteau, ‘Coupures,’ 354: ‘Les surréalistes eussent été mon seul public’.

⁸⁹⁸ Williams, *Jean Cocteau*, 52.

⁸⁹⁹ Ibid., 53.

⁹⁰⁰ Gordon, ‘Efforts,’ 6.

⁹⁰¹ Williams, *Jean Cocteau*, 52.

⁹⁰² Jean Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 2 (Geneva: Marguerat, 1950), 123: ‘[Je suis] de famille bourgeoise, [je suis] un monstre bourgeois’.

⁹⁰³ Crosland, *Cocteau’s World*, 85.

described as ‘the waking dream’,⁹⁰⁴ which enabled him greater access to his subconscious and the mysteries of his inner self.⁹⁰⁵ He stated in a 1964 interview with William Fifield (1916–1987) his belief that: ‘art is a marriage of the conscious and the unconscious’.⁹⁰⁶ The reference is an earlier manifestation of his responsiveness to the ‘interworld’ found below the water’s surface, and analogous with his newfound connection to his subconscious.⁹⁰⁷ In keeping with the requirements of *poésie* [P8, P6], he transformed both the name *Le Potomak*, and its personification, into his visualisation of the *potomak* as a semi-translucent, amphibian creature which lives in an aquarium: ‘a fluid body or embodiment as fluidity’.⁹⁰⁸ Cocteau so identified with the marine creature that he stated: ‘my confused life and the coherence of my dreams makes me a relative of this *potomak*. The same fluid courses through us’.⁹⁰⁹ The fluid metaphor [P6], as a dormant matrix, is activated in his subconscious into the creature of the work, that was emblematic of his creative crisis.

The notion of a latent matrix and dreams connected through image were a recurring theme for Cocteau. In a way, dreams offered a means of virtual immersion that resemble: ‘the underwater world that sensorially connotes the weightlessness of opium’.⁹¹⁰ Cocteau rediscovered that sensation when he began to smoke opium in 1916-17, although he did not become addicted until after Raymond Radiguet’s death in 1923.⁹¹¹ The combined experience of his dreams, and the feeling as if immersed underwater, unlocked the ‘sensorial multidimensionality’ that would inform his material

⁹⁰⁴ Williams, *Jean Cocteau*, 11.

⁹⁰⁵ Milorad, ‘*Les Potomak*,’ 10: ‘première prise de conscience de l’inconscience’.

⁹⁰⁶ Jean Cocteau, ‘The Art of Fiction’, *Paris Review* 34, no. 32 (Summer/Fall 1964).

⁹⁰⁷ Wall-Romana, *Cinpoetry*, 105.

⁹⁰⁸ Jean Cocteau, quoted in *Ibid.*, 106.

⁹⁰⁹ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 249: ‘Ma vie confuse et la cohérence de mes rêves m’apparentent à ce Potomak. Un même fluide nous traverse’.

⁹¹⁰ Wall-Romana, *Cinpoetry*, 106.

⁹¹¹ See letter from a Marine named Marrast to Cocteau, suggesting an evening ‘around a little lamp’, in Kihm, Sprigge and Béhar, *Jean Cocteau*, 105: ‘une soirée ensemble [...] de préférence auprès d’une petite lampe’.

practice.⁹¹² Cocteau pictorially represents this as *poésie graphique* [P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10] in *Le Potomak* that he named *Mortimer's Dream* (see Figure 5.3, below). The image, with the caption *sommeil* (sleep), illustrates the dream of a *Mortimer*, a victim of the *Eugènes*.⁹¹³ *Les Eugènes* are illustrated encircling an abstract dream collage that they are trying to enter and conquer. The text is placed on the opposite page as a title. It explains how 'so full, so round (one for both), the *Eugènes* tried in vain to penetrate the *Mortimer's* dream, in order to achieve an outcome'.⁹¹⁴ The oneiric creatures, emanating from the dominant pictorial realm of Cocteau's imagination, undeniably symbolised a new, potent, hybrid form of expression which prioritised the image,⁹¹⁵ and were strongly indicative of Cocteau's drive towards an expanded dimensionality. The image is presented in the form of the iris of a single eye (rather than two), and is reminiscent of a camera lens, described by Romana as a 'cinematic iris'.⁹¹⁶ The image is a potent metaphor for *poésie* [P6], as the lens through which all Cocteau's artistic expression is mediated.

⁹¹² Jean Cocteau, quoted in Wall-Romana, *Cinepoetry*, 106.

⁹¹³ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 102–103.

⁹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 102: 'Si plein, si rond (un seul pour deux), le rêve des *Mortimers* qu'en vain les *Eugènes* cherchent, pour y pénétrer, une issue'.

⁹¹⁵ Claudia Gotea, 'Les Eugènes de la guerre', Cocteau, la Grande Guerre et le genre des atrocités', *Contemporary French Civilisation* 34, no. 1 (2010), 152.

⁹¹⁶ Jean Cocteau, quoted in Wall-Romana, *Cinepoetry*, 107.

Figure 5.3 *Mortimer's Dream*.⁹¹⁷

Image removed due to
copyright reasons

It is apt at this point to continue the analogy to film. The images were an example of Cocteau's 'dreams of infinite phenomena whose transparent matrix is the image'.⁹¹⁸

In fact, the malleable nature of these *Les Eugènes* images provides a far greater insight into Cocteau's aesthetic, than any written text.⁹¹⁹

L'Album des Eugènes can be regarded as: an illustrated film, which expresses the crisis that it depicts, much more successfully and forcefully than if it had been described in writing.⁹²⁰ However, it cannot be called a film because it is static. *L'Album des Eugènes* bears a strong resemblance to a storyboard for a film animation, whereby the cartoon is activated from the frame-by-frame images. Cocteau used several techniques that transcended book form and were more reminiscent of film. He frequently altered the perspective in his drawings and abruptly switched between reality and the abstract.

⁹¹⁷ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 103.

⁹¹⁸ Ibid., 15: 'rêve aux phénomènes de l'infinie dont sa gélatine est l'image'.

⁹¹⁹ Bancroft, 'Some Notes,' 41.

⁹²⁰ Ibid.

Cocteau's sensitivity to the linearity and sequential style of the comic strip is palpable, in his drawings. He felt responsible for the creature, once it had appeared,⁹²¹ and had to liberate it from the page that Cocteau called: 'his flat prison'. Cocteau makes the *Eugène* synonymous with *poésie* because they are both activated from a latent state. As the *Eugène* emerged from the blotter, Cocteau immediately saw him in three dimensions and 'quietly became accustomed to him'.⁹²² He voiced his multidimensional vision through the *Eugène*, as he explained that 'the *Eugène* communicated to me their wish to move in three dimensions'.⁹²³ He made an explicit assertion about the experimental nature of *L'Album des Eugènes*, in terms of his multidimensional practice. He introduced spatiality into his written texts, such as *Le Cap de Bonne-Espérance*, to add another dimension, and he used the drawings in *Le Potomak* to activate the flatness of the page in order to accommodate other dimensions of space and time through *poésie* [P11]. *L'Album des Eugènes*, with the various protagonists, static and waiting to be activated, was a much more potent visual form of expression for the receiver [P10], than any written description.⁹²⁴ Yet, the new creative experience of the birth of the *Eugènes* was so significant for Cocteau, that he integrated it into the written text.⁹²⁵ *Le Potomak* is unusually visually dominant, in that the drawings, the *Album des Eugènes*, constitute more than half of the published version. They form an autonomous central section rather than being merely interspersed as illustrations throughout the text. The images emerged first and were unquestionably the catalyst of the text. Cocteau confirmed the chronology: 'Here is *l'Album des Eugènes*. In the long run, I realised I had the right to

⁹²¹ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 68: 'sitôt une figure inscrite, nous en devenons responsables'.

⁹²² Ibid., 70: 'La manie de sortir *l'Eugène* du buvard où je le voyais aussi plastique... Je m'accoutumais docilement à lui. Mes recherches pour le délivrer de sa prison plate!'.

⁹²³ Ibid., 71: 'La manière dont *l'Eugène* me communiqua sa volonté de se mouvoir dans trois dimensions'.

⁹²⁴ Bancroft, 'Some Notes,' 41.

⁹²⁵ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 57–75: 'Comme ils vinrent'.

attach a text to the drawings, after thinking that it was not needed'.⁹²⁶ It makes the classification of the work problematic [P4]. As with all Cocteau's work, there are many levels of interpretation, ranging from the obvious to the more obscure [P7]. Whilst the image can be regarded as a more accessible means of expression, *L'Album des Eugènes* does mask other dramas. This requires decoding and is made more complex by the multiple intertextual implications [P2]. A connection can be made here with another lineage of importance; that is from *Les Eugènes* and through *Les Mortimers* to the marine monster, *le potomak*, the final progeny of Cocteau's subconscious emanations. Even though these creatures were the result of an automatic process, *Les Eugènes* and *Les Mortimers* exist as drawings and *le potomak* is ultimately a piece of writing.

Cocteau is demonstrating a primary, mature example of *poésie*, in various forms. How they should be classified is more problematic. Should the work be categorised as *poésie graphique* (graphic), *poésie de roman* (novel) or *poésie critique* (criticism) (see Chapter one)? The fact that it defies classification actually re-enforces the quality of *poésie* quality: the very essence of *poésie* is that it challenges interart boundaries, as well as the process of transcreation implied here in the interaction between image and text, as well as across the intersecting line of *poésie* that unites them.⁹²⁷

Cocteau exposed his idea of asserting *poésie* through image when he described: 'a book of *poésies* [as] a book of images'.⁹²⁸ He envisaged *poésie*, more generally, as his method of shaping works that were 'an amalgam, a source of unexpected relationships'.⁹²⁹ Cocteau made his *poésie* (plastic poetry) by 'transforming thoughts into images of greater immediacy and potency than verbal ones'.⁹³⁰ He was searching

⁹²⁶ Ibid., 81: 'Voici *l'Album des Eugènes*. A la longue, je me reconnus le droit de joindre un texte aux dessins après avoir pensé qu'ils n'en comportaient pas'.

⁹²⁷ Raffaella Vota, 'Song localisation in advertising', Paper presented at the AHRC Launch event for 'Translating Music', Europe House, London, Wednesday, 26 June 2013.

⁹²⁸ Jean Cocteau, *Poésie Critique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), 1:45: 'un livre de *poésies* est un livre d'images'.

⁹²⁹ Ibid. 'un amalgame, un magasin de rapports inattendus'.

⁹³⁰ Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film*, 9.

for ‘a poetic medium, different from verbal poetry but equally valid, flexible and expressive, an art of concrete visual images instead of symbolic or metaphorical ones’.⁹³¹ I maintain, however, that metaphor and symbolism were integral to Cocteau’s creative method, whatever the medium—be it image or text [P6]. At this early stage, before the advent of moving images, Cocteau could only experiment with text and image on the page. Later, with his discovery of film, Cocteau was able to fully realise his cinematic fantasy as *poésie cinématographique*. Film would, ultimately, be the medium through which he put his ideas of plastic poetry into practice: ‘if film is action, by definition, it is poetry in action by implication’.⁹³²

The *Album des Eugènes* is a pictorial fantasy, annotated with occasional words, in which the cruel and aggressive *Eugènes*, ‘angels, drawn and named by Cocteau’,⁹³³ attack the dull and placid honeymoon couple, *Les Mortimers*, who appear as insignificant as they do comic.⁹³⁴ Cocteau constructed his visual story using contrasting stylistic images which highlighted their characterisation. The *Eugènes* are portrayed as cold and angular whilst the *Mortimers* are drawn as more naive and charming. *Les Mortimers* are symbolic of the immature Cocteau, prior to 1913, with his persona as a frivolous prince ‘pandering to social practice, convention and taste’.⁹³⁵ He identified the attack on the *Mortimers* with his own creative battle, which started with a new artistic self-awareness—a fact he duly demanded of his readers. He asked that they ‘only look for *Mortimers* within you’.⁹³⁶

⁹³¹ William E. B. Verrone, *The Avant-Garde Feature Film: A Critical History* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2011), 59.

⁹³² Ibid.

⁹³³ Claude Mauriac, *Jean Cocteau: ou la vérité du mensonge* (Paris: Lieutier, 1945), 34: ‘Une histoire sans parole... Cocteau a donné une forme et un nom à ces anges cruel’.

⁹³⁴ Ibid., 35: ‘Les Mortimers, victimes des Eugènes, y paraissent comme des personnages aussi insignifiants que comiques’.

⁹³⁵ Bancroft, ‘Some Notes,’ 39.

⁹³⁶ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 83: ‘Ne cherche pas de Mortimer sauf en toi-même’.

But, as with all Cocteau's work, there are many levels of interpretation ranging from the obvious to the more obscure [P7]. So, whilst the image can be regarded as a more accessible means of expression, *L'Album des Eugènes* does conceal other dramas and scenarios. These require deciphering and are made more complex because of the multiple intertextual implications. It is the application and interrogation of *poésie* in *Le Potomak* that makes this possible. The malleable nature of the characters in the images, especially *Les Eugènes*, enable a far greater insight into Cocteau's aesthetic than any written text.⁹³⁷ All these physiognomies are direct articulations of the many computations of his principles of *poésie* through *Le Potomak*'s unique form and content, but there are ramifications beyond his conception of *poésie*. *Le Potomak* gave Cocteau the artistic gravitas and recognition that he had craved for so long. *Poésie* liberated him creatively in his subsequent works, especially those multimedial, collaborative ones. He understood the potency of *poésie* as a creative function of his works, but he never rationalised it in any consistent way.

Cocteau had experienced a new creative process with automatic drawing that gave birth to the *Eugènes*. In turn, the cartoon figures inspired his written texts and altered his aesthetic objectives. He wanted his work to develop a plastic dimension, directly in line with the interdisciplinary principle of *poésie* [P5]. He abandoned any attempts to link text and image. Furthermore, he accumulated and juxtaposed elements without any obvious spatio-temporal perspectives. On the one hand, *L'Album des Eugènes* resisted any connection with the text, because it was a self-contained unit and provided the elemental differences necessary for the activation of *poésie* [P3]. But, on the other hand, he reconsidered his viewpoint when he wrote at the beginning of the album: 'Here is *L'Album des Eugènes*. In the long run, I recognised the right to attach a

⁹³⁷ Bancroft, 'Some Notes,' 41.

text to the drawings, after thinking it was lacking'.⁹³⁸ In composing the text he abandoned conventions of rhyme, which was not new for him, but gave in to a more immediate, fragmentary and free flowing method (in order to subvert space and time), so that it becomes *poésie* [P11].

It is evident that, at this point in his artistic evolution, he realised his metamorphosis as writer was through his graphic experience—part of his exploration of *poésie*. He wanted to produce 'not merely a book to read, or a book to see but also a book to hold, an object whose layout is significant'.⁹³⁹ He attributed importance to the structure and design, and yet he questioned it: 'All this book—is it a book?—its black verbiage, its contradictions, which emerge from the depths, and its sick look, but I can tell you its secret'.⁹⁴⁰ Does his insecurity about the work make him derisory or contradictory?

The book, as the product of Cocteau's mature experience of *poésie*, shows his mastery of line, his ability to develop rhythm and movement, reminiscent of a cartoon animation, from the flat solid plane of the page to the viewer's imagination [P10].

Cocteau was driven by the physical need to explore and experiment with such manipulation of the flat space, so as to activate the spatial volume of the plastic arts across all forms of artistic expression. The emergent cartoon drawings of *Les Eugènes* in *Le Potomak* were his proof of this.⁹⁴¹ He implied that the heterogenous whole resulted in a fertile, creative conceptual space [P2, P3].

⁹³⁸ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 81: 'Voici L'Album des Eugènes. A la longue, je me reconnus le droit de joindre un texte aux dessins après avoir pensé qu'ils n'en comportaient pas'.

⁹³⁹ Hélène de Jacquilot, 'Le Potomak: l'image et la lettre, l'image et l'écriture', in *Jean Cocteau Aujourd'hui: Actes du colloque de Montpellier*, ed. Pierre Caizergues (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1992), 76: 'pas seulement un livre à lire et un livre à voir, mais aussi un livre à manipuler, un livre-objet dont l'agencement même est signifiant'.

⁹⁴⁰ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 333–334: 'Tout ce livre—est-ce bien un livre?—son verbiage noir, ses contradictions, ce qui des profondeurs émerge, et son regard d'infirme, je peux te dire son secret'.

⁹⁴¹ Milorad, 'Les Potomak,' 10. 'première prise de conscience de l'inconscience, sous l'aspect de l'Eugène'.

Cocteau offered no explanation as to how the process of automatic writing worked but gave some insight by suggesting the possibility of ‘at-present undiscovered form[s] of memory’,⁹⁴² existing in the subconscious. As usual, Cocteau presented ambivalence or intentional ambiguity. Rather than an amalgamation of the cognisant and intuitive, as initially proposed, he described the nature of creativity as emerging from ‘conscious experience, which is observed from what pre-exists’.⁹⁴³ Cocteau further situated the artistic struggle at the interface between ‘strength and impotence, between the specific and the vague’.⁹⁴⁴ The potential interaction and creative tension of such dualities are fundamental to *poésie* [P3]. The interaction and tension are significant in the context of the genesis and transdisciplinary relationships of Cocteau’s works, beginning with *Le Potomak*. He had realised, from the moment of his self-awakening, that he needed to adopt a different aesthetic approach and reconsider the nature of his creative process. With the creation of *Le Potomak*, Cocteau had a vision of what *poésie* would become for him. He wanted to lead the artistic revolution and be considered a more serious artist. He was also ready to transform his theoretical concept of *poésie* into its practical application that, I maintain, resulted in *Le Potomak*.

Cocteau’s entire creative crisis was played out in a sort of hypnotic trance, from which *L’Album des Eugènes* emerged,⁹⁴⁵ as the product of the ‘visual, plastic experiences of his imagination’.⁹⁴⁶ He wrote, in *Le Potomak* that ‘at the edges of the pink blotter, the pen came to life’.⁹⁴⁷ Claude Mauriac (1914–1996) pointed out the symbolic nature of the book as:

⁹⁴² Cocteau, ‘The Art of Fiction.’

⁹⁴³ Ibid.

⁹⁴⁴ Cocteau, ‘Coupures,’ 358:entre le vouloir et le non-vouloir, entre l’exactitude et le vague’.

⁹⁴⁵ Bancroft, ‘Some Notes,’ 37.

⁹⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁴⁷ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 66:‘Le stylographe, en marge et sur le buvard rose, commence à vivre’.

A story without words—or nearly—illustrating this revolution and making sense of it. The story of those unknown monsters surging from beyond to complete the moults.⁹⁴⁸

According to Cocteau, Stravinsky's music played an important part in the birth of these characters. Cocteau declared how: '*L'Album des Eugènes* forced itself on me, whilst your music was played to me, every day in a country lounge'.⁹⁴⁹ His description is very revealing on several levels. Cocteau's use of the French informal *ta* indicated that he felt close to Stravinsky. In fact, Cocteau framed *Le Potomak* with expressions of gratitude to the composer.⁹⁵⁰ He began and ended the book with text addressed specifically to Stravinsky. Cocteau did not choose the music that was played, but it reminded him of the previous four years he had spent with the *Ballets Russes*, as a much more visually orientated environment which influenced his subsequent work in ballet, theatre and cinema.

What began as idle doodling turned into an obsession. It was fuelled by the need to give shape to *L'Eugène*, as an unusual and mysterious 'hieroglyph representing a crocodile and recounting a battle'.⁹⁵¹ Cocteau was completely mesmerised by the strange characters produced by his imagination until the whole *Album* was finished. The manifestation of the *Eugène* enabled Cocteau to conquer his creative demons and produce his first serious work.

⁹⁴⁸ Mauriac, *Jean Cocteau*, 34: 'Une histoire sans paroles—ou presque—illustre cette révolution et en faisant sens. Celle de monstres inconnus surgis de l'au-delà pour accomplir les mues'.

⁹⁴⁹ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 44: 'L'Album des *Eugènes* s'est imposé à moi dans un salon de campagne où chaque jour, on me jouait ta musique'.

⁹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 55–58 (*Dédicace*) and 225–228 (*À Igor Stravinsky*).

⁹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 70: 'la manie de sortir *l'Eugène* du buvard où je le voyais aussi plastique et aussi indéchiffrable qu'un hiéroglyphe qui représente un crocodile et qui raconte une bataille'.

Figure 5.4 Jean Cocteau receiving a visit from the *Eugènes* at Offranville.⁹⁵²

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On one level, the *Eugène* represented Cocteau's triumph over his personal battle but, on the other, *Les Eugènes de guerre* were symbolic of the wider conflict of the First World War. The *Eugène* became an aggressive combatant at war with the *Mortimers*, Cocteau's other fantasy creatures in *L'Album des Eugènes*. Once the *Eugènes* had emerged from his subconscious, Cocteau could transform them into whatever symbols he chose [P6, P7].

There was only one *Eugène* at the start but gradually there became *Les Eugènes*—with an 's'. This was not due to any 'typographical error [Cocteau] had made ten times, but was instead, the monster's insistence on being replicated'.⁹⁵³ He described the order in which their features developed:

The nose and hair came after the cheek, mouth, collar and tie, the stomach, legs and the absurd little boots. Soon, there were *Eugènes* all over the place, never the same.⁹⁵⁴

Now, as visual entities, the sixty-three linear caricatures were catalysts for the written text.⁹⁵⁵ The inclusion in the text of a description of how the *Eugènes* and the *Mortimers*, the honeymoon couple, came into existence is one of the most intriguing and unique

⁹⁵² *Potomak* manuscript, Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique, reproduced in Kihm, Sprigge and Béhar, *Jean Cocteau*, 77.

⁹⁵³ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 70: 'J'appris peu à peu que les *Eugènes* désirent un *s* au pluriel, à la persistance avec laquelle dix fois je recommençai de suite ce que nous crûmes d'abord être une faute d'orthographe'.

⁹⁵⁴ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 71: 'Après le nez et les cheveux vinrent la joue, la bouche, le col, la cravate, le ventre, les jambes et les petites bottines absurdes. Bientôt il y eut partout des *Eugènes* et aucun d'eux n'étant jamais identique'.

⁹⁵⁵ *L'Album des Eugènes* was completed when he visited Stravinsky in Leysin, Switzerland during Spring, 1914. See Gordon, 'Efforts,' 5.

characteristics of *Le Potomak*.⁹⁵⁶ The beginning reveals the very nature of its own genesis, as part of Cocteau's creative process. It is rare that an explanation of the author's process forms an integral part of the text—and is an example of *poésie* in practice. Here is a work which simultaneously illuminates and conceals [P7]. Cocteau named the preceding chapter in *L'Album des Eugènes* 'Comment ils vinrent' (how they came).⁹⁵⁷ This gives the reader a direct understanding of the birth of *Les Eugènes* (see Table 5.1, below). So, not only did *Les Eugènes* assume a life of their own, but they also evolved over time into a distinctive genre, almost like an early storyboard, that was interrupted by the onset of the First World War in the Summer of 1914. This hiatus was duly acknowledged and publicised by Cocteau at the end of the prospectus, with an aquarium sign announcing: 'Closure of French establishment, due to mobilisation'.⁹⁵⁸ This was clearly a nationalistic comment.

Cocteau's iconic creatures assumed another incarnation as *Les Eugènes de guerre*, alias *Les Atrocités*, when they appeared in *Le Mot* (the Word) in July 1915 (Figure 5.5). *Le Mot* was a fortnightly, satirical, anti-war journal jointly produced by Cocteau and the illustrator Paul Iribe (1883–1935). Cocteau, under the pseudonym of Jim, drew the caricatures dressed as German soldiers. He used the *Eugènes* to promote his newly acquired ultra-patriotic views adopted after the outbreak of war. His intention was to ridicule the Germans and portray them as 'fat, stupid [and] sadistic' (see Figure 5.6).⁹⁵⁹ Cocteau sent a letter to Gide in January 1918 depicting a ferocious *Eugène* (see Figure 5.7). He drew the hand as a wrench, like a robot, and gave it saw teeth and a spiked helmet that represented the industrialisation and the anti-German mood of wartime France.

Cocteau wrote alongside the Eugène cartoon:

⁹⁵⁶ Crosland, *Cocteau's World*, 85.

⁹⁵⁷ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 57: 'Comment ils vinrent'.

⁹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 37: 'MAISON FRANÇAISE FERMÉE POUR CAUSE DE MOBILISATION'.

⁹⁵⁹ Williams, *Jean Cocteau*, 56.

That's the way things are my dear old Gide. Think of the Eugène at Offranville! The talisman against flu and the missed trains. I think of you with tenderness and melancholy—always so far from each other and yet at each meeting the good juice flows again and one hand warms the other. Your chamois leaps into my room and brings the alpine fragrance.⁹⁶⁰

Cocteau's nationalism can be traced through the presence or absence of *Les Eugènes de guerre* in *Le Potomak*. He identified himself with France at the beginning of the war. *Les Eugènes de guerre* were included in the first definitive edition of the book published by Stock in January 1919. Subsequently, Cocteau insisted that these drawings be edited out of the second edition, published 1924, because of the prevalent post-war pacifist climate.⁹⁶¹ and because he wanted to portray himself as non-political. *Le Potomak* was finally republished in its entirety in the Passage du Marais edition (2000) and in *Oeuvres romanesques complètes*.⁹⁶²

⁹⁶⁰ Peters, *Jean Cocteau and André Gide*, 156: 'Voilà où nous en sommes, mon pauvre cher Gide—Pensez à l'Eugène d'Offranville ! Le talisman contre la grippe et les trains manqués. Je pense à vous avec tendresse et mélancolie—si loin l'un de l'autre toujours et pourtant à chaque rencontre le bon fluide circule et la main réchauffe la main. Votre chamois saute dans ma chambre et apporte l'odeur alpicole'.

⁹⁶¹ Claudia Gotea, 'Cocteau entre deux guerres *Le Potomak*, *Les Eugènes de la guerre* et *La Fin du Potomak*' (PhD thesis, Pennsylvania State University, 2008), 91.

⁹⁶² Ibid.

Table 5.1 Jean Cocteau, 'Après coup', *Le Potomak*.⁹⁶³

<p>First I got to know the Eugènes I drew the images of the Eugènes, without text. I sensed from them the need to write I thought I would write a book. I had a great number of disorganised notes. I dictated these notes. I saw that this was not a book, but a preface A preface to what? I left the word 'book' all over the place along with inflated naïve promises. In childhood, one proposes titles of works that never get written. Nothing forces you to read a book. <i>Argémone</i> would say 'what?' No connection between image and text and never one line fitting another.</p>	<p>J'ai d'abord connu les Eugènes. J'ai dessiné, sans texte l'Album des Eugènes. J'ai senti par eux le besoin d'écrire. J'ai cru que j'allais écrire un livre. J'avais un grand nombre de notes en désordre. J'ai dicté ces notes, J'ai vu que ce n'était pas un livre, mais une préface. Une préface à quoi? Je laisse partout le mot 'livre' et l'enflure naïve des promesses. Dans l'enfance, on aligne des titres d'œuvres et on ne les écrits pas. Rien ne te force à lire un livre. <i>Argémone</i> dira 'Qu'est-ce?' Entre les dessins et le texte aucun rapport, et jamais une ligne à l'autre ne s'accouple.</p>
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⁹⁶³ 'Après coup' in Cocteau, *Le Potomak* (1916), 49–50.

Figure 5.5 Cocteau drawing, *La Croix de Fer* (the Iron Cross).⁹⁶⁴

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Figure 5.6 Jean Cocteau, *Les Eugènes de guerre*.⁹⁶⁵

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Although *Les Eugènes* had taken possession of Cocteau's mind, he was the one who decided when and where *Les Eugènes de guerre* would appear. Although Cocteau claimed *Les Eugènes* were a product of automatic creation, it is unlikely that he would completely subjugate himself to such a process, because he still needed to satisfy the needs of his artistic craftsmanship.⁹⁶⁶ Just as the presence or absence of *Les Eugènes* in his book was determined by Cocteau's response to world-shattering events, so was the artist's own creative and mystical quest interrupted through the loss of the newfound connection to his subconscious. In practical terms, it meant that he was merely existing

⁹⁶⁴ Jean Cocteau, *Le Mot* 20 (July 1915).

⁹⁶⁵ Cocteau, *Le Potomak* (2000), Annexes, 217.

⁹⁶⁶ Bancroft, 'Cocteau's Creative Crisis,' 14.

rather than experiencing.⁹⁶⁷ The situation proved critical for him because his creative commitment was to the experience of *poésie* and the communication of that experience through any art form.⁹⁶⁸ An understanding of the experiential basis for *poésie* is key to its application as a workable analytical method. All aspects of collaborations, from creation to reception and analysis, are mediated through experience, and are therefore, according to my hypothesis, a function of *poésie*.

As well as symbols of war, Cocteau likened *Les Eugènes* to angels. He stated how *L'Eugène* suddenly arrived 'blowing in my ear, like an angel'.⁹⁶⁹ He referred to them as 'the first angels, albeit black angels, the first creatures appearing from beyond consciousness, the first guardians of the unknown, the first messengers'.⁹⁷⁰

His use of the word messenger is significant because it corresponds to *angelos*, in Greek, meaning angels. Angels were another of Cocteau's recurring symbols [P6]. The arrival of 'the angel Heurtebise' emerged as a character from his other world, the *audéla* in his play *Orphée* (Orpheus, 1927), some twelve years later.⁹⁷¹ The angel symbolised yet another victory for Cocteau over his demons and in his ongoing artistic struggle.⁹⁷² However, he discussed the impact *L'Eugène*—as the first product of his subconscious—had had on him when he wrote: 'I examined him, not even looking for the source of his power. I obediently got to know him'.⁹⁷³ He freely declared that he was entranced by the peculiar other-world entity that had leapt from his dreams.⁹⁷⁴

⁹⁶⁷ Milorad, '*Les Potomak*,' 17.

⁹⁶⁸ Bancroft, 'Cocteau's Creative Crisis,' 14.

⁹⁶⁹ Milorad, '*Les Potomak*,' 9: 'à mon oreille[...] ce siffle d'ange'.

⁹⁷⁰ Ibid., '*Les Eugènes*, les premiers anges, même s'il s'agit d'anges noirs, les premières créatures venues de l'au-delà du conscient, les premiers parlementaires de l'inconnu, ses premiers messagers'.

⁹⁷¹ Cocteau wrote a poem dedicated to *L'Ange Heurtebise* (1927) as well, see Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 509–514.

⁹⁷² Bancroft, 'Some Notes,' 42.

⁹⁷³ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 70: 'Je le considérais, ne cherchant même plus les raisons de sa force'.

⁹⁷⁴ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 68: 'L'Eugène, le premier Eugène, l'envoyé des Eugène, me fascina'.

Figure 5.7 First page of letter from Jean Cocteau to Andre Gide with *Eugène* cartoon.⁹⁷⁵

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Even the name *Les Eugènes* had many connotations for Cocteau. He believed that it surfaced from his subconscious. He admitted: ‘I did not baptise them... *Les Eugènes*. The *Eugènes* conveyed me their names, as they had sent me the pattern of a silhouette equivalent to their shapeless mass’.⁹⁷⁶ He demonstrated his way of ‘seeing’ words and attached a visual description of the *Eugènes* to their name. He suggested that the characters were galvanised from an untapped latent source of creativity that he called an

⁹⁷⁵ First page of letter from Jean Cocteau to André Gide, dated 19 January 1918, Doucet Y547.5, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris, reproduced in Peters, *Jean Cocteau and André Gide*, 157.

⁹⁷⁶ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 68: ‘Je ne les baptisai pas... *Les Eugènes* me transmirent leur nom comme ils m’avaient envoyé le schéma d’une silhouette équivalente à leur masse informe’.

‘extraordinary fluid’,⁹⁷⁷ identified as *poésie* (see Chapter four).⁹⁷⁸ Yet, according to Milorad,⁹⁷⁹ the name *Eugène* was highly significant for Cocteau and, as such, was more conscious than subconscious.⁹⁸⁰ *Eugène* was a recurring family name. Indeed, Louis-Eugène Lecomte was Cocteau’s maternal grandfather. Furthermore, his mother was christened with the feminised version, Eugénie, and his own middle name was Eugène. Clearly a familial facial characteristic is found in the *Eugènes* caricatures. They emerge with hook noses; a feature which Cocteau inherited from his father and grandfather.⁹⁸¹

Figure 5.8 Picture of Cocteau’s inherited hook nose,⁹⁸² reproduced in his *Eugène* cartoon.⁹⁸³

Images removed due to copyright restrictions

Physical resemblances, passed on to him from his grandfather and mother, were also incorporated into the image of *L’Eugène*—a composite of nose, thin mouth with no visible lips, and receding hairline. Cocteau based some of the *Eugènes* on other family members, whilst others were drawn from many of the visitors, he met on his visits to Blanche’s house in Offranville.⁹⁸⁴ Yet, the superficial resemblances between *Les Eugènes* and his family mask a much deeper family dynamic [P7]. The grandfather as patriarch of the family, the mother and the son (Cocteau) all represent protagonists in

⁹⁷⁷ Cocteau, *Le Rappel* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 189: ‘ce fluide fabuleux où baigne le poète’.

⁹⁷⁸ Music was the catalyst for the emergence of the *Eugènes*.

⁹⁷⁹ Milorad was the acknowledged pseudonym of Léo Dilé, an author and critic who corresponded with Cocteau.

⁹⁸⁰ Milorad, ‘*Les Potomak*,’ 10.

⁹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁹⁸² Yousuf Karsh, Photograph of Jean Cocteau, accessed 1 June 2013, <https://karsh.org/photographs/jean-cocteau-2/>

⁹⁸³ *L’Album des Eugènes* in Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 11.

⁹⁸⁴ Arnaud, *Cocteau*, 122.

the oedipal drama.⁹⁸⁵ An additional reference to the oedipal triangle can be extracted from the name of the *Mortimers*, an imaginary couple featured in *L'Album* as opponents of *Les Eugènes*. The name contains three syllables; the first *mort* means 'death' in French, a reference to his dead father. The second, *ti*, is an allusion to the young Cocteau and *mer*, his mother.⁹⁸⁶ Cocteau juxtaposed the female *Eugène*—the bad, punitive, repressive mother—against the kind, caring one epitomised by the female *Mortimer*. Cocteau considered his mother an unsteady buffer between him, his father, his family, and the prejudiced outside world.⁹⁸⁷ But, returning for a moment to the family analogy, how did the female *Eugène* materialise? In the same way as her male counterparts, 'one night of their own accord, on a page where my inert hands were wandering'.⁹⁸⁸ The female *Eugène* has a profusion of hair, not unlike that of his mother recognisable from photographs at the time. She characterises his sister Martha as well as other female members of his family—just as the male *Eugène* is symbolic of the males of his family.

The couple are depicted in a primitive pose; the female is emerging from the side of the male, reminiscent of the biblical description of Eve (who was created from Adam's rib in the Garden of Eden). In effect, they are the archetypal mother and father.⁹⁸⁹ The chronology of the creation of *Les Eugènes* within the book is made clear. The male *Eugène* comes first, followed by the female, then, Cocteau 'drew the couple. (see Figure 5.9). Then a tribe. Then *L'Album*'.⁹⁹⁰ The *Mortimers* followed *Les Eugènes* from Cocteau's imagination, making the way for the birth of *Le Potomak*, a fantasy sea monster, living in an aquarium under the church, in the Place de la Madeleine in

⁹⁸⁵ Milorad, '*Les Potomak*,' 11.

⁹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁹⁸⁸ Cocteau, *Le Potomak* (2000), 74: 'Un soir, et d'elles-mêmes, sur une page où vagabondait ma main morte'.

⁹⁸⁹ Milorad, '*Les Potomak*,' 12.

⁹⁹⁰ Cocteau, *Le Potomak* (2000), 75: 'Je dessinai le couple. Puis une troupe. Puis l'Album'.

Paris.⁹⁹¹ *Le Potomak* was named after a Washington river, the Potomac,⁹⁹² but Cocteau insisted on substituting the ‘c’ for a ‘k’.⁹⁹³ Yet, in a letter to Andre Gide (1869–1951) in March 1914, (on headed paper from Le Grand Hotel, Leysin, Switzerland), he wrote: ‘I am finishing *Le Potomac*’; he still used the original spelling.⁹⁹⁴ He continued to use this spelling up to the last moment, as shown in a draft page conserved at the *Mercure de France*.⁹⁹⁵

Even though Cocteau drew this image, that he labelled *Le Potomak*, it differed stylistically from the sixty-three other drawings of *L’Album*. It was originally used to decorate an envelope, sent to *Le Mercure de France*, the intended publisher, in 1914. It stands out as a more abstract and decorative example of the creature and was intended to promote the book.⁹⁹⁶ An original Cocteau depiction of the creature still exists in one of his manuscripts entitled ‘In the wrong, a history of a shedding’ (see Figure 5.11, below).⁹⁹⁷

⁹⁹¹ Kihm, Sprigge and Béhar, *Jean Cocteau*, 73. Cocteau lived at 9 Place de la Madeleine with his lover, Jean Marais.

⁹⁹² ‘Potomac’ means ‘something bought’. See Steegmuller, *Cocteau*, 546, n.91.

⁹⁹³ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 245: ‘Mon Potomak par un K se termine (exigez le K)... Le fleuve qui se jette, si je ne m’abuse, dans la baie de Chesapeake, doit son nom à ce Mégaptère Cœlentéré’.

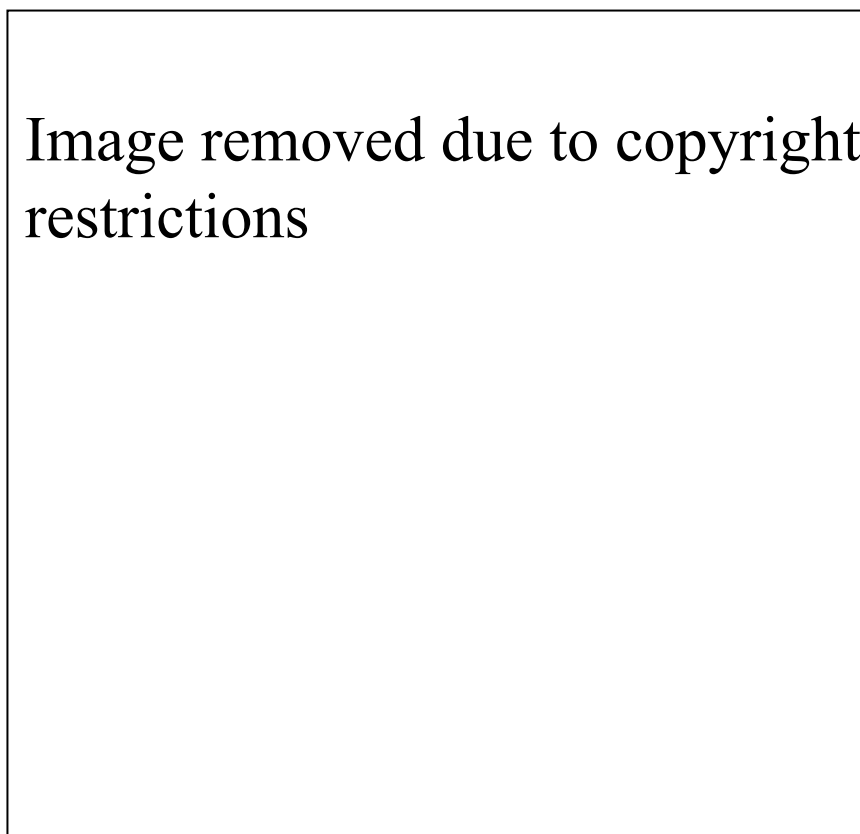
⁹⁹⁴ Letter no.14, Y547.20, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris, reproduced in Jean Cocteau, *Lettres à André Gide. Avec quelques réponses d’André Gide* (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1970), 47.

⁹⁹⁵ Kihm, Sprigge and Béhar, *Jean Cocteau*, 73.

⁹⁹⁶ The image was later used as the front cover illustration of the reprint by Marais in 2000 of the 1924 version.

⁹⁹⁷ *Dans L’Impair: Histoire d’une mue par Jean Cocteau*, Le fonds Madame Louis Solvay, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, reproduced in Kihm, Sprigge and Béhar, *Jean Cocteau*, 409.

Figure 5.9 Cocteau's drawing of the messenger of the *Eugènes* and the first female *Eugène*.⁹⁹⁸



He made a deliberate choice not to include this illustration, because he did not want to expose his own visualisation of *Le potomak*. Vanity prevented him from disseminating the negative self-image of an amorphous, dejected mass, confined in the aquarium, as represented by the drawing of his alter ego. The conscious decision to describe, rather than illustrate, the sea monster was very strange for someone as visually orientated as Cocteau—especially as the cartoons were so fundamental to both the creation and the form of his work. The reversal of Cocteau's earlier method favouring visual primacy over text was carefully considered.

⁹⁹⁸ Cocteau, *Le Potomak* (2000), 75: 'Calque de l'envoyé des *Eugènes* et la premier femme *Eugène*'.

Figure 5.10 *Le Potomak* drawing.⁹⁹⁹

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By presenting the fantasy in written form, Cocteau forced the individual to imagine their own conception of *Le Potomak* entity [P10]. Cocteau constantly complained about public complacency and, as a result, he actively introduced an element of provocation in all his work [P9].

Cocteau used *Le Potomak*, the monster, as a vehicle for *poésie*. In the text, he described the creature as ‘Mégaptère Cœlentéré’,¹⁰⁰⁰ literally meaning hump-backed whale.¹⁰⁰¹ He added the word *cœlenterate*, derived from the Greek *koilos*, hollow, and *enteron*, intestine (see Figure 5.12). By omitting the illustration, Cocteau directed the reader towards alternative, personal visualisations and subtexts associated with the marine monster [P2, P10]. He revealed more about the creature and, at the same time, he made it mysterious for the reader to decode [P6, P7].

⁹⁹⁹ Jean Cocteau, Drawing of *Le Potomak* collaged onto a *Mercure de France* envelope, accessed June 2013, <http://cocteau.biu-montpellier.fr>. This image also appeared on the front cover of Cocteau, *Le Potomak* (2000).

¹⁰⁰⁰ Cocteau, *Le Potomak* (2000), 245.

¹⁰⁰¹ *The Concise Oxford French Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 343.

Figure 5.11 The *potomak*'s aquarium.¹⁰⁰²

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Figure 5.12 Hydra Coelenterate.¹⁰⁰³

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The large amorphous creature has a single mouth surrounded by sensory tentacles at one end, opening into the coelenteron, an extensive digestive tube.¹⁰⁰⁴ The embryonic *potomak* lives in his warm womb-like aquarium eating, digesting and excreting. It represents the early oral and anal libidinal developmental stages identified in psychoanalytic theory.¹⁰⁰⁵ The *potomak* is synonymous with, and symbolises, Cocteau's artistic renaissance.

¹⁰⁰² *L'Aquarium du Potomak* drawing, *Potomak* manuscript, Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique, reproduced in Kihm, Sprigge and Béhar, *Jean Cocteau*, 73.

¹⁰⁰³ Google Image Search, 'hydra coelenterata', accessed 20 June 2019, www.qianqianhua.com/dongwu/487.html

¹⁰⁰⁴ Countryside Info, 'Hydra', accessed 10 November 2019, www.countrysideinfo.co.uk

¹⁰⁰⁵ Milorad, '*Les Potomak*,' 15.

In the book, Cocteau described Argémone's first visit to the *potomak*, when he revealed the creature's diet of incongruous objects such as 'mandragores (mandrakes), montgolfières (hot air balloons), olive oil, white gloves and spelling mistakes',¹⁰⁰⁶ and as 'aloe stalks, a music box playing Wagner operas, programmes of the *Ballets Russes*'.¹⁰⁰⁷ Cocteau included another reference to mandrakes in his poem *La Crucifixion* (1945–1946); he wrote: 'Serene. Instead of mandrake grows a root of entrails'.¹⁰⁰⁸ He focussed, yet again, on inner depths represented by roots and the transformative process of food digestion as symbolised by entrails. He wanted to distance himself from previous associations in the name of his artistic transformation.¹⁰⁰⁹ Some of his allusions were more self-evident than others, but they were all assimilated into his poetic process.¹⁰¹⁰ The marine monster is emblematic of Cocteau: his sensory tentacles absorb various external influences, all of which are processed, integrated and internalised as outpourings of *poésie*. Fundamentally, the *potomak* creature forms the nucleus of the book and, as such, it encapsulates the very essence of *poésie* as object and process. Moreover, it activates the book as a highly significant first representation of the yet-unarticulated single red line that is to be carved out by *poésie* (see Chapter four).

The aquarium, as a composite environment, can be compared to the multifaceted complexity of the collaborative works under investigation. The sea monster inhabiting it represented Cocteau being imprisoned by the intricacies of his own creative quest. It is characterised by recurring themes of immersion, dreams, identity, the real and the

¹⁰⁰⁶ Cocteau, *Le Potomak* (2000), 246: 'Nourri de mandragores et de montgolfières... des gants blancs et des fautes d'orthographe'. The mandrake is a plant whose root has the form of a human body. It was once considered to have aphrodisiac properties.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Milorad, 'Les Potomak,' 15: 'tige d'aloès, boîte à musique diffusant des opéras de Wagner, programme des Ballets Russes'.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Verse three in Jean Cocteau, *La Crucifixion*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 4 (Geneva: Marguerat, 1950), 264: 'Sérénissime. Au lieu de mandragore pousse une racine d'entrailles'.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Williams, *Jean Cocteau*, 53.

¹⁰¹⁰ Milorad, 'Les Potomak,' 15: 'servant à l'élaboration des déjections poétiques'.

imaginary. Serge Linares refers to the drawing of the *potomak* (marine monster), found in the manuscript but omitted from the book, stating that ‘the inhabitant of the aquarium stays much more confined in his verbal reality than its visual representation never having escaped from the draft manuscript’.¹⁰¹¹ He observes how the verbal expression of Cocteau’s symbolic self is just as much a prisoner within the text as the visual one is restricted to the manuscript. Does Cocteau regard himself as captive within the generative process of the work because it originated much more subconsciously than his previous works (and had less control over its outcome)? He admitted how:

I had therefore received, if not the order, at least the obsession to reveal the *Eugène* from the blotter, where I saw him as malleable and indecipherable... I accepted him, not even looking for sources of his strength. I obediently submitted to him.¹⁰¹²

It is evident from this that Cocteau was compelled to draw. We are made aware of the passivity of the blotting paper, the plasticity and mystery of the creature and its power to dominate the poet.

In what way was the book, *Le Potomak* unique? It can be described as a visual poem and/or poetic prose, and the drawings as a comic strip showing three dimensional and filmic characteristics of animation. Cocteau included the aspect of dimensionality in the text of the book [P7], and offered an insight into his specific cross-sensory approach to drawing:

I am a draughtsman. It is quite natural for me to see and hear what I write, to endow it with plastic form. When I am shooting a film, every scene I direct is for me a moving drawing.¹⁰¹³

¹⁰¹¹ Serge Linares, ‘D’un *Potomak* à l’autre: Cocteau et la tentation de la rupture’, *Cahiers de l’Association internationale des études françaises* 53 (2001), 318: ‘le pensionnaire de l’aquarium reste d’autant plus cantonné dans sa réalité verbale que sa représentation graphique n’a pas passé le stade du manuscrit’.

¹⁰¹² Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, ‘J’avais donc reçu, sinon l’ordre, du moins la manie de sortir L’Eugène du buvard où je le voyais aussi plastique et aussi indéchiffrable... Je le considérais, ne cherchant même plus les raisons de sa force. Je m’accoutumais docilement à lui’.

¹⁰¹³ Cocteau, *Entretiens sur le cinématographe*, 18: ‘Je suis dessinateur. Il m’est naturel de voir et d’entendre ce que j’écris, de le douer d’une forme plastique. Lorsque je tourne un film, les scènes que je règle deviennent pour moi des dessins qui bougent’.

Eugènes as Poésie: The Visual Expression Text

Cocteau's experience of the emergence of *Les Eugènes* enabled him to access the plastic expression of *poésie*, albeit on a subconscious level. Nevertheless, the enhanced form of his 'plastic expression' was inspired by his work with the Diaghilev ballets and his exposure to Picasso's pictorial world.¹⁰¹⁴ Many years later he confirmed: 'I am a draughtsman. It is natural for me to see and to hear what I write, and to give it a visual form'.¹⁰¹⁵ Cocteau revealed his impulse to draw and showed how the image/text relationship was inexorably linked for him, as he explained in a dedication to Picasso: 'Poets don't draw. They unravel their handwriting and then tie it up again, but differently'.¹⁰¹⁶ He described the applied process of *poésie*, whereby text is transformed into image [P8] and vice versa.

Cocteau showed a lifelong tendency to reciprocally transfer ideas between text and image that involved an active process beyond representations in different art forms, as required with *poésie* [P5]. He did not regard drawing and writing different activities but processed one in terms of the other. He explained 'I always drew. To write, for me is to draw, to tie lines such that they are written, or to untie them so that the writing becomes drawing'.¹⁰¹⁷

He always wrote drawings and drew writing because he knotted the lines of drawings into writing or unravelled them to become drawings. His inherent transdisciplinarity is authenticated by his persistent assertions about the foregrounding of his visual and aural sensibilities through which all his written work was mediated, as part of his poly-sensorial orientation. He took the analogy even further when he

¹⁰¹⁴ Bancroft, 'Some Notes,' 41.

¹⁰¹⁵ Cocteau, *Entretiens autour*, 51: Je suis dessinateur. Il m'est naturel de voir et d'entendre ce que j'écris, de le donner d'une forme plastique'.

¹⁰¹⁶ Jean Cocteau, *Dessins* (Paris: Stock, 1924), 18: 'Les poètes ne dessinent pas, ils dénouent l'écriture et la renouent ensuite autrement'.

¹⁰¹⁷ 'Opium' in Jean Cocteau, *Romans, Poésies, Oeuvres diverses* (Paris: La Pochothèque, 1995), 614: 'j'ai toujours dessiné. Écrire, pour moi c'est dessiner, nouer les lignes de telles sorte qu'elles se fassent écriture, ou les dénouer de telles sorte que l'écriture devienne dessin'.

described how such ravelling and unravelling of line (now synonymous with writing and drawing) dissolved into music across elusive and ephemeral melodies into the physicality of the volume of sculpture. He wrote:

To hear it, all the arts originate from the same source, unravelled and then reworked differently. The line is formed and expands the letters in books, which then generate the unconstructed fullness of the drawings. These evaporate into music through the elusive melody and materialise as the volume of sculptures.¹⁰¹⁸

The analogy between visual and melodic lines can only be conceived metaphorically—as a function of *poésie* [P6]. Cocteau’s creativity originated from the same source and was shaped by his visual and aural perceptions.

Bancroft describes *Les Eugènes* as ‘visual images of language’.¹⁰¹⁹ Cocteau processed his thoughts as ‘montages of images, sounds, ideas and forms’ through *poésie*.¹⁰²⁰ *Le Potomak* is an early example of this creative process, but it was with the technological advances of sound in film that Cocteau found the perfect vehicle for his perceptually cinematic approach—that is, his ‘strongly metaphorical imagination’,¹⁰²¹ and his heightened aural sensibility.

Figure 5.13, below, is reminiscent of Apollinaire’s calligrams, and illustrates how Cocteau translated his idea onto paper. The lines of text and image have an integral flow and unity. Here, Cocteau has unravelled the lines which are suggestive of hair into writing.

¹⁰¹⁸ Claude Arnaud, Preface to Cocteau, *Dessins*, 8: ‘Tous les arts proviennent à vrai dire d’une même source, à l’entendre. Dénouée puis renouée autrement, la ligne qui forme en gonflant les lettres des livres engendre les pleins et délie des dessins. S’évaporent en musique à travers l’insaisissable mélodie, elle se matérialise dans les sculptures en volume d’air dessin’.

¹⁰¹⁹ Bancroft, ‘Cocteau’s Creative Crisis,’ 18.

¹⁰²⁰ Williams, *Jean Cocteau*, 11.

¹⁰²¹ Cocteau, *En Verve*, 6: ‘[le] pouvoir métaphorique de son imagination’.

Figure 5.13 ‘I am a lie that always speaks the truth’ (1936).¹⁰²²

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The aphorism, in written form, originally appeared in Cocteau’s prose poem *Le Paquet Rouge*, part of the *Opéra* series (1925).¹⁰²³ The phrase ‘I am a lie who always speaks the truth’ is derived from the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900). Nietzsche believed that ‘it is the poet who knowingly and consciously lies [who] can alone tell the truth’.¹⁰²⁴ When Cocteau spoke of the writer’s craft, he stated: ‘Man is a social lie. The poet is forced to fight this social lie, against the majority, especially if his unique truth is designated a lie’.¹⁰²⁵ He wanted to go beyond the mere facts and record a true history that took account of the unseen as well as the visible [P7]. He had to create something that, on the face of it, was a fabrication. Normally Cocteau chose not to explain his statements. That he has done so in this instance gives it significance. He updated Nietzsche’s philosophy with his own interpretation, fulfilling the requirement of his own concept—that of active reader participation [P10]. Later, the adage was transposed from text into image, thus achieving his transdisciplinary objective as an example of

¹⁰²² Jean Cocteau, ‘Je suis un mensonge qui dit toujours la vérité’, accessed 4 December 2018, [www.ecoles.cfwb.be/argattidegamond/Contes/R%C3%A9flexion%20sur/cocteau_mensonge\[1\].gif](http://www.ecoles.cfwb.be/argattidegamond/Contes/R%C3%A9flexion%20sur/cocteau_mensonge[1].gif)

¹⁰²³ Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 540.

¹⁰²⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Oeuvres philosophiques complètes*, vol. 8 (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), 103: ‘Le poète qui sait mentir /sciemment et consciemment/est seule à pouvoir dire vrai’.

¹⁰²⁵ Jean Cocteau quoted by Davide Gullentops in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 1698: ‘l’homme est socialement un mensonge. Le poète s’efforce de combattre le mensonge social surtout lorsqu’il se ligue contre sa vérité singulière et l’accuse de mensonge’.

poésie graphique. Cocteau articulated such close and transformative creative interactions as a prime function of *poésie* demonstrable in *Le Potomak*.

These and other attributes define *Le Potomak* as the first example of *poésie* encompassing the artefact. Its process of creation and reception would inform his later works, and it forms the basis for the analytical study of the chosen case studies. I see *Le Potomak* as an affirmation of the dialogue between image and text, and an invitation to explore such relationships. In what way does Cocteau set out *poésie* in his text, and what developments to the term are manifest in *Le Potomak* and *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*?

Cocteau included dedications and references that publicised three influential and innovative composers of the time whom he admired; namely, Igor Stravinsky, Georges Auric and Erik Satie. They add to the prestige of *Le Potomak* and *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*. Cocteau chose to announce the dedication of *Le Potomak* to Stravinsky in a letter to him, dated 1913: 'I am finishing my (your) book [*Le Potomak*]'.¹⁰²⁶ He began the book with a letter to Stravinsky and concluded it with a five-page poem, called 'À Igor Stravinsky, Leysin, Mars',¹⁰²⁷ in which he immortalises Stravinsky as the character Canche (see line 10, Table 5.2, below).

Although, initially, Cocteau fell very much under Stravinsky's spell, their relationship was certainly not easy and, for several months during 1914, Cocteau pursued the composer so much that he made a nuisance of himself.¹⁰²⁸ Indeed, in a letter to Misia Sert, Cocteau confessed that his friendship with Stravinsky:

had been heavy and full of misunderstandings... You know of my love and dedication to Igor, of my sadness for a blot on the beautiful snows of Leysin, and perhaps of my project for a book about him [Letter of July 14, 1916].¹⁰²⁹

¹⁰²⁶ Robert Craft, ed., *Stravinsky: Selected Correspondence*, vol. 1 (Michigan : Knopf, 1982), 73.

¹⁰²⁷ Cocteau mentions Leysin in March, referring to Switzerland and the Alps. It is significant because he pursued Stravinsky there to persuade him to collaborate on his project, *David*. See Vera Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures and Documents* (London: Hutchinson, 1979), 110.

¹⁰²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰²⁹ *Ibid.*, 111.

Not only did Cocteau incontrovertibly acknowledge the extent to which Stravinsky's influence contributed to the realisation of *Le Potomak*, but he also mentioned his discarded outer self as 'my old skin' (see line one, Table 5.2, below). This is symbolic of his artistic renaissance—a theme that recurs in *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* where it is described as a period 'of transformation, [of] moulting'.¹⁰³⁰ Cocteau linked his rebirth directly to his collaboration with Stravinsky as a recognition of their aesthetic affinity.

Essentially, *Le Potomak* defines Cocteau's emergence as a serious artist, but in form and content it also articulates his chaotic state of mind.¹⁰³¹ Subsequently, Cocteau gives Stravinsky the credit for liberating him from his creative crisis. He stated:

When I wrote *Le Potomak*, I could not see it clearly owing to my disordered state. Stravinsky helped me shake it off as a charge of cheddite liberates the ore. Now that I have emerged from my black mood, I look at it like everyone else.¹⁰³²

Cheddite refers to a plastic explosive material. The metaphor is apt because it signifies the volatile genesis of *Le Potomak* from the depths Cocteau's despair.

Barbara Kelly, in her review of critical musical literature of the time, documents a 'change of perspective'.¹⁰³³ Cocteau's perceived change of musical allegiance from Stravinsky to Satie is chronologically traceable through *Le Potomak* (Stravinsky) to *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* (Satie). This exposes the change in his musical aesthetic, following Satie's preference for 'a focus on melody, counterpoint and simplicity in everything (*la simplicité en tout*)'.¹⁰³⁴

¹⁰³⁰ Cocteau, *Le Coq* (2009), 98: 'c'était pour moi époque de transformation. Je muais, j'étais en pleine croissance'.

¹⁰³¹ Crosland, *Cocteau's World*, 85.

¹⁰³² Cocteau, *The Cock*, 37; and Cocteau, *Le Coq* (2009), 81: 'Quand j'écris *Le Potomak* je n'y voyais goutte dans mes malaises; Stravinsky m'a aidé à en sortir comme une boîte de cheddite dégage le minerai. Sortir de mon noir, je le regarde avec le reste'.

¹⁰³³ Kelly, *Music and Ultra-Modernism*, 163–183; see, particularly, 168.

¹⁰³⁴ *Ibid.*, 168.

Table 5.2 À Igor Stravinsky, *Le Potomak*.¹⁰³⁵

Igor, I planned to offer you a book and I offer you my old skin.
 From the shadow, from my old skin, from the clouds
 (behind which the Alps appeared undoubtedly a little terrible).
 Some lame paragraphs.
 Some foolish paragraphs.
 Some contradictory paragraphs.

But, from time to time, a phrase – like doves which Robert Houdin
 captures anywhere. An incandescence which freezes... a vagueness which
 congeals... a grasp at the unknown...

Canche entrusted me with my complete work, I carried it in me since the first day...
 My book is to me the Ecce Deus, the
 perpetual drought, and the manna which rains.
 - Canche you are full Oh! How empty I feel!¹⁰³⁶

Igor, je comptais t'offrir un livre et je t'offre ma vieille peau.
 De la pénombre, de la vieille peau, des nuages,
 (derrière lesquels, sans doute un peu, l'Alpe terrible apparaît).
 Des paragraphes boiteux.
 Des paragraphes bêtes.
 Des paragraphes contradictoires.

Mais, de temps en temps, une phrase, pareille à ces colombes que Robert Houdin attrape
 n'importe où. Une incandescence qui se gèle... une nébuleuse qui se coagule... un rapt à
 l'inconnu.

Mon œuvre complète, me confiait Canche, je la porte en moi depuis le premier jour...
 Mon livre à moi, c'est de l'Ecce Deus, de la disette qui s'éternise et de la manne qui pleut.
 Canche, vous êtes plein. Oh ! que je me sens vide'!

Editions of *Le Potomak*

Although *L'Album des Eugènes* was conceived at one time in 1913, the rest of the book evolved over eleven years.¹⁰³⁷ Cocteau implied that the book was largely unrevised because any editing would have spoiled the spontaneity for him.¹⁰³⁸ However, the existence of various editions challenges this myth. Linares also confirms 'several reworkings' prior to publication.¹⁰³⁹ Despite all these revisions, Cocteau remained dissatisfied and was ultimately disappointed.¹⁰⁴⁰ Was '*Le Potomak* [as] imperfect' as

¹⁰³⁵ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 340–341.

¹⁰³⁶ Gordon, 'Efforts,' 5.

¹⁰³⁷ Serge Linares in Cocteau, *Oeuvres romaneques*, 887.

¹⁰³⁸ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 45: 'mettre en ordre, taillader, maquiller, serait soustraire une chance d'intérêt à ce que je t'offre'.

¹⁰³⁹ Serge Linares in Cocteau, *Oeuvres romaneques*, 887: 'plusieurs remaniements'.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Ibid.

Cocteau believed?¹⁰⁴¹ It is almost as if he were striving for the impossible—a reflection of the underlying spirit of *poésie*. Cocteau positioned *Le Potomak* as the primary work of his artistic renaissance by refusing to acknowledge his first three early poetry anthologies: *La Lampe d'Aladin* (1909), *Le Prince Frivole* (1910) and *La Danse de Sophocle* (1912). He preferred to deny their existence and distance himself from what he regarded as their artistic superficiality. He no longer wanted to be associated with those publications. Linares documents the gradual excision of Cocteau's immature works through various editorial indicators. *Le Potomak* is listed as Cocteau's third work in the second set of proofs (1914)—because *La Lampe d'Aladin* was no longer featured. The suppression is completed in the third set of proofs (post-war) when *Le Potomak* is re-presented as the 'preface' for works that were to follow.¹⁰⁴² Consequently, he ensured that those earlier titles never appeared in any complete collections of poetry.¹⁰⁴³ He also made sure they were omitted from any subsequent bibliographic reference listings, as in the Stock edition of *Le Potomak* where *Poésie* (1916–1927), and *Opéra* (1927) are presented as his first poetic works.¹⁰⁴⁴ Cocteau used the voice of Persicaire, in *Le Potomak*, to express his self-reproach: 'Oh! What an idiot I was! I measure [that] time as nothingness [...] I thought la *poésie* was a game, an elitist game'.¹⁰⁴⁵ He later reflected upon his renaissance in *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*. He summarised how:

It was a time of transformation. I was changing and maturing. Frivolity, dispersal, and gossip were naturally succeeded by an excessive need for sobriety, method and silence.¹⁰⁴⁶

¹⁰⁴¹ Ibid.: 'Le Potomak était-il si imparfait'?

¹⁰⁴² Ibid., 887 and 'notes sur le texte', 900–901.

¹⁰⁴³ Wallace Fowlie, *Modern French Poets: Selections with Translations: A Dual-Language Book* (New York: Dover, 1992, unabridged reprint 1955), 117.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, Fly Page.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Ibid., 220: 'Oh! que j'étais imbécile! Je mesure comme un néant [cette] époque... Je croyais la *poésie* un jeu, un jeu d'élite'.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Cocteau, *Le Coq* (1979), 98: 'C'était pour moi époque de transformation. Je muais, j'étais en pleine croissance. Il était naturel qu'à la frivolité, la dispersion, le bavardage, succédât un besoin excessif de sobriété, de méthode et de silence'.

This shows that Cocteau vacillated in his self-criticism—from ideas of elitism to his chaotic and voluble state, where he spread himself too thinly. Cocteau had attached so much importance to *Le Potomak* and, as such, he imposed unrealistic expectations on himself to perfect it. He was so desperate to separate himself from his earlier incarnation that he wanted the book to be ‘more radical in its modernity, in other words more animated with iconoclastic fury against his three initial publications’.¹⁰⁴⁷

The *Mercure de France* was due to publish *Le Potomak* first in August 1914, but publication was blocked because of the outbreak of the war.¹⁰⁴⁸ It is very different from the later Société Littéraire de France version. Jean-Jacques Kihm (1923-1970), suggested that the archive at the Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique represented the components of a draft of the *Mercure* edition rather than just a collection of assorted material.¹⁰⁴⁹ The reality remains unclear because Kihm qualified his opinion and wrote: ‘we don’t know where the work begins nor where it ends’.¹⁰⁵⁰ However, Cocteau finished one version before the war which he then reworked after the war began. The first edition differed from the second with the inclusion of new sections and a second album of drawings, *Les Eugènes de Guerre* (1915), as an appendix. Cocteau insisted that the new images be removed from later editions—for personal and political reasons.

The Société littéraire de France book, *Le Potomak (1913–1914), précédé d’un Prospectus (1916) et suivi des Eugènes de Guerre (1915)*, was published in 1919, whilst the next edition, *Le Potomak (1913-1914), précède d’un Prospectus (1916)*, appeared in 1924.¹⁰⁵¹ The titles themselves reveal a timeline of images and text with the addition of a retrospectively written *Prospectus*. Cocteau enacts the seventh principle of *poésie*,

¹⁰⁴⁷ Serge Linares in Cocteau, *Oeuvres romaneques*, 887: ‘plus radical dans sa modernité, autrement dit plus animé de fureur iconoclaste contre ses trois premiers recueils’.

¹⁰⁴⁸ *Le Potomak* (1919) page proofs, and unpublished *Mercure de France* Edition, French Collections, Bix-Folder 44. Harry Ransom Centre, The University of Texas at Austin.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Fonds Madame Louis Solvay, Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique 1141/1.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Kihm, Sprigge and Béhar, *Jean Cocteau*, 72: ‘nous ne savons ni où commence le travail, ni où il se termine’.

¹⁰⁵¹ Serge Linares, ‘Préface à une préface’ in Cocteau, *Le Potomak* (2000), 13.

because he disclosed the information in its title and illuminated the work's genesis. As a continuation of *Le Potomak*'s progression, the definitive 1919 version was republished in its entirety, in 2000, by Passage du Marais, Paris. According to Bancroft, once the text was written it remained unedited.¹⁰⁵² Cocteau did not want to detract from the spontaneity and sense of immediacy of the work's conception.¹⁰⁵³ Indeed, he wrote: 'There was no book; at the very least a fevered page',¹⁰⁵⁴ which indicates how frenetic Cocteau's creative experience had been. Did Cocteau ever intend to write the book? Closer inspection of the plan indicates that he did but had no idea what it would be.¹⁰⁵⁵ The episode was so potent that he felt obliged to describe it, but the idea of a spontaneous and unabridged text is questionable. There is evidence of editing from the original manuscript of Cocteau's plan for *Le Potomak* shown below (see Figure 5.14).¹⁰⁵⁶ A whole section (marked A) was deleted and the next part (indicated at B) was continued at the bottom of a new sheet.¹⁰⁵⁷ Significantly, the future central character, the *potomak*, that was also the book title, is not mentioned at all in the plan.¹⁰⁵⁸ Had the marine monster not yet emerged from Cocteau's imagination, or was he suppressing any reference to it, as a surprise, or for dramatic effect? Alternatively, he may have had more conscious control over its emergence and presentation than he did over *Les Eugènes*, who completely possessed him. Cocteau may have suggested the process of automatic drawing in the emergence of *Les Eugènes* to add to the sense of mystery around the book.

Cocteau's own name only appears once on the plan where he is associated with the name of an unrealised project: 'what is wrong/the history/of a/ moulting/by/Jean

¹⁰⁵² Bancroft, 'Some Notes,' 37.

¹⁰⁵³ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 45: 'Mettre en ordre, taillader, maquiller serait soustraire une chance d'intérêt'.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Ibid., 45: 'Il n'y a pas eu de livre; tout au plus une feuille de température'.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Kihm, Sprigge and Béhar, *Jean Cocteau*, 72.

¹⁰⁵⁶ See Cocteau, *Oeuvres romaneques*, 904.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Kihm, Sprigge and Béhar, *Jean Cocteau*, 408.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Ibid., 74.

Cocteau' (see D, Figure 5.14).¹⁰⁵⁹ Note the layout of the title at D, 'the odd story of a moulting, by Jean Cocteau',¹⁰⁶⁰ which sets it out as a limited expanded vertical dimension [P11]. The plan proposes Cocteau's 'dream [for] an immense synthesis of experiences and human preoccupations of art, of love, and of death [through] the *Eugènes*' (See C1, C2, Figure 5.14, below).¹⁰⁶¹ These were recurring topics that Cocteau battled with. Indeed, he used *Les Eugènes* to help him process and articulate them. It is evident from the final text that the original material was reworked and simplified into a freer form,¹⁰⁶² further dispelling the myth of an unrevised book.¹⁰⁶³

¹⁰⁵⁹ Ibid.: 'Dans l'Impair/Histoire/D'une/Mue/Par/Jean Cocteau'.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Ibid., 409: 'Dans l'impair, Histoire d'une mue par Jean Cocteau'.

¹⁰⁶¹ Ibid., 74: 'Cocteau rêve d'une sorte de vaste synthèse des expériences et des préoccupations humaines: *les Eugènes* et l'amour—*les Eugènes* et l'art—*les Eugènes* et l'amour?'

¹⁰⁶² Ibid.: 'Le plan sera remanié, ramené à des lignes plus simples, puis abandonné'.

¹⁰⁶³ Ibid., 72.

Figure 5.14 Cocteau's Plan for *Le Potomak*.¹⁰⁶⁴

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

¹⁰⁶⁴ Manuscript conserved at Fonds Madame Louis Solvay, Bibilothèque royale de Belgique, WB SFS1X 1141/ C2.

Structure of *Le Potomak*

Le Potomak is unusual as a hybrid work which projects its interactive nature—not in literal terms of artist collaboration but as a dialogue of text and image. The narrative has no plot and is non-linear,¹⁰⁶⁵ and consists of a more collaged form of maxims and strange ‘playlets, and sketches’.¹⁰⁶⁶ These are structured as either prose or poetry. The book is a mysterious amalgam—part novel, part graphic fable—interlaced with a series of half sleeping confessions. It includes a compendium of aphorisms which predate the style of *Le Coq et l’Arlequin* by some five years.¹⁰⁶⁷ It is a book that ‘leads nowhere, forms a perfect circle’.¹⁰⁶⁸ Cocteau confirmed the idea of circuitousness at the start of *Le Potomak*:

I wrote these lines a year after *Le Potomak*. I could not add yet another preface to this book, which is itself a preface, and framed by several others. I would prefer a binding system that does not open and close the book with this preface, useful both at prow and stern, but that would allow the preface to encompass the book like the thick cover of the prospectus that reinforces its individuality.¹⁰⁶⁹

He proposed the unusual format of his book, with no specific beginning or end. It was something of a circular book, with any entry or exit point, and operating as a continually evolving work.

The peculiar style, content and form of the work prevents its exploration by any conventional analytical method. Therefore, my alternative methodology, based on interart parameters, and viewed through the lens of *poésie*, is applied as a means of analysing its structure. The archival material, from which the book was drawn, consists of a copious collection of assorted notes, letters and short essays, all interspersed with

¹⁰⁶⁵ Crosland, *Cocteau’s World*, 85.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Williams, *Jean Cocteau*, 53.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Gordon, ‘Efforts,’ 5.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Justin O’Brien, *Contemporary French Literature*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1971), 249.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 7: ‘J’écris ces lignes un an après *Le Potomak*. Impossible que j’ajoute encore une préface à ce livre qui en est une, flanquée elle-même de pas mal d’autres. Je souhaiterais donc un système de brochage permettant, non d’ouvrir ou de fermer le volume par cette notice, utile à la proue et en poupe, mais de l’y joindre autour, comme la gaine épaisse de prospectus qui consolide une spécialité.

poems. There are even four small books of manuscript paper full of notes, illustrated with sketches and drawings relating to the text.¹⁰⁷⁰ These show Cocteau's preference for the use of manuscript paper. These books were compiled in 1914, during a visit with Stravinsky at Leysin. One of Cocteau's poems, *Ne sois pas trop intelligent* (Do not be too intelligent),¹⁰⁷¹ is included in the book. It was written on Chateau la Roche-headed notepaper, which gives a clue to the chronology of parts of the text. Cocteau visited Chateau la Roche, the home of painter and friend Lucien Daudet (1878–1946) in August 1911 and 1912.¹⁰⁷²

In Cocteau's own words, there were: 'a great number of disorganised notes',¹⁰⁷³ which confirms *Le Potomak*'s lack of structure. Nevertheless, *Le Potomak* has an 'internal structure and logic' for Cocteau that is not immediately apparent.¹⁰⁷⁴ Yet, he attempted to document the exact nature of *Le Potomak*'s conception, in some logical order. He detailed its genesis at the beginning of *Prospectus*. Some text, such as Persicaire's letter,¹⁰⁷⁵ was revised several times in Cocteau own handwriting.

Other pages in the collection contain allegories and fables, as well as personal descriptions. There is also an alphabetical list of medicinal plants that Cocteau retrieved from the dictionary, after seeing them in the bottles of an Offranville pharmacy that he visited with his friends Jacques-Emile Blanche and André Gide.¹⁰⁷⁶

He admitted Gide's influence when he declared, in *Le Potomak*: 'I was in a Normandy pharmacy with a mutual friend of Gide's. Look on the jars, you'd think they were names from Gide. That's how I baptised the characters in *Le Potomak*'.¹⁰⁷⁷

¹⁰⁷⁰ Fonds Madame Louis Solvay, Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique 1141/1.

¹⁰⁷¹ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 236–239.

¹⁰⁷² Kihm, Sprigge and Béhar, *Jean Cocteau*, 71.

¹⁰⁷³ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 50: 'J'avais un grand nombre de notes en désordre'.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Bancroft, 'Some Notes,' 36.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 214–232.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Kihm, Sprigge and Béhar, *Jean Cocteau*, 73.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 50: 'J'étais dans une pharmacie normande avec un ami commun à Gide et moi. Regardez sur les pots, lui dis-je, on croirait des noms de Gide. C'est ainsi que je baptisai les personnages du Potomak'.

Adopting such strange names as Persicaire, Argémone, Balsamine and Pygamon, as well as altering the spelling of *Le Potomak* from its original source, was a device Cocteau used to make the book unique and impose an air of mystery onto otherwise mundane topics as a function of *poésie* [P8].¹⁰⁷⁸ All the instances above show a definite and extended timeline of collated and reworked material that documented Cocteau's personal and creative crisis. He even declared in the text how 'in 1914, I resigned myself. To organise, edit, and refine'.¹⁰⁷⁹ In fact, it took Cocteau eleven years for his text to be ready for publication.¹⁰⁸⁰

According to Cocteau's plan (see Figure 5.14), the book was to be divided into written chapters—organised as if predetermined—that separate the visual components of *L'Album des Eugènes* and *Les Eugènes de guerre. Prospectus*, the preface, was written two years after the rest of the book and represents Cocteau's transformation from frivolous prince to dedicated poet.¹⁰⁸¹ Cocteau questioned the role of the book. He stated: 'I realised that it was not a book, but a preface. A preface to what?'¹⁰⁸² It was the preface to those future works of his new creative existence (following on from his renewal). He went on, in the guise of the protagonist-narrator, to describe it as an 'odd story of a moulting'.¹⁰⁸³ He described the pain of metamorphosis in *Les vocalises de Bachir-Selim*:

Just as the bud hopes to be a rose,
The deer's antlers burn the forehead of the fawn,
The soft butterfly in its stifling sheath
Before being born longs for metamorphosis...¹⁰⁸⁴

¹⁰⁷⁸ Kihm, Sprigge and Béhar, *Jean Cocteau*, 73.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 45: 'en 1914, je m'y résigne. Mettre en ordre, taillader, maquiller'.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Serge Linares in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 887.

¹⁰⁸¹ Gotea, 'Cocteau entre,' 5.

¹⁰⁸² Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 49: 'J'ai vu que ce n'était pas un livre, mais une préface. Une préface à quoi?'

¹⁰⁸³ Jean Cocteau, 'Plan du Potomak' *Dans L'Impair, Histoire d'une mue par Jean Cocteau*, manuscript Les fonds Madame Louis Solvay, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, FS IX 1141 C 1, reproduced in Kihm, Sprigge and Béhar, *Jean Cocteau*, 409.

¹⁰⁸⁴ 'Les vocalises de Bachir-Selim', in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 1516: 'Alors que le bouton espère être la rose/Que les rameaux du cerf brûlent le front du faon/Que le mol papillon dans sa gaine étouffant/Aspire avant de naître à sa métamorphose...'

Again, Cocteau communicated his powerlessness during the generative process of the book, as he wrote in *Le Potomak*:

Tomorrow I may not be able to write this book anymore. It will stop the day transformation is complete: The last day of my convalescence. Then I could write it, because what composes, directs, and blocks it, was the state in which, momentarily I find myself.¹⁰⁸⁵

The narrator acts as the conduit for the interpretation of the composite work as he embodies Cocteau. Cocteau as author/narrator tells the story of the evolution and design of his book, and he disseminates a series of images, as well as verbal metaphors throughout the text, which demonstrate his experimentation with *poésie*. He uses the narrator as a device to question the nature of his experiences linked to his illness, his suffering, his crisis and the ‘end of his convalescence’.¹⁰⁸⁶ He also assumed different characters through images evoked by text [P8, P10]. It was through these that he was able to speak about himself.¹⁰⁸⁷ He becomes the architect, acrobat, pilot, miner and diver.¹⁰⁸⁸

The chapter *Comment ils vinrent* (How they came) precedes *L'album des Eugènes*. It describes the genesis of the characters and is an example of *poésie* in practice [P7, P8, P10]. Cocteau gave the book a subtitle of ‘an odd story that to finish well, has to have the worst ending’.¹⁰⁸⁹ His comment is rather typically contradictory. Is he observing the malevolence of the *Eugènes* that is beyond his creative control? In effect, the *Eugènes* ‘are terrible’, but indispensable: they enacted the moultings’.¹⁰⁹⁰

Cocteau differentiated the functions of the two sets of drawings through their structural positions. Cocteau used the *Eugènes* to symbolise certain themes—those of

¹⁰⁸⁵ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 52: ‘Demain je peux ne plus pouvoir écrire ce livre. Il cessera le jour ou cessera la mue: le dernier jour de la convalescence. Alors je pourrais l’écrire, car ce qui le compose, le dirige et le bloque, c’était l’état dans lequel, momentanément je me trouve’.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 52: ‘le dernier jour de convalescence’.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Jacquilot, ‘*Le Potomak*,’ 76.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 12, 22, 34–35, 53: ‘architecte’; 34–35, 52, 257: ‘acrobate’; 251: ‘mineur’; 59–60, 324–325: ‘scaphandrier’.

¹⁰⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 79: ‘une histoire qui de finir bien n’en que plus mal se termine’.

¹⁰⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 334: ‘Ils sont terribles...ils sont indispensables: Ils exécutent les mues’.

love, death and art—as examples of the use of *poésie*. As such, they are integral to the book. In contrast, the *Les Eugènes de guerre* series was added on at the end as an *Annexe* and was a straightforward historical commentary that could be omitted (in the 1924 version) without disturbing the balance of the book.¹⁰⁹¹ As previously stated, *Le Potomak* evolved and was designed by Cocteau in a completely new way, creatively, and so it necessitates a different structural approach, which I formulate from the spatio/temporal perspectives of *poésie*. The two albums of drawings demarcate the written segments of the book and act as visually signposted structural devices.

The sixty-three cartoon drawings can be divided into eleven sections. They depict events in a fairy tale that Mauriac (1914–1996) described as a story without words. It is a story of ‘unknown monsters, emerging from beyond to accomplish the transformations’.¹⁰⁹² However, the drawings are accompanied by some words: each image is preceded by a page with a single caption.¹⁰⁹³ Cocteau devotes a whole page to each caption. They act as titles and show that equal importance was attributed to text and image. Cocteau categorically stated, at the beginning of the Album: ‘Here is the *L’Album des Eugènes*. In the long run, I recognised my right to attach a text to the drawings after thinking that none were included’.¹⁰⁹⁴ Although Bancroft suggests a structure for the Album, I propose a different structural analysis, as follows.¹⁰⁹⁵

A single *Eugène* on a ship spots the innocent honeymooning couple, the *Mortimers* [I1], as potential prey [I4]. The female *Eugène* appears [I3]. Cocteau shows the male *Eugène* as ‘the keeper of the bag that contained THE THING [I5].¹⁰⁹⁶ What is

¹⁰⁹¹ Jacquilot, ‘*Le Potomak*,’ 73.

¹⁰⁹² Mauriac, *Jean Cocteau*, 34: ‘de monstres inconnus, surgis de l’au-delà pour accomplir les mues’.

¹⁰⁹³ The bracketed numbers, preceded by the letter I, refer to the images; the page numbers refer to the caption pages in *L’Album des Eugènes*. They are annotated by me as no annotations exist in the published version: Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 134.

¹⁰⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 81: ‘*L’Album des Eugènes*. A la longue, je me reconnus le droit de joindre un texte aux dessins après avoir pensé qu’ils n’en comportaient pas’.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Bancroft, ‘Some Notes,’ 36.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 94: ‘Le gardien de la valise contenant LA CHOSE’.

‘the thing’? We see the bag again with a group of *Eugènes* [I21] We know it is ‘the thing’ from the caption and the bag, but we are none the wiser as to what it is. Cocteau indicates that *Les Eugènes* believe ‘the thing’ is their means of overpowering the couple [I21] as they plan their attack. Ultimately, he reveals the ‘important mystery of LA CHOSE—to distil an elixir—a vaporiser’.¹⁰⁹⁷ They will use this to overpower the unsuspecting *Mortimers*. Image *Parsifal IV*, [I25] illustrates the preparation of opium, to which Cocteau had become addicted in 1923, see *Le Potomak*.

Cocteau simultaneously masked and revealed the nature of *LA CHOSE* as a feature of *poésie* [P7]. He created a false sense of security for the *Mortimers*, who are susceptible because they suspect nothing. This is indicated by his subtitle for an image with the caption: ‘spirit of understanding’.¹⁰⁹⁸ Here, the *Eugènes* appear to be conciliatory [1920]. Two other images, the ‘ceremonial spirit’ [I26],¹⁰⁹⁹ where the *Eugènes* are marching, and the ‘ferocious spirit’ [I31],¹¹⁰⁰ build up the sense of war.

The next thirteen images illustrate the *Mortimers* disembarking [I7]. We observe them pursuing various activities of their bourgeois lifestyle. They pursue cultural activities, such as theatre [I9], where the *Eugènes* are also featured. The two sets of characters are again featured side by side in the image of *Musique* (music) [I18]. Is this Cocteau’s representation of the battle between high art and popular culture? The *Mortimers* are shown at an art exhibition [I17] and attending a music performance [I18] (in evening dress, where they wear top hats symbolic of the elite: see Figure 5.15).

The implication of *Musique* may be autobiographical: they are all unsuspecting or concentrating on the music. He used the image to send an ambiguous message, at once affirming the importance of music. However, he criticised the bourgeoisie for the

¹⁰⁹⁷ Ibid., 141: ‘Mystérieuse importance de LA CHOSE—Avec LA CHOSE on distille un élixir—Vaporisateur’.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Ibid.: ‘Esprit d’entente’.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Ibid.: 136: ‘Esprit cérémonial’.

¹¹⁰⁰ Ibid.: 146: ‘Esprit de férocité’.

elitism of their concert attendance and their complacency. He despised those facets of his own upbringing and attitude, before his personal transformation.

Figure 5.15 *Musique. Rien ne trouble les Mortimer.*¹¹⁰¹

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

He commented on other aspects of their life such as religion [I12], love [I13, I14], dance [I16], sleep [I10] and dreams [I11]. *Poésie* is mentioned [I15], but it is difficult to decode what the *Mortimer* are doing that merits the caption. They appear seated outside a performance and M. Mortimer is asleep. This is all characteristic of Cocteau and *poésie* [P4]: images obscure and require individual reader interpretation [P10].

The *Eugènes*, as the aggressors, plan their onslaught and, with his captions to images 22–25, Cocteau refers to Wagner's last opera, *Parsifal* (1882), in *Parsifal I, II, III* and *IV* [I22, I23, I24, I25]. *Parsifal* and Wagner are mentioned more than once in the second half of *Le Potomak*. Cocteau's overt anti-Wagnerianism forms a consistent thread in his later publication, *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*, but the musical cross-reference connects the two works, and he acknowledged the influence that Wagner had on other composers. Such contradictions permeate Cocteau's writings and are part of his aesthetic [P9]. Wagner imposed a restriction on the opera which prevented it from being

¹¹⁰¹ Ibid., 120. The caption (I19) reads: 'Nothing bothers *les Mortimer*' [I18].

performed anywhere outside the Bayreuth Festspielhaus until 1913.¹¹⁰² The rarity of performance would have appealed to Cocteau—though it is possible that he had heard of a private performance of *Parsifal* in Monaco during February 1913.¹¹⁰³ The interaction between the *Eugène* images—concerned with preparing for war—and the textual references to Wagner’s Germanic music, demonstrate a potent use of the transdisciplinary potential of Cocteau’s *poésie* [P5].

Cocteau identified a sense of time-space interplay which he referenced with the *Parsifal I–IV* drawings, and this resonated with his eleventh principle of *poésie*. Just before the grail scene in the first act of Wagner’s opera, Gurnemanz sings the following phrase to Parsifal: ‘Du siehst, mein Sohn, zum Raum wird hier die Zeit’ (My son, here time becomes space).¹¹⁰⁴ This summarises Wagner’s aesthetic conception of his music drama: time (music) becomes transposable into space (drama).¹¹⁰⁵

Cocteau continued reference aspects of music in the *Album*. He introduced a fragment of a musical score, *Cortège* (see Figure 5.16, below).¹¹⁰⁶ It contains a quotation from the solo piano accompaniment (bars 59–64) of the first Act of *Parsifal* when the *Cortège* of the Knights enter the Castle of the Holy Grail. He placed the music opposite the image of the *Eugènes*, as a title, and used the music to function as text through *poésie* [P5]. The associated image shows several *Eugènes* in formation of a cortège [I27] and this resonates with the procession of Knights in the opera.

As a direct musical and visual reference to the procession of Knights in the *Album*, Cocteau gave the *Eugènes* another incarnation as musical *Eugènes*. Cocteau created a distinct section of text and images that comprise a sequence of cross-

¹¹⁰² Geoffrey Skelton, ‘Bayreuth’ *Grove Music Online*, accessed 16 November 2019, www.oxfordmusiconline.com

¹¹⁰³ OperaGlass, ‘Parsifal: Performance History’, accessed 11 July 2013, <http://opera.stanford.edu/Wagner/Parsifal/history.html>

¹¹⁰⁴ Richard Wagner, *Parsifal* (1882): end of Act 1, Scene 1.

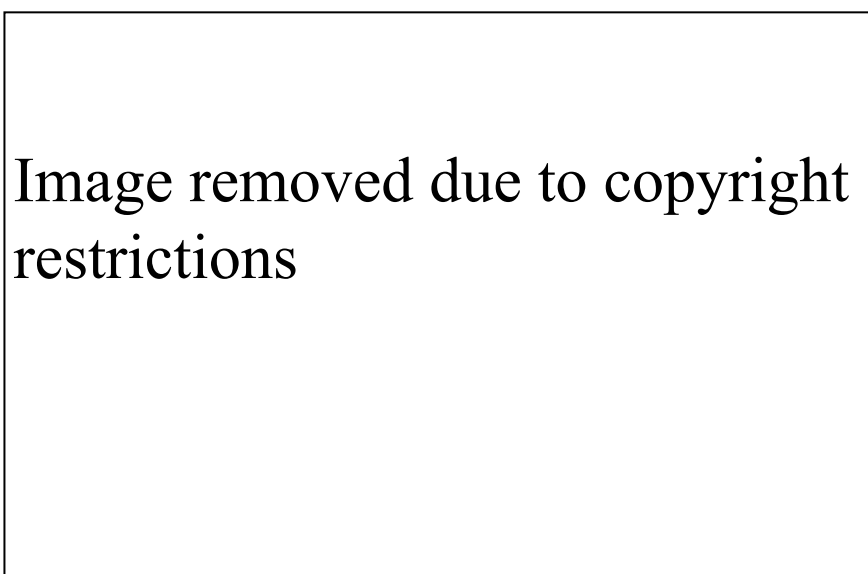
¹¹⁰⁵ Serge Dieudonné, ‘Dionysus and Orpheus’, in *Cahiers Jean Cocteau, no. 10 Avec les musiciens* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), 223.

¹¹⁰⁶ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 137.

references. He overlays and weaves themes of *Parsifal*, Wagner, music and the *Eugènes*. They provide a network of interactive relationships which enact *poésie* [P3].¹¹⁰⁷

These important interart and intertextual cross-references need decoding by the reader as a function of *poésie* [P5, P10]. Cocteau often sought to legitimise his work musically, by providing associations with respected composers of the time. The notion of a *cortège* (a procession) had important connotations for Cocteau. In 1962, he wrote a preface for Guido Marinelli's book *Les Biennales De Paris 1959–1961* called 'Here is the considerable cortege of the disobedient'.¹¹⁰⁸

Figure 5.16 *Cortège*, musical fragment, *Le Potomak*.¹¹⁰⁹



Here, he refers to the procession of rebellious and innovative artists with ideas ahead of their time. The article reflected the quality of provocation of *poésie*—as a necessary component of Cocteau's work [P9]. Within the body of the text, Cocteau varies the phrase slightly. For example, in the space of three pages he alters its

¹¹⁰⁷ The sequence runs from *Parsifal I–IV* [I22–I25], *Esprit de cérémonial* [26], *Cortège* fragment [page 137] to the image of the *Eugènes* [I27], See *Album des Eugènes* in Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 127–138.

¹¹⁰⁸ See Jean Cocteau's preface in Guido Marinelli, *Les Biennales De Paris 1959–1961, Les Festivals D'avant-Garde Jusqu'au Salon Comparaisons* (Turin: M.A.O, 1962): 'Voici le considérable cortège de la désobéissance'.

¹¹⁰⁹ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 137.

presentation from ‘*Voici le considérable cortège...*’ (twice) to ‘*Voici le cortège considérable...*’ (once), and then shortens it to ‘*Voici le cortège...*’.¹¹¹⁰ The difference is even more noteworthy because it does not alter the meaning to any great extent but alters the sonority of the sentence. The reader is forced to alter his or her evaluation of the text as it progresses. Cocteau activated the phrase, through manipulation, and introduced a very simple instance of *poésie* [P5, P10]. He used the word metaphorically, as an alternative to ‘line’, with respect to interart connections. This time it was used in a more general artistic context. In so doing, he transposed *cortège* from a musical to a textual reference and introduced various disciplines. In the article he cites how:

Only the straight line of *poésie*, of music, of painting, of sculpture, of architecture, does not obey the same laws as those of the collective spirit of science. Its meanderings disconcert those who invent, because the new has no point of reference; it is without precedent, so it unnerves the still compliant souls, of traditional school spanning several centuries.¹¹¹¹

Cocteau also used the phrase to introduce some of his important subversive ideas; for example, he represented the artistic innovators as:

the considerable cortège of the disobedient to dogma... to all those who follow the unmarked routes and by arriving on time, they prove others are late.¹¹¹²

He praised those artists, who were ahead of their time, as pioneers not afraid to break the rules.¹¹¹³ Later, he enriched his metaphor of line as a trace, with the imagery of a *cortège* (as a procession, or form of line), when he linked them semantically, as well as

¹¹¹⁰ Jean Cocteau, *Cortège de la désobéissance*, ed. Pierre Caizergues ([Saint-Clément-de-Rivière]: Fata Morgana, 2001), 19–21.

¹¹¹¹ Jean Cocteau, *Cortège de la désobéissance*, ed. Pierre Caizergues ([Saint-Clément-de-Rivière]: Fata Morgana, 2001), 20: ‘Seulement la ligne droite de la poésie, de la musique, de la peinture, de la sculpture, de l’architecture n’obéit pas aux mêmes lois que le génie collectif de la science. Ses méandres déconcertent jusqu’à l’homme qui les inventes car le neuf, ne s’appuyant sur rien, n’offrent aucun point de repère, inquiète les âmes encore obéissantes à l’école de plusieurs siècles de ressemblances’.

¹¹¹² Jean Cocteau, *Cortège de la désobéissance*, ed. Pierre Caizergues ([Saint-Clément-de-Rivière]: Fata Morgana, 2001), 19: ‘*Voici le considérable cortège de la désobéissance* aux dogmes... de tous ceux qui suivent les routes qu’on ne trouve pas sur les cartes et qui, en venant à l’heure exacte, prouvent que les autres retardent’.

¹¹¹³ He later commented on how, with time, the term had lost its impact—marginalised art became more mainstream. Jean Cocteau, *Cortège de la désobéissance*, ed. Pierre Caizergues ([Saint-Clément-de-Rivière]: Fata Morgana, 2001), 19: ‘A la longue, l’art dit révolutionnaire est devenu l’art officiel’.

symbolically. He proclaimed that ‘from our birth to our death, we form a procession of outsiders, connected by a thin thread’.¹¹¹⁴ He chose to expand the analogy by introducing the word *fil*, which can mean procession or thread in French, as an alternative to *ligne* (line). He aimed to intensify the text’s impact and provoke more questioning on the part of the reader—both prerequisites of *poésie* [P9, P.10]. Subsequently, in 1962, he wrote: ‘Here is the considerable cortège of those to whom individualism triumphs and singularity fights with the plural, that threatens to overtake the world’.¹¹¹⁵

Uniqueness versus multiplicity presented an ongoing struggle for him. However, he found that the spirit of contradiction from ‘the eternal great war between singularity and plurality’ stimulated his creative energy.¹¹¹⁶ Yet, the idea of singularity versus plurality was a constant source of tension for Cocteau. The conception of *L’Album des Eugènes* was an example, because a whole tribe of protagonists were replicated from the single *Eugène*, as the dominant force in the cast of characters. He wrote: ‘I imagined them as one and many’.¹¹¹⁷

The *Eugènes* as a group overcome the *Mortimers*. This increases the couple’s state of anxiety to one of agony [I32, I35]. The sense of multiplicity and helplessness is increased by the entrance of the female *Eugènes*—that Cocteau called *commères* (wives) [I40]—who begin devouring *Les Mortimer* [I36]. In his typical contradictory way, Cocteau draws the women as *Eugènes* but the caption reads ‘*Les femmes humeuses* begin to work’.¹¹¹⁸ That is, they swallow up *Les Mortimer* until they are satiated (see

¹¹¹⁴ Jean Cocteau’s preface in Guido Marinelli, *Les Biennales De Paris 1959–1961, Les Festivals D’avant-Garde Jusqu’au Salon Comparaisons* (Turin: M.A.O, 1962): ‘De notre naissance à notre mort, nous sommes un cortège d’autres qui sont reliés par un fil ténu’.

¹¹¹⁵ Ibid. ‘Voici le considérable cortège de ceux grâce auxquels l’individualisme triomphe et le singulier lutte contre le pluriel qui menace d’envahir le monde’.

¹¹¹⁶ Cocteau, *Entretiens* (Rocher), 170: ‘la grande guerre éternelle du singulier contre le pluriel’.

¹¹¹⁷ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, Abbreviation II, 71: ‘je les supposai un et innombrables’.

¹¹¹⁸ Ibid., 156: ‘*Les femmes humeuses* commencent le travail’. *Humeuses* derives from the French verb *humer* which means to aspirate and swallow liquid. I translate the phrase *Les femmes humeuses* as devouring women.

Figure 5.17, below). The layout of these images in the 2013 Stock edition differs from that in the definitive Stock edition. Four images are grouped together in a page and the captions do not occupy the single page opposite the drawings. They lose their potency as titles with this alteration.

Do *Les femmes humeuses* reflect Cocteau's unflattering view of women as overwhelming and consuming creatures? Rather grotesquely, they all participate in the preparation of the honeymoon couple as a meal offering for the *Eugènes*. There is a 'spirit of gluttony'.¹¹¹⁹

Figure 5.17 *Les femmes humeuses*.¹¹²⁰

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

There is a progression—from the preparation in *Cuisine I, II* [I44, I45] (the Kitchen) to the consumption, *Le repas* (the meal) *I, II* [I46, I47] and *III* [I48]—with a gruesome caption that invites the reader to: 'inspect the viscera'?¹¹²¹ Two more equally

¹¹¹⁹ Ibid., 170: 'esprit gloutonnerie'.

¹¹²⁰ Ibid., 78–79.

¹¹²¹ Ibid., 180: 'viens-tu paître des viscères'?

grotesque images complete the meal: *Le repas IV, V* [I49, I50]. A series of five images, titled *Digestion I, II, III, IV* and *V* (I51–I55), show the *Eugènes* sitting and bloated.

Numerically, Cocteau portrays a group of *Eugènes* [I51], followed by a single, faceless *Eugène*, with the caption *L'esprit de digestion* [I52] (spirit of digestion), then another single *Eugène* [I53] and then two *Eugènes* [I54] are bizarrely placed diagonally—as if floating on the page to subvert the reader's spatial interpretation of the image [P11]. It renders an additional unreal quality to the image. *Digestion IV* [I55] and *Digestion V* [I56] each feature a single *Eugène* sat in a chair, with their faces contorted in discomfort. Cocteau then draws several *Eugènes* vomiting, seen from behind, in *Indigestion (Pile)* [I57]. There is an ongoing sequence of *Indigestion* [I58]: *Eugènes* are viewed face on in the distance, vomiting into river as a result of their overindulgence.

After this process, the *Mortimers* are gradually reconstructed in a 'spirit of regeneration' [I59].¹¹²² The drama of the unfortunate *Mortimers* is symbolic of his own personal and creative crisis [P6]: the *Eugènes* are vomiting back 'all the undesirable elements that that had kept him from true creative work'.¹¹²³ It is represented through an aggressive process of ingestion, liquidisation, digestion and regurgitation—all as a process of a painful renaissance. The digestive metaphor [P6] is also a cross-reference to the Cœlenterate—*le potomak*, the gelatinous marine monster. The lurid portrayal of events in the last section is a parable of renewal and an illustration of the interaction between Cocteau's reality and his dreams, which sets up an inevitable tension [P3]. *Les Mortimer* are then featured fully reconstituted and back in their bedroom [I60]. Indeed, in the last image [I63] they are fully dressed and back on their honeymoon. The last caption reads:

¹¹²² Ibid., 90: 'esprit génésiaque de reformation. Les Mortimer peu à peu se recomposent'.

¹¹²³ Bancroft, 'Some Notes,' 39.

Excuse me,
Persicaire, a drawing so abject. Others (for example the ghastly one with
the ugly, vaporiser,) did not have this pitiful casualness.¹¹²⁴

Cocteau introduced the name *Perscaire* only once: it is found in *l'Album* as part of the caption of the final image.¹¹²⁵ The name links *L'Album* and text; indeed, the name is mentioned on the second-to-last page of *Après coup* and at the start of the chapter *Comment ils vinrent*, in which Cocteau describes the arrival of the *Eugènes*.¹¹²⁶ Cocteau devoted a whole section in the form of a letter from *Persicaire*, used as a structural device in the text, to frame *l'Album*.¹¹²⁷

Temporal Signposts Within the Text

Cocteau was preoccupied with the subversion of time and space and asserted the linear disruption of real time by the way he organised text [P11]. He inserted the *Prospectus* section, as the first chapter, even though it was written one year after the rest of the book was finished. Cocteau stated: 'I write these lines a year after *Le Potomak*. God forbid that I add another preface to this book, which is one flanked by many others'.¹¹²⁸ He repeated his view of *Le Potomak* as: 'a preface to works that follow, that are published or yet to appear'.¹¹²⁹ This is another of Cocteau's ambiguous statements which disrupts his chronological linearity; how can a future work already be published? He considered *Le Potomak* as the aesthetic foundation of all his subsequent works.

There is a temporal axis that intersects the remaining text, interconnected by various sequential markers, and this was disrupted by Cocteau. One such marker consists of the documented visits to the *potomak* monster, which function as a central

¹¹²⁴ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 210: 'Retour, Excuse, Persicaire, un dessin si abject. D'autres (celui, affreux, du vaporisateur, par exemple) n'avaient pas cette pitoyable désinvolture'.

¹¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 209.

¹¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 56 and 59.

¹¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 214–232.

¹¹²⁸ Jean Cocteau, *Le Potomak: 1913–1914; précédé d'un prospectus 1916; et suivi des Eugènes de la guerre, 1915* (Paris: Société littéraire de France, 1919), 7: 'J'écris ces lignes un an après *Le Potomak*. À Dieu ne plaise que j'ajoute encore une préface à ce livre qui en est une, flanquée elle-même de pas mal d'autres'.

¹¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 2: 'préface des ouvrages suivants, parus ou à paraître'.

device in Cocteau's manipulation of the linearity of time. The whole of the second written part of text is devoted to the marine monster, the *Potomak*.¹¹³⁰ He included at least five separate visits to the aquarium where the *Potomak* lived, as well as over a hundred other mentions of the *potomak* by name. These visits divide the text into units and form poorly developed narrative links. Three chapters bear the titles of first, second and third visits.¹¹³¹ A fourth visit is mentioned in the chapter *Lendemain* that followed.¹¹³² The entire book is framed by a repeated reference to the one final unsuccessful visit: it had to be aborted because the *Potomak* had disappeared. Cocteau described the final visit at the beginning of the book; that is, in the *Prospectus*. He begins the chapter with the finality of the words: 'One more word. I returned to the *potomak*'s aquarium', which is a chronological reversal of real time, since it is placed before the first visit [P11].¹¹³³ It recurs at the end, in the *Tirage spécial* section (third from last), when Cocteau laments the disappearance of the *Potomak*.¹¹³⁴ He wrote:

Potomak! My *Potomak!* I'll find you soon. We are separated from each other... Forgive me for calling you *Potomak*... I have drawn a world from you, little by little oh *Potomak*... *Potomak*, I regret the aquarium of the Place de la Madeleine, but I will meet up with you, elsewhere.¹¹³⁵

The disruption of the narrative linearity formed the basis of the modernist ideal.

According to Astradur Eysteinnsson:

the entire issue of modernism is especially momentous and foregrounded in the case of narrative, for the aesthetic proclivities of modernism seems bound to go against the very notion of narrativity, narrative progression, or storytelling in any traditional sense.¹¹³⁶

¹¹³⁰ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 243–336.

¹¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 241: 'Première visite au *Potomak*'; 283: 'Seconde visite au *Potomak*'; 297: 'Troisième visite au *Potomak*'.

¹¹³² *Ibid.*, 205: 'Je revis, seul, le *Potomak*'.

¹¹³³ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 329.

¹¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 330: '*Potomak!* Mon *Potomak!* Je te retrouverai vite. Nous voilà séparés l'un de l'autre... Pardonne-moi de t'avoir appelé *Potomak*... De toi, peu à peu ô *Potomak*, j'ai tiré un monde...*Potomak*, je regrette l'aquarium de la place de la Madeleine, mais je vais te rejoindre ailleurs'.

¹¹³⁶ Astradur Eysteinnsson, *The Concept of Modernism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 187.

In both *l'Album* images and in the text of *Le Potomak*, Cocteau disrupted the narrative through the manipulation of time. The subverted narrative creates a space and the resulting book is an open work, whereby the role of the reader as interpreter is essential as a collaborative participant or in the creative process. These are crucial functions of *poésie* [P2, P10, P11]. In the process, Cocteau scrambled the intra-textual contours to open textual spatiality. Wolfgang Iser (1926–2000) stated how:

Whenever the flow is interrupted and we are led off in unexpected directions, the opportunity is given us to bring into play our own faculty for establishing connections—for filling in the gaps left by the text itself.¹¹³⁷

The sequence in *l'Album* when the *Mortimers* are in their room, titled *La porte I* [I33] (door I) and *La porte II* [I34], depicts the entrance of a single female *Eugène* and then several female *Eugènes*. The images switch to the male *Eugènes*, who go through a process of consuming the *Mortimers*. They overindulge, suffer indigestion and vomit; we are then shown the reincarnated *Mortimers* back in their room facing a closed door [P60]. Time is rewound and our perception of time is distorted. We expect another *Eugène* onslaught but are surprised by the entrance of a maid carrying water in the next drawing [P61], as if nothing has happened. The water is symbolic of new life and regrowth [P6].

I maintain that Cocteau's polysensorial perception was heightened by a belief that space and time were inextricably bound through movement, but more specifically as duration rather than speed. If image and text are considered as space and time, respectively, there can be no possible exchange without movement. However, as time itself represents the movement, it is considered as progression: these perceptions exist in the purely metaphorical terms so it is totally plausible to accept that *poésie* can develop in *Le Potomak*—as a progression within the temporal and spatial domains. *Poésie*

¹¹³⁷ Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), 280.

functions to accommodate Cocteau's aesthetic within his (and the reader's) conceptual space. Cocteau concluded that time does not pass but that man actively crosses it. It was the space-time synthesis that powered his reality. In *Journal d'un inconnu* he wrote:

I repeat that the perspective of time dissociated from space is distorted in the mind of man. Unlike that of space, where things shrink when we move away from them, they grow when time moves them away from us. The separation of time from space causes the distortions of the memory, whereby space is eliminated by the amplification of the memories.¹¹³⁸

He believed that the space-time interplay produced a flexibility that enabled him to conceive his concept of *poésie* so that it could function within the fourth dimension—but almost beyond our comprehension He wrote:

Time and space form an amalgam so elastic, so unusual, that man is constantly in front of small attestations that he understands so badly that he strays.¹¹³⁹

In our imagination, distance makes objects seem smaller, whereas, with time, our recollection increases the size of objects because of altered memories. He explained how this applied to artistic practice:

And all this: paintings, drawings, poems, plays, films are time and space that are cut out, a large folded thickness of time and space. This thickness is resistant to cutting. It only shows notches, slits, holes, strangers to each other. Inside the fold, these holes, slots, notches organize a lace, a geometry. It would take time and space bent to stretch out to allow us to see them.¹¹⁴⁰

There are other indicators that act as temporal signposts and act as textual dividers. In the first chapter (première visit au *Potomak*), he pinpointed a specific time of day, when he described: 'the coolness of early morning of the boulevard de la

¹¹³⁸ Cocteau, *Journal*, 79: 'Répéterai-je que la perspective du temps dissocié de l'espace est jouée dans l'esprit de l'homme, à l'inverse de celle de l'espace, où les choses rapetissent lorsqu'on s'en éloigne, alors qu'elles grandissent lorsque le temps s'éloigne de nous. C'est ce qui fausse les événements de l'enfance et de l'Histoire. Ils prennent du vaste à cause de ce phénomène d'amplification'.

¹¹³⁹ Ibid., 79: 'Le temps forme avec l'espace un amalgame si élastique, si insolite, que l'homme se trouve sans cesse en face de petites preuves qu'il s'y égare et qu'il connaît fort mal'.

¹¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 118: 'Et tout cela: tableaux, dessins, poèmes, pièces, films sont du temps et de l'espace qu'on découpe, une grosse épaisseur pliée de temps et d'espace. Cette épaisseur résiste au découpage. Elle ne montre qu'encoques, fentes, trous, étrangers les uns aux autres. A l'intérieur de la pliure, ces trous, fentes, encoches organisent une dentelle, une géométrie. Il faudrait que le temps et l'espace pliés se déplissent pour nous permettre de les voir'.

Madeleine grabs us'.¹¹⁴¹ Cocteau put the text into italics as a means of visually accentuating the moment. Cocteau uses several references to the month of April as temporal markers. In the letter to Stravinsky, he wrote: 'I imagine the April nights on your Russian river'.¹¹⁴² He mentioned 'the April sky' in 'Persicaire's letter', and 'some April days', in 'utilisation impossible'.¹¹⁴³ In the 'Seconde visite au potomak' chapter, he refers to 'the April sunshine'.¹¹⁴⁴ April was significant for Cocteau: it was this month, in 1898, when his father committed suicide and, in 1906, when his grandfather Lecomte died. He used the outbreak of the First World War to record another move along the temporal axis of the text. He documented two different associated events that demarcate sections of text. Initially, he referred to the first draft of the book at the *Mercure de France* (that remained unpublished because of the war).¹¹⁴⁵ He applied the word 'dormait' (sleeping) to the book: it lay dormant and was waiting to be activated. This fitted in with his concept of *poésie*. His second reference to the war occurs three pages later, when he declared in *Prospectus*: 'FRENCH HOUSE CLOSED FOR MOBILISATION'.¹¹⁴⁶ This announcement is given even more emphasis—not only because it is printed in upper case letters but also because it coincides with the narrator's final visit to the *Potomak*.

Temporality can be suggested in other ways. Milorad introduced musical terminology and, by implication, temporality (because music is a temporal art) in his observation of *Le Potomak*. He described it as: 'the perfect preface to future compositions envisaged by its author; musical overtures of a forthcoming opera that

¹¹⁴¹ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 248: 'la fraîcheur du boulevard de la Madeleine nous saisit'.

¹¹⁴² Ibid., 'Je devine des nuits d'avril sur votre fleuve russe'.

¹¹⁴³ Ibid., 216: 'au ciel d'avril', 325: 'des jours d'avril'.

¹¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 287: 'soleil d'avril'.

¹¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 34: 'Le livre dormait au mercure de France pour cause sa guerre'.

¹¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 37: 'MAISON FRANÇAISE FERMÉE POUR CAUSE DE MOBILISATION'.

would develop those principal themes'.¹¹⁴⁷ He confirmed the work as a new beginning for Cocteau. Although he did not refer to any specific opera, did he acknowledge Cocteau's musical orientation?

It has been shown how structurally important musical references are in *l'Album* (the visual section). Cocteau specifically used another Wagner reference in the text in the *Utilisation impossible* chapter (see Table 5.3, below) as a link to the drawings.

¹¹⁴⁷ Milorad, 'Les Potomak,' 16: 'Le Potomak est donc parfaitement la préface à l'œuvre futur qu'y voyait son auteur, une de ces ouvertures musicales qui énumèrent d'avance les principaux thèmes que développera l'opéra qui suit'.

Table 5.3 Poem *Cor de Tristan* (Tristan's horn).¹¹⁴⁸

<p>Cor de Tristan mourant—travail à l'orchestre de ce cor qui avance, s'arrête, s'enroule, hésite, recule, avance, cherche le cœur entre toutes les cotes tour à tour Debout au fond de la loge, un angle de scène lumineuse entre une grosse tête et le balustrade. Pénombre rouge. Cor de Tristan mourant Cor de Cor de Tristan Cor de Tristan mourant Cor de Tristan mourant et attendant Cor de Tristan mourant et se rappelant Cor de Tristan se rappelant Cor Cor Cor de Tristan.</p> <p>Tristan's horn dying—working at the orchestra of this horn that moves forward, stops, curls, hesitates, recoils, advances, seeks the heart between all the sides, one by one. Standing at the back of the box room, at an angle to the bright stage between a big head and the railing. A Red shadow. Dying Tristan's horn Horn Tristan's horn dying Tristan's horn dying and waiting Tristan's horn dying and remembering Tristan's horn remembering Horn Horn Tristan's horn</p>

Cocteau was deeply affected by Wagner's horn solo in the prelude to the final act of *Tristan and Isolde* (1865), which evoked Tristan's death.¹¹⁴⁹ He was so moved that he used it in the soundtrack for *Le Testament d'Orphée* (1950), his last film. He created his interpretation of the music as a poem in the text. He altered the spatial layout of the poem to ensure a disruption of its reading. He thereby asserted Wagner's music through

¹¹⁴⁸ Cocteau, *Le Potomak*, 323–324.

¹¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 324: 'Je supportais trop mal ce cor'.

the rhythmicity, syllabic repetition and the shape of the text. Cocteau activated *poésie* as the fourth dimension of space and time.

Conclusion

Le Potomak has now been considered in context as the defining work of Cocteau's artistic transformation. As such, it has been evaluated in terms of the origins and characterisation of *poésie*. Through *poésie*, as revealed, it has been possible to gain an insight into Cocteau's aesthetic.

I orientate the analysis to highlight those conditions of *poésie* that can be shown to exist between the image, text and music relationships—as part of a broader interart dialogue. The enigmatic work is a mixture of images, prose, poems, conversations, letters and aphorisms, which are variously permeated with historical and social critiques, and philosophical observations on themes of death, art and love. Cocteau included autobiographical details and insights into his dreams and imagination. He described its genesis as part of the text—details which are not normally found in a work of fiction. However, many more complex readings that pertain to Cocteau's artistic aesthetic exist underneath this simplistic overview.

He was unequivocal in his expectation of the onus on the reader's interpretive role. He declared how:

My method is simple: I do not aim for *poésie*. It must come of its own accord. The mere whisper of its name frightens it away. I shall try to build a table. It will be up to you then to consume it, to examine it or to cut it up for firewood.¹¹⁵⁰

However, it is important to recognise that Cocteau sometimes made his texts obscure and perplexing just to be provocative. It is the asynchronicity within elements of *Le Potomak*—with its ensuing elemental interactions—that form the basis of my

¹¹⁵⁰ Cocteau, “*La Belle et la bête*”, 16: ‘Ma méthode est simple: ne pas me mêler de poésie. Elle doit venir d'elle-même. Son seul nom prononcé bas l'effarouche. J'essaie de construire ma une table. A vous ensuite, d'y manger, de l'interroger ou de faire du feu avec’.

interrogation, as well as the role of the reader in its interpretation. The principles of *poésie* form the basis for an assessment of how Auric worked with Cocteau's text and engaged with his aesthetic through his musical settings of the *mélodies*. I have now tested my methodological framework against *Le Potomak* and shown it to exhibit all the characteristics of *poésie*, to a greater or lesser extent. It will now be applied to Auric's musical settings of the *Huit poèmes de Jean Cocteau* in Chapters Six and Seven in order to consider their transdisciplinary and collaborative context.

Part III: Analytic and Interpretive Perspective

Chapter 6: *Hommage à Erik Satie: Poésie in Practice*

In Part III, *poésie* is applied as a methodological framework with which to test my reading of *Le Potomak*. This will form the basis for my analysis of *Hommage à Erik Satie* and *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau*, the first and final *mélodies* in *Huit poèmes de Jean Cocteau* (1917). My application of *poésie* as an analytical framework—to Cocteau's poems and Auric's musical settings of them—will evaluate it from a transdisciplinary perspective and allows me to compare how Cocteau and Auric's use of *poésie* informed their respective creative methods in a collaborative context. The *mélodies* have been chosen as very early, yet significant, examples of the new French musical aesthetic, as set out in *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*. Auric endorsed Cocteau's transcript of their early discussions on music and subsequently put them into practice with these musical settings amongst other compositions, such as the ballet *Le Pauvre matelot* (1922), as well as the scores for all of Cocteau's films. Jean Cocteau and George Auric's collaborative process did not necessitate any physical proximity. They worked better from a distance, through the exchange of ideas in letters. It was Auric who actively pursued Cocteau for his poems.¹¹⁵¹ The *mélodies* were experimental and represented their shared aspiration for a new French music that they both endorsed. Auric proposed a less ornamented music with a clear melodic line that was 'a music of the everyday'.¹¹⁵² Cocteau and Auric were both influenced by the popular music of the circus and street parades. They wanted to close the gap between the elitism of high art and popular culture. Catherine Miller describes the way Auric translated this idea into his compositions. He used:

The various melodic, rhythmic cells and variations, combined with diverse piano motifs [to] give the listener an impression of strolling

¹¹⁵¹ Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*.

¹¹⁵² Cocteau, *Le Coq*, 62: 'Une musique de tous les jours'.

along the Paris boulevards, during an era of mechanical organs, the circus, with its clowns and acrobats, a sense of popular culture.¹¹⁵³

The *mélodies* were important because they contributed to the start of a new social and cultural trend within the arts. The contemporaneity of Cocteau's poems and Auric's musical settings set the context for a fertile artistic intersection with which to explore any common influences, as well as any differences. The 'influence of theory over practice and/or the influence of practice over theory' is also called into question.¹¹⁵⁴ To what extent were their creations consciously or subconsciously shaped by their ideas?

Auric declared that:

for those of us who were present at the appearance of *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*, and its notes around music, they seemed more like notes around the era in which when they were published.¹¹⁵⁵

Cocteau started to develop *poésie*, not only as an expression of his transdisciplinary creative practice. He sought to enhance his credibility by associating himself with other artists, especially musicians.

In practice, Cocteau introduced innovative, flexible and irregular compositional forms and sonorities built on the internal rhythmic and rhyming patterns in his poems. This corresponded with Auric's compositional technique that shaped his word settings. Auric demonstrated his own interart sensibility through the spatial and temporal manipulation of his text settings, as discussed in more detail later in the text. Both men understood how the deconstruction of recognised formal structural configurations enabled the activation of many new and continually reflexive word-music interactions.

¹¹⁵³ Miller, 'Lectures du *Coq*,' 18: 'La multiplicité des cellules mélodiques et rythmiques, et la diversité des figures de l'accompagnement donnent à l'auditeur l'impression d'une promenade à travers les rues de Paris, à une époque où les orgues mécaniques, le cirque, ses clowns et ses acrobates font partie de la vie quotidienne.'

¹¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 16: 'influence de la théorie sur la pratique et/ou influence de la pratique sur la théorie'.

¹¹⁵⁵ Georges Auric, Préface in Cocteau, *Le Coq*, 25: 'Pour ceux d'entre nous qui virent naître *Le coq et l'arlequin*, ces notes autour de la musique apparaissent en même temps comme des notes autour des années où elles étaient rédigées'.

Previously published work on the *mélodies* has been based on more traditional analytical methods, centred on the melodic, rhythmic and harmonic structure of Auric's music in relation to Cocteau's use of poetic form and content.¹¹⁵⁶ However, none has explored the multiple transdisciplinary ramifications of the innovative techniques used by both artists that contributed to the artistic revolution of the time. Whilst traditional parameters are still relevant, to a limited extent, my investigation has been re-orientated to develop an alternative analytical framework from *poésie*. To what extent is the concept of *poésie*, as both process and product, represented in these poems and their transformation into *mélodies*? I maintain that Cocteau expressed his musical sensibility through the rhythmic and sonorous qualities with which he structured the first poem, *Hommage à Erik Satie*, effectively affirming music as part of his creative method [P5]. It was this particular aspect of *poésie* in Cocteau's creative process that enabled Auric to respond to the musicality of the text with his word setting.

Auric gave voice to Cocteau's musical aspirations because he identified the musicality in the poems, which he then developed with his musical settings. He manipulated the spatiality of text and temporality of the music [P11] to generate interart exchange [P5]. Such occurrences represented active musico-poetic intersections that I cite as evidence of Cocteau and Auric's shared aesthetic. Indeed, these are reflected through *poésie* in Cocteau's writings. When Auric chose Cocteau's poems to set to music as *mélodies*, he showed an understanding of the genre which was fundamentally built on very close connections between words and music that were clearly vital to his

¹¹⁵⁶ See Ann Corrigan, 'Songs of George Auric' (DMA dissertation, University of Indiana, 1995); Suzanne Winter, 'La mise en musique des poèmes de Jean Cocteau', *Oeuvres et critiques* 22 (1997), 119–141; Colin Roust, 'Reaching a *Plus Grand Public*: Georges Auric as Populist', *Musical Quarterly* 95, no.2–3 (2012), 343–376; Gullentops and Sevenant, *Les Mondes de Jean Cocteau*; Michael Edward Lee, 'Georges Auric and the Danced Theatre, 1919–1924' (PhD thesis, University South California, 1993); Miller, 'Lectures du *Coq*,' 15–32; Perloff, *Art and the Everyday*.

creative process.¹¹⁵⁷ It can be argued that all song lyrics have to relate to the music, to some extent, but in the context of my research I will show how it is the nature and extent of those relationships which makes them more significant. I will show how the music/text relationship in Auric's settings of the *Huit poèmes* represent a more equal, interactive and transdisciplinary dialogue which is founded on Cocteau's texts and realised as a result of his experimental compositional techniques. After this first joint effort, however, Auric did not set any more of Cocteau's poems to music.¹¹⁵⁸ Was he fed up with constantly pursuing Cocteau for his poems, or had he exhausted the creative possibilities of *mélodies* with which to explore the new aesthetic? Whatever the case, Auric did subsequently search for greater compositional variety in the texts of other poets. Meanwhile, Cocteau gave his poems to many other composers to transform into songs and, although he did not actively participate in the songs' production, he nevertheless saw it as an opportunity for self-promotion.¹¹⁵⁹ Cocteau considered himself an important musical impresario, especially with respect to his mentoring of *Les Six* alongside Satie. He regarded himself as 'the supplier of works for the group of young musicians'.¹¹⁶⁰ However, he always looked to expand his concept of *poésie* into other, more multifaceted musical theatre works, such as ballet and opera. Despite this, it was the advent of sound in film that would ultimately lead Cocteau to reunite with Auric as musical collaborators: Cocteau chose Auric to compose all his film scores. They both creatively explored that new genre. The nature and process of their collaboration in film is documented in *La Belle et la Bête – Journal d'un film*.¹¹⁶¹ Further understanding of

¹¹⁵⁷ Robert Orledge, 'Rethinking the Relationship Between Words and Music for the Twentieth Century: The Strange Case of Erik Satie' in *Words and Music*, ed. John Williamson (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), 189.

¹¹⁵⁸ Miller, 'Lectures du *Coq*,' 16.

¹¹⁵⁹ For a complete listing of Cocteau's works set to music by other composers, see Gullentops and Haine, *Jean Cocteau: textes*, 295–302.

¹¹⁶⁰ Cocteau, *Lettres I*, 419, letter 31 (August 1918): 'Les peintres ont fait pour Apollinaire ce que les musiciens font pour moi. Servir une cause est la chance la plus rare'.

¹¹⁶¹ Cocteau, *L'Édition Anniversaire*.

their collaborative relationship is seen in published extracts of André Fraigneau's 1951 radio interviews with Cocteau: *Entretiens Cocteau – Fraigneau*.¹¹⁶² Fraigneau later interviewed Georges Auric and these interviews were published as 'Avec les musiciens' (1976–1977): they, usefully, provide Auric's perspective on their collaboration.¹¹⁶³

Hommage à Erik Satie

The first poem under review, which was set to music, *Hommage à Erik Satie* (1917), was a tribute to Satie, but why Satie? Cocteau and Auric admired Satie as the leading proponent of the new French music that they pioneered. Cocteau declared that:

Satie shows us the greatest boldness of our time: towards simplicity. Has he not given us proof that he can refine better than anyone else? He clears, he releases, and he reduces the rhythms.¹¹⁶⁴

They were equally impressed by the spirit and direction of Satie's work, regarding it as:

[The] personification of the new modern spirit of simplicity and French nationalism with its roots in popular melody and its inspiration in music-hall, cabaret and circus.¹¹⁶⁵

The priority of the time was to establish a new French musical identity that broke away from the pre-war Austro-Germanic ornamented style and to promote popular music. Another link existed between Cocteau, Auric and Satie: they all shared a preoccupation with the interplay between word, image and music.¹¹⁶⁶

Cocteau wrote several poems, inspired by the painter Henri Rousseau, as a tribute to Erik Satie. In 1916, he stated: 'the mad and the very young look at Grandpa Rousseau and listen to Uncle Satie'.¹¹⁶⁷ He implied that only people without any sense—because of youth or insanity—would pay attention to such eccentric artists.

¹¹⁶² Cocteau, *Entretiens* (Rocher).

¹¹⁶³ Auric, 'Témoignages,' 70–71.

¹¹⁶⁴ Cocteau, *Le Coq*, 61: 'Satie enseigne la plus grande audace à notre époque: être simple. N'a-t-il pas donné la preuve qu'il pourrait raffiner plus que [personne]? Or il déblaie, il dégage, il dépouille le rythme'.

¹¹⁶⁵ Orledge, 'Rethinking,' 187.

¹¹⁶⁶ Indeed, Satie's scores were noteworthy: they often included text unrelated to performance instructions and were typically associated with imagery.

¹¹⁶⁷ Volta, *Satie/Cocteau*, 127: 'Les fous et les tout petits regards grand'père Rousseau et écoutent l'oncle Satie'.

Cocteau did not acknowledge that Satie's reputation as an eccentric was a persona that the composer chose to hide behind, just as Cocteau hid behind his own self-promoted reputation as a dilettante. Despite the fact that Rousseau was not formally tutored, Satie did attend the Paris Conservatoire (but did not finish) and took composition classes, until 1912, at the Schola Cantorum de Paris, a private music school. He had doubts about his compositional training and, ultimately, never completed the course.¹¹⁶⁸ Yet Cocteau identified how Satie and Rousseau had much in common. Both men created works that were idiosyncratic, mysterious and sought to narrow the divide between high and low art. Indeed, Rousseau's work, like Satie's, 'opened the way for the new possibilities of simplicity'.¹¹⁶⁹ Auric consolidated the connection between the two songs, *Hommage à Erik Satie* and *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau*, with the Satie and Rousseau references in both. The references also highlighted an image text/music/text transdisciplinary interchange between both *melodies*.

After endorsing Satie in *Le coq et l'arlequin*, Cocteau continued to promote him with his explicit dedication in the title of the first poem, *Hommage à Erik Satie*. He also included a direct textual reference to Satie's piano work *Morceaux en forme de poire* (1903) in its last line. Auric continued to emphasise this Satie cross-reference with his musical quotations of the A4, B4, C5, and D5 semiquaver opening motif from the same piano piece (see Example 6.1), which I have notated according to the keyboard image (see Note on Text, Figure A).

¹¹⁶⁸ Kurt Heinzelman, ed., *Make It New: The Rise of Modernism* (Austin, Texas: Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, 2003), 145.

¹¹⁶⁹ Herschel B. Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), 129.

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For Auric, the inclusion of the motif represented much more than a homage to Satie. He transformed the simple figure in several ways to use it as a structural device for his composition. This will be analysed in greater detail later in the chapter. Satie was the obvious figurehead for the *Huit poèmes de Jean Cocteau*—the first example of their experimental aesthetic.

From Poem to Music

There are two versions of the poem with the same title (*Hommage à Erik Satie*). The work was published as part of the *Embarcadères* (1917–1920) series.¹¹⁷⁰ Cocteau first wrote it as a prose poem, which is a composition in prose, that has some of the qualities of a poem. The manuscripts archived under the title *Embarcadères* are important because they represent Cocteau's move away from the more formal, classical style of his early poetry collections—*La Lampe d'Aladin* (1909), *Le Prince frivole* (1910) and *La Danse de Sophocle* (1920)—and provide a radical break from the past in the search for new forms of expression. He did not, however, completely reject established metrical modes, but continued to integrate the Alexandrine (12 syllable verse) as a fundamental part of his new creative aesthetic.¹¹⁷¹ This would then be matched by Auric with his imaginative musical settings of the *Huit poèmes de Jean Cocteau*.

In November 1916, Cocteau recited the poem *Hommage à Erik Satie* at the 'Instant musical d'Erik Satie' event (see Figure 6.1), where he was introduced by the

¹¹⁷⁰ Jean Cocteau, *Embarcadères*, ed. Pierre Caizergues ([Fontfroide-le-Haut]: Fata Morgana, 1986), 29.

¹¹⁷¹ See Gullentops, 'Présences,' 155.

French composer Roland-Manuel (1891–1966) under the auspices of the Lyre et Palette society, known for its support of multimedia projects.¹¹⁷² The influential novelist and poet Blaise Cendrars (1887–1961) instigated the joint presentation of music, words and art, and invited Satie to participate.¹¹⁷³ The short concert took place in the afternoon and Satie premiered *Les Trois valse distinguées du précieux dégoûté*.¹¹⁷⁴ According to Emile Lejeune, Cocteau and Cendrars each recited their poems, in Satie’s honour, especially written for the programme (see Figure 6.1).¹¹⁷⁵ Satie responded self-effacingly to the tribute in a letter to Cocteau:

My dear friend.
I read what you wrote about me. It’s too good for me. Yesterday, Roland Manuel... told me of his admiration for this poem
I am very moved...
Why write such a beautiful thing about an old gasbag like me?
I don’t deserve it...¹¹⁷⁶

Art works by Kisling, Ortiz, Matisse, Modigliani and Picasso were exhibited at the same time, together with African and Oceanic masks and sculptures, never before shown in Europe, as confirmed in the programme:

It is the first Parisian exhibition of African or Oceanic African sculptures, artefacts presented for their artistic value rather than their ethnic or archaeological character.¹¹⁷⁷

The event was unusual, not only because of its interdisciplinary format but also because of the venue. Public performances were restricted during the First World War, necessitating the search for smaller, informal venues, such as the studio of Swiss painter

¹¹⁷² Orledge, *Satie the Composer*, 222.

¹¹⁷³ Caroline Potter, *Erik Satie: A Parisian Composer and His World* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2016), 151.

¹¹⁷⁴ See invitation and programme, exhibition catalogue, Album Lyre et Palette, *Le Tout-Paris des Arts à Montparnasse 1916–1919* (Paris: Librairie Sur le fil de Paris, 2014), 22–23.

¹¹⁷⁵ Emile Lejeune, ‘Montparnasse à l’époque héroïque’, 7: 1st Exposition (19 November to 5 December 1916, Kisling, Matisse, Modigliani, Ortiz de Zarate, Picasso, *Tribune de Genève* 33, no. 6 (8–9 February 1964), 1: ‘Les poètes aussi avaient collaboré. Pour notre catalogue, Jean Cocteau et Blaise Cendrars composèrent chacun un poème, dédiés l’un et l’autre à Erik Satie’.

¹¹⁷⁶ Album Lyre, *Le Tout-Paris*, 22: ‘cher ami. /J’ai lu ce que vous aviez écrit sur moi. C’est trop beau ‘pour moi’ ‘Hier, Roland Manuel... me disait son admiration pour ce poème. / J’en suis tout ému pourquoi écrire une si jolie chose en faveur d’un vieux ‘fourneau’ comme moi ?... Je ne le mérite pas...’

¹¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 20: ‘C’est la première fois que l’on expose à Paris, non pour leurs caractères ethniques ou archéologiques, mais pour leur caractère artistique, des sculptures d’Afrique, fétiches ou d’Océanie’.

Emile Lejeune (1885–1964) at 6 rue Huyghens, in Montparnasse.¹¹⁷⁸ Milhaud described how:

The benches without backrests were uncomfortable, the atmosphere was unbreathable because of the fumes from the stove, yet the Paris smart set, artists and lovers of the new music, all crammed themselves in.¹¹⁷⁹

Cocteau understood that, as uncomfortable as it was, the Montparnasse studio actually contributed to ‘the rich atmosphere which could not be ordered, and which risked being lost in a more comfortable setting’.¹¹⁸⁰ He saw in this situation, a closing of the gap between elite and popular culture.

This event was important as a *vernissage* (preview) of Erik Satie’s music, Cocteau’s original version of *Hommage à Erik Satie*,¹¹⁸¹ and Blaise Cendrars’s poem, *Le musickisme*, alongside an exhibition of visual art that included original artefacts, all situated in an unconventional environment.¹¹⁸² The introduction of these artefacts at the exhibit provoked an interest that would become hugely influential in Picasso’s work, amongst other Western artists. In essence, the programme represented the spirit of the new aesthetic championed by Cocteau, Satie and Auric.

In 1917, Auric wrote to Cocteau requesting that he ‘send him the first poem of the Suite Satie-Rousseau and another (but not the one featured in the programme Huygens which I already have)’.¹¹⁸³ Auric referred to the first version of Cocteau’s humorous poem *Hommage à Erik Satie* (fragment),¹¹⁸⁴ as shown below with the musical references in red print, which he found was an unsatisfactory text for a *mélodie*. Ornella

¹¹⁷⁸ Kelly, *Music and Ultra-Modernism*, 2.

¹¹⁷⁹ Darius Milhaud, quoted in Album Lyre, *Le Tout-Paris*, 42: ‘Les bancs sans dossiers étaient inconfortables, l’atmosphère irrespirable à cause des émanations du poêle, mais le Tout-Paris élégant, les artistes et les amateurs de musique nouvelle s’y écrasaient’.

¹¹⁸⁰ Cocteau, *Carte Blanche*, 19: ‘Mais on y trouve cette atmosphère riche qui ne se commande pas et qu’on risque de perdre en voulant la transporter dans un locale plus agréable’.

¹¹⁸¹ ‘Hommage à Erik Satie’ in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 135.

¹¹⁸² Emile Lejeune quoted in Potter, *Erik Satie: A Parisian Composer*, 151.

¹¹⁸³ See his 1917 letter in Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 18: ‘Envoyer le 1er poème de la Suite Satie-Rousseau et un autre (mais pas celui imprimé dans le programme Huygens que j’ai déjà).

¹¹⁸⁴ ‘Hommage à Erik Satie’ in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 135 and both versions in Volta, *Satie/Cocteau*, 129–130.

Volta included this version, as well as the song version, in her book.¹¹⁸⁵ The title of both versions remained unchanged. In the original poem, Satie is first identified from the reference to *le binocle* (the pince-nez), as the title of the second of his *Trois valse* *distinguées du précieux dégoûté* (1915), and second, from the premier performance of that same piece, in 1916 at the Lyre et Palette concert in his honour.¹¹⁸⁶

¹¹⁸⁵ Volta, *Satie/Cocteau*, 129–130.

¹¹⁸⁶ ‘Instant Erik Satie’ in November 1916, Album Lyre, *Le Tout-Paris*, 22.

Figure 6.1 ERIK SATIE: L'INSTANT MUSICAL. Vernissage de l'exposition, 19 November 1916.¹¹⁸⁷

<p>HOMMAGE A ERIK SATIE (<i>fragment</i>)</p> <p>2. Le binocle pèse un mi. C'est un beau mi lourd comme le ténor. C'est même un mi en or, une alchimie.</p> <p>Le Chinois s'incline profondément l'un vers l'autre. C'est même un mie ô gué ! un miracle, un ange ami.</p> <p>L'ange de la Butte pèse l'Ut — l'ange ignoré pèse le Ré — l'ange en salmis pèse le Mi — l'ange de Saint-Cucufa pèse le Fa — l'ange qui aime bien l'alcool pèse le Sol. (<i>un salmis d'ange cela se mange entre amis</i>).</p> <p>Vous n'avez pas soif ? Octave apportez nous les quartes. A trois avec le douanier Rousseau et l'âne, ils burent toutes les étoiles du sceau. Ensuite ils jouèrent de la flûte et aux cartes.</p> <p>Les fous de l'asile et les petits enfants de l'école laïque sortirent se tenant par la main et vinrent s'asseoir sur le canape rouge. La reine de cœur Clémence et le roi des Cimbres s'épousèrent a l'HOTEL DU COMMERCE. La lune mûrit les bémols. Cueillons des bémols sur Les aloès. Après, nous allâmes toute la noce au jardin d'Acclimation où le chef d'orchestre s'appelle justement Monsieur Orphée.</p> <p>Le faux col encoche le faune Fa dièze d'avion Et l'œuf du tir ut bémol.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">JEAN COCTEAU.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">A ERIK SATIE</p> <p>LE MUSICKISME</p> <p>Que nous chaut Venizelos Seul Raymond, metton Duncan trousse encore la défroque grecque Musique aux oreilles végétales Autant qu'éléphantiaques Les poissons crient dans le gulf-stream Bidon juteux plus que figue Et la voix basque du microphone marin Duo de music-hall Sur accompagnent d'auto Gong La phoque musicien 50 mesures de do-ré do-ré Ça y est ! Et un accord diminué en la bémol mineur ETC !</p> <p>Quand c'est beau un beau joujou bruiteur dans la sonnette</p> <p>Entr'acte A la rentrée</p> <p><i>Thème</i> : CHARLOT chef d'orchestre bat la mesure Devant L'europpéen chapauté et sa femme en corset</p> <p><i>Contrepoint</i> : Danse Devant l'europpéen ahuri et sa femme Aussi</p> <p><i>Coda</i> : Chante Ce qu'il fallait démontrer</p> <p style="text-align: right;">BLAISE CENDRARS</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Nov 1916</p> <p style="text-align: center;">* 'vibrant poetic hommages by Jean Cocteau and Blaise Cendrars to Erik Satie, who will initiate the preview with an <i>Instant musical</i> of his creation'.</p>
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¹¹⁸⁷ Album Lyre, *Le Tout-Paris*, 22.

* Ibid.: 'vibrant hommages poétiques rendus par Jean Cocteau et Blaise Cendrars à Erik Satie, qui va animer le vernissage par un *Instant musical* de sa création'.

Figure 6.2 *Hommage à Erik Satie* – First version (musical references in red).¹¹⁸⁸

Le binocle pèse un **mi**. Un beau **mi** lourd comme le **tenor**. C'est même un **mi** en or, une alchimie.

Le Chinois s'incline profondément l'un vers l'autre. C'est même un **mi** ô gué ! un **miracle**, un ange **ami**.

L'ange de la **Butte** pèse l'**Ut** — l'ange ignoré pèse le **Ré** — l'ange en sal**mi** pèse le **Mi** — l'ange de Saint-Cucufa pèse le **Fa** — l'ange qui aime en l'alcool pèse le **Sol**. (*un sal**mi**s d'ange cela se mange entre amis*).

Vois n'avez pas soif ? **Octave** apportez-nous les **quatre**s. À trois avec le douanier Rousseau et l'âne, ils burent toutes les étoiles du seau. Ensuite ils jouèrent de la **flûte** et aux cartes.

Les fous de l'asile et les petits enfants de l'école laïque sortirent se tenant par la main et vinrent s'asseoir sur le canapé rouge. La reine de cœur Clémence et le roi des Cimbres s'épousèrent à l'HÔTEL DU COMMERCE. La lune mûrit les **bémols**. Cueillons des **bémols** sur les aloès. Après, nous allâmes toutes toute la noce au jardin d'Acclimatation où **le chef d'orchestre** s'appelle justement Monsieur Orphée.

Le faux-col encoche le faune.

Fa dièse d'avion.

et l'œuf du tir **ut bemol**

Key to musical terms in poem:

Ut (equivalent to do), ré, mi, fa, sol are pitches described by the solfège scale.

Bémol = flat, Ut bémol = C^b

Dièse = sharp, Fa dièse = F[#]

¹¹⁸⁸ Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 135.

Figure 6.3 *Hommage à Erik Satie* – Song version with English translation.¹¹⁸⁹

Madame Henri Rousseau monte en ballon captif Elle tient un arbrisseau Et le douanier Rousseau Rousseau prend son apéritif	Madam Henri Rousseau climbs into a tethered ballooon she holds a shrub and the customs officer takes his aperitif
L'aloès gonflé de lune Et l'arbre à fauteuils Et ce beau costume Et la belle lune Sur les belles feuilles	the aloe, swollen by the moon and the armchair tree and this smart suit and the beautiful moon on the beautiful leaves
Le lion d'Afrique Son ventre gros comme un sac Au pied de la République Le lion d'Afrique Dévore le cheval de fiacre	the African lion its belly as fat as a bag at the foot of la République the African lion is devouring the coach-horse
La lune entre dans la flûte Du charmeur noir Yadwigha endormie écoute Et il sort de la douce flûte Un morceau en forme de poire.*	the moon enters into the flute of the black charmer Yadwigha asleep listens and out of the soft flute comes a piece in the shape of a pear.

* Title of Satie's (1903) piano composition.

Although it contained many musical references, Auric did not find the initial text suitable for setting to music. It did demonstrate a certain musical quality, but was not 'ready for music' since it represented a closed text.¹¹⁹⁰ The main characteristic of an open written text is that there are gaps, which enable readers to add their own imagination and experiences, thus resulting in a personal response. Open written texts describe open works [P2] and require active reader interpretation [p10].¹¹⁹¹ There is a critical perspective that proposes that all texts have undifferentiated, open spaces.¹¹⁹²

¹¹⁸⁹ My translation.

¹¹⁹⁰ Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, 105.

¹¹⁹¹ See Lawson, *Closure*; Eleanor V. Stubbley, 'The Performer, the Score, the Work: Musical Performance and Transactional Reading', *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 29, no. 3 (1995), 55–69.

¹¹⁹² Iser, *The Implied Reader*.

Schoenberg progressed the idea of a ‘music-ready’ text as an open one with respect to its potential for musical setting. He discussed how ‘The author of the text must save space on the surface for music to occupy’.¹¹⁹³

Cocteau’s first attempt to write a music-ready text showed few characteristics of *poésie*. There was no spatiality in its layout, as found in the final poem *Portrait d’Henri Rousseau* (see Chapter seven, Figure 7.7). The temporal dimension was also underdeveloped, and this resulted in little or no variation of vocal contour for Auric to use in the shaping of his musical setting. The poem lacked any significant internal structure based on rhyming or rhythmic patterns, effectively limiting the sonorous, lyrical quality clearly tangible in the second version. Therefore, Auric was not able to respond to the text sufficiently to accommodate his interart compositional process. It is my hypothesis that without these elements, which are necessary for *poésie* to be active, there is little potential for any musico-poetic cross-over or interactions. Interestingly, it was Auric who rejected the original as incompatible for his compositional technique. As a result of Auric’s request, Cocteau then wrote the final song version, a text which was more music-ready, in keeping with his concept of *poésie*. Auric accepted it. Cocteau experimented with the musical attributes of language through structure, rhythm and sonority. The final form showed Cocteau’s ability to take words beyond their power of signification and meaning into the realm of abstraction and musicality and shape them into a music ready text.

In the second version, Cocteau included Henri Rousseau’s own poem, *Inscription for The Dream* (1910). The poem was Rousseau’s verbal transcription of his oil painting *Le Rêve* (1910). Note also the musical references that would have been of interest to Cocteau. The poem was remarkable because Rousseau rarely spoke or wrote

¹¹⁹³ Jelena Hahl-Koch, ed., *Arnold Schoenberg, Wassily Kandinsky: Letters, Pictures and Documents*, trans. John C. Crawford (London: Faber, 1984), 89.

about his work and Cocteau took advantage of another artist's cross-medial creative approach to use as his own expression of *poésie* [P5].

Figure 6.4 Henri Rousseau, *Inscription pour la Rêve* (1910).¹¹⁹⁴

<i>Yadwigha dans un beau rêve</i>	Yadwigha sleeping peacefully
<i>S'étant endormie doucement</i>	In a beautiful dream
<i>Entendait les sons d'une musette</i>	Hears the sounds of a [musette]*
<i>Dont jouait un charmeur bien pensant.</i>	Played by a friendly snake-charmer.
<i>Pendant que la lune reflète</i>	While the moon gleams
<i>Sur les fleuves [or fleurs], les arbres</i>	On the rivers [or flowers], and the
<i>verdoyants,</i>	verdant trees,
<i>Les fauves serpents prêtent l'oreille</i>	The tawny snakes listen
<i>Aux airs gais del'instrument.</i>	To the instrument's [joyful] tunes.

* A type of small bagpipe played with bellows, common in the French court in the 17th–18th centuries and in later folk music

Cocteau liberated himself from the limitations of established poetic structure. Instead, he favoured irregular syllabic configurations, fluid internal rhyming and rhythmic patterns—in order to develop a textual sonority and multiplicity of relationships.¹¹⁹⁵ The process showed how Cocteau formalised his principles of *poésie* directly, as text with inherently musical qualities but also indirectly, as an interaction with the music through those very characteristics. According to Clive Scott, free verse has ‘a versatility, a [diversity] which increases its cultural range, its capacity to create multi-metrico-rhythmic landscapes [and] changes the temporality of the text’.¹¹⁹⁶ Cocteau understood this in a visceral way which influenced the construction of his poetic texts.

¹¹⁹⁴ Cornelia Stabenow, *Henri Rousseau 1844–1910* (Cologne: Taschen, 2005), 77.

¹¹⁹⁵ See Purnelle, ‘Camouflage’ and Gullentops, ‘Présences,’ 113–53 and 155–82. See also Michel Murat, *Le Vers libre* (Paris: Champion, 2008) and Guillaume Peureux, *La Fabrique du vers* (Paris: Seuil, 2009).

¹¹⁹⁶ Clive Scott, ‘Free Verse and the Translation of Rhythm’, *Thinking Verse* 1 (2011), 77.

Hommage à Erik Satie: Poetic Structure

The song version consists of four verses each made up of five lines. The first verse has the classical split Alexandrine structure.¹¹⁹⁷ The syllabic structure is shown in Table 6.1, below, of verses 1 and 2 as 12/7/12. Each twelve-syllable phrase is divided by a caesura (pause). Cocteau varied the syllabic structure of the remaining three verses (13/6/12, 13/8/15 and 12/8/18) in order to distort the regularity of the poem and introduce a more improvisatory flow to text (see Table 6.1). He mixed poetic styles and combined a feature of the sonnet with the Alexandrines. The sonnet includes a turn or a moment in the poem where the theme or tone changes in a surprising way. Here, it is the eighteenth line (illustrated in red) *Yadwigha endormie écoute* (Yadwigha asleep listens) which does this. He developed further layers of rhythm by incorporating rhyming and repetitive patterns throughout the poem (see Table 6.2), and these create complex, cascading internal relationships. Cocteau connected the verses using this technique of syllabic patterning. There are multiple layers within the poem that form internal connections between syllables, words, lines and an overarching connection between lines and verses. To understand the complex interconnections, Table 6.2 needs to be read in combination with Figure 6.5.

¹¹⁹⁷ Gullentops, 'Présences.' 156–157.

Table 6.1 *Hommage à Erik Satie*: Poetic structure.

<i>Hommage à Erik Satie – song version</i>	syllables	Line numbers
Madame Henri Rousseau monte en ballon captif	12	1 2
Elle tient un arbrisseau	7	3
Et le douanier Rousseau prend son apéritif	12	4 5
L'aloès gonflé de lune Et l'arbre à fauteuils	12	6 7
Et ce beau costume	7	8
Et la belle lune Sur les belles feuilles	12	9 10
Le lion d'Afrique Son ventre gros comme un sac	13	11 12
Au pied de la République	6	13
Le lion d'Afrique Dévore le cheval de fiacre	12	14 15
La lune entre dans la flûte Du charmeur noir	13	16 17
Yadwigha endormie écoute	8	18
Et il sort de la douce flûte Un morceau en forme de poire.	18	19 20

As stated earlier, the intricate patterns of repetitive, rhythmic, rhyming and sonorous words and syllables, result in multiple interactive connections. These are formed either horizontally along individual lines of the poem, and/or vertically down connecting lines and verses (see Figure 6.5). These create the greatest potential for contours and interfaces and are an example of words asserting music—that is, illustrating *poésie* as process [P5].

Table 6.2 Distribution of repetitive rhythmic and rhyming word/syllabic patterns, across lines and verses of poem.

Pattern	Syllable	Verse 1	Verse 2	Verse 3	Verse 4
		lines	lines	lines	lines
A	ri	1 3 4		1 4	
B	rous	1 4			
C	seau/beau	1 3 4	3		5
D	tif	2 5			
E	son	2/2 5	1	1 2 4	
F	lune/ume		1 3 4		1
G	teuils/feuilles	2 5			
H	belle		4 5		
I	que			1 3 4	
J	sac/iacre			2 5	
K	flute				1 4
L	noir/poire				2 5

The table and figure show how the different layers connect:

Verse 1 has the most concentrated number of patterns, from A ('ri') to E ('on')

Verse 2 has syllable patterns E ('on'), F ('lune'), G ('belle') and H ('feuilles')

Verse 3 has syllable patterns E ('on'), A ('ri'), I ('que') and J ('sac/iacre')

Verse 4 has syllable patterns C ('seau'), F ('lune'), K ('flûte') and L ('noir/poire')

Pattern A ('ri') connects verse 1, lines 1, 3 and 5, verse 3, lines 1 and 4

Pattern C ('seau/beau') connects verse 1, lines 1, 3 and 4, verse 2, line 3, and verse 4, line 5

Pattern E ('son') connects verse 1, lines 2/2 and 5, verse 2, line 1 and verse 3, lines 1, 2 and 4

Pattern F ('lune') connects verses 2, lines 1, 3 and 4 and verse 4, line 1

Or to summarise

A ('ri') connects V1 V3

C ('seau/beau') connects V1 V2 V4

E ('son') connects V1 V2 V3

F ('lune') connects V2 V4

The syllable patterns B, D, G, H, I, J, K and L (highlighted in blue in the table) are contained within individual verses, as follows:

Verse 1 B ('rous') and D ('tif')

Verse 2 G ('belle') and H ('feuilles')

Verse 3 I ('que') and J ('sac/iacre')

Verse 4 K ('flûte') and L ('noir/poire')

Rhyming line patterns

Verse 1 contains syllables A to E 1 3 4 connects V1/V2/V3

Verse 2 contains syllables E to H 1 4 connects V1/V3

Verse 3 contains syllables I to J 2 5 connects V1/V2/V3/V4

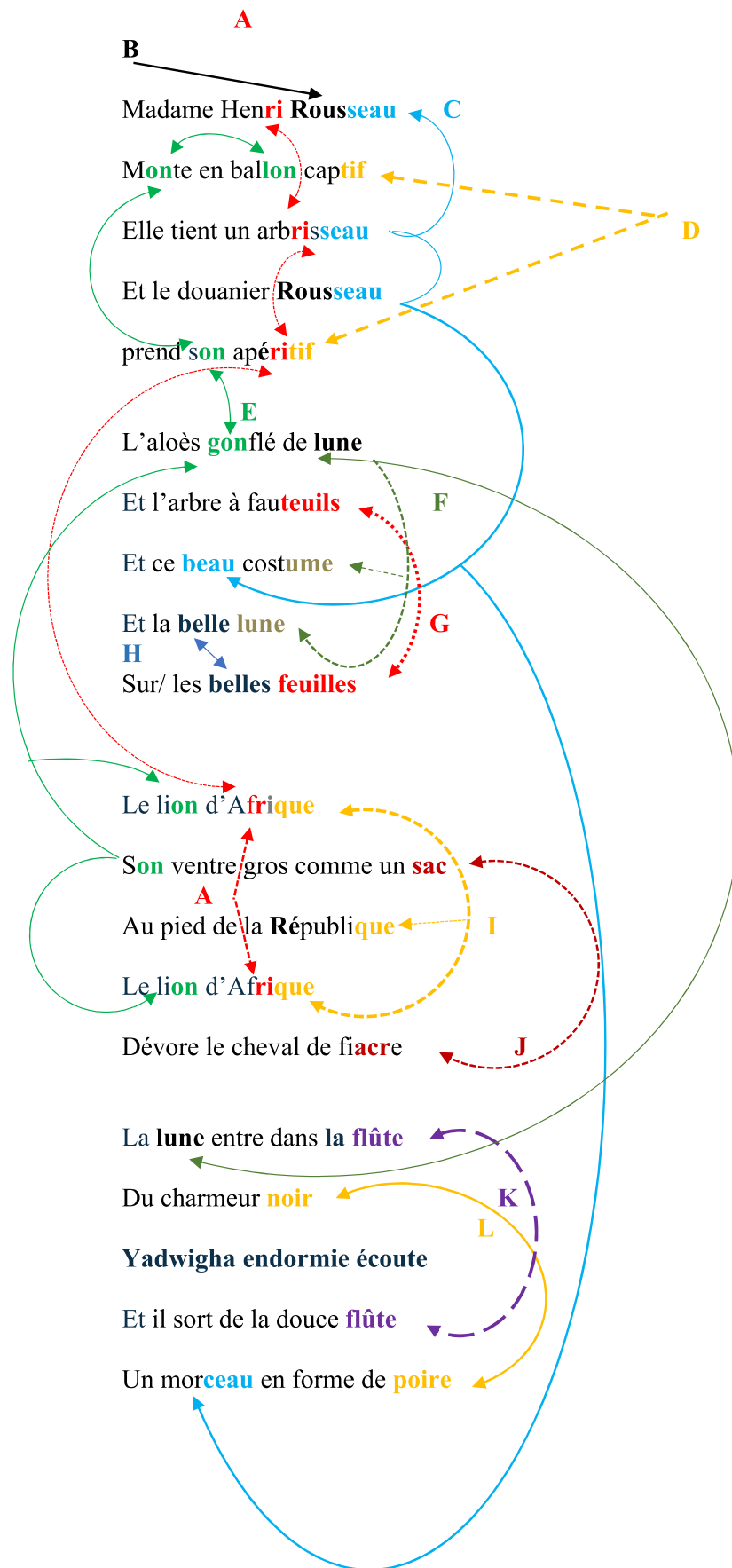
Verse 4 contains syllables K to L

The result is twofold. Firstly, the multiple interpretative possibilities create an open work [P2], that provoke an active reader participation in the creative process [P10] and ensure a constantly evolving piece. Second, the complex textual network provides sonorous surface contours and interfaces that create a text that is music-ready, as discussed earlier. In the context of *poésie*, the text asserts music [P5].

The poem has no continuous linear narrative but is constructed from several juxtaposed ideas or images, in a freestyle form that is not constrained by a more formal organisation. With his method of mixing Alexandrine, sonnet and free forms, Cocteau had composed a different type of poem that defied classification—again, as a feature of *poésie* [P4]. Because the original poem on paper was a visual object, the perceptual experience of the intricate internal structure is a more spatial experience. Gullentops states that: '[Cocteau's] manuscripts reveal the dynamism of their creation. This is proved in the poem, the spatial layout and the use of different colours reveal a second method of writing'.¹¹⁹⁸ Gullentops's use of the word 'colours' in a textual context is problematic, as it invokes a more conceptual application of the term. The conceptual aspect of *poésie* [P6, P8] can accommodate the semantic difficulty. However, once the words are set to music, the spatiality of the textual layout is neutralised, and the relationships are transformed into temporal ones. The 'spaces' in the song are constructed and perceived differently (both as metaphorical spaces).

¹¹⁹⁸ Gullentops and Sevenant, *Les Mondes de Jean Cocteau*, 137: 'Les manuscrits révèlent le dynamisme de la création. Pour preuve dans ce poème, la disposition spatiale des vers et l'emploi des couleurs différentes révélant une seconde campagne d'écriture'.

Figure 6.5 Internal word/syllabic structure of poem showing horizontal and vertical relationships.



The networks become even more intricate. Repetitive, rhythmic and sonorous complexities of the text interact and form new linear and intersecting vertical relationships with those in the music (as shown in Figure 6.5). These then reciprocally impact upon the new relationships and form new interactions. This second version of the poem was a music-ready text because it had rhythmic and sonorous contours that left space for Auric's music, which is why he accepted it in preference to the first one. Auric has not composed a regular structural form but, instead, used varied harmonies to underpin the asymmetrical and unpredictable form of the lyrics, thus liberating himself from any restrictive structure. The structural relationships that Auric developed in his musical setting were a combination of his own compositional approach and his response to Cocteau's music-ready text. The harmonic structure of his first *mélodie* is set out below.

Cocteau set up patterns that act reciprocally in his poem. Indeed, he introduced the potential of aural memories of the syllabic sounds that resonated with each subsequent repetition. The effect is a simultaneous forward and retrograde experience of the song. For example, the recurrent sound of the repeated syllable *seau* establishes the linearity of text but after each occurrence, an aural memory is retained and there is a simultaneous reversal of the forward temporal experience, as illustrated below. This results in a subversion of the temporal experience [P11].

Figure 6.6 Repetitions of syllable *seau* in *Hommage à Erik Satie* to show subversion of temporal experience through aural memory.¹¹⁹⁹



¹¹⁹⁹ Auric, *Huit poèmes* (1963).

Harmonic and syllabic progressions in Auric's word setting of
Hommage à Erik Satie

Ma/dame Hen-**ri Rous/seau**

V in E V

Monte/en bal-**lon cap/tif**

I

Et-le/tient un **ar-bris/seau**

iii ii

Et le doua/nier **Rous-/seau**

V in f#

prend **son a-/pé-ri-/tif**

iii I

L'a-lo-/ès /**gon-flé** de /**lu-ne**/

Et l'arbre à fau-/**teuils**/

I in C

Et ce **beau** cos-/**tu-me**/

V in f#

Et la **bel-le/ lune**/

Sur/ les **belles/ feuilles**/

V → I in E

Le li-/**on d'A-fri-que**/

I in C ► vii in G

Son ven-tre/ gros comme un/ **sac**/

Au pied/ de la/ **Ré-pu-/bli-que**/

vii

Le li-/**on d'A-fri-que**/

vi in f#

Dé-vo-re/ le che-val de/ **fia-/cre**/

La/ **lune**/ en-tre dans la/ **flû-te**/

iv

Du/ char-meur/ **noir**/

iii

Yad-/wi-/gha-/ en-dormie/ é-/cou-te/

Et il/ sort/ de la dou-ce/ **flû-te** /

iv – V

Un mor-/**ceau**/ en forme de/ **poi-/re**/

vi – V

I I

Cocteau used syllables as if they were cadences, through repetition and resolution. Auric responded and translated them into harmonic cadences as shown above.

Auric subverts the temporality in his composition by widening the intersecting vertical registral pitches in bars 12–14 and 16–17 (see Example 6.2). His method imparts a static quality that moves towards spatiality in the music.¹²⁰⁰

Example 6.2 Auric's setting showing the relationship between the linear extension of text and the registral spacing of music in the first verse. Bars 5–18

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

¹²⁰⁰ Catherine Laws, 'Music and Language in the Work of Samuel Beckett' (DPhil thesis, University of York, 1996), 203.

Although there are many other internal patterns similarly constructed—both within and between remaining verses—the first is the most concentrated in terms of potentially active musico-poetic intersections. The structure of the poem can be compared to sonata form. The first verse represents the exposition, whilst verses two and three are the development, and the final verse is the recapitulation; here is an example of Cocteau composing text in a musical way. In my analysis, the exposition section has been described in detail, because it represents the most occurrences of *poésie* in the text and provides the most music-ready part of the poem for Auric’s setting. Auric manipulated the spacing between syllables by contraction, as shown below. The variation is shown in his musical setting (see Example 6.2).

Line 1	<i>ri — seau</i>
Line 3	<i>ri-seau</i>
Line 5	<i>ri-tif</i>

Across bars 9–10 (end of line one) he uses two quavers plus a crotchet. Across bars 13–14 (end of line three) he uses two quavers followed by a semiquaver rest. Across bars 17–18 (end of line five) he reversed the note values and used a crotchet, followed by a quaver to end the verse.

Auric constructed relationships between resolved and unresolved harmonies against strong/weak syllables which he then placed on weak or strong beats of the bar (see Example 6.3). For example, *ri* is placed on the weak beat of bar and against a G sharp minor chord at **A** (bar 9), *seau* is on the strong beat of the bar against an downward resolving dominant at **B** (bar 10), with a cadence to the tonic on *tif* at strong beat of bar 12 (**C**). He uses the technique of such horizontal dislocation to create asynchronicity as musico-poetic tension in the *mélodie*, and to subvert the temporality of between words and music. Other examples are shown later in this chapter.

Example 6.3 Patterns of relationships between resolved/unresolved harmonies against strong weak syllabic beats. Bars 5–14

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The musicality and music-like form of Cocteau's poem render it ready suited for Auric's musical setting. The compositional devices Auric uses (in setting the text) reflect Cocteau's similar transdisciplinary orientation and confirms the composer's version of *poésie* in practice. Firstly, he constructed his piece as 'musical prose' using literary devices to free himself from the restrictions of symmetrical compositional structures; that is, as a way of developing an alternative transdisciplinary compositional method that corresponded to Cocteau's poem. He used motifs to shape and punctuate his musical phrases so as to create a musical text based on a literary form, which is expressed as 'musical prose', a technique also explored by Satie with his *Trois sonneries de la Rose+ Croix* compositions (1891–95).¹²⁰¹ The term is also used by Schoenberg in his essay 'Brahms the Progressive', with respect to his analysis of

¹²⁰¹ Orledge, 'Rethinking,' 161–189.

themes in Brahms's *Andante* from A minor String Quartet, Op. 51, No. 2 (1873).¹²⁰²

These composers developed an alternative musical syntax with which to construct their compositions.

Not only is Auric's musical form assuming literary characteristics but the use of such devices is an acknowledgement of the innovations in Satie's and Schoenberg's music and of their shared aspirations for a new musical style. Auric varied harmonic, rhythmic and mimetic devices to build a syntax for his musical prose. He offset the strong/weak syllabic stresses against those found in music and manipulated the harmonies to either mirror or oppose hard and soft syllabic sounds.¹²⁰³ They act as constructive devices which shape his composition. In the same way, he incorporated unresolved moments and points of repose through musical cadences that accentuated or were in counterpoint to similar instances in the lyrics. He imposed his own literary method into his music—as a compositional process independent of Cocteau's use of musical form in his poetry. Yet, Dayan refutes the idea with his second law: 'Poetic form... cannot gain any value by imitating musical form'.¹²⁰⁴ Furthermore, if the proposition is that Auric's music functions in a literary way and the poetic dimension asserts music, Dayan's fifth law is satisfied.¹²⁰⁵ The concept of *poésie*, however, overcomes the apparent contradiction in Dayan's model, because of its inherent transdisciplinarity and transformative quality that is based on conceptual blending. Another method Auric used was to introduce lines of metric and rhythmic variations in relation to the text, sometimes synchronously and sometimes contrapuntally, without disrupting the integrity of the text and, in fact, re-enforcing its scansion in musical

¹²⁰² Schoenberg first described the idea in a 1933 talk and wrote a later 'fully reformulated version of my original lecture' in Leonard Stein, ed., *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, trans. Leo Black (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984, reprint of 1975 Belmont Music Edition), 398–441.

¹²⁰³ Hard syllables usually have a hard consonant/combination: b, d, g, j, k, p, q, r, t, tch, v, x, or z. Soft syllables have either no consonants or softer consonants/combinations: f, h, l, m, n, s, sh, or th.

¹²⁰⁴ Dayan, *Art as Music*, 2.

¹²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 3

terms. He devised a way of subverting the syllabic and musical relationships by dislocating the alignment of their respective stresses resulting in a form of rhythmic syncopation that he transferred from the music to the text. He created motifs with progressions which act like letters making up words, equivalent to musical phrases and sentences. Harmonic points of tension and release, as in cadences, function like punctuation in the text but do not necessarily coincide with its structural patterns of repose and closures. All these are examples show how Auric modified his compositional practice to adapt literary principles into his version of musical prose.¹²⁰⁶ Yet, he remained sensitive to the musical attributes of the text and demonstrated his transdisciplinary orientation, highly significant as a confirmation of the interart model, as proposed here.

The ensuing rhythmic, melodic and harmonic innovations precipitate new and unexpected musico-poetic exchanges. Auric foregrounded words or syllables. They function rhythmically and consequently imitate a musical characteristic. The textual contours and patterning constitute a complex web intersections (see Figure 6.5) that provide a rich template upon which the music can be constructed, either synchronously, comparable with Albright's figures of consonance,¹²⁰⁷ or contrapuntally to form figures of dissonance.¹²⁰⁸ Albright's elemental approach is particularly applicable here because he opens up the possibility of 'polyphonies and homophonies [in the] comparative arts.'¹²⁰⁹ Furthermore, his idea of vertical chords comprising 'one element a musical note... another element is a word and a third element is a picture'.¹²¹⁰ It is technically questionable whether different non-musical stacked elements can constitute a chord but,

¹²⁰⁶ Orledge, 'Rethinking,' 161–189.

¹²⁰⁷ Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent*, 6.

¹²⁰⁸ See Part Two of *Ibid.*, 185.

¹²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

assuming the term is applied metaphorically rather than literally, the idea is valid. Music can be described as having textures without hearing chords (or even harmony).

It is especially relevant because Auric actually created various triadic combinations of vertical word-music relationships, sometimes consonant and sometimes dissonant. Again, the visual component is not apparent in the lyrics as such, but it is present in the imagination of the listener. In terms of *poésie*, an interart dialogue can be said to be active in this instance. Albright succinctly describes: ‘the arts that pertain to time, such as poetry and music, seem to acquire a new dimension in space; the arts that pertain to space, such as painting, seem strangely temporalised’.¹²¹¹

Auric was aware of specific ideas contained in the poem—such as quotations from Satie, musical features from Rousseau’s painting—and transformed them into his composition. His music does not develop motivically but, instead, is comprised of mosaic patterns of cells and motifs that are juxtaposed and transposed, so that they become devoid of any obvious linearity—which creates a static quality. As with Satie’s pieces, the sonorities are independent and not always part of an overall harmonic progression.¹²¹² Auric deviated from the characteristics of most French songs of the time in avoiding word setting which was predominantly syllabic. The lyrics do not follow any recognisable narrative form either, as Cocteau joined seemingly unconnected diverse ideas. A cursory review of the musical setting of these songs demonstrates a structure relating to the lyrics that has been variously discussed, to a greater or lesser extent, in other literature.¹²¹³ Lee describes a musical setting that is through composed and structured according to the verses of the poem.¹²¹⁴ He describes how the first *mélodie* begins with a piano introduction (bars 1–7). Verse one extends from bars 8–18

¹²¹¹ Ibid.

¹²¹² Ibid., 191.

¹²¹³ See Corrigan, ‘Songs of George Auric’; Winter, ‘La mise’; Roust, ‘Reaching’; Gullentops and Sevenant, *Les Mondes de Jean Cocteau*; Lee, ‘Georges Auric’, Miller, ‘Lectures du *Coq*,’ 15–32; Perloff, *Art and the Everyday*.

¹²¹⁴ Lee, ‘Georges Auric,’ 8.

and is followed by a piano transition (bars 19–29). Lee shows how verses two (bars 30–47) and three (bars 48–62) are consecutive and separated from verse four (bars 70–95) by another piano transition (bars 63–69). Lee’s analysis is more conventional and somewhat more simplified, than my analysis. I propose an alternative structural interpretation of these bars in order to illustrate the interart transformative potential of *poésie* in this song (Example 6.4).

Auric introduces a musical space between lines four and five in the second verse using two bars of solo piano (Example 6.4, bars 40–41, **A**) and then three bars of solo piano (Example 6.4, bars 45–47, **C**), which precedes the opening line of verse three. These very short solo piano episodes expand the linear spacing either side of the text. They frame the only unaccompanied vocal bar in the whole song (Example 6.4, bar 43, **B**). Section **A** prepares the listener for a significant moment in the song. In bar 42, Auric places the first word of the last line on an offbeat. He dislocated the strong/weak linearity between words and music and created a moment of tension. In terms of *poésie*, Auric has connected two sections of spatiality within the text and with one bar, where the concept of music is asserted through the text and delivered by the unaccompanied voice (illustrated as **A** and **C**, in red and **B** in purple in Example 6.4). The composition can be further subdivided according to other parameters, such as harmony, rhythm, registral variants and musical quotations, all of which Auric used to shape his work. However, he superimposed additional groupings based on different techniques. These had been developed as part of his interart process and were fundamental to the proposed new analytical method. As a consequence, the structure becomes far more fluid and allows slippage between the various strata. The result is a tension that enhances the potential for interart dialogue—a necessary component of *poésie*. The whole song, as based on a verse structure, and as illustrated in Figure 6.7 highlights this particular section (bars 39–47) of the score as its centre.

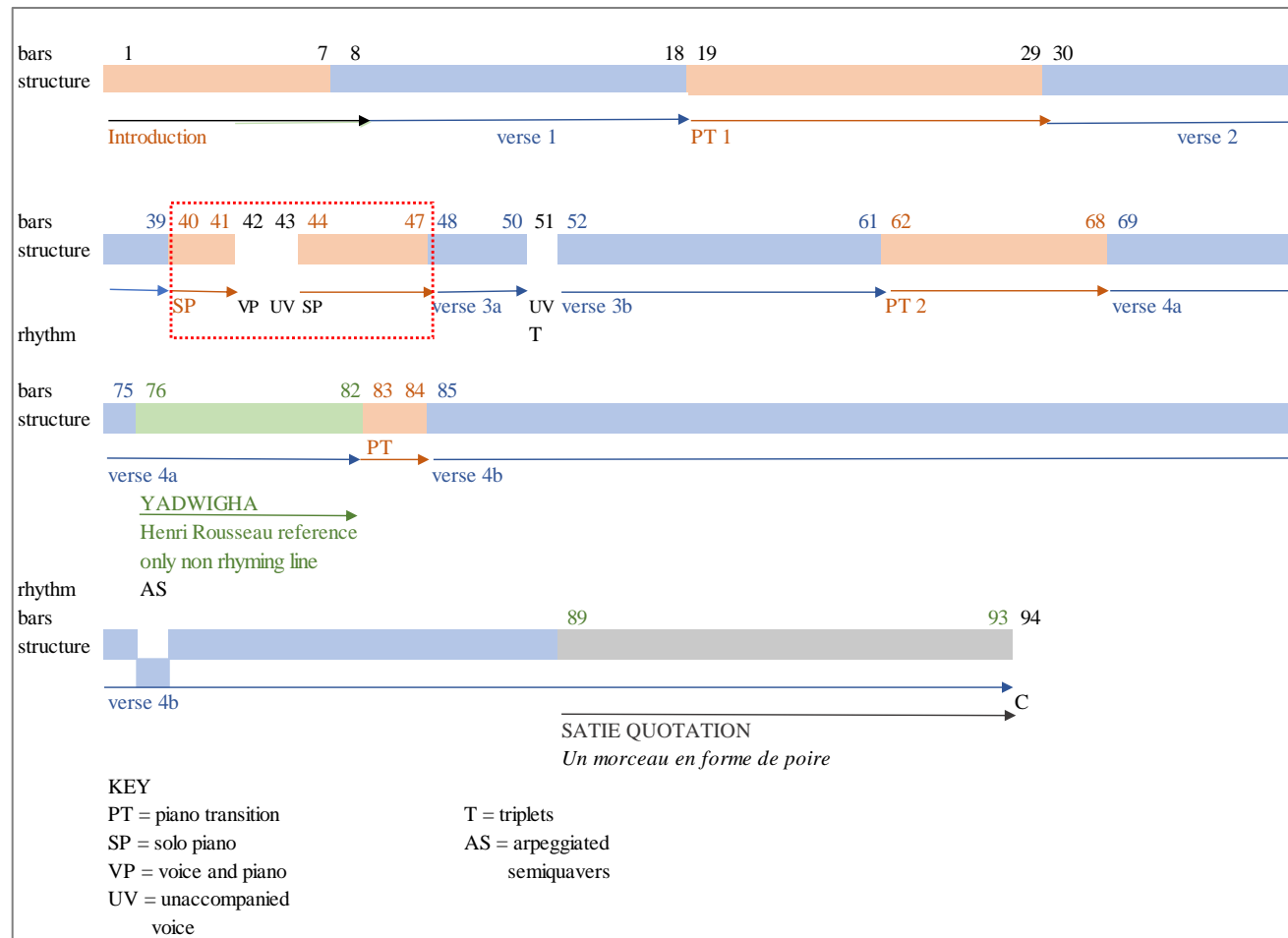
Auric's Use of Satie's *ABCD* Quaver Motif as a Structural Device

Example 6.5 (whole score) shows an overview of Auric's use of Satie's *ABCD* musical motif as a quotation from *Morceau en forme de poire*. In *Hommage à Erik Satie* Auric varied the forms and registers and key signatures of the motif as a structural device for the composition. The blue boxes delineate motivic material quoted in its original form, whilst the ones in red indicate sharpened pitches. Auric varies the motif using single lines (as in bar 56) or in thirds (bar 75) and alters it rhythmically with quaver and semiquaver patterns. He uses fragments (bars 74 and 93), sometimes carried across barlines (bars 80–81), repetitions (bars 70–72) and registral variants (lowest bar 56, highest bar 75) and a combination of these approaches.

Example 6.4 *Hommage à Erik Satie* score, verse two, showing fragment of *poésie*.
delineated in red. Bars 26–50

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Figure 6.7 Auric's musical setting of *Hommage à Erik Satie* based on verse structure with an example of a fragment of *poésie* delineated in red



The section from bars 19 to 35 of Auric's word setting of the first *mélodie* represents the most concentrated occurrences of the motif in all its forms (see Example 6.6). Auric introduced the *ABCD* quotation using the first two notes of Satie's original motif, but at a lower register in the bass line at bar 25 (a2, b2, as per pitch notation). He doubles the texture with contrary motion and note reversal (b3, a3) in the tenor line (see pitch notation keyboard in notes on text). He then used the notation of the first two beats of Satie's original motif in bar 31 as part of a sequence, but as semiquavers to vary the rhythm. He repeated the sequence in bars 32 and 33 (see Example 6.6). Auric interspersed several of his own variations throughout the song as a structural device. He sometimes retained the sharpened C and D (bars 70, 71) in accordance with the key signature. In this case, he placed the quote at the original register, but omitted the first *a*. He also varied the registral placings. He extends the motif across bars 34 and 35, two octaves lower, and at the same register in bar 56. He spread the motif across barlines, and used sequences, as previously indicated. Auric's compositional variations of Satie's quotation shows the potential of *poésie* to conceal and illuminate simultaneously [P7]. His technique requires active-listener interpretation [P10], and this does depend on prior knowledge of the Satie piece in order to recognise the musical reference. Auric re-enforced Cocteau's textual reference in bars 90–94 with a final entry at bar 90 of the motif. Here, he placed it at the original register but in the key signature of his song setting.

Example 6.5 Overview of Satie's *ABCD* musical motif, as a quotation from *morceau en forme de poire*, and used in various forms as a structural device in *Hommage à Erik Satie*.¹²¹⁵

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¹²¹⁵ Blue boxes denote quotations following Satie's original key signature, whilst red boxes denote those that follow the key signature of Auric's song.

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Example 6.6 Auric's variations of Satie's *ABCD* musical quotation from *Morceaux en forme de poire*, as structural motif in *Hommage à Erik Satie* (bars 19–35).

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Example 6.7, below, further illustrates Auric's text setting and shows how the musical prose asserts text (see Example 6.3 and Example 6.13). Auric expanded the intra-syllabic linear space of the word 'poire' in the vocal line and inserted a shortened version of the musical motif, underneath it in the lower piano part of that textual space (across bars 93 and 94). Auric widens the vertical registral space by two octaves in the upper piano part across the same two bars. He created horizontal and vertical spatiality into text and music respectively. Indeed, this is how he activated *poésie* at the musico-poetic intersection of the last word of the lyrics, 'poire', and achieved a musical full stop in his musical prose.

Example 6.7 Musical setting of final line *Hommage à Erik Satie* (bars 89–95) to illustrate Auric's version of *poésie*

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Auric increased the network of relationships by quoting Satie's music. He referenced Satie in other indirect, more subtle ways, by using material reminiscent of his compositional style and structural methods. Example 6.8 shows how Auric composed two phrases in the style of Satie's idiom (black boxes). These are interrupted by the direct use of his variation of the *ABCD* motif (shown in the red box).

Example 6.8 *Hommage à Erik Satie*, Bars 51–62. Auric references Satie’s *La statue de bronze* (1916), with two sections connected by the *ABCD* musical quotation.

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Example 6.9 bars 10–13.
La statue de bronze one of Satie’s *Trois mélodies* (1916),¹²¹⁶ showing motif that Auric quoted.

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One fragment [A] (see Example 6.9) is from *La statue de bronze* of Satie’s *Trois mélodies* (1916),¹²¹⁷ to which Auric added his own flair by emphasising the very low register octaves with accents. This is followed, at [B], by a variation of the opening *ABCD* motif from *Trois morceaux en forme de poire*, in bars 55 and 56 (Example 6.10)

¹²¹⁶ Erik Satie, *Trois mélodies* (Paris: Salabert, 1917).

¹²¹⁷ Another connection between both sets of *mélodies* is that they were dedicated to mezzo-soprano and impresario Jane Bathori (1877–1970).

except that Auric naturalises the D[#] of the key signature. The section at [C] is an example of Auric's use of material similar to Satie's, as another structural section (see Example 6.10).

Example 6.10 Auric's setting of Satie quotation and Satie's musical style in *Hommage à Erik Satie* (bars 51–62).

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Earlier reference has been made to Auric's use of intertextual references from Satie as part of his musical setting. He made other cross references in order to structure his composition. Indeed, he used and transformed material from Stravinsky's *Firebird* (1910).¹²¹⁸ This can be seen in the vocal line of bars 15–17 [A] of Example 6.11. Here, we see replicated pitches but varied rhythms—so as to accommodate the lyrics.

¹²¹⁸ Lee, 'Georges Auric,' 9–10.

Example 6.11 Bars 29–31.
Stravinsky's *Firebird* showing original motivic quotation (1910)¹²¹⁹

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Example 6.12 Bars 15–17.
Auric's version in *Hommage à Erik Satie*

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The lyrics in bars 15–17 refer to Rousseau taking his aperitif. Auric takes up the textual reference to Rousseau and, by implication, Primitivism. He transforms it into a musical reference, thereby also connecting the painter with Stravinsky, a composer particularly associated with Primitivism. Auric further reinforced the intertextual transference by appropriating musical elements from the Primitivist style, as did

¹²¹⁹ Igor Stravinsky, *Firebird* (Original version), Study Score (Critical Edition) (London: Eulenberg, 1996), 61.

Stravinsky.¹²²⁰ For example, the tonal centre was designated according to the most important pitch and emphasised in several ways. The pitch could be used as a starting or finishing point. It could be placed on strong beats, or as an agogic stress by extending the note value. Using the relevant pitch as a pedal note is another way of accentuating it.

Other Primitivist stylistic features can be found in these *melodies*. He integrated these techniques not just to replicate the genre but to assert the various intertextual intersections in the painting and poems through the music, as a manifestation of *poésie* [P5]. Such features include irregular phrase lengths, various non-prescriptive cadences, exotic pentatonic scales, hexachords and bimodality, where the juxtaposition of two tonalities can create dissonant intervals. Contrapuntal textures also characterise Primitivist music and Auric adapted them to include text as part of the counterpoint. He also used multiple asymmetric metric arrangements, significant in Primitivist compositions, to construct the final *mélodie* (see Chapter seven).

Satie created other associations with the artistic protagonists of Primitivism previously mentioned; namely Stravinsky (music), Henri Rousseau (painting) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (text). In terms of *poésie*, Primitivism forms a strong interdisciplinary link through mediation between both text and music. Satie understood how ‘musical evolution is always a hundred years behind pictorial evolution’.¹²²¹ Indeed, his earlier compositions, such as the *Gymnopédies* (1888) were designated Primitive, as were Rousseau’s paintings.¹²²² Myers (1892–1985) wrote, ‘what the *Douanier* Rousseau was doing for painting Satie was doing for music’.¹²²³ In fact, Primitivism was artistically highly influential, in a wider context, at that time as because it represented ‘a Western perception of otherness’.¹²²⁴ Rousseau was the French pioneer of so-called naïve art.

¹²²⁰ Lee, ‘Georges Auric,’ 9.

¹²²¹ Ornella Volta quoted in Orledge, *Satie the Composer*, 222.

¹²²² Rousseau was also called *Le douanier* because of his job as a toll collector.

¹²²³ Rollo H. Myers, ‘The Strange Case of Erik Satie’, *The Musical Times* 86, No. 1229 (July 1945), 202.

¹²²⁴ Mawer, *French Music*, 99.

His outwardly Primitive technique and incongruous subject matter, combined with his own awkward public manner, provoked derision in the contemporary art world.

Rousseau and Satie shared a similar reception.

Auric continued the intertextual references in *Hommage à Erik Satie* and introduced a double Satie quotation in bars 55 and 56. This was a preparation for the ensuing section, where he presented material very reminiscent of Satie's idiom. He did this underneath the line 'Au pied de la République': 'at the foot of the statue in the Place de la République'. The statue represents the French Third Republic with associated nationalistic connotations. The corollary was very apt because, according to Cocteau and Auric, Satie became the composer who epitomised the very essence of what came to be regarded as French music.

Satie defended his pioneering style of composition, against those who criticised it for having no form, when he wrote:

all I did... was to write *Pieces in the form of a pear*. I brought them to Debussy [in 1903] who asked, why such a title? Why? Simply, *my dear friend*, because you cannot criticise my *Pieces* in the shape of a pear. If they are *en forme de poire* they cannot be shapeless.¹²²⁵

Satie adapted literary syntactical principles to structure his *Trois sonneries de la Rose+Croix* (1891–95),¹²²⁶ as a type of 'musical prose'.¹²²⁷ The word prose derives from the ancient Latin word meaning unbound speech,¹²²⁸ and is applied in this context to works free from the rigid 'four-squared compositional construction'.¹²²⁹ That is, those based on 'Evenness, regularity, symmetry, subdivision, repetition, unity, relationship in rhythm and harmony'.¹²³⁰ Auric found the technique of musical prose suited his interart

¹²²⁵ Orledge, 'Rethinking,' 172, *n.18*.

¹²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 161–189.

¹²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 161. See also 'Brahms the Progressive' in Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 52–101.

¹²²⁸ Schoenberg's 'Brahms the Progressive', cited in Carl Dahlhaus, *Schoenberg and the New Music: Essays by Carl Dahlhaus*, trans. Derrick Puffett and Alfred Clayton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 105.

¹²²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²³⁰ Stein, *Style*.

sensibility because it enabled him to establish multiple, alternative musico-poetic interactions in a more irregular and asymmetrical word setting. It was the means of music asserting text—necessary for *poésie* to be activated. Musical prose has an additional reciprocal interart connotation by referring to prose that has a musicality, as with Cocteau's text. How can prose be musical? Apart from its sonorous and rhythmic qualities, music appealed to Cocteau because of its abstraction, and the musicality of text enabled him to disrupt the language and diminish its referentiality. It is, however, too simple to say that all semantic attributes can be eradicated through such musical manipulation of text.¹²³¹

Musicality of prose depends on the sonority produced through rhythmic variation and other elements, such as phrasing and syncopation, rather than beat regularity. Irregularity is the important common denominator that can make prose sound like music and vice versa. Just as with music, text has a contour demarcated by the intonation of the words. How then does Auric correlate the melodic and text contours in his musical settings? He sometimes made contours work in parallel, but at other times he used opposing contours. Counterpoint is a prerequisite for *poésie* [P3].

Example 6.13 Bars 10–11.
Contrary musical contour between text and melody

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¹²³¹ Laws, 'Music and Language,' 10.

Auric, like Schoenberg, sought an alternative structural compositional approach of a musical organisation that was no longer based on harmonic progression. He adapted his use of pitch and rhythm to accommodate the sonorous and syllabic contour of the text. Instead of balanced phrase structures, Auric's musical prose was built on asymmetrical phrases that represented various juxtaposed musical ideas. These were used to form larger cohesive groups. This enabled him to assert literature through music, using cells and motifs as syntactical structural devices. He built the musical equivalent of syllables, words, phrases and sentences. In one form of his structural approach, Auric used syncopated and non-syncopated material, with or without octave expansion patterns. He often displaced strong word stresses against musical off beats and placed weak stresses on the beat. He developed strong/weak oppositions between syllables and musical beats through horizontal and vertical metric and rhythmic displacements and found ways to transpose musical features—such as rhythm into text, a technique that I describe as 'syllabic syncopation'—as a feature of *poésie* [P5, P8]. He attributed rhythmic qualities to syllables of unaccompanied text in a musical way and enabled certain words or syllables to function as music (see bar 14 of Example 6.14). In other words, these compositions are formulated using transdisciplinary parameters, in keeping with the concept of *poésie* [P5, P8]. More specific examples will be tested later in the text.

Example 6.14 Bars 1–19.

First page of Auric's setting showing punctuated form consisting of syncopated, non-syncopated motifs, with or without octave expansion musical ideas

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Key

Bars 1,3, 6 and 7 (blue) = syncopated music

Bars 2 and 4 (orange) = no syncopation but registral expansion

Bars 8,9 and 10 (blue) = dislocated syncopation between text and music

Bars 11, 16 and 19 (yellow) = no syncopation.

bars 5, 12, 13, 14, 17 and 18 (purple) = syncopation plus registral expansion.

Auric's punctuated form is demonstrated in Example 6.14, from the first page of the score. The syncopated musical idea, in bars 5–7, evokes sounds of approaching footsteps and prepares the listener for the impending entry of Madam Rousseau, generating a sense of movement. Whereas, the non-syncopated patterns, in contrast, are more static—especially in combination with expanded registers. Not only did these innovative qualities of structural free form resonate with Auric, but they also made the text eminently suitable for adaptation to his own musical process. They allowed him to compose similarly unrestricted and word-sensitive musical settings. The juxtaposition of non-developmental musical material gives the listener an overall aural experience that is equivalent to the viewing a single multi-faceted object from different perspectives, which can be likened to the visual experience of a piece of sculpture. The stasis imparts a feeling of spatiality. As described by Brian O'Doherty:

Time is used to destroy time. Stasis is what opens the way to the spatial idea. And in turn the spatial idea more or less suggests simultaneity, the possibility of seeing all the pieces at once. Here we have telescopic reciprocities occurring between wholes and parts.¹²³²

Auric uses musical prose to translate the temporality of music into the spatiality of the plastic arts, as another expression of *poésie* [P5].

Auric also experimented with irregular phrase lengths built from cells and motifs, rather than complete melodic lines (see **A**, **B**, **C**, **D** in Example 6.15). He underpinned all of the above with an unusual chromatic harmonic language. The combination of lyrics and music, both fluid and deconstructed in form, resulted in a cross-fertilisation of infinitely variable, reciprocal musico-poetic relationships, that act synergistically. To maintain irregular phrases Auric used completely different musical material against the same line in the poem, 'Le lion d'Afrique', first in bars 48–50 at **A** and second in bars 56–57 at **D**.

¹²³² Brian O'Doherty, Liner Notes for Morton Feldman, *Viola in My Life / False Relationship*, CRI SD 276, Composers Recordings, Inc., 1971.

Example 6.15 Bars 48–62.
Structural arrangement of irregular phrases and motifs

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Auric's Poésie

Looking beyond this initial architecture, a different analytical approach, in terms of *poésie* and the musico-poetic interactions that are fundamental to these *mélodies*, has been proposed. Auric demonstrated his ability to produce a musical setting that was sensitive to an inherently musical poetic language. According to Albright we receive 'first sound, then meaning. Our brains are constructed so as to regard every combination of sounds as, in potential, a language; when we listen, we seek to construe'.¹²³³ Auric's music sometimes matched the imagery of the text and at other times it did not correspond with it, establishing figures of consonance and dissonance, fulfilling another principle of *poésie* [P3]. He simultaneously showed originality in the way he mediated that poetry through the form and process of his compositional technique, synonymous with Dayan's fifth interart law '...to describe work in one medium as if it were operating in another...'.¹²³⁴ This fulfils the fifth interdisciplinary principle of *poésie*.

Music represented far more than Auric's response to the structure, content and sonority of Cocteau's poems. It showed how Auric used both literary and musical devices to construct a multiplicity of layered interactions with the text, itself rich in musical attributes. He generated the complex network of connections through very simple means, an important aesthetic consideration for their new experimental music.

Although Auric rejected the original poem *Hommage à Erik Satie*, he did extract an important musical idea from it which he transposed it into the fabric of the final version of the composition. Cocteau emphasised *mi*, the third degree of the *sofège* scale, by repeating it ten times, sometimes alone and sometimes incorporated into other words (see Figure 6.2). Auric acknowledged this repetition by choosing E major as his

¹²³³ Albright, *Panaesthetics*, 160.

¹²³⁴ Dayan, *Art as Music*, 3.

tonal centre for the first song.¹²³⁵ He asserted the syllable *mi* through music in the final *mélodie* and demonstrated his version of the transformative potential of *poésie* [P8]. The word or idea has been converted into its musical counterpart. Like Satie, Auric put into practice the precepts for his idea of a new French music, as documented by Cocteau in *Le coq et l'arlequin*. He used simple melodic lines, minimal material and sparse textures to evoke childlike popular tunes alongside those of the music hall, circus and jazz bands. That is, the music of the everyday:¹²³⁶ essential to the fourth principle of *poésie*. He developed his own musical language, by juxtaposing cells constructed upon traditional harmony, tonal ambiguity, and passages remote to the prevailing key, together with sections of exotic, unexpected pentatonic pitch collections. The diverse figuration and variety of melodic or rhythmic motifs, allows the listener to imagine a walk through Paris with 'mechanical organs, the circus with its clowns and acrobats, forming part of everyday life'.¹²³⁷ He also demonstrated his interart orientation by creating wide vertical spacing and manipulating the temporal linearity in extending the note values under or between words or syllables. Auric extended his compositional process even further to accommodate a more radical word-music sensibility. He achieved this in a number of ways. Auric used the introduction, bars 1–7, in a musical and literary way to herald an event, character, idea or material content (see Example 6.16). Auric's first seven bars prepare the listener for the vocal entry in bar 8, announcing Madame Henri Rousseau. Bars 1 and 3 are harmonically ambiguous, the chord of E is missing a third, neither major nor minor and strongly reminiscent of jazz,

¹²³⁵ Cocteau also mentioned *ut* twice in line five and once in line eleven, as part of the word 'flûte'. *Ut* originated from the first line *Ut queant laxis* of a IXth century Latin medieval hymn. The syllables *Ut, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La* in the hymn formed the basis of the solfège scale. The notes of the melody correspond to the initials of the first six notes of the diatonic scale of C.

¹²³⁶ Cocteau, *Le Coq*, 64: 'Le music-hall, le cirque, les orchestres américains de nègres, tout cela féconde un artiste au même titre que la vie'.

¹²³⁷ Miller, 'Lectures du *Coq*,' 18.

very popular at that time. In this case, however Auric placed a G sharp in bar 2, so a major tonality is implied).

Bar 2 opens with the tonic E and ends on the dominant, B. Bars 7 and 8 continue with a syncopated dominant pedal, a feature of jazz. Bars 5 and 6, as swung bars, are vital in establishing the strong first beat of the intervening bars and the consecutive syncopated bars reduce the first beat emphasis.

After the introduction, Auric adapted the rhythmic motif to set up a counterpoint between musical and textual stresses, crucial in shaping the song. But he generated this interface in a subtle way. He did not simply displace weak against strong in an expected oppositional way but creates diverse and unpredictable patterns. In bar 8, he dislocated the syllabic and musical stresses horizontally, and subverted the expected matching of the hard first syllable with strong first beat of the bar, by making it an anacrusis (**A**). In bar 9 the end of the word 'Rous-**seau**' falls on the strong beat (**B**). Similarly, in bars 10, 12 and 14, we hear a syllabic pattern of hard-soft-hard-soft. He set up rhythms of sonority of text against the musical rhythm without disrupting the language. Auric's idea was to move rhythmic patterns within the metric structure by varying syllable/note/rest relationships between vocal and piano parts, in order to create a contrapuntal rhythmic line, not only in the music but syllabically (see Example 6.16). The thickened chordal texture on the second (weaker) beat of bar 12 (**G**) emphasises the tonic E in a vertical direction, to correspond with the start of the next line of text. The twelfth syllable, *tif* (in the last line of the Alexandrine verse), coincides with the resolution of the perfect cadence as a single E on the first beat of the bass line in bar 12. The thin texture unexpectedly foregrounds the vocal emphasis at the end of the word (**C**). The effect is to present the vocal moment of repose ahead of the piano. In contrast, the second appearance of the final syllable of verse one, *tif* (in bar 18), falls on the strong beat, without any piano accompaniment. Instead, he delays the V-I

Example 6.16 Bars 1–18. Various vertical patterns of syllable/note/rest relationships between vocal and piano parts.

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Key

A= Hard first syllable on weak beat of bar

B=syllable over bass

C, D=vocal line foregrounded

E=syllabic syncopation, no music

F= syllable over treble

G= thickened texture and widening of registral space on second weaker beat of bar that subverts the emphasis of a new line

H= dissolving of barline with rests

(weak/strong) cadence onto the offbeat (strong/weak), allowing the solo voice to verbally resolve the cadence.

Auric transferred the moment of resolution to the text, ahead of the music (see **C** and **D**, Example 6.16). The text marks a point of punctuation which is re-enforced by the music.¹²³⁸ In fact, only the voice marks the first beat of bars 16, 17 and 18 and asserts the musical feature of a strong beat emphasis.

Auric manipulated both horizontal and vertical lines to undermine the impact of the barline (**G**). He similarly dissolved the barline between bars 15 and 16 (**H**), this time placing rests either side of it. He set the weak syllable ‘seau’, solo voice, on the strong beat of the bar, and syncopated the syllable ‘prend’, but thickened the texture with piano chords on the offbeat. Other pattern variations are evident: horizontally, he varied the syllable/music combinations on the beat or introduced syncopation (on either beat of the bar). Another variable is the vertical texture which ranges from thin—syllable alone (**E**), syllable plus treble (**F**), syllable plus bass (**B**)—syllable plus treble and bass, either as single note (**H**) or chordal (**G**). His contrapuntal method of structuring the musical phrases against the textual phrases adds layers. These initiate a complex web of relationships and enact many aspects of *poésie* by activating it at the many interfaces that are formed.

¹²³⁸ Orledge, ‘Rethinking,’ 161.

Table 6.3 Summary of word setting in bars 1–18.

Bars		
1–7	Introduction	Auric prepares the listener for vocal entry.
1, 3		Harmonically ambiguous.
2		Opens with tonic (I), ends on dominant (V).
7, 8		Dominant pedal with syncopation, a feature of jazz.
8	A	Horizontal dislocation of syllabic and musical stresses. Anacrusis at A.
9	B	Weak syllable ‘seau’ set against strong beat at B.
10, 12 and 14		Rhythms of sonority of text against musical rhythm.
12	G	Thickened chordal texture on weaker beat of bar at G. Perfect cadence is resolved on syllable ‘tif’.
14	A	The vocal phrase <i>Et le douanier Rousseau</i> is foregrounded, as the start of fifth line of verse one. It is unaccompanied and has two syncopated syllables.
15	B	The appearance of the painter, highlighted by embellishment and musical syncopation.
15, 16	H	Barline dissolved with rests either side.
18	C	V/I (weak/strong) cadence on offbeat to allow solo voice to resolve cadence. Moment of resolution transferred to rest
16, 17 and 18		Voice marks first beat of each bar and asserts the musical feature of strong beat emphasis
	E	Syllable alone
	F	Syllable plus treble
	B	Syllable plus bass

Auric's Use of Syncopation as a Structural Device

Auric extended the level of word-music interaction even further. He asserted music through the text and vice-versa. Indeed, he attributed the musical quality of rhythmic syncopation to the text. The resulting syllabic syncopation (my terminology) enabled text to function in a musical way. Unaccompanied off-beat vocal syllables are therefore foregrounded—in order to accentuate moments of musical transference. He used this cell variant like a literary structural device to punctuate the musical form, like letters making up words (equivalent to musical phrases and sentences).¹²³⁹ He thereby asserted literature through his musical setting.

Auric varied the pattern of syncopation. Indeed, as well as syllabic syncopation, he syncopates the solo piano part and combines syllables with music in different textures: from thin to thick. The vocal part in the middle of bar 14 foregrounds the syncopated syllable [A] and uses it to introduce 'le douanier Rousseau', which begins the fifth line of verse one. He then musically highlights the appearance of the painter, through embellishment and musical syncopation [B] (bar 15, Example 6.16). He developed syntax through syncopation and used it as a structural device to punctuate his composition in a prose-like way. This was achieved through words and music, both singly and in various combinations, enabling music to function as text and vice versa.

¹²³⁹ The word 'sentence' has been used in musical analysis without any literary connotations. See Arnold Schoenberg, *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*, ed. Gerald Strang and Leonard Stein (London: Faber, 1970) and William Caplin, *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). For the purposes of my thesis I make the correlation applicable to both contexts.

Example 6.17 Bars 8–12. Patterns of relationships between strong/weak harmonies and strong weak syllabic beats.

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Figure 6.8 illustrates the structure of the musical setting of the *Hommage à Erik Satie* showing syllabic syncopation as structural device. Noticeable groupings of syllabic syncopation of song, are as follows:

Verse one, bars 12, 13/13, 14/14 = 5 occurrences, across 3 bars.

Verse two, bars 30, 38, 43/43 44 = 5 occurrences, across 14 bars.

Verse three, bars 49/49, 50, 51, 58, 59 = 6 occurrences, across 10 bars.

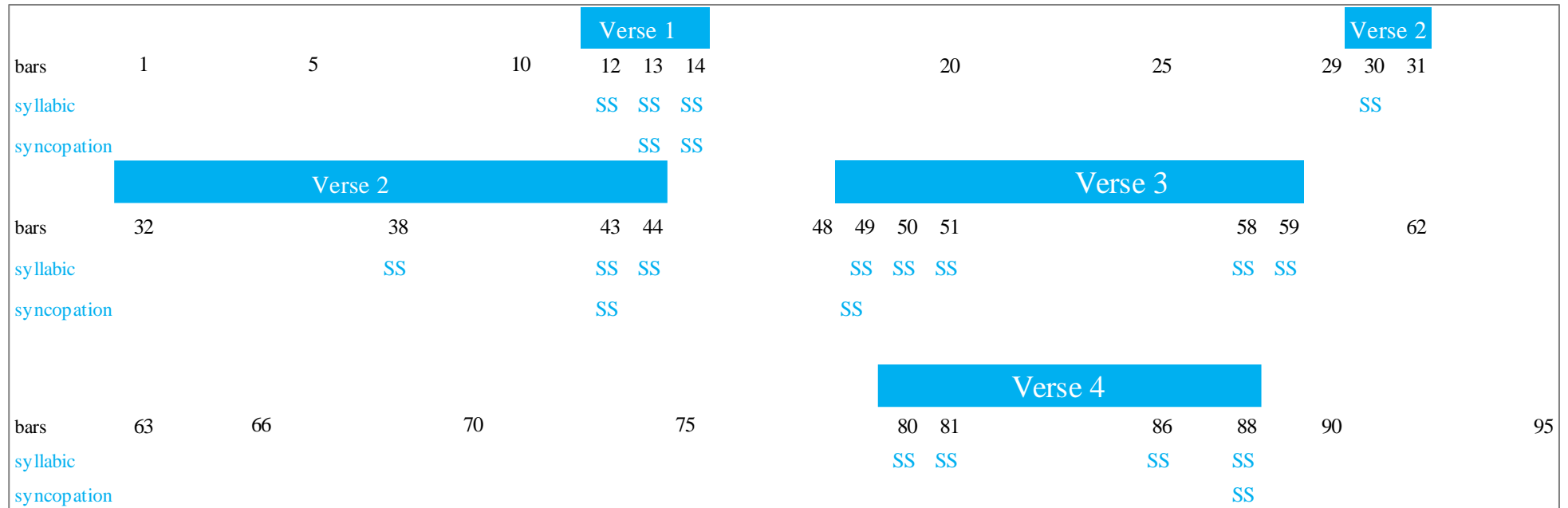
Verse four, bars 80, 81, 86, 88/88 = 5 occurrences, across 8 bars.

Cocteau instigated the potential for interart exchange through his poetic structural relationships and music-ready text. It is the surface contours of the text formed by its rhythms and sonority that made it suitable for setting to music. Auric, in turn, adapted the surface parameters of music (articulation, timbre, rhythm, pitch and dynamics).¹²⁴⁰ He continued the process, partly as a response to the poem but also as a direct result of his own interart perspective. *Poésie* is possible because of the triadic vertical and dislocated horizontal connections which create tensions as figures of dissonance, as described by Albright.¹²⁴¹

¹²⁴⁰ Peter Gena, 'Freedom in Experimental music: The New York Revolution', *Tri-Quarterly* 52 (1981), 225.

¹²⁴¹ Albright, *Panaesthetics*, 210; and Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent*, 5.

Figure 6.8 Structural diagram of *Hommage à Erik Satie* showing syllabic syncopation as structural device.



Example 6.18, below, shows the structure of Auric's musical setting of the first verse (bars 6–18) based on the variations of syncopated patterns between text and music.

Example 6.18 Bars 6–18.

Three possible variations of syncopated patterns between text and music.

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By incorporating the horizontal displacement of rhythmic stresses, Auric had already set up a contrapuntal relationship between lyrics and piano parts. He now inserted a structural layer that consisted of syncopated and non-syncopated patterns, as musical syntax. This resulted in musical phrases and sentences that did not correspond to more synchronous melodic shaping. Again, the irregular, contrapuntal form opened up numerous possibilities for interaction across disciplinary boundaries.

On the basis of the proposed methodology, verse one displays a high concentration of intricate internal repetitive and rhyming patterns of the text. How has Auric addressed this in his musical setting? Between bars 8–18, he developed his musical syntax by building interactive elements for his own corresponding horizontal and vertical rhythmic variations, based on solo voice (**V**), solo piano (**P**), voice and piano (**VP**) (see Figure 6.9). He shifted the vertical components by positioning them either on the strong beat (**sb**), the weak beat (**wb**) or the offbeat (**ob**). He used these different cells as musical equivalents of letters, syllables and words, making phrases or sentences which produced friction between the word stresses of the text. Auric's use of syllabic syncopation confirmed the expression of his and Cocteau's shared fundamentally interart creative process, in this collaborative work.

Looking at the structure of Auric's musical setting of this song section, he has put his version of *poésie* into practice and asserted literature through the union of form, where music functions as text (see Example 6.19). He begins the 'sentence' with voice and piano, in bar 9 alternating on beats one (**A**) and two (**B**), as well as on the offbeat (**C**), punctuated with three solo piano cells, each on the offbeat (**D**).

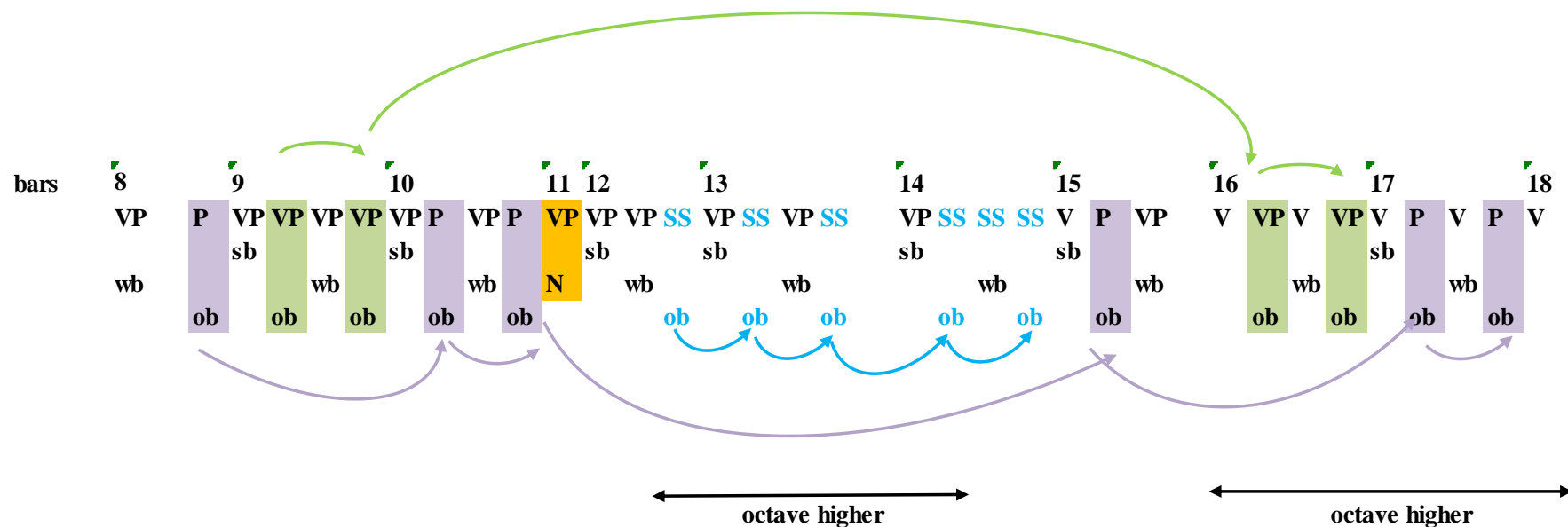
Voice and piano work together as the expected pattern in song is continued in bar 11, but then Auric alters the pattern by introducing a single non-syncopated bar (**E**), preparing for the first syllabic syncopation at the end of bar 12 (**F**) and twice in bar 13 (**F**). He further emphasised the importance of this bar and expanded the registral space by an octave, until the first beat of bar 14 which featured the unaccompanied voice with a double syllabic syncopation that heralded the entrance of *Le Douanier Rousseau* (**G**). In bar 17, prior to the perfect cadence at the end of the textual and musical phrase, he changed the pattern to solo voice on beats one and two, alternating with solo piano on each off beat, effectively stretching the space between the syllables and delaying the

final resolution of the verse in bar 18 (**H**). Auric highlighted the significance of bars 16 and 17, by again raising the octave to widen the registral space.

Example 6.19 Bars 6–18.
Voice to piano rhythmic cells, as structural device in verse one.

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Figure 6.9 Bars 8–18 Horizontal and vertical rhythmic variations in verse one, based on solo voice (V), solo piano (P), voice and piano (VP), also showing registral variants



Key

- Solo piano (P)
- No syncopation (N)
- Voice + piano (VP)
- solo voice (V)
- syllabic syncopation (SS)
- strong beat (sb)
- weak beat (wb)
- offbeat (ob)

The opening of the registral space is Auric's way of applying a spatial dimension to the composition as a form of interart transference, fulfilling that principle of *poésie* [P5]. However, musical space is a conceptual one and, as such, purely metaphorical. It functions as *poésie* but is perceived musically as pitch variations. As will be demonstrated in the next chapter, the technique is used more extensively in the final *mélodie* because Cocteau manipulated the spatial element in the original text version of the last poem far more than he did in the first. Auric addressed this dimension of the work accordingly as an interart characteristic of *poésie*. He increased the vertical pitch spacing of the music at the most contracted section of the text as a figure of dissonance (this will be analysed in greater detail in next chapter).

As stated earlier in the chapter, the first part of the *mélodie* (see below) is the most intense in terms of *poésie* from the perspective of text, music and their combination. The text provides a complex network of vertical and horizontal relationships with the potential for inter-medial exchange. It asserts music through form and sonority, originating in the repetitive rhythmic and rhyming patterns. The rhymes form a textual cadential pattern. As a result, Cocteau provided a template for Auric to create his musical setting, which is equally rich in certain qualities of *poésie*. Other instances occur, as shown below. Indeed, Auric inserts irregular syllabic patterns into the solo voice (V) as an additional syntactical system throughout. This occurs at the following places:

Table 6.4 Bars 9–81: Occurrences of unaccompanied voice

Bars	Occurrences of unaccompanied voice
9–18	12
30	2
43	3
49–52	8
59	2
81	1

He includes two bar-long sections for unaccompanied voice at bars 43 (see 6.20, below) and 51 (see Example 6.21). These are very significant as examples of the transdisciplinary element of *poésie* in Auric's composition. The voice is unaccompanied for a whole bar (see bar 43, Example 6.20) and theoretically it should be an opportunity for vocal rubato. But, in keeping with Auric's inclination to subvert expectations and assert music through text, he wrote 'Sans ral.' (without slowing) as a performance instruction. He has also set two instances of syllabic syncopation, and the pedal mark ensures no piano sound at all. The accented offbeat rhythmic pattern, in combination with the intentionally restricted vocal expression and no accompaniment, results in the transference of that rhythmic quality to the text. In this same bar, there are no rests printed in the piano part. The texture is even thinner here and foregrounds the voice even more. This was either the intention of Auric's word setting or, alternatively, it may just have been a printer's error. There is another section where rests have been omitted in bars 26–29, right-hand piano part (see Example 6.27). There is no voice in this section, but the texture of the piano part is thinner prior to entry of voice at start of second verse.

Example 6.20 Bars 37–44. Auric's use of text to assert music through rhythm.

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His second unaccompanied vocal line appears in bar 51; in contrast to the earlier example, it has no explicit performance instructions but is rhythmically prescribed with the triplet motif, the first of only two in the whole *mélodie*. Again, the lack of any instrumental music here enables the text to assume musical characteristics.

Example 6.21 Bars 51 and 52. Auric's use of text to assert music through rhythm

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It can be seen how Auric used different rhythmic means to vary the effect of the rhythmic characteristics of the lyrics in the unaccompanied voice for the bars shown above. Subsequently, in verse three, the same text is used for both lines one and four, *le lion d'Afrique* (the African lion), but each occurrence has different connotations for each and Auric composes different music to reflect this.

Example 6.22 Bars 48–50 and 57–58.
Auric's different musical settings of phrase *le lion d'Afrique*.

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The occurrence at **(B)** refers to the lion in the painting. Here, Auric uses the same solo voice motif for *Afrique* as **(A)** from Example 6.20 at bar 43, punctuating the *mélodie* through motivic repetition.

As well as directly referencing the artwork, the word itself is asserting music, through its syllabic syncopation and the notion of music through *poésie*. The second occurrence of the phrase (see Example 6.22, bars 57–58) at **(C)**, relates to a lion statue in the Place de la République, Paris, built to commemorate France's third republic. (It is a repetition of the motif found in bar 16 (Example 6.19) but it is not relevant in the present context of the musical setting phrase *le lion d'Afrique*). The nationalistic tone

and content are heightened by the music through a military march style, changed to the key of C major, and this emphasises the individuality of this section.¹²⁴² Although the rhythmic motif of the vocal line of the two bars is identical, the second one has added piano accompaniment in Satie's compositional style—another intertextual association. The first 'lion' of the poem, drawn from the painting, is connected to the second one, which evokes patriotism and the city. Both are ultimately, translated into the music at bar 58, illustrating Auric's assertion of music through text and the transference of imagery into the music. Auric used syncopation and flattened sevenths (see Example 6.23) which allude to jazz as part of popular culture. The latter should not be designated as blue notes because, although they correspond enharmonically, they do not resolve in the same way.¹²⁴³ All these characteristics fulfil the requirements of *poésie*.

Example 6.23 Bars 84–89.
Syncopation and flattened 7ths, allusions to jazz in *Hommage à Erik Satie*.

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Non-Syncopated Motifs Used as Syntax: Imitative or Opposing Relationships

As shown above, Auric has treated the music as if it were prose and structured it with non-syncopated passages in addition to the syncopated passages. With these motifs, he

¹²⁴² Perloff, *Art and the Everyday*, 163.

¹²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 165.

developed different word-music connections. He responded musically to the imagery, as suggested by the text, in an imitative or oppositional way. Thereby, he superimposed another level of potential interaction. For example, the rhythmic pattern in bars 5–9 is evocative of footsteps, announcing Madame Rousseau’s impending entrance, which is also heralded by the fanfare—like a repeated dominant pedal (see Example 6.24).

Example 6.24 Bars 5–9.
Syncopated rhythmic pattern introducing vocal entry.

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In bar 11, Example 6.25, below, the tethered balloon is represented by a busy ascending and descending arpeggiated motif, suggestive of the upward and downward movement of a released balloon. Here, the musical idea completely counteracts the imagined one, setting up a tension between the two, which is in keeping with Cocteau’s eighth principle of *poésie*. Yet the tension does not disrupt the language. Cocteau symbolised technological advances with his portrayal of an air balloon.

Example 6.25 Bars 10–14.
Musical idea Textual idea in opposition.

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In a later section (bars 70–79), Auric reversed the pattern. He separated two passages of non-syncopated music (**A** and **C**) by one syncopated bar (**B**), as a comma between

sentences (Example 6.26). Bar 76 is given significance by its syncopated rhythm and with the higher octave pitches of the first beat chord.

Example 6.26 Bars 70–79.
Punctuation of non-syncopated patterns.

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The weaker second beat F[#] (bar 76) is accented and the whole effect prepares for the vocal entry of Yadvigha (an important character in the poem). Cocteau and Auric acknowledged the significance of Yadvigha, Rousseau's early love, portrayed in the painting. Auric transferred the idea into music with a piano part of arpeggiated pentatonic pitch collections under extended note values of the vocal line, a motif not featured anywhere else in the song (C, see above). The setting conjures up the exotic and hypnotic scene of Yadvigha lying on a red sofa in the jungle, listening to the snake charmer's flute-playing.¹²⁴⁴ Interestingly, Cocteau transformed Yadvigha's image into

¹²⁴⁴ Rousseau himself replied to a letter from art critic André Dumont (1809–1920) giving an insight into the reason the sofa was included in the painting. 'The woman sleeping on the sofa dreams that she is transported into the forest, hearing the music of the snake charmer's instrument...' The letter was originally published in *Soirées de Paris* (Rousseau issue), 15 January 1914. The English translation is

text and Rousseau did the reverse. He established Yadwigha's importance much earlier in a play he wrote in 1899, *La Vengeance d'une orpheline Russe* (The Vengeance of a Russian Orphan). The triadic interdisciplinary cycle of both artists is completed by Auric's music. Auric, similarly, gave importance to the opening phrase of the second verse after marking the end of the most unusual section of the song. The piano transition, bars 19–29, combines various pitches from the pentatonic scale as hexachords. He also extended the note values of pitches at **B** and **C** in bars 77–79 (see above), giving importance to Rousseau's mistress Yadwigha. Both these features are an overt manifestation of characteristics of the Primitivist musical style.

Another example of Auric's emphasis of text is found at beginning of the second verse (see **A**, Example 6.27), where he emphasised the syllable 'L'a' of the vocal line in several ways.

Example 6.27 Bars 26–31.
Syncopated and non-syncopated rhythmic structure.

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The voice is unaccompanied and accented. It is marked dynamically with a *mf* instruction. He extended the syllabic space using rests in the music, alongside a fermata. He co-ordinated the beginning of the verse with the strong beat of the bar but with no piano accompaniment. However, he began the vocal line on the less assertive dominant, **B**, as an anacrusis. In other words, he endowed the syllable with a musical function. He

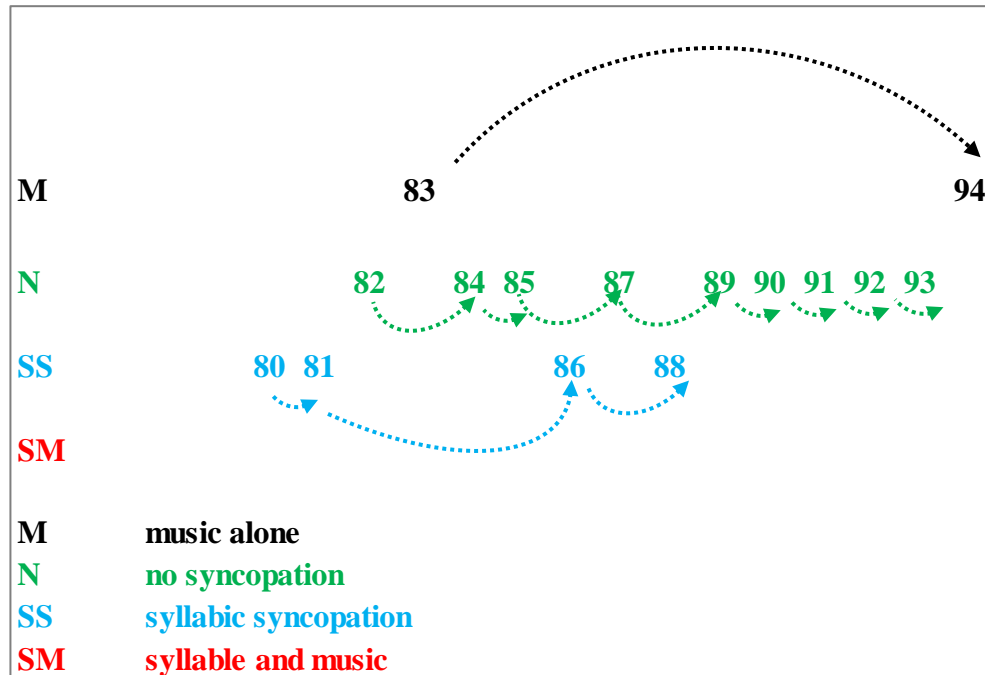
from Robert Goldwater and Marco Treves, eds., *Artists on Art: From the XIV to the XX Century* (London: Pantheon Books, 1945), 403.

then inserted two sets of chords: one following the syllable ‘l’a’ (A) and the second preceding the syllable ‘lo’—a further instance of syllabic syncopation at (B). He dislocated the rhythm horizontally and created a disjunction between syllables and music at the start of the verse. But he later varied the musical syncopation to act as a comma in the middle of the third verse, before Yadwigha is mentioned. After the non-syncopated section, both text and music are more simplified. There is less syllabic syncopation in the last verse as the lyrics assume the intertextual role. Auric deferred to the direct referencing of the imagery in the painting. Consequently, he thinned the musical texture and minimised the rhythmic manipulation of the text—as a transdisciplinary technique. He kept some syllabic syncopation, as in bars 80, 81, 86 and 88, as part of his structural syntax and drew upon other textual relationships in order to continue the musical quality of the text, as illustrated in Figure 6.10. He chose not to include any combined syllable/music syncopation, allowing the syllables and music to be individually foregrounded. It was his method to show a definite interart exchange. Both the elements seem to pull together because of the common rhythmic feature, as a figure of consonance. Albright described how it ‘presupposes the existence of some invisible centre, casting out extensions into the varied realms of music and painting and language, but itself simple and unitary’.¹²⁴⁵ With minimal syncopation, the rhythm is regularised and the potential disruption or friction is reduced. Dissonance is replaced by consonance, resulting in the elements pulling together towards the invisible centre described by Albright. In essence, *poésie* is no longer a feature of either text or music. The final bar consists of a single quaver which is not an anacrusis and does not fit into the metric structure at all. The significance of this is unclear, other than confirming the key signature and an unexpected moment on which to end.

¹²⁴⁵ Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent*, 6.

Figure 6.10 Bars 80–94

Diagram illustrating the syncopated and non-syncopated rhythmical structure in the musical setting of the final verse, and showing the predominance of consonant relationships.



Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to test *poésie* as an analytical method for Cocteau and Auric’s collaborative work *Hommage à Erik Satie*. The poem, the musical setting and the interactive relationships have all been assessed in terms of their relevant compositional processes. Certain features of *poésie* can be identified and others not.

The poem can be described as a new object because Cocteau devised a new form combining Alexandrine and free verse, which was then set to music by Auric as a *mélodie*, and a new reality as required to fulfil the first principle of *poésie* [P1].

The chosen genre of the *mélodie* is such an established one, with a prescribed presentation that can hardly be classed as enigmatic or one which defies classification. It does not provoke, and the potential for multiple interpretations is questionable.

Therefore, in this respect there is no *poésie*. *Poésie* requires that something should simultaneously conceal, confuse and illuminate [P7]. Cocteau made an overt textual reference to Satie’s work, *Morceau en forme de poire*, in the last line of the text,

whereas Auric initially quoted the opening motif of the piece exactly, but subsequently disguised it by varying the register and changing key signature. He also incorporated Satie's stated idea, relevant here:

Do not forget that melody is the Idea, the outline; at the same time as being the form and subject matter of the work. The harmony is an illumination, an explanation of the subject, its illumination.¹²⁴⁶

All of these features represent Auric's mediation of *poésie* through music [P5].

Poésie inherently enacts transdisciplinarity. It is this quality that is most strongly represented in the song, albeit concentrated into the first verse, and is potent evidence of Cocteau and Auric's shared interart perspective expressed through the concept of *poésie*. It also highlights the difference in their creative approach. Cocteau transformed Rousseau's visual painting *Le Rêve* into description in the text. He created multiple vertical lines and verses and horizontal relationships that provided frictional interfaces—with active potential for dialogue exchange between text and music. He also created sonority within the poem, using repetitive rhyming and rhythmic patterns that introduced a musicality into it. By making the transdisciplinary component of *poésie* so rich in the text it becomes music ready. Cocteau produced something which allowed Auric to integrate *poésie* into his compositional process and use the text as a musical template. Although stated previously, it is important to reiterate that I am not suggesting that Auric consciously used *poésie* as his creative method. Indeed, he adapted the attributes of *poésie* to fulfil his artistic aesthetic. First, he constructed his musical setting in a literary way, using the musical equivalent of semantic structural devices. Second, he transferred musical attributes to text by rhythmically subverting the temporal dimension, another feature of *poésie*. He dislocated the linear relationship of text to music in order to foreground syncopated syllables without any underlying music as an

¹²⁴⁶ Erik Satie, *Écrits*, ed. Ornella Volta (Paris: Éditions Champ Libre, 1981), 48, item 37.

expression of interart transference. He utilised syncopated sections as figures of dissonance, another principle of *poésie*.

The aspects of *poésie* described above are present in *Hommage à Erik Satie*. Verse one is the most refined and focussed representation of *poésie* as interart transference between music and text. The rest of the song is punctuated with syllables asserting music (as previously described) but, overall, *poésie* is inconsistent and underdeveloped in this example. The genre of *mélodie* is so prescribed that the potential for experimentation is limited. The aim of the next chapter is to evaluate the final *mélodie*, *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau*, with the same analytical method and to compare its form and content in terms of *poésie* with that found in *Hommage à Erik Satie*.

Chapter 7: *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau* (Number VIII)

The poem *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau* was written in 1915 but not published until 1917.¹²⁴⁷ It refers to the French post-impressionist painter Henri Julien Félix Rousseau (1844–1910), also known as *Le Douanier* because of his occupation as a toll and tax collector.¹²⁴⁸ In the original manuscript, the poem's title was *Le Douanier Rousseau*. Cocteau's humorous description of Rousseau may also have alluded to Rousseau's self-portrait *Moi-même, portrait paysage* (1890), as illustrated in Figure 7.1. Rousseau made a statement with the composition of his painting. He places himself in the middle of a Parisian scene by the River Seine in front of the *Pont du Carrousel* (Carousel Bridge). He shows no regard for scale or perspective. He makes himself taller than the Eiffel Tower and the ship, whilst diminishing the size of the other people. The overall composition creates a powerful self-portrait that represents Rousseau as of greater stature. Cocteau cross-references the perspectival aspect in his text with his description of how 'the angels with large wings, fly around the Eiffel Tower' (see **A**, Figure 7.2). He inverts the pointed shape of the tower in his layout and subverts the spatiality as an expression of *poésie* [P11]. Understanding Cocteau's interart transfer from image to text requires an informed reading of Rousseau's painting.

The first version was published during the period, between 1917 and 1920, when Cocteau wrote *Vocabulaire* and *Embarcadères*. They were published under the title *Poésies* and were archived in the Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris (BHVP). The second version differs from the first, with its title change, and sections **B** and **C** omitted, as shown in Figure 7.2.

¹²⁴⁷ See Jean Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques complètes* (Geneva: Marguerat, 1950), 137–138.

¹²⁴⁸ Henri Rousseau, 'Le Douanier' (1844–1944), accessed 31 January 2020, www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/henri-rousseau-1877

Figure 7.1 *Moi-même, portrait paysage* (Self-Portrait, Landscape) (1890).¹²⁴⁹



¹²⁴⁹ 'Henry Rousseau: Jungles in Paris', accessed 7 February 2016, www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/henri-rousseau-jungles-paris/henri-rousseau-jungles-paris-room-2

Figure 7.2 Reproduction of original version of *Le Douanier Rousseau*.¹²⁵⁰

LE DOUANIER ROUSSEAU

des aloès et des mésanges
en costume du dimanche

A

les anges aux grosses ailes
volent autour
de la Tour
Eiffel

le dirigeable République
le nègre jouait de la flûte
sur la butte
fumant sa pipe

l'autre s'appelait Jean-Jacques
biplan
soleil
cloches de Pâques

ce fut une belle fête
autour de l'arbre liberté
on y voyait toutes les bêtes
de la jungle et de la cité
un lion et un cheval blanc
et tous les deux très ressemblants

Un air doux comme dans le SACRE
de Stravinsky Père Rousseau, Douanier Rousseau
et la belle noce appartient à qui ? si tellement folâtre et sot
la belle noce de massacre

B

Le mésange disait : vive la République

¹²⁵⁰ Manuscript *poèmes epars* MS-FS-05-0016, BHVP, from collection, *Vocabulaire* (1917–1920) together with *Embarcadères*, a preparatory version, finally published under the title *Poésies* (1917–1920).

Figure 7.3 Second Version, *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau* (1917) in *Embarcadères*.¹²⁵¹

Des aloès et des mésanges
en costume du dimanche.

Les anges aux grosses ailes
volent autour
de la tour
Eiffel.

Le dirigeable RÉPUBLIQUE
L'autre s'appelait Jean-Jacques
Biplan soleil cloches de Pâques
Ce fut une belle fête
autour de l'arbre Liberté.
On y voyait toutes les bêtes
de la jungle et de la cité.
Un lion et un cheval blanc
et tous les deux très ressemblants.

La mésange disait : vive la République !

Portrait of Henri Rousseau (translation)

Aloes and tomtits
In Sunday best.

The angels with big wings
Fly around the Eiffel Tower.

The air-ship RÉPUBLIQUE
The negro was playing the pipe
Upon la Butte* smoking his flute
The other was called Jean-Jacques
Biplane sun Easter bells
It was a beautiful Liberty.
There one could see all the beasts
Of the jungle and of the city.
A lion and a white horse
And both very much alike.

The tomtit was saying: "Long live the République!"

* The Butte is the hilly area on Montmartre, in the north central section of Paris.

The text enclosed in the red box at **B** in Figure 7.2 connects *Sacre du Printemps* and *Les Mariées de la Tour Eiffel* with Douanier Rousseau but was not found in the final song text. It is included here, for completeness, as part of the word layout. *Embarcadères* (1917–1920), the second version, is shorter. It is unclear whether Auric chose to omit

¹²⁵¹ 'Portrait d'Henri Rousseau (1917)' in *Embarcadères*, in Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 137.

the **B** section from the song version for compositional reasons or in order to remove Stravinsky's name (which would raise the question as to why). But Auric did reinstate **C** section (from the first version) in the song lyrics.

Hommage à Erik Satie and *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau* do have some comparable content, themes and textual references. Indeed, they begin and end the song series. Whereas the first poem mentions a single Rousseau painting, this last one refers to five of his paintings, not unexpected for a work dedicated to the artist. Cocteau wrote several poems inspired by Henri Rousseau.¹²⁵² In so doing, Cocteau has orientated the transdisciplinarity within this poem towards visual art and uses references to various paintings as a structural device to demarcate five sections.

The poems differ in structure and sonority as well. *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau* displays little of the rhythmic or rhyming sonorities and patterns found in *Hommage à Erik Satie*. The final poem, therefore, presents a different template for Auric's word setting. As a result, he changed his compositional method so that it ultimately reflected other features of *poésie*—though it was more of an intuitive process than a conscious one. Auric never directly articulated anything about Cocteau's concept.

In his musical setting of this poem, Auric responded to each pictorial representation by varying the motivic and rhythmic material, as well as using multiple time signatures (see Table 7.1). The interart component of *poésie* is still very strongly represented, but more through spatial and temporal manipulation of both text and music, as described subsequently. Auric's time signature changes in *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau* are summarised in Table 7.1.

¹²⁵² Cocteau, *Embarcadères*, 89: 'Cocteau écrira plusieurs poèmes, inspirés par le peintre Henri Rousseau'.

Table 7.1 Showing structure of *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau* from Auric's time signature changes and relationship to pictorial sections.

Bars	Time signatures	Bars	Picture
1–8	C		
9–13	3/4	8–15	A: <i>Moi-même portrait paysage</i>
14	2/4		
15–17	3/4		
18	2/4		
19	2/4	19–22	B: <i>Ivry Quay</i>
20–22	3/4		
23	2/4	23–31	C: <i>La Charmeuse de serpents</i>
24–27	C		
28–116	2/4	45–48 80–89	D: <i>Pecheurs à la ligne</i> E: <i>Un centenaire de l'Indépendance</i>
117–135	3/8		

The Poem

Cocteau's poem shows no conventional verse structure but has been constructed in a form that activates the spatial component of the layout, as shown in Figure 7.2. Cocteau adopted Stéphane Mallarmé's (1842–1898) topographical ideas from the latter's *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard*, 1897 (*A Roll of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance*). The topography of Cocteau's poem subverts the temporality in the reading of the text. What are the implications of such a text setting? The poem can no longer be thought of as merely a series of sounds, but now must be considered from the perspective of a particular set of typographical and spatial-structural designs. The memory of Cocteau's flights with Roland Garros informed the writer's experimentation with his layout of text on the page. He deconstructed the outer page margins and reintegrate them as spaces within the text to suggest 'air pockets and joyful leaps aroused by aeronautical aerobatics.'¹²⁵³ He was trying to realise Mallarmé's *mis en page* and Apollinaire's calligrams as well.¹²⁵⁴ Both Cocteau and Auric adopted similar

¹²⁵³ Arnaud, *Jean Cocteau*, trans. Elkin and Mandell, 150.

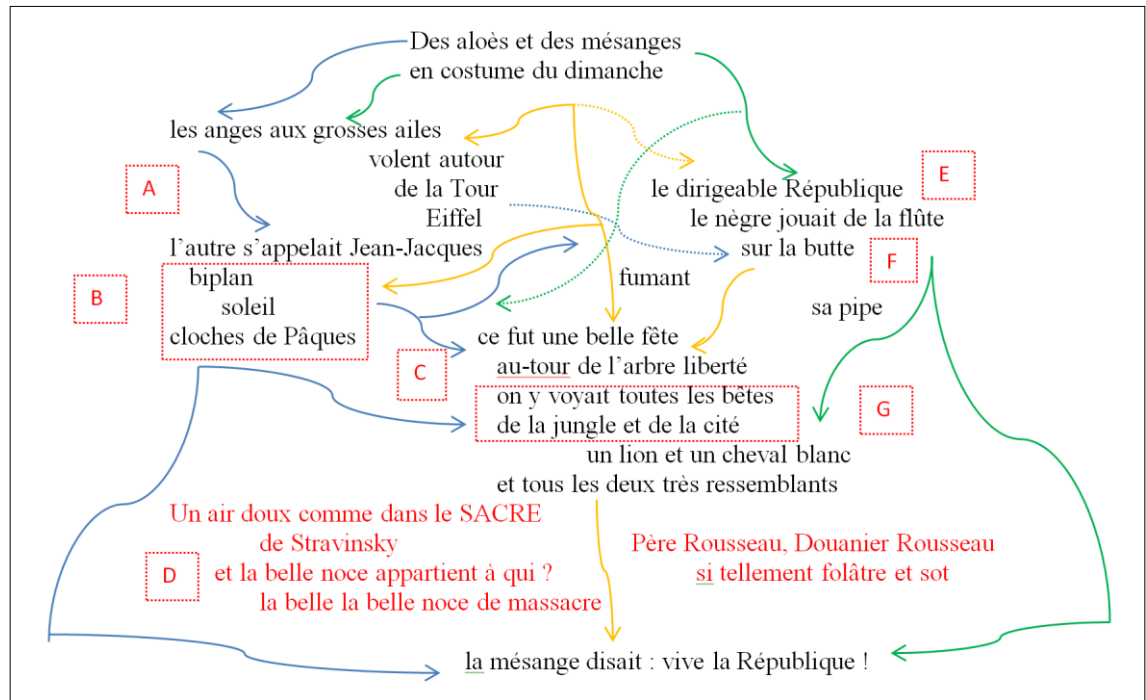
¹²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

methods, as shown from their published correspondence, in so doing, they showed their visual sensibilities.¹²⁵⁵ These ideas are equally applicable to Cocteau's manuscript setting of the last of the *Huit poèmes: Portrait d'Henri Rousseau* which is reproduced in Figure 7.4. The original title of the poem on the manuscript was *Le douanier Rousseau*. It has been used here as an example of the only surviving manuscript of a poem in such an unusual, although not original, form. It is also used to illustrate certain aspects of *poésie* in an embryonic form that may not yet have been fully articulated by Cocteau. It follows on from *Le Potomak* as another manifestation of *poésie*. Is there any evidence that Auric musically mediated these ideas?

With a conventional layout, a blank space forms a rectangular frame around the verse. By distorting the layout with irregular horizontal and linear spaces, the framing is destroyed and the linear nature of the reading, along with the reader's expectation, is subverted. Other characteristics emerge from the unfamiliar structure of the work. A different sonority of the wording is introduced because the unexpected spacing potentially influences internal rhythms and stresses. In such a way, a musical quality can be ascribed to the poem, which would not have previously been found. The altered rhythms can be overlaid onto the existing rhythms of the more linearly arranged layout of text to set up a contrapuntal effect.

¹²⁵⁵ Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*.

Figure 7.4 Multiple pathways of potential readings of *Le douanier Rousseau*.¹²⁵⁶



The composer, poet and painter George Migot (1891–1976) declared how: ‘as soon as a poem emerges from silence, it moves towards music’.¹²⁵⁷ But can a poem ever be silent? Even before it is spoken, it is aurally imagined in the creator or reader’s mind. As in music, rests do not represent silence, but they are pauses that are filled with the resonances of decaying sound and aural memories of the preceding music. The poem becomes activated through its topography with its added spatial dimensions that incorporate further textural layers. All these enhanced characteristics disorientate the reader and present a choice of multiple possible readings, and a perception of various elements differently ordered (Figure 7.4).¹²⁵⁸ This is possible because the poem does not follow any linear narrative but consists of a collage of unconnected ideas, that are therefore not disrupted. These multiple pathways necessitate active participation by the reader in the interpretive process, because each reading will be different. In the poem,

¹²⁵⁶ Stublely, ‘The Performer,’ 55–69.

¹²⁵⁷ Georges Migot, cited in Marcel Beaufilet, *Musique du son, musique du verbe* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954), 60.

¹²⁵⁸ Katherine Shingler, ‘Perceiving Text and Image in Apollinaire’s Calligrammes’, *Paragraph* 34, no. 1 (2011), 66.

Hommage à Erik Satie the musicality is established through its form as well as through interconnected multiple textural interactions, formed along and between individual lines of text. These emanate from rhythmic and rhyming sonorous patterns, created by pathways both along individual lines and between blocks of text, in the poem and shown in green, yellow and blue in Figure 7.4. (The colour coding is for clarity and has no specific significance.) There are other potential pathways which are not illustrated. In *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau*, Cocteau used spatial manipulation to create many possible interpretive pathways for the reader, resulting in an open text.

In his design of the poem, Cocteau created another work with qualities of *poésie*. The poem is transformed into a visual object in its own right. He has added a spatial dimension to the text which has now been dynamically activated in a multidimensional way. The temporality of the text is disrupted because of the multiple pathways and dislocated spatiality. The result is a work that is continually evolving. Cocteau has permeated the art object and its reception with the characteristics of *poésie*, as concomitant with his creative method.

The reading, therefore, becomes a transactional event: from creator to object, from object to reader.¹²⁵⁹ With the poem as object, the meaning becomes embedded in its materiality, in keeping with the Symbolist tradition of 'objectifying the subjective'.¹²⁶⁰

As previously stated, the described potential pathways are eliminated by the linearity of the song lyrics, but these are retained in the reader's memory and contribute a visual component to the experience of the text. Because any expected reading is subverted, a performative element is introduced. Auric has mirrored the manipulation of the temporal dimension of the music in several ways. He extends or contracts the

¹²⁵⁹ See Stublely, 'The Performer,' 55–69.

¹²⁶⁰ Katherine Shingler, 'Potential Images in Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés*' in *Symbolist Objects: Materiality and Subjectivity at the Fin de Siècle*, ed. Claire I.R. O'Mahoney (High Wycombe: Rivendale Press, 2009), 70.

horizontal spacing of syllables, words, phrases and verses in his musical setting. He varies the range of registral spacing, sometimes synchronously and sometimes in direct contrast to the spacing of the text. All these techniques demonstrate the transdisciplinarity of *poésie* in Auric's composition. The poem develops musicality through the performative aspects of spatiality and temporality (as previously described), instead of the rhythmic and rhyming textual sonority (as found in the first *mélodie*). Cocteau transcribed the visual art component with his descriptions of several paintings. The reproduction of the poem illustrated in Figure 7.4 identifies Rousseau's paintings. **A** refers to *Moi-même, portrait paysage* (1890), see Figure 7.1; **B** refers to *Pêcheurs à la ligne* (1908); **C** to *Un centenaire de l'Indépendance* (1892); and **E** to *Ivry Quay* (1908). At **D**, Cocteau also included references to Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps* (1913) and his own ballet, *Les maries de la Tour Eiffel* (1921), which introduced a theatrical element as part of his process and connected these works with Rousseau and his paintings. **F** and **G** in Figure 7.4 are discussed below.

In what follows, I show how Auric uses a similar heightened spatio/temporal awareness to Cocteau. He uses expanded musical pitch registers and extended linear syllables as part of his musical prose method. His implementation of *poésie* was to translate these elements into his music setting. It is important to point out here that the concept of space within music is purely metaphorical. Nevertheless, it is the metaphorical aspect of *poésie* that can conceptually neutralise the semantic difficulties of using common terminology across different art forms.

The poetic content in *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau* is less abstract than that of *Hommage à Erik Satie* but still has no narrative linearity, and Cocteau's transdisciplinary method is also manifestly different. He distilled the imagery and ideas from the paintings that were equally important to him at the time, and converted them into the written word, rather than concentrating so much on the musicality of his text.

This made Cocteau more reliant on Auric to complete the transfer of his ideas into music. Cocteau created a structure within his poem (that also highlighted the important topics depicted in them) with his textual description of different Rousseau pictures. Prior knowledge of such topics contextualises the influence of primitivism, modernism and nationalism that informed the work of artists at that time. In 1917,

Auric referred to a set of several poems by Cocteau that were inspired by the artist Rousseau, and which were a homage to Erik Satie.¹²⁶¹ Auric called the series *la Suite Satie-Rousseau* thereby linking the composer and painter. These two are connected to the extent that the first song is dedicated to Satie (and yet refers to Henri Rousseau), and the final song is titled *Portrait Henri Rousseau*. Rousseau was the French pioneer of naïve art whose outwardly uncomplicated technique, incongruous subject matter and awkward public manner provoked derision in the contemporary art world. Satie's earlier compositions, such as *Trois Gymnopédies* (1888), were designated as minimal as well. Linking the two artists, both by name and within the poem, is therefore not so surprising. Cocteau also connects Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), with Henri Rousseau and Satie, by mentioning the former in the last poem of the collection.


¹²⁶¹ Caizergues, *Correspondance Georges Auric*, 147, n.5.

Figure 7.5 Letter from Auric to Cocteau, Summer 1917.¹²⁶²

32 Boulevard de la Halle
Issoire [été 1917]
Puy de Dôme

'mais je viens d'écrire
RÉVEIL
(Bouche grave des lions...etc)
et j'ai dans la tête Biplan le matin, Basse-cour*
et pour 'chœur' le Portrait de Rousseau et Marie Laurencin
Il n'y a qu'à écrire cela
Puis
j'écrirai
Cette nuit, tous les immeubles
Posés de travers n'importe où**

Et M^{lle} Caouppa
Mais envoyez encore des poèmes, sans hésiter.
j'y compte.
Et travaillez à de nouvelles choses.
M. Sadi m'a envoyé une belle lettre.
À PARIS
un jour d'automne
vous entendrez je l'espère
des tas de mélodies
de
votre
Georges Auric

Envoyez le 1^{er} poème de la Suite Satie-Rousseau et un autre
(mais pas celui imprimé dans le programme Huyghens que j'ai déjà) 

¹²⁶² Ibid., 18.

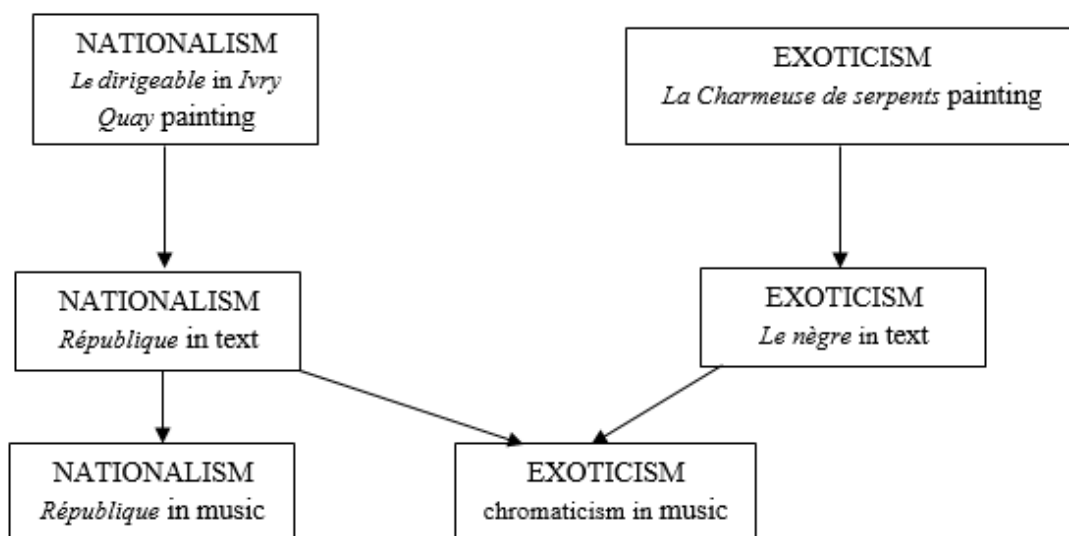
* Auric refers here to Cocteau's poem *Basse-cour*. It inspired him to compose a *mélodie* for voice, string quartet and flute, which he subsequently abandoned. See David Gullentops, 'Textes inédits de Jean Cocteau mis en musique', in *Jean Cocteau: textes et musique*, ed. David Gullentops and Malou Haine (Sprimont: Mardaga, 2005), 149.

** Pierre Caizergues identifies these two lines as the two first verses of a poem entitled *Retour*. It remained unpublished until its posthumous publication in Cocteau, *Embarcadères*, 91.

A pathway was established whereby early twentieth-century art forms adopted the exotic or redefined elements of Primitivism. Features of Primitivism in Rousseau's paintings, such as naïvely presented non-Western exotic elements, together with some abstraction, are recognisable. Cocteau makes textual references to *Le Rêve* (The Dream) in the first poem, *Hommage à Erik Satie*, and he abstracted the form and content to a certain extent, reflecting visual primitivism. Auric emphasised musical elements such as rhythmic and percussive elements that also characterised the style. The simplicity of the motifs, altered one after another, also places these vocal works in the primitive and naïve style launched by Satie.

There are other intertextual references (illustrated in Figure 7.6) and these will be explored in more detail subsequently in the chapter. All the images referred to in *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau* are included to illustrate the importance of the visual/textual intersection in the poem and the broader context of French nationalism that was central to the development of the new musical style.

Figure 7.6 Illustration of *poésie* in practice as interart transfer from painting to text, and text to music in *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau*.



Henri Rousseau was enthusiastic about technological progress and often included modern phenomena such as the Eiffel Tower, airships and biplanes in his

paintings.¹²⁶³ He would have seen many types of balloons, planes and airships that were on display at the 1909 International Air Show in Paris.¹²⁶⁴ Like Cocteau and Auric, he combined such symbols of modernism with aspects of everyday life.

The poems follow no linear narrative as Cocteau places disparate images or ideas side by side. Auric similarly juxtaposed different motifs in his settings with no development. The compositional processes of both artists, in their structuring of the works, is an implied intertextual reference to Cubism and represents the transdisciplinary nature of *poésie* in practice.

Cocteau further expressed *poésie* using its metaphoric principle [P6]. He figuratively drew attention to the Eiffel Tower's impressive height when he described angels flying around it (see **A**, Figure 7.4). Rousseau painted an air balloon to pictorially emphasise the Tower's height. Cocteau demonstrated the significance of spatiality in only one section of the preparatory version of the last poem published under the title *Poésies* (1917–1920).¹²⁶⁵ The idea of space is visually and symbolically accentuated in the four lines of text, shown in red below, as reflected in Rousseau's painting and Auric's music. Cocteau created a figure of dissonance [P3] between image and text by flipping the apex of the visual shape of the Tower in his text (see Figure 7.7)—a further example of his *poésie* in practice.

¹²⁶³ 'Henri Rousseau: Jungles in Paris: Rousseau and modernity: Modern marvels', accessed 31 January 2020, www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/henri-rousseau-jungles-paris/henri-rousseau-jungles-paris-rousseau-0

¹²⁶⁴ 'Paris Flight Show – First Impressions of an Artistic and Fascinating Display', *Flight*, October 2, 1909.

¹²⁶⁵ For translation see Figure 7.3.

Figure 7.7 Preparatory version Number 8, *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau*.¹²⁶⁶

Des aloès et des mésanges
en costume du dimanche.

Les anges aux grosses ailes
volent autour
de la tour
Eiffel

Le dirigeable RÉPUBLIQUE
L'autre s'appelait Jean-Jacques
Biplan soleil cloches de Pacques
Ce fut une belle fête
autour de l'arbre Liberté
On y voyait toutes les bêtes
de la jungle et de la cité.
un lion et un cheval blanc
et tous les deux très ressemblants.

La mésange disait 'vive la République' !

Cocteau increased his spatial manipulation of the whole poem in its final version (see Figure 7.4), in order to further activate the visual component.

From poem to music

Auric represented the impressive height of the Tower and the symbolism of flying angels, as described by Cocteau, and translated the idea of movement into music. In Example 7.1, bars 8–15, he mirrored the up and down movement of the flying angels through the pitch spacing in the soprano, alto, tenor and bass piano lines with his sequences as indicated X (bar 9), X¹↓_{8ve} (bar 10), X (bar 11), Y (bar 12), Y1↑^{8ve} (bar 13). He intertwined other wave-like patterns of registral variants based on the dominant D (shown in red), the tonic G (shown in blue) and the submediant E (shown in green). These patterns are suggestive of the fluidity of the angels' flying movements around the Tower. Other minor pitch patterns have been omitted for the sake of clarity. Auric translated the visual spatiality portrayed in the image into musical pitch space with the

¹²⁶⁶ Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques*, 137.

resulting sonority. He demonstrated his own interpretation of *poésie*. The melodic lines of the right-hand piano part show much more movement and represent the angels flying high up above the ground, which Auric mediated musically as static tonic and dominant pedal points in the bass part. He framed this significant phrase with changes of tempo and rhythm and used an insistent whole-bar repetitive dominant (at **A**, bar 8) and an anacrusis to create an anticipatory tension. This alerts the listener to an impending important moment. He ends the phrase with a key change to E, the relative minor of G, in the vocal and piano lines (at **B**, bar 15).

Auric demonstrated his understanding of the interart potential of *poésie* when he transposed the spatiality of text into his musical language at this point. It is apparent that the composer chose to mirror the idea of textual space here, an example of Albright's figure of consonance.¹²⁶⁷ Subsequently, he chose to contrast the textual and musical spatiality with his musical setting of line 9, in bars 90–97, where these lines are contracted in the text. Auric's response, on this occasion, was to move towards the widest registral spacing of the whole piece (and this is analysed in greater detail later in this chapter). Auric fulfilled the dissonant requirement of *poésie* in two ways. He emphasised his own technique in the earlier phrase (bars 8–15) which contrasts with Cocteau's contracted text, in the second section (bars 90–95), where Auric composed the widest registral spacing of the whole piece (see Example 7.12). With this latter part, the composer fulfilled the dissonant requirement of *poésie* [P3]. He continued the interart exchange and built the musical phrase, from units of registral pitch variation in a syntactical way, as if it were prose.

¹²⁶⁷ Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent*.

Example 7.1 *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau*, Bars 8–15
Patterns of registral variations, based on the dominant (red), tonic (blue) and
submediant (green)

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Sections can be identified in the soprano part, A1, expanded into A2, which is then repeated before resolution to A3, as a full stop (see Example 7.2). Auric used metric changes, together with pitch patterns, as structural units to make musical phrases. Bars 8–15 can be divided into four sections according to time signatures, common time (bar 8), 3/4 (bars 9–13), 2/4 (bar 14) and 3/4 (bar 15).

The next line in the poem refers to a hot-air balloon (see **E**, Figure 7.4), which was called 'La Patrie' (The Homeland) and was featured in the 1907 painting *Ivry Quay*. There is a tension, perhaps even an irony, in the image because, although it was the most advanced military aircraft at that time (and a source of great national pride), the strolling Parisians appear to be taking little notice of it.¹²⁶⁸

¹²⁶⁸ 'Henry Rousseau: Jungles in Paris', accessed 8 February 2016, www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/henri-rousseau-jungles-paris/henri-rousseau-jungles-paris-rousseau-0

Example 7.2 *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau*, Bars 8–15
Auric's setting of the first pictorial reference using motifs based on registral patterns of the dominant (D) as structural units.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Auric wrote a musical setting that contrasts with the image of the flying airship rising in the sky (bars 19–22). The soprano piano line and the vocal line are identical, using extended note values on main beats and a narrow range—F#, F* and G# (see **B**, Example 7.3)—to give a static and tethered quality to the phrase. As a function of *poésie* [P3], Auric's setting counters the sense of the text and creates a tension between the words and music. The stasis is re-enforced by the thick texture of the exotic chromatic chords in the lower voices of bars 19–23 (see **C**, Example 7.3). Across bars 21 and 22, he composed a rising scalar bass line motif, suggestive of the release and rising path of the air balloon. Cocteau established dissonance [P3] in the text by juxtaposing symbols of Nationalism, such as 'La Patrie', against representations of the exotic in his description of the snake charmer from Rousseau's painting.

Example 7.3 *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau*, Bars 14–32. Auric's version of *poésie* where his musical setting opposes the sense of movement of the balloon in the text.

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Auric further developed *poésie* with his musical transformation of the same ideas. He represented nationalism and the hot air balloon with an accented march-like pedal above thickly textured chromatic chordal alto and bass parts that sets up a tension (see **B**, bars 19–23, in Example 7.4), which enacts Auric's version of *poésie* [P3]. The exotic chord material has two functions. Set against the military-style rhythms, it subverts the idea of Nationalism whilst simultaneously preparing the listener for the exoticism of the snake charmer, introduced at the start of the new vocal phrase of song lyrics (bar 24). The image of the character from the song is evoked from the Rousseau painting, and its transfer from the visual, to the written text, to the music is an example of *poésie* in practice [P3]. He heightened the intensity of this moment of *poésie* with accents on the minims of the first three syllables in the word *Ré-pu-bli-que* (**B**¹, bars 21–22), effectively drawing attention to France and Nationalism, against the

chromaticism that represented the exotic: 'Le nègre jouait de la pipe' (the native played the pipe).

Example 7.4 *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau*, Bars 18–31
Contrasting military march music with exotic chromatic music.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

He augmented the significance of the musical phrase using metric variation: he enclosed four bars of common time (at **B**, bars 24–27) within 2/4 bars at either end (see **B**, bars 23 and 28, example 7.4).

With the vocal entry of 'le nègre' (bar 28) there is a change of rhythm and time signature. This is comparable to bars 16 and 30 of *Hommage à Erik Satie*, which emphasises the voice over a thinner piano texture. As part of his musical prose technique, Auric used syncopation as punctuation between syllables to shape the phrases (see Example 7.5).

Example 7.5 *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau*, bars 19–22. Relationship of musical syncopation to text (delineated in red) in line 7.

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Figure 7.8 *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau*. Bars 19–22.
Diagrammatic illustration of Auric's word setting showing his use of syllables and musical syncopation to shape his musical phrases.

bars	19						/20							/21					/22					//	
	s	m	m	s	m	s	m	s	m	m	s	m	m	s	m	s	m	m	s	m	m	s	m	s	//
	←————— a1 —————→											←————— a2 —————→					←————— a3 —————→								
	Le		di-		ri-		/gea-		ble		/Ré-		pu-		/bli-		que		//						
syllable			s																						
musical syncopation			m																						

Auric extended the musical phrases across the bar lines and dislocated them from the textual phrases. As shown in Figure 7.8, the musical phrases identified as a1, a2 and a3 are gradually contracted:

a1, s m m/ s m /s m /s m m//
a2 s m m/ s m/ s m m//
a3 s m m//

He subverted the musical expectation in these sections with his technique of syncopating the weak-word syllables against the strong beats at the start of the bar (another way of shaping his musical phrases). This is shown in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2 *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau* showing distribution of Auric's setting of weak syllables against strong beats.

Bars	Weak syllables against strong beat
15	-fel
20	-gea
22	-ble
25	-ait
94	-tes
96	-ci
97	-té
131	-que

The text that follows this section consists of a textual representation of the image of the snake charmer playing his flute as depicted in *La Charmeuse de serpents* (1907) (see **F** of Figure 7.4). Rousseau's paintings connect *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau* (the final *mélodie*) and the first song, *Hommage à Erik Satie*. In the eighteenth line of the poem, Cocteau provided the line 'Yadwigha endormie écoute' (Yadwigha listened, whilst asleep) from Rousseau's final painting and the poem *Le Rêve* (see Chapter six).¹²⁶⁹ A snake charmer also appears in the painting that Cocteau transformed into text in both *Hommage à Erik Satie* (bars 70–76) and in *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau* (bars 23–31), and which Auric mediated musically as *poésie* in his song setting (see Examples 7.6. and 7.7). Both sections are in 2/4 time, but the *Hommage à Erik Satie* one is seven bars long, in E major, compared with the one in *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau*, in E minor, and is nine bars long. Cocteau made musical references that further link the two works: Satie in the first and Stravinsky in the last. Auric transposed these ideas into his musical setting using musical quotations. He used variations of the opening motif of Satie's *Trois Morceaux en Forme de Poire* (see Example 6.1) throughout his composition, and quotes from Stravinsky's *L'oiseau de feu* (The Firebird).

¹²⁶⁹ Cocteau, *Oeuvres poétiques* (1950), 135.

Example 7.6 *Hommage à Erik Satie*, bars 70–76, Auric’s musical setting of the snake charmer from Rousseau’s painting, *Le Rêve*.

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Example 7.7 *Portrait d’Henri Rousseau*, bars 23–31, Auric’s musical setting of the snake charmer from Rousseau’s painting, *La Charmeuse de serpents*, showing *Flûte* and *pipe* word reversal between the poem and song versions.

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In *Portrait d’Henri Rousseau*, the words ‘flute’ and ‘pipe’ in the original manuscript (see **F** in Figure 7.4) have been interchanged in the song version (see Example 7.7) and are both syllabically accentuated on the beat. It is unclear whether the change in the musical setting was intentional, or was the result of a compositional, or a publishing error.

Auric connected the two *mélodies* with his original compositional technique of syllabic syncopation: text syllables are placed on the offbeat without any piano accompaniment (see Chapter six). He exhibits his form of *poésie* by transferring musical characteristics to the text. However, he used more syllabic syncopation as punctuation in *Hommage à Erik Satie* than he did in this *mélodie*, where this aspect of musicalisation of the text only occurs in bars 8, 94, 96, 99 and 102 (see Example 7.8).

Example 7.8 *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau*, bars 8–13, 94–98, 99–105, showing occurrences of syllabic syncopation.

Image removed due to copyright reasons

Auric adapted his setting to accommodate Cocteau's introduction of a new character into the text—Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), the Swiss philosopher and composer. Auric set the line 'l'autre s'appelait Jean-Jacques' (the other was called Jean-Jacques) as a transition between pictorial references of Henri Rousseau paintings, *La Charmeuse de serpents* and *Pêcheurs à la ligne*. Both Cocteau and Auric carried the allusion to Primitivism across the series into *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau* and encapsulated their interart approach. Auric framed the four bars of word setting (35–38)

between three bars (32–34) and six bars (39–43) of solo piano (see Example 7.9, below).

Example 7.9 *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau*, bars 32–45, musical setting of Cocteau's introduction of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, new character.

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He drew attention to the other Rousseau with a key change to C major (delineated in red from bar 34) but modulated to G (dominant of C, delineated in green, bar 39) at the end of the sentence. He also simplified the music and thinned the texture ensuring the clarity and prominence of the text. The subsequent six bars of piano transition have a slightly thicker texture of alternating tonic and dominant thirds in the bass, under a dominant pedal in bars 39 and 40. Auric then moved the thirds pattern into the right hand for one bar and repeated the first phrase in bar 42, as if representing the plane's ascent before the next vocal entry of the word 'Biplan' in bar 45. This provides a textual reference to the aircraft featured in the picture *Pêcheurs à la ligne* (1908). Auric widens the registral space between the hands at bar 44 (see red arrow at A, Example 7.9) to increase the spatial dimension within the music. The performance instructions in the same bar indicate a dynamic change to *forte* alongside *plus vite*, a

faster tempo, and this further accentuates moment, giving a sense of the ascent of the plane which is gathering speed. As required for *poésie* to be activated, there has been a translation of the visual imagery into the text of a plane in flight. The musical setting then completes the transfer of the idea of the biplane's flight through an upward movement of the piano's thicker chords from the lower bass to the higher treble registers and imparts a sense of gathering speed—here we have a moment of *poésie* through the interart exchange of image to text to music.

Portrait d'Henri Rousseau uses different musical features to *Hommage à Erik Satie*. Indeed, Cocteau chose to adopt a different technique of spatial manipulation. This is manifested in his layout of the original version of the poem. He also added a stronger visual dimension to the poem by making numerous references to Rousseau's paintings. His modified creative method still reflected an expression of his concept of *poésie* but from a different perspective. Auric transformed his compositional technique as a result of the parameter changes in *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau* in accordance with the principles of *poésie*. He achieved interart transference by manipulating the spatiality of the words. He extended the linear spacing of the vocal line in bars 45–67 with prolonged note values and added intra-syllabic tied bars (see **A**, **B**, **C** and **D**, outlined in red, Example 7.10). Auric demonstrated *poésie* by subverting the space/time elements between text and music in his setting. The syllabic elongation dislocates the temporality of the song. Where Cocteau contracted the text (see **A**, **B** and **C**, Figure 7.11), Auric has extended it at four stages in bars 45–67 as follows:

- [A] [bi-/plan-], 1 word, 2 syllables across 3 bars (bars 45–47).
- [B] [so/-/-/leil/], 1 word, 2 syllables, across 4 bars (bars 49–52).
- [C] [clo/-/-/ches/de 2 words, 6 syllables across 6 bars (bars 56–60).
- [D] [Pâ/-/-/-/ques/], 3 words, 5 syllables across 6 bars (bars 62–67).

Auric created a musico-poetic dialogue in bars 63–67 (see **E**, outlined in green, Example 7.10), where the vertical widening of registral spacing of the music and the horizontal syllabic spacing of the text intersect. This intensifies the moment of *poésie*.

He also included triplet motifs for the first time in the *mélodie*, as a rhythmic variation in both the vocal (bar 64) and piano parts (bars 63–66). The rhythmic change gives prominence to the vocal part, at this point.

Auric achieved a complex web of intertextual connections in a short musical phrase. He also uses this phrase of intense *poésie* and interart exchange as punctuation as well as a focal point of the whole *mélodie*. These short but highly concentrated and dynamic segments of interart dialogue are structurally significant and fulfil the requirements of *poésie* through their transdisciplinary and dissonant characteristics.

The diagram below (Figure 7.9), shows the structure of Auric's word setting according to the following parameters:

1. Auric's juxtaposed musical motifs (green sections), as Section 1 (bars 2–7), Section 2 (bars 35–38), Section 3 (bars 49–67), Section 4 (bars 90–97 and 99–104), within the word setting of Cocteau's non-linear narrative of text.¹²⁷⁰
2. Musical setting of Pictures **A** to **E** as described by Cocteau in his poem (bars 8–15, 19–22, 23–31, 45–48 and 80–89).¹²⁷¹
3. Piano sections either alone or with voice (blue sections).
4. Time signatures.
5. Rhythms that differentiate between syllabic syncopation, musical syncopation and word/music syncopation (Auric's compositional technique, as described in Chapter six).

The concentration of interart exchange as *poésie* in Auric's composition (shown in Example 7.10) is represented from an alternative perspective as a graphical illustration in Figure 7.10. The lower horizontal axes indicate bars 45–48, 49–55 and 56–67, where Auric has introduced progressive syllabic elongation in his word setting. The vertical axis separately marks the expanded registral range of vocal line (black), soprano piano line (red) and bass piano line (blue).

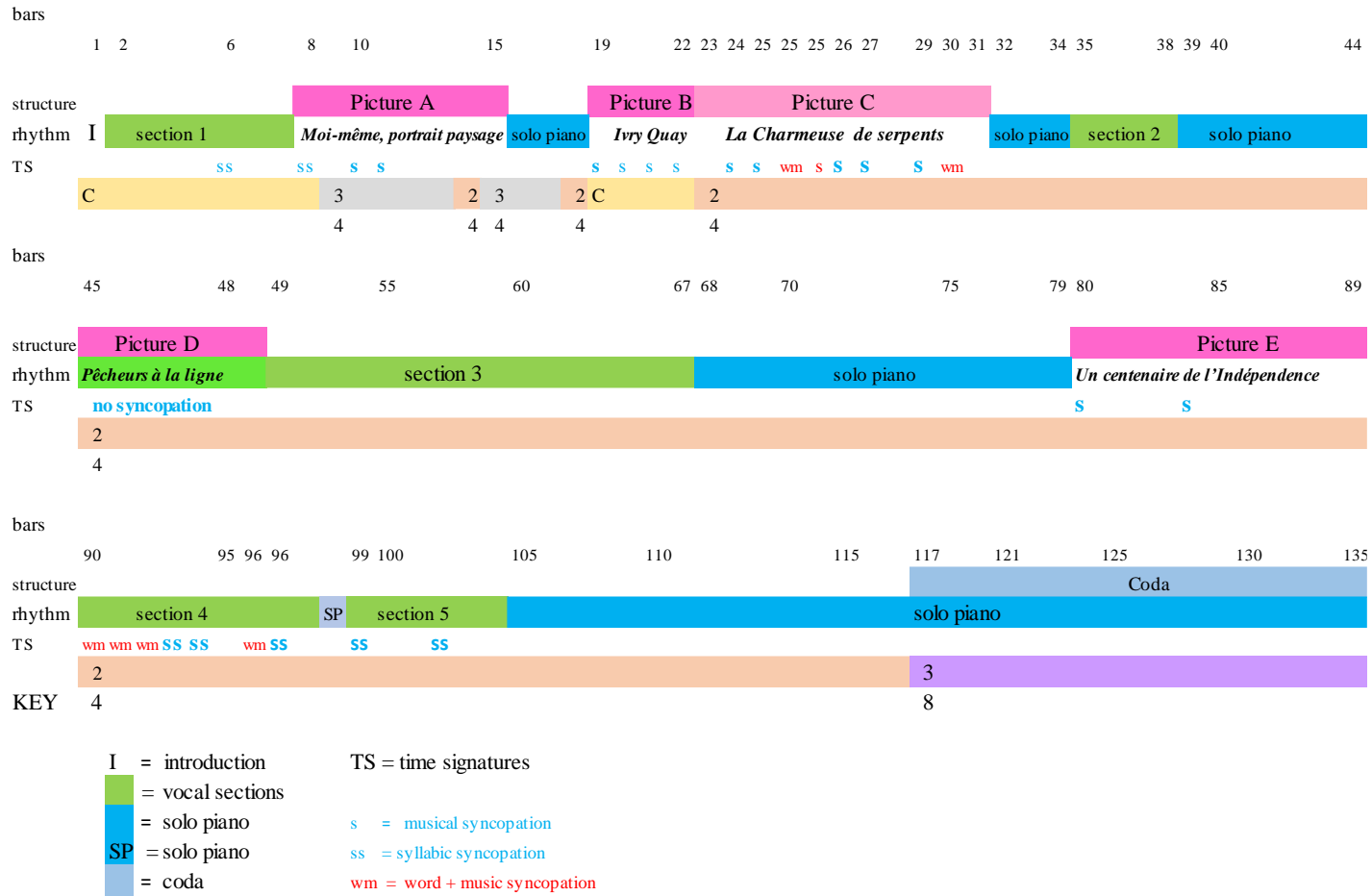
¹²⁷⁰ Auric, *Huit poèmes* (1963).

¹²⁷¹ Ibid.

Example 7.10 *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau*, bars 45–67 show the syllabic linear extension by Auric in his musical setting.

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Figure 7.9 Structural relationships between picture sections of text with syncopation and metric variations within the musical setting of *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau*.



After this complex section of word setting, that signifies the most concentrated section of *poésie*, Auric introduced a piano transition built on strong, repetitive regular rhythms, reminiscent of military march-style music (bars 67–79, Example 7.12).¹²⁷² In the next section, shown at **C** in green (Figure 7.11), Cocteau compared the animals of the jungle with sculptures in the city (See **G**, Figure 7.4). This imagery functions on two levels. Firstly, Cocteau linked animals to city people and made a metaphorical reference to the difference between the ‘savage’ and the ‘civilised’, in line with Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s philosophy as described earlier. The second allusion to animals of the city was a more direct reference to the actual animal sculptures in the *Place de la République*, which returns us to the idea of Nationalism and provides a thematic connection to verse three of *Hommage à Erik Satie* (see Chapter six, page 375).

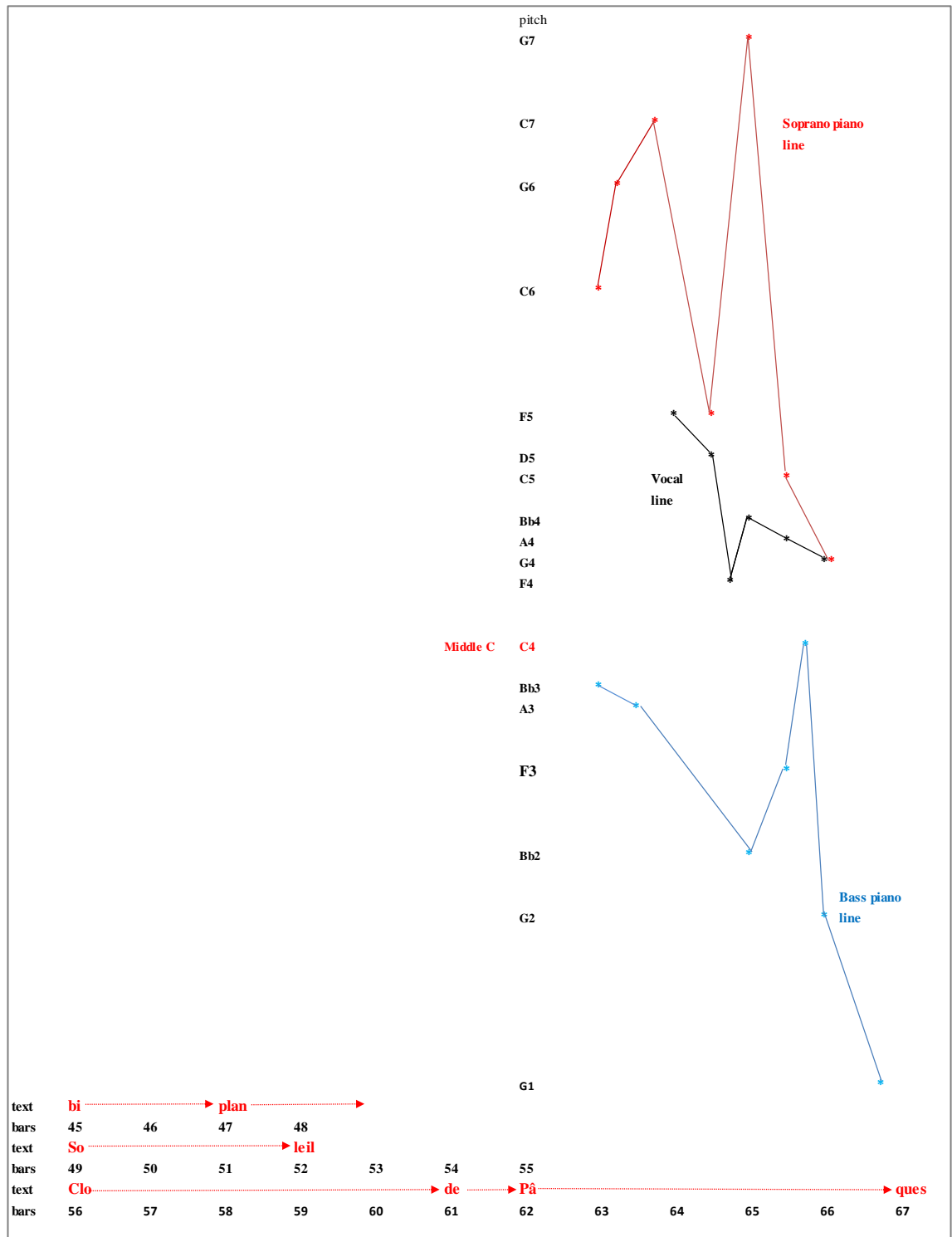
Auric re-enforced the Nationalistic theme, as portrayed by Cocteau’s description of ‘Un centenaire de l’Indépendance’ (the century of Independence), which is the last textual representation of Rousseau’s paintings in the poem. Cocteau describes a group of revellers dancing around the Liberty Tree, to mark the founding of the French Republic in 1792—clearly symbolic of French Nationalism (see **B**, Figure 7.11). The lyrics were straightforward and Auric simplified his musical setting accordingly, in keeping with the style of music that he and Satie (among others), were promoting at the time (bars 80–89 in Example 7.11). Cocteau and Auric were committed to creating a new French musical identity, as shown in the text and the music, through *poésie*. In his composition, Auric joined the two contrasting sections without transition but varied his musical setting according to Cocteau’s minimally spatially altered text (see Example 7.12). Auric kept the musical range at **A** narrow and it mirrors the contracted text. He maintained the regular march-like rhythms to transmit the Nationalistic theme. He

¹²⁷² See Andrew Haringer, ‘Hunt, Military, and Pastoral Topics’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, ed. Danuta Mirka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 194–213.

continued Cocteau's *poésie* in the completion of the transfer of an idea from image to text to music, but as a figure of consonance because he reflected the contracted spatiality of the poem and restricted the registral separation in the music (see **A**, bars 80–89 in Example 7.12).¹²⁷³

¹²⁷³ The term consonance is not used in a musical sense (harmonically) but is used here with reference to interart relationships, as described by Daniel Albright, and is aligned with Cocteau's ideas on synchronicity.

Figure 7.10 Graphical illustration of Auric's word setting, bars 45–67, showing the intersection of horizontal syllabic elongation of text with vertical registral spacing of music as the most concentrated occurrence of *poésie*.



Auric then immediately juxtaposed his own version of *poésie* in the more complex musical setting of the section that follows (see **B** bars 90–97, Example 7.12).

Here, he set the constricted text against music of very wide registral spacing, and though difference, he created the dissonance required as a function of *poésie* [P3]. The idea of spatiality is accentuated with Auric's performance instruction *très élargi* (very expansive) at bar 90. According to the principles of *poésie*, Auric's music asserts text and image through his use of spatial manipulation in his word setting. I reiterate: such spatiality is conceptual although the linearity of the lyrics in the song eliminates any implied textual spatiality, but the topographical image of the original layout is still visually retained in the reader's memory.

Example 7.11 *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau*, bars 80–89. Musical setting of Cocteau's description of *Un centenaire de l'Indépendance* (1892).

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Figure 7.11 Reproduction of original manuscript of *Le Douanier Rousseau*, showing sections **A** and **B** as the most spatially contracted parts of the poem.¹²⁷⁴

LE DOUANIER ROUSSEAU

Des aloès et des mésanges
en costume du dimanche.

les anges aux grosses ailes
volent autour
de la tour
Eiffel
l'autre s'appelait Jean-Jacques

le dirigeable République
le nègre jouait de la flûte
sur la butte
fumant

biplan
soleil
cloches de Pacques

sa pipe

A

B ce fut une belle fête
autour de l'arbre Liberté
On y voyait toutes les bêtes

de la jungle et de la cité.
un lion et un cheval blanc

C

et tous les deux très ressemblants.

Un air doux comme le SACRE
de Stravinsky

Père Rousseau, Douanier

Rousseau
et la belle noce appartient à qui? si tellement folâtre et sot
la belle noce massacre

la mésange disait 'vive la République' !

When Auric reintroduced a musical spatial dimension by expanding the registral space against the corresponding spatiality of the textual syllabic elongation (as previously described), he created a musico-poetic intersection of a simultaneous aural and visual perceptual experience. Auric set the pitches of bars 93, 94, 96 and 97 at their widest vertical, registral spacing of the whole piece. He also extended the note value of the vocal line at bar 93 and gave the first syllable 'bê' a whole bar (see **B**, Example 7.12). He completed the trio of image/text/music exchange using syllabic

¹²⁷⁴ Manuscript poèmes epars MS-FS-05-0016, BHVP, from collection, Vocabulaire (1917–1920) in Gullentons and Haine, *Jean Cocteau: textes*, 156.

Example 7.12 *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau*, bars 67–97 show Auric's contrasting musical settings for two spatially contracted sections of Cocteau's poem.

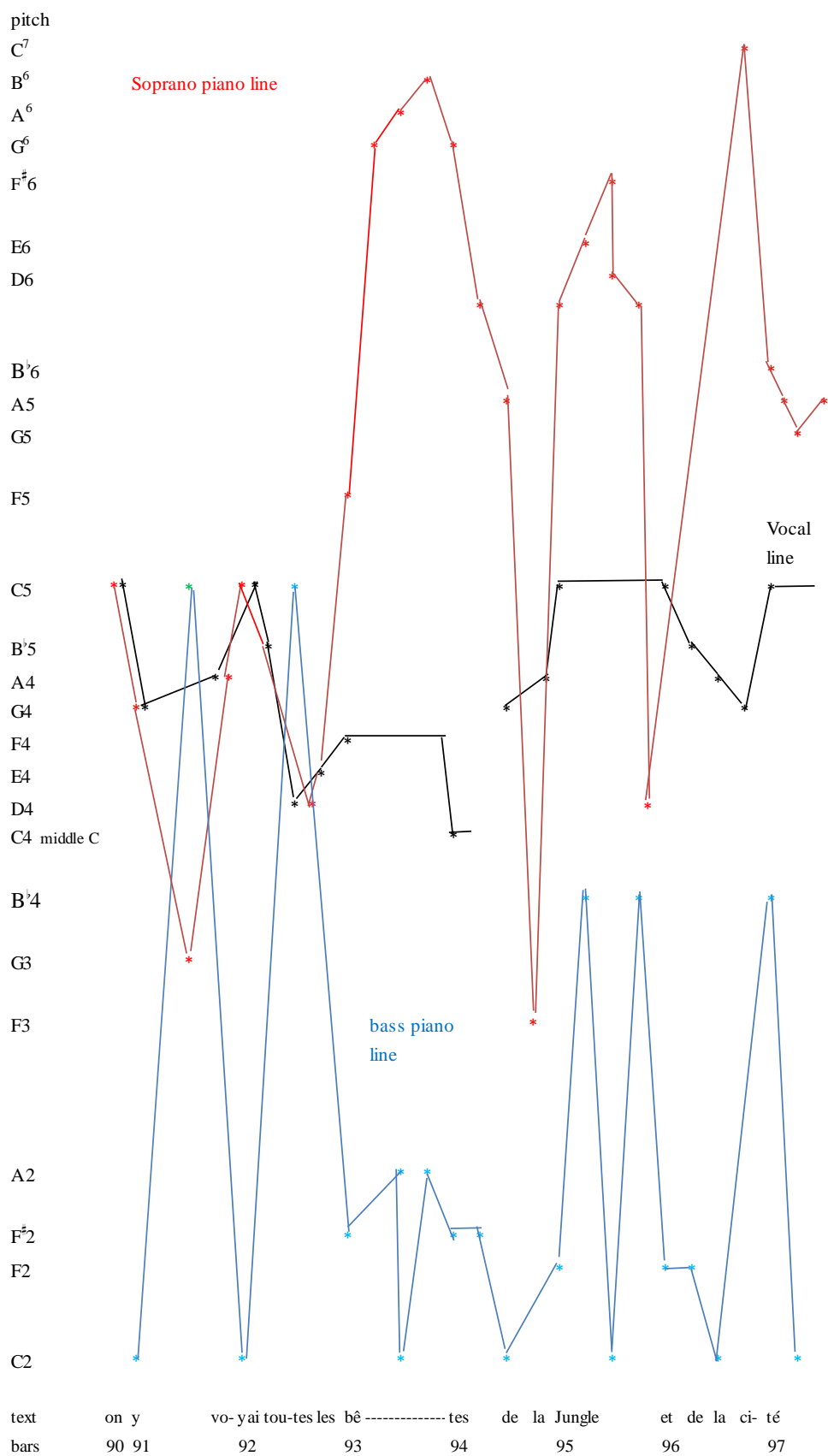
Image removed due to copyright reasons

syncopation in the vocal line. This provided the rhythmic characteristic of music to syllables at the end of bars 94 and 96 (see **C**, Example 7.10) and made a connection of *poésie* with bars 10–18 in *Hommage à Erik Satie*. In bars 63, 64 and 65 (see Chapter six) Auric created two important intersecting episodes of both vertical and horizontal spatial expansions in direct contrast to Cocteau’s compression of the text—as his version of *poésie*.

Figure 7.12 is a graphical representation of the conceptual musical spaces between wide pitch registers in section **B**, bars 90–97 of the *mélodie* (Example 7.13). The vertical axis denotes the pitches. The horizontal axis marks the bar numbers and the associated song lyrics. The red and blue lines represent the highest and lowest pitches of the soprano and bass piano parts, respectively, and show points of musical intersection. The black line marks the vocal line in the context of the musical setting.

Auric developed a compositional process that transfers the implied spatiality of the many visual images of Henri Rousseau’s paintings, described in Cocteau’s text, to his musical setting as an example of *poésie*. He used the sections containing linear expansion and/or registral spacing in a structural way, so as to shape his piece as musical prose. This can be seen in bars 8–15 in Example 7.2; bars 45–67 in Example 7.10; and **B**, bars 93–97, from Example 7.12. These all show similar spatial manipulations interspersed as a form of musical punctuation. In the entire composition, Auric makes ‘Pâques’ (Easter) the most linearly expanded word. He extends it over six bars (bars 62–67, Example 7.13) but, in contrast, he limited the registral spacing to two bars: 63 and 65 (**A** and **A**¹). Auric then altered the temporality in bars 64 and 65 (**B** and **B**¹) with a triplet rhythmic change (not found elsewhere in the piece).

Figure 7.12 Graphical representation of musical setting in bars 90–97, illustrating the relationship between the vertical registral spacing against the linear expansion of text at **B** (Example 7.13). This is the most concentrated example of musico-poetic interaction.



Auric incorporated both musical features at a point of intersection, in bar 65 at **A¹/B¹**, and maintained his spatial and temporal method before the triplet rhythm at bar 66, in preparation for the end of the phrase.

Example 7.13 *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau*, bars 62–67 show horizontal syllabic expansion, registral spacing and triplet rhythms.

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In other words, by introducing a spatial dimension into his musical setting that is aurally perceived, he subverted the temporality of both music and text and achieved *poésie* through the exchange of interart characteristics. In essence, the text asserts music and art, and the music asserts art and text.

From *Hommage à Erik Satie* to *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau*

In *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau*, with his original compositional approach, Auric created two complex musico-poetic sections that represent his version of an interart exchange, expressed as the transdisciplinary [P5], metaphorical [P6], and asynchronous (dissonant)[P3] components of *poésie*. Auric used these two climactic musical phrases to function structurally, as a cadence, after which he simplified the music but continued with some syllabic syncopation in bars 99 and 102. The piano transition prepares for a time signature change and a lively motif promotes the tom-tit's nationalistic message 'Vive la République' (long live the Republic) as a finale.

These *mélodies* were significant as one of Cocteau and Auric's very early collaborative projects, conceived during a very fertile period of interart experimentation—alongside the search for a new French musical identity. My analysis

of the two songs, that begin and end the *Huit poèmes de Jean Cocteau* series, has required a different methodology, formulated from my interpretation of Cocteau's concept of *poésie* and Auric's compositional approach. Cocteau's poems and Auric's music have both been shown to exhibit features of *poésie* assessed through alternative parameters of analysis, especially from a transdisciplinary perspective and by looking at other features of *poésie*.

The poem used in the first *mélodie*, *Hommage à Erik Satie* originated because Auric rejected Cocteau's initial version. From Auric's point of view, the first version did not have the necessary musical attributes that made it suitable for setting to music. As a consequence, Cocteau then wrote a poem constructed from an internal architecture of rhythmic patterns and sonorities. The final version was unusual, in that it did not conform to any particular linear narrative. Images and ideas were juxtaposed, and this resulted in a somewhat obscure and absurdist text. The ambiguous content, with its bizarre associations, forced the reader to actively develop an individual interpretation, thereby becoming part of the creative process and ensuring an ongoing evolution of the work. There are direct and indirect references to painting and music, and this makes the poem inherently transdisciplinary. The deconstructed form, of both text and music, facilitated a free-flowing transfer between art forms. The sonorities, rhythmic qualities and internal rhyming patterns of the text, produced a music-ready text that informed Auric's musical setting. He was able to transfer the inherent musical and transdisciplinary potential of the poem and adapt it into his own compositional process. The analysis has shown how Auric constructed his songs using motifs and cells as literary devices. He punctuated the music with repetitions, sequences and rhythmic patterns, building up 'words' to produce musical phrases and sentences. Effectively, his composition functioned as literature. He also expanded his musical idiom, which was aligned with Cocteau's interart method, because they both shared similar

transdisciplinary sensibilities. He created horizontal rhythmic dislocations between the phrases of song and music, and he varied the vertical spatiality and texture to produce his own version of *poésie* in his musical settings (although Auric never directly acknowledged Cocteau's concept).

The musicality of Cocteau's first poem is evident and was harnessed to maximum effect by the composer. However, the last one, *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau*, presented an entirely different compositional challenge for Auric. Here, Cocteau adopted a direct spatial approach to the design of his text and wrote a more visually orientated poem—as implied through its content. In it, he made multiple references to Rousseau's paintings and transformed the spatiality within a visual art into text by disrupting the layout on the page. The musical setting mirrored the spatial dimension by means of vertical registral widening as well as expanded linear spacing, as described previously. Auric does this in an oppositional way, as a figure of dissonance, in keeping with the principle of *poésie* [P3]. However, both compositions do show similar methods of construction in the form of musical prose: Auric developed a system of syntactical devices based on structural motifs that functioned in a literary way and enabled him to shape his songs by means of his alternative method (and Cocteau's *poésie*). In essence, these *mélodies* represent not only a collaborative realisation of the new musical aesthetic, that both artists actively promoted, but also exemplify the transdisciplinary creative perspective that they shared, inspired by Cocteau's concept of *poésie* and adapted into a musical setting through Auric's interpretation. This reflected *poésie*'s potential to underpin an interart dialogue. Yet *poésie* is never fully realised. Cocteau often conceived of and wrote about inaccessible, abstract ideas, sometimes to be self-promoting, provocative and enigmatic. Yet sometimes his writings were an attempt to articulate his creative aspirations, and they allow him to work through his personal and artistic difficulties. *Poésie*, by its very nature, was active because it was elusive,

paradoxical and represented a work never attained. Nonetheless, it continued to evolve through its intertextuality. *Poésie* is synonymous with Cocteau's authorial voice and represents the trajectory of his artistic journey. Because transdisciplinarity forms a large component of *poésie*, the concept gave Cocteau the opportunity to communicate the musicality that was fundamental to his creativity—whatever form of artistic expression he chose. Nevertheless, Cocteau needed Auric's contribution over their fifty-year friendship to fulfil his musical ambitions for a *poésie de musique*.

Chapter 8: Conclusion: *Poésie* As an Expression of Transdisciplinarity in the *Huit Poèmes de Jean Cocteau*

This thesis presents Jean Cocteau's concept of *poésie* as the overarching principle that shaped and unified his creative production. It adds to Cocteau studies by providing a perspective of his musical practice (Chapter two). More specifically, it reveals aspects of Auric's creative practice (Chapters six and seven). *Poésie* is situated at the very core of Cocteau's artistic philosophy and creative practice (Chapter four). He metaphorically described it as 'his single red line', and it was the embodiment of his transdisciplinary sensibility.¹²⁷⁵ I have shown how my modification of Cocteau's theoretical concept can be applied as a practical analytical method from the perspective of musico-poetic relationships. I selected Auric's two of musical settings of Cocteau's poetry—*Hommage à Erik Satie* and *Portrait d'Henri Rousseau*, that begin and end the *Huit poèmes de Jean Cocteau* series—to test my model (Chapters six and seven, respectively), and to expose the transdisciplinary origins of Cocteau and Auric's shared aesthetic. Across his career, Cocteau interrogated his own transdisciplinarity across his diverse output. Indeed, he wrote:

Why do you write plays? asks the novelist. Why do you write novels? asks the playwright. Why do you make movies? asks the poet. Why do you draw? asks the critic. Why do you write? asks the draughtsman. Yes, why? I wonder. Probably so my seed can fly all over the place. The breath that inhabits me, I hardly know it, but it is not tender. It ignores fatigue. It takes advantage of my skills. It wants to give form to trumpets. It forces me from all sides. it's not an inspiration, but an expiration, one should say.¹²⁷⁶

¹²⁷⁵ Cocteau, *Journal 1942–1945*, 412–413: 'Si les critiques se donnaient la moindre peine, ils retrouveraient dans mes œuvres ce fil unique, rouge—et qui les traverse'.

¹²⁷⁶ Cocteau, *La Difficulté* (Rocher), 47: 'Pourquoi faites-vous des pièces? me demande le romancier. Pourquoi faites-vous des romans? me demande le dramaturge. Pourquoi faites-vous des films? me demande le poète. Pourquoi dessinez-vous? me demande le critique. Pourquoi écrivez-vous? me demande le dessinateur. Oui, pourquoi? Je me le demande. Sans doute pour que ma graine vole un peu partout. Le souffle qui m'habite, je le connais mal, mais il n'est pas tendre. Il ignore la fatigue. Il profite de mes aptitudes. Il veut donner sa forme aux trompettes. Il me force de toutes parts. Ce n'est pas inspiration, c'est expiration qu'il faut dire'.

Cocteau regarded himself, above all, as a poet but he did not allow this to restrict his creative production. In fact, he broadened his idea of poetry and used the term *poésie* to encompass all his other artistic activity. He demonstrated a strong musical affinity which informed and shaped his entire creative output in one way or another, and this explains his many collaborations with so many different composers. Ultimately, however, it was Auric's musical contribution (throughout their long-term collaborative association) that enabled Cocteau to satisfy the musical void in his own creativity. Initially, Cocteau was Auric's mentor—he was older by ten years—and helped the composer to expand his creativity. But, with time, the artistic relationship developed a more equal dynamic. Later, Auric gained experience and independence, and he became more assertive within the working relationship, which was still based on mutual respect and a shared aesthetic (Chapter three).

The shared aesthetic sets the context for evaluating Cocteau and Auric's interart aesthetic through the parameters of *poésie* and music. Auric never directly mentioned *poésie* as a working method, but the literature confirms that both he and Cocteau shared a broad interest across all arts, and that this then informed their aesthetic. I do not claim that *poésie* was a conscious creative process for either artist, but more a lens through which their shared aesthetic can be explored.¹²⁷⁷

Cocteau wrote extensively about *poésie*, albeit in a somewhat erratic and disorganised way. He tended to commit his thoughts to paper as a conscious stream of writing. The sheer volume of his publications proved to be both an advantage and a hindrance. It has been possible to gain considerable information and insight into Cocteau's work as an individual creator and in a collaborative context. Yet, it has been necessary to be particularly circumspect about all such gleaned information, because

¹²⁷⁷ See Gullentops and Haine, *Jean Cocteau: textes*. Contains a compilation of all Cocteau's texts that have been set to music by different composers and includes essays by various authors on topics that relate to Cocteau and Auric's contribution to music and their interart orientation.

Cocteau was notorious for favouring ambiguity and misinformation. He admired how the poet Rimbaud (1854–1891) was miraculously able to ‘place the two forms of obscurity into a work, one clear on the right side, the other obscure on the wrong side’.¹²⁷⁸ They were both intrigued by the idea of an ambiguous surface. Ambiguity and obscurity in his work allowed Cocteau to build his personal mythology, which he could then hide behind in an attempt to disguise any insecurities and disappointments at public criticism. Sometimes his writings were an attempt to articulate his creative aspirations and allowed him to work through his personal and artistic difficulties. He also used his publications for purposes of self-promotion. Moreover, his abstract ideas and unusual works made it harder for other artists to imitate him. It was, therefore, more difficult to sustain the necessary objectivity in my work: Cocteau’s writings are theoretically very seductive but, in practice, sometimes proved to be problematic. His concept of *poésie* proposed several disparate abstract ideas around his artistic aesthetic, from which I have distilled and modified eleven principles of *poésie* (Chapter four). These principles are a model by which to assess his works from a transdisciplinary viewpoint. *Le Potomak*, as Cocteau seminal work, was the means by which he tested his own concept (Chapter five). I have interrogated *Le Potomak* to establish the extent to which it is an example of *poésie* and can be considered as Cocteau’s interart manifesto (much in the way that *Le Coq et l’Arlequin*—his second publication—was his musical manifesto). The exploration of *Le Potomak* prepares the context for the subsequent analyses of the two case studies.

My analysis has necessitated an original methodology. This was established from the interart exploration of *Le Potomak* (Chapter five) and has been formulated using my interpretation of Cocteau’s concept of *poésie* alongside an understanding of

¹²⁷⁸ Jean Cocteau, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 9 (Geneva: Marguerat, 1950), 232: ‘lui son miracle consiste à mettre les deux formes d’obscurité en œuvre, un ouvrage claire à l’endroit, obscur à l’envers’.

Auric's compositional approach in the context of word/music interactions. In essence, these *mélodies* represent not only a collaborative realisation of the new musical aesthetic that both artists actively promoted, but also exemplified the transdisciplinary creative sensibility that they shared. This was inspired by Cocteau's concept of *poésie* and adapted into a musical setting by Auric's interpretation of it. Cocteau's poems and Auric's music have both been shown to exhibit features of *poésie* assessed through an analysis that is based on an exploration of the spatio-temporal interface between text and music as transdisciplinary parameters. My work reflects *poésie*'s potential to underpin an interart dialogue, which is certainly applicable to the analytical model established here. I have formulated a new analytical method based on musico-poetic factors rather than on harmonic, melodic and rhythmic ones, as with established analytical methods. However, traditional analyses often require metaphorical and figurative descriptions, in common with the work presented here.

As well as proposing a new analytical model, my research draws on and contributes to the wider theoretical interart scholarship, pertaining to exchange and dialogue across and between the arts. My contribution to this discourse depends on substantiating *poésie* as a concept that functions according to certain identifiable conceptual processes, which I collate and present as a unified intellectual framework. I identify a transdisciplinarity that goes beyond artistic boundaries yet is characterised by interart differences, which are accentuated. I draw on and expand the conceptual ideas referred to: they underpin *poésie* in its transformative, transdisciplinary and metaphorical functions.

Poésie, by its very nature, is complex, elusive, paradoxical and, consequently, difficult to access. Despite strong theoretical propositions, it is more difficult to translate into practical application. It represents the work never attained but, nevertheless, continues to evolve through its intertextuality. *Poésie* is synonymous with

Cocteau's authorial voice and represents the trajectory of his artistic journey. Although Auric was associated with Cocteau over a long period, he had his own aesthetic. Yet, his word settings show how he understood the musicality of the poet's texts. They enabled him to adapt his own transdisciplinary compositional method of word setting. None of Auric's subsequent musical setting of texts by other people have been explored. The question as to whether they conform to Auric's interpretation of Cocteau's concept of *poésie* offers potential for further research. Although I have identified eleven principles of *poésie*, only three emerge as particularly significant in the formulation of my methodology because they are particularly pertinent to the aesthetic of both Auric and Cocteau. My analysis has focussed on how Cocteau and Auric's works need to show transdisciplinarity [P5], be understood through metaphor [P6], and show manipulation of their spatial and temporal dimensions [P11], so that they can be said to enact *poésie*. The other eight principles have not been considered in my analysis. My research is limited to only two of the eight *mélodies* and no other Cocteau/Auric multidimensional collaborative works have been tested against the model.

Can the principles of *poésie* be seen in the work of other artists? This raises additional questions which are valid for future research. The exact nature of their collaboration is also called into question: it was based far more on shared interart sensibilities than generally accepted collaborative processes, whereby two or more people work simultaneously and in close proximity to contribute to the development of a production. Instead, it has been shown how Auric and Cocteau worked separately and exchanged ideas from a distance.

It is the transdisciplinarity, with its associated interart transfer at the musico-poetic intersection, that forms a large component of *poésie*. This characteristic emerges from my research in a significant way because it informed the artistic practice of both men (along with their collaborative association) and explains why it is central to my

analysis of the two chosen case studies. Transdisciplinarity is the concept that gave Cocteau the opportunity to communicate the musicality fundamental to his creativity—whatever form of artistic expression that might be. So, it is necessary to consider how Cocteau might experience music in terms of other art forms through metaphor, as a practical realisation of a *poésie de musique*—one which was in line with his broader theoretical concept.

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