UNIFYING DEVICES IN POULENC
A study of the cycles Banalités and Tel jour telle nuit

by

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ABSTRACT

Francis Poulenc has made a significant contribution to twentieth century repertoire for voice and piano. Many of his songs are published in collections under a single title. These collections are often referred to as cycles, but they do not always fall into the definition of a song cycle in the traditional sense. The goal of this paper is to disclose a cyclic nature on a structural level in the music of Banalités, using Tel jour telle nuit as a model for critical examination of both works.

The introduction to the thesis addresses both the problem of defining a song cycle, and the implications such a definition has on categorizing the works Banalités and Tel jour telle nuit. Chapter One explores influences of composers, teachers and artistic movements on Poulenc's early life and outlines his significant compositional periods. In addition, this chapter cites specific works indicative of a maturation process in Poulenc's approach to vocal settings. Chapter Two investigates the poetic texts of Banalités and Tel jour telle nuit. Guillaume Apollinaire and Paul Eluard were integral figures in the developments of Surrealism and its formation as an artistic movement. The chapter analyses the linkage between the poems within each work, offering interpretive solutions.

Chapter Three, which constitutes the main body of the paper, provides a detailed analysis of the general architecture and shape of each cycle in terms of formal structure, harmonic and melodic language, and text-music relationships. The analysis reveals that both cycles are highly integrated and unified through various devices, such as literal restatement of materials, intervallic relationships and stylistic resemblances at the levels of texture, tempo and tonal structure. Moreover, metric aspects of both poetry and music are shown to also contribute to that integration.
In light of this investigation, unifying devices of both a covert and overt nature testify to the cyclic nature of Banalités and Tel jour telle nuit, yet point to the different type of cycle each work outlines. This conclusion helps the performers to convey the unity of the song cycles, thus doing justice to the sense in which Poulenc conceived the works.
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INTRODUCTION

The cycles Banalités (a group of five songs set to words of Guillaume Apollinaire) and Tel jour telle nuit (consisting of nine songs with texts by Paul Eluard) have been recognized by musicologists, theorists and performers as major contributions to Francis Poulenc's legacy of vocal music.¹

The composer has been described by some as "a musical clown of the first order, a brilliant musical mimic, and an adroit craftsman".² Undeniably, works written during his early years are characterized by a propensity for a witty and somewhat comical style. However, in later years (from 1932 onwards) his compositional technique began to exploit a more poignant and deeper melodic inspiration, derived from insightful poetic interpretations.

In his biography and commentary on the songs of Francis Poulenc, Pierre Bernac writes: "Tel jour telle nuit constitutes a cycle in the true sense of the word"³, and, "this collection of five poems [Banalités] is not in any sense a cycle."⁴ To put these works into perspective, two vital questions must be asked: What does Bernac mean by "a cycle in the true sense of the word", and, what are his reasons for not considering Banalités a cycle?

To begin, it is necessary to define the word "cycle" and clarify its use in this discussion. Luise Peake suggests that a song cycle is:

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³ Bernac, Francis Poulenc, p. 97.
⁴ Ibid., p. 69.
A composite form of vocal music consisting of a group of individually complete songs... It may relate a series of events, or a series of impressions, or it may simply be a group of songs unified by mood. The texts may be by a single author or from several sources.\(^5\)

Peake continues her definition with a more specific set of criteria:

Each [song cycle] is an art work in which the emotional content of each song, together with its rhythmic and dynamic momentum, is allowed to carry over to the next, and to be musically prepared, developed and concluded.\(^6\)

The momentum Peake refers to implies a progression and linkage of some kind. This linking she cites as being emotional, rhythmic and dynamic. Certain romantic cycles such as Schumann's *Frauenliebe und -leben* and Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* depict the momentum of Peake's definition to various degrees and on varied levels. *Frauenliebe und -leben* tells of a woman's love through the eyes of a girl, bride, wife, mother and widow. The mill stream provides a linking element for the emotional journey of the lad in *Die schöne Müllerin*.

Some works are referred to as cycles despite the absence of a story-line or linking musical material. Schubert's *Schwanengesang*, for example, a collection of songs on poems by Rellstab, Heine and Seidl, has been considered a song cycle only because of the publisher's decision to release them together under this name. In light of the previous definition, a classification of this collection as a cycle is a misconter. However, Gerald Moore finds a momentum of a kind in the 'sehnsucht' or 'longing' theme contained in some of the

\(^6\) Ibid., p. 522.
verses which justifies him to include it in his book, The Schubert Song Cycles.\textsuperscript{7}

Poulenc refers to his groups of songs under a single title as 'cycles' in much the same way as Peake. However, Poulenc's concept of the term seems to have caused apparent disagreement between him and Bernac. For example, concerning Fiançailles pour rire, Poulenc stated: "the tonal ambiguity prevents the song [La dame d'André] from coming to a conclusion and so prepares the way for the following song."\textsuperscript{8} This kind of linkage resembles the one indicated by Peake as a characteristic of the work as a song cycle. In what appears to be a contradiction, Bernac insists that the collection Fiançailles pour rire "...does not at all constitute a true cycle", and that "...there is no poetic or musical link of any kind between these effectively contrasting songs."\textsuperscript{9} One could interpret Bernac's claim to mean that some songs from collections such as Fiançailles pour rire or Banalités could very well be performed out of context with each other. Yet he also contradicts himself by asserting that both these and other cycles do form a "well-constructed group for concert performance".\textsuperscript{10}

A cursory glance at the five songs which make up the cycle Banalités does not show immediate connections between them. However, a study of aspects of the surrealist movement and Apollinaire's anticipation of its ideals, reveal associations of themes within the poetry. It is also the intention of this paper to disclose a cyclic nature in the music of Banalités on a structural level, using Tel jour telle nuit as a model for critical examination of both works. The ultimate purpose is to aid performers in

\textsuperscript{9} Bernac, Francis Poulenc, p. 137.
\textsuperscript{10} Ibid.
discovering a sense of continuity and cohesiveness beneficial to performance. As a result, audiences may perceive more clearly the often obscure evocations elicited by the poetry.

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CHAPTER ONE
POULENC'S EARLY LIFE AND INFLUENCES

Francis Poulenc was born on January 7, 1899, in the heart of Paris. His early spiritual, cultural and musical development was self-admittedly influenced by his parents. In particular his mother, who was a competent pianist, introduced the young Poulenc to the music of Mozart, Chopin, Schubert, Schumann and Scarlatti. Moreover, she communicated her love for popular salon music by composers such as Grieg and Anton Rubinstein. In later years, Poulenc referred to this style of music as "l'adorable mauvaise musique" - the adorable bad music.

Fascinated with Debussy's composition Danse sacrée et danse profane for cross-strung chromatic harp and string orchestra, Poulenc was intrigued by Debussy's predilection for ninth chords and added tones. Several years later, at the age of eleven, his interest in song literature was awakened with the discovery of Schubert's Winterreise in a local Parisian music shop. His study of these works, in addition to L'Oiseau de feu, Petrouchka and Le sacre du printemps of Stravinsky, proved to be a major influence in Poulenc's early music education and development as a composer. His earliest attempts at composition, a group of preludes of "incredible complexity written out on three or four staves, [were] later referred to by the composer as inferior imitations of Debussy and Stravinsky".\(^{11}\)

In 1914 Poulenc discovered the music of Emmanuel Chabrier. Thirty five years later, Poulenc wrote a biography of this composer who made an indelible mark on him and on many of his contemporaries. Perhaps, as Daniel points out, the "anti-romantic, anti-Wagnerian bent of much of [Chabrier's] music certainly must

have attracted these composers, as did his simple textures, ingratiating melodies, and popular café-concert atmosphere.\(^\text{12}\)

At the age of fifteen, Poulenc began studies with the Spanish virtuoso pianist, Ricardo Viñes. He describes this as being a "turning point" in his life. The young man learned much from this teacher who not only guided his pianistic technique, but also broadened his horizons as an artist.

The characteristic exuberance and freedom which distinguished Viñes' style was reflected in Poulenc's playing. A distinctive trait, which later was to find its way into Poulenc's compositions, was Viñes' pedal technique which Viñes himself considered to be "an essential factor" in modern music. Poulenc commented on Viñes and aspects of piano technique: "...nobody knew better how to teach this than he did. He could play clearly in a flood of pedals. And what science of the staccato opposed to an absolute legato".\(^\text{13}\)

By 1916, Poulenc had begun to make his presence felt in the artistic circles of the Parisian "musical kaleidoscope", so dubbed by Elaine Brody in her book by the same name.\(^\text{14}\) He became acquainted with the leading poets and musicians of the day and, in particular, formed a friendship with Eric Satie. Although this bond was to last a mere seven years, Satie's influence on Poulenc was profound, and can be heard in his compositions written between 1918 and 1920. Further to this influence, Poulenc comments:

Shortly afterward, I wrote the Mouvements perpétuels and, a bit later, this Suite en ut so obviously Satie-esque. You must realize that the metamorphosis took place in the twinkling of an eye under the guidance of a magician who knew my true personality.\(^\text{15}\)

\(^\text{13}\) Bernac, Francis Poulenc, p. 23.
\(^\text{15}\) Daniel, Francis Poulenc: His Artistic Development and Musical Style, p. 12.
Satie's influence was not confined to Poulenc. He became the "spiritual model" and "unofficial guardian" of a group of musicians who called themselves "Les Nouveaux Jeunes". Initially made up of Georges Auric, Arthur Honegger, Louis Durey and, later, Darius Milhaud, this group met frequently for readings of music and poetry. These readings were often enhanced by displays of art by Parisian painters such as Picasso, Braque and Gris. Poulenc and Germaine Tailleferre joined the core group of composers in the fall of 1917.

Musical soirées became the avenue for the performance of many of Poulenc's early works such as the song cycles Le Bestiare, Cocardes, and the Mouvements perpétuels for solo piano. In his biography of the composer, Hell refers to the "striking melodic gifts" evident in the short songs of Le Bestiare and to the apparent intimacy found here between Poulenc the musician and Apollinaire the poet. The reminiscent music-hall tunes found in Cocardes are a complete contrast to Le Bestiare. The enigmatic Cocteau poems benefit from Poulenc's uncluttered settings.

Elements of grace, charm, colour and clarity of texture reflect a movement which took place during and immediately after World War I. It was a reaction against both the German romanticism of Wagner and the French impressionism of Debussy. Not only was this response apparent in music but also in art and literature. Brody calls Paris a "cultural melting pot", owing to the interaction which existed between musicians, writers and artists after World War I. Music was an important part of the lives of artists of many disciplines such as Degas (who had little love for Wagner, preferring the music of Chabrier) and Rodin (who disliked Debussy). Writers who turned away from Wagner included Gide, who called him "barbarous". The trend was toward clarity of expression and away from superfluous ornamentation. This can be observed in the music of Satie, poems of Cocteau and Apollinaire, and works of Picasso and Braque.

Although the six musicians of Les Nouveaux Jeunes (Auric, Honegger, Durey, Tailleferre, Milhaud and Poulenc) shared a very general dislike of extremes in music, they made no conscious effort to form a "national school" of any description. In fact, the name of
"Les Six" became attached to them as a result of articles written by Henri Collet in *Comoedia* entitled: 'The Five Russians, the Six Frenchmen and Satie', and, 'The Six Frenchmen'. Milhaud writes:

Quite arbitrarily [Collet] had chosen six names: Auric, Durey, Honegger, Poulenc, Tailleferre and my own, merely because we knew one another, were good friends, and had figured on the same programmes; quite irrespective of our different temperaments and wholly dissimilar characters.¹⁶

This feeling is shared by Poulenc in his comment that their names "...only had to be linked together as a team several times for a critic needing a slogan to baptize the French "Les Six", on the model of the famous "Five" Russian composers. We had never had any common aesthetic and our musical styles have always been dissimilar".¹⁷

In her article entitled 'Les Six and Jean Cocteau', Vera Rasin believes however that a bond did exist: "On the purely musical side the members of the 'Groupe des Six' were linked by technique".¹⁸ Rasin draws an insightful analogy between jazz and the popular songs of the day and the group's search for "simplicity" and "purity". As well, she sees an interesting comparison between the writing style of composers in France after World War I and the economy of movement demonstrated by acrobatics and clowns of the French circus. She speaks of a "return to what was almost a form of classicism"¹⁹ and points to a movement away from the influences of Debussy and Ravel. These observations reflect a pamphlet by Jean Cocteau, written in 1918, entitled *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*. This manifesto spurred the group which, with the help of Cocteau and

¹⁹ Ibid., p.167.
Satie, "provided a much-needed breath of fresh air in the stuffy, over-heated atmosphere of French music of the time".\(^{20}\)

Despite the denial by Poulenc and Milhaud of any association based on style between members of Les Six, the six Parisian composers shared the maxims contained in Le Coq et l'Arlequin. An examination of these new ideals reveals a cleaner, purer style of writing: melodies based on music-hall tunes, interpolations of 'jazz' idioms, explorations of harmony through the use of bitonality and a return to what Martin Cooper describes as the implication of "a linear conception of music".

In a sense this proclamation of the ideals of simplicity, sobriety and linear workmanship was a form of classicism...With such ideas as these it was inevitable that neo-classical pastiche should take the place of what might have been a more serious return to classical ideals and practices. This did not fail to happen, especially in the case of the two composers [Poulenc and Auric] who were at the heart of the new movement.\(^{21}\)

Acknowledging such differences concerning the unity of "Les Six", suffice it to say that Poulenc's association with the group provided recognition to both him and his music. His first work performed publicly was a chamber composition written in 1917 for piano, string quartet, flute, B-flat clarinet and voice. This five-movement composition entitled *Rapsodie nègre*, considered avant-garde for its time, caused quite a reaction to its extreme dissonances, parallel fifths, and octaves.

During the period 1917-21, Poulenc served in the army and continued to develop his own unique style, composing from instinct rather than from formal training. After his discharge from military service in 1921, he began studies with Charles Koechlin who had a significant influence on him. Koechlin used Bach chorale melodies to

\(^{20}\) Ibid.

\(^{21}\) Cooper, *French Music*, pp. 185-186.
instill basic rules of harmonization and encouraged Poulenc's obvious talent for choral composition. A result was his first work for chorus written in 1922: *Chanson à boire*. Glimpses of later works for this medium may be seen here. Of particular note is Poulenc's ability to colour the text through innovative harmony which contradicted techniques being taught at the Paris Conservatoire and Schola Cantorum.

"Les Six" developed individually as composers and, by the end of 1921 went their separate ways. The last attempt at a "group" composition was initiated by Cocteau and was a dadaist fantasy entitled *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel*. Ideally it was to be a collaboration between all the members of "Les Six". However, Durey refused to participate and Honegger contributed only a single piece.

Despite their relatively short existence as a group and questionable unification, it must be said that their friendship was the bond which enabled them to liberate France from Wagner and impressionism. In Keith Daniel's words:

...they accelerated the decline of romanticism [and] helped to lay the artistic foundation of skepticism and banality upon which dada and surrealism flourished. They brought music back down to earth...They helped usher in a decade of pleasure...and aesthetic freedom...They set the stage for, and became some of the chief proponents of, musical neo-classicism".\(^{22}\)

While composing diverse works, Poulenc nurtured his love for the poetry of Cocteau, Apollinaire, Eluard, Jacob and others whose poetry was published in various literary journals in existence during the war years. Although instrumental works dominated Poulenc's output during the years 1923-30, he did write several compositions for the voice. *Poèmes de Ronsard* contain splashes of heavy

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dissonance and Poulenc states that they were written, with the exception of the prosody, "with all possible carelessness".  

In the genre of vocal music, he was openly critical of his 1927-28 work: Airs chantés. He writes:

I am always astonished at myself for having been able to write these four songs. I detest Moreas and I chose these poems precisely because I found them suitable for mutilation...Have I been punished for my vandalism? I fear so, because this song [Air champêtre] that irritates me is said to be a hit.  

In addition to this criticism of the work, Hell and Bernac comment on the mediocrity of both poetry and music. Although they contain phrases with a fine melodic sweep, much of the piano writing seems uninspired and purely accompanimental.

Poulenc was much more positive in his remarks concerning the Chansons gaillardes, whose texts are anonymous ribald poems dating from the seventeenth century. Here we see the piano as an equal partner with the voice. The accompaniments are intricately woven with the vocal line and although spiced with dissonance, cannot be characterized as such throughout.

During the mid-1920's Poulenc excelled in chamber composition. With these compositions, the piano took on a role of increased importance in Poulenc's style of writing. The Trio (1926) for piano, oboe and bassoon is considered one of his masterworks in the repertoire. In three movements, it opens with a declamatory statement from the piano which immediately establishes its central position in the ensemble. The composer again gave the piano a major role in his choreographic concerto entitled Aubade, written in 1929. At the very least, the piano is given consideration as an equal member of a small chamber orchestra numbering nineteen instruments.

23 Poulenc, Diary of My Songs, p. 23.
24 Ibid., p. 25.
Poulenc continued to write music for piano during this period. Although some of these compositions (Trois pièces (1928), Deux novelettes (1927-28)) have become popular, his works for solo piano are of uneven quality and have received criticism for their superficial nature and seeming lack of inspiration.

It was with the four songs: Quatre poèmes, written in 1931 and set to the poetry of Apollinaire, that Poulenc felt he had found his "true melodic style". In this work Poulenc successfully juggles two primary characteristic traits that are the hallmarks of his style: the elements of comic light-heartedness versus a more serious lyric quality of melody foreshadow a mature Poulenc, inspired by poetic word.

In fact, Guillaume Apollinaire and Paul Eluard were (along with Max Jacob) the poets he most admired. In 1935 the composer turned to Eluard's poetry for Cinq poèmes, a work written for his first recital with baritone Pierre Bernac.25 At that time, as the composer himself states, he was "feeling [his] way in this work."26 The difficulties inherent in surrealist poetry are apparent when one listens to these Eluard settings. Although the dominant mood is one of gravity, they seem somewhat disjointed. (This characteristic is not atypical of poetry of this nature, and further discussion of such attributes will be found within the dissertation.)

Poulenc overcomes these problems of text interpretation in his settings of the nine Eluard poems which make up the cycle Tel jour telle nuit, written between December, 1936 and January, 1937. The poet himself acknowledges the composer's achievement after the work's first performance:

I hardly listened to myself Francis
Francis through you I now hear myself
On the whitest of roads
Through a vast landscape

25 Undoubtedly, the relationship between Poulenc and Bernac was instrumental to Poulenc's acquisition of skill at writing for the voice and mastery of lyric technique. He learned much from accompanying the singer in performances of standard German lieder as well as the French art songs of Debussy, Ravel and Fauré.
26 Poulenc, Diary of My Songs, p. 31.
Soaked in light  
Night has now no roots  
Shade is behind mirrors  
Francis we dream of distance  
Like a child with an endless game  
In the starlit country  
Giving in return youth.  

In Bernac's opinion, *Tel jour telle nuit* "may well never be equalled in the whole of 20th century vocal music."  

The years 1937-40 were prolific: Poulenc composed a variety of works for voice (solo or chorus), revised a sextet, and began work on incidental music for *Babar the Elephant*, the *Sonata for cello and piano*, and music for a ballet.  

The Apollinaire poems which make up the five songs of *Banalités* were discovered by Poulenc in old literary reviews published during the war years. These songs, written in the months of October and November 1940, have enjoyed an immense popularity due primarily to their accessibility to audiences.  

This accessibility can be attributed to Poulenc's success at setting the extraordinary texts with enlightening compositional devices. Poulenc himself has been described as "a Surrealistic mixture of seemingly contradictory elements."  

How do these contradictions allow clarity and insight? Poulenc clarifies the text for the listener by his manner of text setting and organic development of ideas. In a sense, the composer guides the musicians and the audience along his own stream of thought, thereby participating in the interpretive process. These thoughts are communicated through melodic and rhythmic impulse - the 'momentum' Peake uses in her definition of the cycle.  

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27 Henri Hell, *Francis Poulenc*, p. 53.  
Several analyses exist which are devoted to the study of various musical aspects of Francis Poulenc's works. The extensive study undertaken by Daniel has resulted in an invaluable addition to scholarly research and as such should be considered primary source material. Werner's study articulates Poulenc's harmonic language and provides a source of reference for structural analysis. The work of Stringer gives a detailed study of the diversity of compositional styles found in Poulenc's song and chamber/instrumental genres.

The goal of this paper is to further analyse Banalités and Tel jour telle nuit, especially from a performance perspective. Bearing in mind elements that most concern the singer, pianist, and their audience, this study comprises two sections: (1) the surrealist texts of Apollinaire and Eluard and (2) Poulenc's harmonic and melodic language, with attention to general form and structure and aspects concerning performance.

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Surrealism has had an impact unequaled, in our time, by any other conception of literary communication.

J.H. Matthews

Such a monumental assertion reflects the significance of the artistic movement known as Surrealism. Although not confined solely to France, it was there that the movement became articulate. André Breton (1896 - 1966), a French poet and critic, is considered the founder of the movement. Surrealism had its beginnings in Dadaism, a deliberately provocative movement which reacted to the concepts of waste and war. Its aim was primarily directed toward the destruction of certain aesthetics and resulted in experimentations with phonetic or nonsense poetry, collage and theatre events that often bordered on the outrageous. Breton was associated with this movement, but broke from it in 1924 to issue his first Manifeste du Surréalisme, devoted to poetic surrealism and the surrealist viewpoint.

In this discourse, Breton recalls how, in 1919, he began to pay attention to phrases and their corresponding striking images that would enter his head before falling asleep. Using an experimental technique he called "automatic writing", he recorded his thoughts as he attempted to suppress any attempts at organization or interpretation.

His ultimate goal was to increase the boundaries of artistic creation. To achieve this, he concentrated on the world of the
unconscious mind; dreams and fantasies became the vehicle for artistic creativity.

The recognized difficulties in deciphering or interpreting works of a surrealist nature are obvious. What the reader brings to the text will affect his interpretation of verbal cues. Commenting on this, Louise Rosenblatt explains that "the reader of a text who evokes a literary work of art is, above all, a performer, in the same sense that a pianist performs a sonata, reading it from the text before him." 33 She continues with this comparison, emphasising that the finding of meaning in any work of literature involves both the author and the reader. The reader, "from the linkage of his own experiences with words, from his own store of memories, [draws] the appropriate elements symbolized by the score or text, to structure a new experience, the work of art". 34

J.H. Matthews agrees with Rosenblatt in a discussion concerning surrealist poetry and, specifically, the works of the poet Paul Eluard. He says: "No surrealist...persuades us more quickly that poetry is an act of cooperation between writer and public, an act requiring generosity on the part of the former as much as it demands faith of the latter." 35

Poulenc's remarkable ability to put forth an intimate musical interpretation of surrealist poetry has assured his place in the repertory of twentieth century French mélodie.

Guillaume Apollinaire (1880 - 1918) was at the cusp of the surrealist movement. Although he died before Surrealism had fully matured, he realized his dream of writing in a new style. Through his lectures and articles, he formulated a new form of writing which emphasized unbridled invention and inspiration. His works and thoughts were a great influence on Breton.

Apollinaire's emphasis turned from Symbolism and the expression or representation of norms of reality, to a new creative

33 Louise Rosenblatt, The Reader, the Text, the Poem. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press. 1978), p. 28.
34 Ibid., p. 14.
spirit in poetry. This creativity diverted attention away from objects with a familiar function or surrounding to a more "other-worldly" perspective. His efforts were often pre-occupied with the cyclic pattern of life, death and resurrection. As a result, traditional rhetoric became coloured with a sense of "rootlessness". The ultimate effect was an enlargement of the scope from which poets worked: exploring the psyche and delving into eroticism. Balakian justly claims that "Apollinaire's writings show he was not only conscious of a transition but helped to herald and shape a new world." He truly was a link between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The younger Paul Eluard (1895 - 1952) experienced both world wars which deeply affected his thinking. As a result, he took refuge from the cruelty and absurdity of war in the warmth and light of love and poetry. In fact, Eluard almost fused the two as he speaks of poetry as a love which "unites everything".

Both poets realized the self-defeating sterility of the dadaists and their violent rejection of order and conventional romanticism. They did however retain the technique of free association of words and explored concepts which stemmed from dream-like imagery. Although there are marked differences in the two poets, two important similarities can be drawn. Both are revolutionaries, and both have the unmistakable ingredient of lyricism in their works.

The five poems that comprise Banalités were not published collectively. Poulenc explains in the following passage how he made his choices:

I have already spoken of my inveterate habit of putting certain poems on one side in advance. I had chosen Sanglots a long time before and the curious Fagnes de Wallonie.

Going through my library in October 1940, I turned the pages once again - and with how much emotion - of those literary reviews which from 1914 to 1923 had enchanted my adolescence. This time, the series of issues of *Litérature* particularly held my attention...I chose only the delicious lines of doggerel, *Voyage à Paris* [from *Poèmes retrouvés*] and *Hôtel* [from *Poèmes divers 1900-1917*], grouped under the title *Banalités*... Nothing more was needed for my decision to undertake a cycle in which *Sanglots* and *Fagnes* [from *Il y a*] would appear. It remained to find an opening rhythmical song since *Sanglots* would conclude the cycle with gravity. Then I remembered a song, a little Maeterlinck in style, that Apollinaire had inserted in a strange and beautiful prose piece entitled *Onirocritique.*

In attempting to discover some common linkage or thread running through these poems, the themes of love and fantasy surface in one form or another throughout the collection. The strophic form used for *Chanson d'Orkenise* lends itself easily to a fantasy-ballad, and imitates French folk-poetry. Light-hearted poetic content is the reason for Apollinaire's somewhat unusual departure from his style of free-verse. References to the "heart" and "marriage" are made by two of the three characters in the poem, and provide the first suggestion of the element of "love".

The fantasy in *Hôtel* is detailed in a wonderful way: the poet sees the sun as possessing human qualities and completes his life of bliss by lighting his cigarette "at the fire of day". Apollinaire juxtaposes his fragmented thoughts and achieves an unbroken sequence of images of the artist's spleen, into which the reader is drawn.

The poem *Fagnes de Wallonie* speaks of a part of Belgium where Apollinaire once lived. As such, "Fagnes" originates from a

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37 Bernac, Francis Poulenc, p. 70.
Flemish dialect and refers to the uplands. This area of country is rather windy and untamed, and consists primarily of woods and peat-bogs. Apollinaire describes his fantasy walk in these woods. As the four stanzas of uneven length progress an increasing element of sadness is introduced. The woods that befriended him and became his refuge suddenly turn against him, reflecting one of Apollinaire's philosophies of life: the world is made up of objects in a state of change or flux. Images from the first poem reappear here. Apollinaire recalls the image of the heart in stanza one and, in the final stanza, the idea of marriage is coloured by a sharp reference to the contrast between life and death. This foreshadows their presence in the final poem.

*Voyage à Paris* is, with five unpunctuated lines, by far the shortest poem of the group. The general mood is not unlike that of the second poem, *Hôtel*. Its simple sentiment expresses the charm of gay Paris which, Apollinaire feels, was created by love.

*Sanglots* without dispute, is the most poetically intense poem in *Banalités*. Hell describes it as "one of the most penetrating poems of Apollinaire, exposing the misery in the hearts of all men". As it progresses, the poetic momentum increases in intensity, the ensuing result of which is the climax of momentum of the entire group.

The poem moves in two separate strata which represent two speakers. (Radford, in translation, has differentiated the two voices by means of parenthesis.) The first speaker is a realist who believes in man's somewhat futile existence. The second voice (in parenthesis) is a dreamer, and one who is optimistic about life, mankind and a divine will "ordered by the stars". The extreme surrealist nature of the poem itself and unbalanced strata groupings give it a sense of development and momentum unequalled in the course of the poems.

At the level of the entire collection, a progressive shape to the poems may be discerned. Certainly the most naive of the five are *Hôtel* and *Voyage à Paris*. These we will consider as transitory and

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38 Hell, *Francis Poulenc*, p. 61.
transitional. There are marked similarities in content between the central poem, *Fagnes de Wallonie*, and the two remaining outer poems. These are: references to the heart, love-tenderness and marriage, and life and death. As a result, this poem can be considered pivotal. The first and last poems give balance to the group in terms of length and poetic intensity. There are musical similarities, presently discussed, between the settings of these outer poems which lend credence to the argument that they are the bonding poems for the collection, marking growth from lightness to intensity.

Poulenc chose the nine poems which comprise *Tel jour telle nuit* from collections by Eluard entitled *Les yeux fertiles* and *Facile*. Recognizing that Eluard's titles perhaps would not be suitable for a collection of songs, he asked the poet to suggest another. In reply, Eluard wrote to Poulenc on January 2nd, 1937 and suggested four possible titles for the cycle:

1. Tout dire.
2. Tel jour telle nuit.
3. Aussi loin que l'amour.
4. Paroles peintes.

The reference to "day" and "night" in Poulenc's chosen title could be representative of Eluard's dream universe. Although they belong to the familiar world, Eluard uses them, and images like them, in a context which sever their connections with that world. Eluard's world is one of self-exploration; a universe illuminated by a love which succeeds in dominating any thoughts of the material world.

*Bonne journée* presents fleeting images of love, friendship, death and life. The first stanza introduces someone who the poet feels deeply about, whom he "shall never forget". This relationship holds lasting happy memories for the poet evoking "smiles" in the final line of the first stanza. The second stanza changes the tone of the poem to include the "shadow" of death of the "man who passed by". The third stanza introduces a serene picture of a place after death: the "distant shore". The final stanza brings new life in the word "dawn" which invades the "dark under the green trees".
The next five poems all contain references to death and sadness. *Une ruine coquille vide*, consisting of three stanzas, presents the image of weeping children surrounding what could be an old woman represented by "A ruin an empty shell" (although Bernac specifically disagrees with this interpretation). The "arrow in a heart" only escapes death by sleep, which comes in the final line of the poem.

*Le front comme un drapeau perdu*, made up of four stanzas of uneven length, evokes a pessimistic view of life and love, through images of "cold streets" and "dark rooms", futility of life, and drowning. The final stanza suggests a grave and death.

*Une roulotte couverte en tuiles* is in three unbalanced parts consisting of a stanza of four lines, a single line, and a two line stanza. The first two stanzas relate a scene of torment: a hideous scene of a wagon and dead horse, "two breasts beating down upon him like two fists", "his brow blue with hatred". The final stanza comments on the futile scene: tearing away "the sanity of the heart".

*A toutes brides* could very well be a description of internal, emotional turmoil. In the first of three stanzas the death image, not unlike that in Goethe's *Erlkönig*, appears riding his horse. The final stanza is the height of desperation for the narrator. Even so, the verbal imagery is never violent but rather displays an inner turbulence that many will argue is more powerful than any image.

Although *Une herbe pauvre* contains the image of death in the final line of its single stanza, this is not the central subject. The short sentences contain softer images: "grass", "snow", "pure air". These words appear in a context that suggests spring and purity, only tinged with the bittersweet melancholy of the final word: "withered". This poem is as simple and gentle as the preceding verses are complex and vehement.

With the poem *Je n'ai envie que de t'aimer*, the tide has turned towards hope and a strong perception of love. Only two lines fail to exhibit tender sentiment, illustrating surrealist visual suggestions: "a storm fills the valley / a fish the river." Eluard refers to "days" and "nights" in the final line, providing a link to the first and last poems of the group.
The penultimate poem, *Figure de force brûlante et farouche*, returns Eluard's images to those of "fiery wild forcefulness". Of the three stanzas, the third is the longest and provides contrast within the poem by its intimate reference to the human body. The last three-line stanza seems to cry out at life as a "prison".

*Nous avons fait la nuit*, the last poem of the group, is written in a continuous, unbroken stanza. It is an intimate poem, in praise of the many facets of love and the poet's beloved. At the climax of the verse, the lover realizes that the "stranger" that is his beloved brings a newness to the relationship. This stranger is the essence of love to him.

J.H. Matthews believes that, to Eluard, "woman is the mirror in which the world is reflected in new perspective".\(^{39}\) If one is to believe Matthew's theory to be correct, the references to women and images of love throughout the poems become representations of hope and, in a sense, re-creation or rebirth. Eluard's imagination releases him from the every day familiarities of the world. Concepts such as "day" and "night" (the obvious poetic link between poems in *Tel jour telle nuit*) are overcome in his search to discover the surreal in the universe around him.

In addition to the theme of love embraced in the outer poems, musical connections will be examined which link these poems together. Poulenc specifically notes his considerations of certain songs in the cycle to be transitory. With these details in mind, similarities in the overall shapes of the two cycles may be discerned.

Bernac describes the atmosphere which pervades *Tel jour telle nuit* as one of "composed happiness, of calmness and serenity."\(^{40}\) This supports Matthews' theory of an underlying theme of love which unites all. The reconciling presence of love is apparent in Clancier's description of Eluard's writing: "His poetry is infinitely sensitive.

\(^{39}\) Matthews, *Surrealist Poetry in France*, p. 110.

sad, yet remains a pure song of happiness; immediate, spontaneous, intimate as the poet's breathing".41

When considering the great partnerships of poetry and music, one is inclined to dwell on Goethe and Schubert. Like the marriage of the romantic Goethe's poems to Schubert's music, Poulenc's settings of Apollinaire and Eluard's surrealist poetry infuse his interpretations of the poetic images with a certain immediacy. The composer feels the partnership of words and music "...should be an act of love, never a marriage of convenience."42 Goethe's and Poulenc's instincts parallel each other remarkably. Goethe speaks of the importance of recognizing basic recitation when he says that "...singing itself must revert to the simplicity of speech if it aspires to become significant and deeply moving."43 As we shall see, Poulenc takes his melodic inspirations from the texts, recognizes their genesis, remaining faithful to them in every aspect.

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42 Bernac, The Interpretation of French Song, p. 269.
CHAPTER THREE
THE INTERACTION OF TEXT AND MUSIC

In his book *Diary of My Songs*, Poulenc states that he considers each song in any cycle to be influential to what follows it. With a view to performance, the transitional or pivotal nature of certain songs in both cycles provides the performers with unwritten indications of pacing and emphasis. Although the perception of the architecture of each cycle as a whole requires performers to think in rather general terms and broad concepts, it is possible to pinpoint specific elements which aid in achieving an overview of the entire work or works.

Concern for architecture is a factor Poulenc considered of prime importance in *Tel jour telle nuit*. *Le front comme un drapeau perdu, Une roulotte couverte en tuiles* and *A toutes brides* are songs the composer feels are impossible to perform separately. Of *A toutes brides*, Poulenc insists "[it] has no other pretentions than to heighten the effect of *Une herbe pauvre*".\(^{44}\) Furthermore, the primary aim in the performance of *Figure de force brûlante et farouche* is to "make one hear the kind of silence that is the opening of *Nous avons fait la nuit* [which follows]".\(^{45}\) These statements lead to the conclusion that songs are dependent not only on each other, but also on those which surround them in order for their purpose of existence to be entirely fulfilled.

Unity is achieved between the opening and closing songs of *Tel jour telle nuit* through semblance of melody. The melodic contours of *Bonne journée* and *Nous avons fait la nuit* are alike. Each begins with an ascending line encompassing an octave, over an

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\(^{44}\) Poulenc, *Diary of My Songs*, p. 35.

\(^{45}\) Ibid.
accompaniment which consists of reiterated octaves and continuous eighth-note movement, sharing the C tonality. (see figures 1.1 & 1.2) This predominant quarter-note motion is followed by, for the most part, intervals of a second or third. Poulenc reserves larger intervallic leaps for the climax in both songs.

Literal restatement of melodic material, termed as germinal motives, also serves to link these important songs in the
cycle. Two motives in *Bonne journée* appear in *Nous avons fait la nuit*. The first is a chromatic figure in the accompaniment which eventually resolves to the tonic chord of C major. (See figures 1.3 & 1.4) This figure in both songs serves as a bridge to the coda.

The second example of a literal restatement of material is a syncopated bass octave line which appears under the interval of a reiterated tonic and dominant. (see figures 1.5 & 1.6) Both appearances of this motive occur in the piano postludes. The extended coda of the last song plays a role not unlike the postlude in Schumann's *Dichterliebe*, a comparison supported by many scholars and performers including Keith Daniel and Pierre Bernac. The quote
from the opening of the cycle in the final measures of this postlude, brings this cycle's arch shape to full formation.

The recapturing of the C tonality in the first and last songs has been mentioned. In addition, vestige of a tonic-dominant association is seen between songs one and two, three and four, and four and five. However, because the texts are of an ambiguous
nature, Poulenc frequently uses polytonality to link musical sonority with aesthetic intent of the poetry.

For example, the fifth song contains elements of a D tonality (reinforced by the piano right hand and vocal line) and a G tonality (in the piano left hand). The remaining songs begin in a minor tonality, the resulting seriousness tempered with excursions to related major keys. A return to the opening C tonality at the conclusion of the cycle, coupled with its similar motivic content and migration to predominantly major keys, provides striking recollection and reinforces the arch shape signalling the conclusion of the cycle. Specific discussion of the use of tonality to highlight poetic intent will take place later in this chapter.

Regarding Banalités, Poulenc was certain he wanted to "conclude the cycle with gravity". He took care in choosing the opening song. His choice provides suitable contrast and balance with the intense and grave characteristics inherent in the final song. In this case too, he was concerned for the cycle's architecture as well as for the impression the collection gives as a cohesive group of songs.

Chanson d'Orkenise begins Banalités with the light tone of a musical and poetic folk-song. His inspiration comes directly from the text, which is a folk-like narrative. In fact, Poulenc's performance indication specifically gives the direction: "dans le style d'une chanson populaire". The song contains numerous changes of dynamics, chord colours and expressions of character. The poem itself requires the characterization of voice types in order that the listener recognize the various speakers: narrator, tramp, carter and town guard. To this end, Poulenc assigns like textures in the piano accompaniment for each particular voice. The voices of tramp and carter are accompanied by similar motives of sparse chordal texture. The characters of the narrator and town guards both possess more intricate and thicker textured piano lines. (see figure 1.7)

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In contrast, the singular mood of laziness revealed by the poetry of Hôtel is teamed with accompaniment of a homogeneous style. The sonorous piano writing is a major unifying factor in the composition through its steady pulse and harmonic rhythm.

If, for the sake of argument, we were to remove the third song (Fagnes de Wallonie) from the cycle, the similar "fantasy" texts of Hôtel and Voyage à Paris would negate development from a poetic
standpoint. Each is concerned with a rather care-free existence and, as such, contrast would be eliminated. The dynamic momentum of the poetry is accentuated by the inclusion of *Fagnes de Wallonie*.

The text of *Fagnes de Wallonie* foreshadows the pain and sadness fully described in the final song of the cycle. In addition, the positioning of this song mid-way through the cycle allows for direction from and toward changes of character; consequently, elements of motion and intensity throughout the cycle are introduced. As we shall soon see, these elements are essential for the shaping of the cycle as a whole.

It is an interesting observation that this is the only song in the group of five which lacks a piano introduction and features the piano and voice in melodic and rhythmic unison in the opening measures. If performers treat this song as transitional, importance tends to gravitate to the outer songs.

Reference has been made to the intensity and climax of poetic momentum in *Sanglots*. Restatement of similar melodic material may be found to link the outer songs of *Banalités* (*Chanson d'Orkenise* and *Sanglots*). These essentially germinal motives provide the genesis for reminiscence and, in this way, a sense of unity and musical momentum within the cycle.

The piano introductions of *Chanson d'Orkenise* and *Sanglots* share intervals (albeit rhythmically prolonged and elaborated), giving rise to the similar melodic contour heard in the opening measures of both songs. The interval of a third is significant and governs the direction and arch of each melody. (see figure 1.8 & 1.9)
The vocal line of *Chanson d'Orkenise* begins with an initial leap of a perfect fifth, extended by a minor third interval. The final gesture of the opening four measure phrase is also a rising third of a major variety. The entire phrase is repeated, followed immediately by a series of descending and ascending thirds, occasionally decorated with appogiaturas. (see figure 1.10)
The vocal line of Sanglots begins with a stepwise motion encompassing the interval of a minor third. The first phrase is completed by a descent of a major third followed by an ascent of a minor third. The interval of a third also dominates the melodic contour of the second phrase. (see figure 1.11)
Poulenc's emphasis of particular intervals and consequent similarities in the melodic contours of the first and last songs in *Banalités* provide the basis for a figurative analysis of the architecture of the cycle. By treating the central song as transitional and realizing the like characteristics of the texts which surround it, the cycle is shaped in a progressive way, with some detours, moving from lightness to seriousness. In this respect, the role of *Fagnes de Wallonie* is pivotal not only in terms of anticipating the poetic pain and sadness but also as an attempt to remind one of the folk element present in the first song. Poulenc accomplishes this through a lilting perpetual movement and folkish melodic structure.

This pivotal role is underlined also through its tonality: the F-sharp minor key foreshadows its reappearance in the final song. Furthermore, the overall key structure to the cycle reflects the different nature of the shape of this cycle compared to that of *Tel jour telle nuit*. The F major, D major and E-flat major keys of songs one, two and four provide a sense of lightness characterizing the beginning of the progression, while the F-sharp minor key of this pivotal central song anticipates the grave final mood of the cycle.

Thus we can see that an arch shape is not a necessary ingredient to any song cycle. The difference in the nature of the two cycles under discussion does not in any way contradict Peake's
definition. On the contrary, these works demonstrate Poulenc's ability to mold songs to form cohesive cycles in different yet equally convincing ways.

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The success of a composer of song literature is often measured by that composer's ability to set the poetry. It is the interaction of the two elements - text and music - which bind together to provide the "momentum" of Peake's definition of a song cycle, quoted in the Introduction to this thesis.

Clearly, Poulenc constructed aspects of unity within his songs using parallels between the vocal and piano lines. In a conversation with Robert Sabin for the journal *Musical America*, he explains:

I believe that one must translate into music not merely the literal meaning of the word, but also everything that is written between the lines, if one is not to betray the poetry. Each, poetry and music, should evoke the other...I want to express the things which are only implied on the large printed page.  

These implications are magnified when one views both voice and piano lines in correlation with each other. The relationships between both are such that each is dependent on the other for total success in communicating the poetic thought or image.

Concerning his abilities to write for piano, Poulenc commented on several occasions that he felt his piano writing was much stronger in his song accompaniments than in his works for solo

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Certainly his accompaniments serve and intensify the vocal line. In addition, they are often used to link stanzas or lines of poetry of different moods or aid in the continuity of stanzas of like moods. The interludes frequently correspond to his observation of the way in which poets arranged their words on the page. An examination of several interludes reveals the composer's awareness of the poet's formal structure.

Apollinaire's strophic verse style in Chanson d'Orkenise of Banalités, provides incentive for Poulenc to divide the five strophes into two divisions: made up of three, then two stanzas. The piano ritornello opens and closes the song and is the linking device for the two divisions of the piece. Its lack of formal cadence and use of remote harmony leave the listener in an anticipatory state. (see figure 1.8)

The markedly different approach to the setting of the next poem and its consistent style throughout lead to another observation regarding the structure of each song. Homogeneity of such basic elements as meter, tempo and harmonic vocabulary serve as a source of unity and cohesiveness.

The lush harmonies contained in the chordal accompaniment of Hôtel contribute to the prevailing feeling of laziness. Although there are three distinct sections to this short song, the accompaniment provides a unifying agent. Its constant quarter-note rhythm is the linkage for three perfectly balanced sections, clearly indicated below by the sum of measures in each division:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prelude</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Interlude</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>Postlude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 + 6</td>
<td>7 + 1</td>
<td>5 + 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The single measure of interlude is used not only to modulate to the B-flat minor seventh chord, but also to develop and indeed mark the

\[48\] An interesting discussion and references concerning this topic may be found in the chapter entitled "The Piano Music" in Keith Daniel's book Francis Poulenc: His Artistic Development and Musical Style.
changed mood of the song from a state of observation to one of declaration: "I do not want to work / I want to smoke".

The significant changes of mood in Fagnes de Wallonie of Banalités are bridged by three interludes of similar melodic contour. (see figures 1.12 - 1.14) Scale-type passages of a single voice serve as linking devices at these strategic mood changes, propelling the music through these stanzaic divisions. Subsequent measures feature thinner textured writing which heightens the poetic interpretation. The final interlude leads to an expanded tessitura for both instruments, climaxing the "death" image. The unusually restless text which begins the song is matched well by the constantly moving accompaniment and multi-textured writing.

![Figure 1.12]

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Scale-type piano interludes reinforce poetic momentum throughout both cycles. In *Le front comme un drapeau perdu* of Tel jour telle nuit, the interludes mark significant mood changes. (see figure 1.15) The extended scale-type descent of the final voice phrase, besides acting as a structural link, precipitates emphasis of a poetic nature by a pianissimo dynamic marking and legato line.
This contrasts with the preceding forte angular measures. (see figure 1.16)
Poulenc also uses scale-type interludes as representations of allusions to poetic text. The transposed two-measure interlude beginning at measure 16 of *A toutes brides* is an extension of the four-measure interlude beginning at measure 7. (see figures 1.17 & 1.18) These passages serve as a leit-motif recalling the tension-ridden text, as well as a structural device used to link and mark the stanzaic divisions.

The melodic style of Poulenc is substantially lacking in developmental procedure. Daniel refers to his compositional style in general as "additive" rather than "developmental". In explanation, rather than developing a theme, Poulenc juxtaposes several shorter fragments, often choosing one to repeat in a different key or in
partial repetition. Often the repetition will involve some re-ordering of notes or intervals.

Measures 1 through 6 of Une herbe pauvre of Tel jour telle nuit are harmonically identical to measures 17 - 22. (see figures 1.19 & 1.20) This musical repetition (with a slight re-ordering and octave transposition marked) highlights repetition of text. Similarly, Poulenc relies on exact repetition or simple intervalic transposition in Voyage à Paris of Banalités. (see figure 1.21) Alone, the melodic material is not strong enough to support a developmental technique, nor is the doggerel intense enough to warrant such elaborative procedures. In both examples, poetic content dictates the compositional approach.

![Musical notation](image_url)

figure 1.19

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Une herbe pauvre Sauvage Apparemment
Sans ralentir

uela

Sans ralentir

figure 1.20

© 1937 Durand S.A.,
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Sole Representative U.S.A., Theodore Presser Company
figure 1.21

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Juxtaposition of melodies conforming to Poulenc's additive style is often accompanied by pervasive rhythmic elements. Continuous rhythmic motion indicates phrase structure and melodic sweep. Both cycles contain songs of this nature.

Fagnes de Wallonie of Banalités and Je n'ai envie que de t'aimer of Tel jour telle nuit both possess accompaniments with constant rhythmic motion. Of the former, Bernac suggests the song should be sung "as though in one gust of north wind from the beginning to end".49 The tempo remains brisk, the dynamic intensity lessens, and the song calms throughout the final measures with sudden absence of constant eighth-note movement.

Concerning Je n'ai envie que de t'aimer, Bernac states that the song requires performers to think in terms of "...a single curve, a single impulse".50 With this in mind, the most striking feature of the song is the way in which Poulenc juxtaposes successive melodies. The unceasing eighth-notes of the accompaniment serve well as a linking element for these otherwise disjointed phrases. Despite a predominance of improvisatory-like material, his additive style of writing retains an acute sense of structure and organization. The clear antecedent-consequent phrase structure, reinforced by alternating major-minor modes, obviates the unstable character of individual phrases.

Further examination of Poulenc's "additive" rather than "developmental" style of writing shows that changes of meter, mood, tempo, and/or style function as a type of development. In this way, momentum is realized within both cycles. Poulenc relies greatly on the unity found within the text to guide his writing and the corresponding elements of momentum. The demands of the text prosody dictate the musical treatment and, therefore, the structure of momentum from the beginning to the conclusion of each song in the cycles.

49 Bernac, The Interpretation of French Song, p. 283.

50 Bernac, Francis Poulenc, p. 104.
For example, Poulenc's use of metric change corresponds to the free verse patterns of the poet's texts. By definition, the term "free verse" seems to negate the presence of a pattern or a metrico-rhythmic structure. However, his extreme sensitivity to the combination of words and music reveals patterns and images that enable the listener to form personal associations that may otherwise be elusive. Further to the subject of free verse, Calin comments:

Poetry must have an expected meter: this meter will then contrast with the actual rhythmic accent of the text when spoken aloud, comparable to a prose rhythm. The contrast thus is between the artificial convention of meter and natural linguistic articulation of speech. The play and tension between the two - meter and rhythm - create the language of poetry. To sacrifice either is to sacrifice poetry, to exterminate it, to render its existence impossible.\(^{51}\)

Recitation of the poetry in *Chanson d'Orkenise* of *Banalités* reveals a rhythmic pulse which is the impetus for the setting Poulenc provides. A pervasive rhythmic element, consisting of two eighth-notes followed by (in the majority of cases) two quarter-notes, corresponds to Apollinaire's verses:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{\(\frac{3}{4}\)} \\
\text{\(\frac{3}{4}\)} \\
\end{array}
\]

Par les por-tes d'Or-ke-ni-se

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{\(\frac{3}{4}\)} \\
\text{\(\frac{3}{4}\)} \\
\end{array}
\]

Veut en-trer un char-re-tier

This rhythmic ostinato makes development difficult to perceive and leads the performer to depend on changes of dynamics and expressions of text characters to portray contrast. Shifts of register in the accompaniment, coupled with a fast harmonic rhythm lessen the danger of monotony found in the rhythm of the vocal line. Despite the dynamic and harmonic changes, the basic tempo of the song never alters. Constancy of tempo becomes a unifying device and as such achieves a type of momentum.

The unmetered poetry of *Bonne journée* of *Tel jour telle nuit* receives a different type of musical treatment. The two rhythmic elements that dominate the construction of this song are shown in Figure 1.22. Rhythm 'A' is the steady eighth-note pulse found in the piano accompaniment and is the "expected meter" Calin speaks of. Rhythm 'B' is Calin's "contrast of...natural linguistic articulation of speech." The placement of the eighth-notes followed by quarter-note pattern in the vocal line is governed by the syllable stress. Of particular note are measures 10 and 11, where the syllable stress does not coincide with the natural measure-to-measure accents. Together, rhythms 'A' and 'B' create the language of poetry and music in combination. In this song there are fifteen similar musical meter changes.
je n'oublierai jamais — Et des femmes fugaces dont les yeux Me faisaient unueil d'honneur — Elles s'enveloppent dans leurs sou.

"B"
In the song Sanglots, the last of Banalités, there are nine meter changes corresponding to the uneven meter of the poetry. These changes reflect not only the complex nature of the poetry, but also Poulenc's sensitivity in setting texts of varying metric regularity.

Une roulotte couverte en tuiles of Tel jour telle nuit is an engaging "parlando" melody over a chromatic accompaniment. Reminiscent of Moussorgsky, the melodic contour is rather static and somewhat out of the character of Poulenc's usually spacious, soaring melodic lines. This is not due to any lack of inspiration on Poulenc's part. On the contrary, it contributes to the grim scene portrayed by the poetry. Composed in a modified ABA form, the A sections feature repeated tones which emphasize the melodic rhythm and natural speech accents. The B section's greater note values and triplet rhythms provide a momentum for rhythmic and melodic development.

It has been shown that constancy of tempo achieves a type of momentum alongside developments of other key elements such as harmony and poetic structure. The next three examples support the theory that Poulenc's use of tempo change serves as development.

The first example concerns fluctuations of the basic pulse in Sanglots of Banalités. The composer's instructions to the performers such as: "animer un peu mais très progressivement", "animer encore un peu" and "céder" are key elements in determining progressive or recessive phases in intensity.

Areas of progressive rhythmic actions and relations correspond to areas of increase in poetic intensity. At the first "animer" indication at measure 17, the piano texture thickens and becomes chordal in relation to the sparse open writing which prevails throughout the opening sixteen measures. At the region of the second "animer" (measure 27), the melodic pulse increases, eventually to triplets. At the "céder" (measure 38), both piano and voice lines decrease their rhythmic activity. Finally, at Tempo I (measure 39), the piano returns to the initial sparse texture of the opening.
The three tempo changes mentioned coincide with the establishment of three tonal centres separated, by a third, from the original tonal centre of F-sharp minor. The combination of harmonic and rhythmic momentum underline the importance of the poetic content and its building tension. Variations in tempo aid in delineating the two strata upon which the poem is structured.52

The second example demonstrates how rhythmic augmentation and diminution can be used to accentuate poetic intensity. In the following excerpt from Figure de force brûlante et farouche in Tel jour telle nuit, tension is held, focusing on a fixed collection of tones within a pianissimo dynamic. (see figure 1.23) At the same time, an element of instability is introduced in the harmonic content with conflicting semi-tones between the voice and piano lines.

52 An explanation of these strata may be found in Chapter Two, p.19. Guy Arnold Hargrove Jr. provides a more detailed discussion in "Francis Poulenc's Settings of Poems of Guillaume Apollinaire and Paul Eluard" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1971). pp. 126-139.
Aux veines des tempes
Comme aux bouts des seins
La vie se refuse

Les yeux nul ne peuvent crever
Boire leur éclat ni leurs larmes

Le sang au-dessus d'eux

triumph pour lui seul

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At this point in the text the poet is intensely personal, exploring the depth of human emotion through images of the body. Bernac confirms this song as a melodie of "transition", a description made even more obvious by this contrasting central section. This extraordinary effect foreshadows the sublime intimacy contained in the final song of the cycle.

A final example of momentum achieved by tempo fluctuation is from *Le front comme un drapeau perdu* of *Tel jour telle nuit*. Here, Poulenc combines a metric increase in the speed of recitation with an ascending line, the final destination leading to poetic climax. (see figure 1.24)
The materials for moments of climax are often segments of previously stated melodic or rhythmic material. In this example from *Figure de force brûlante et farouche* (see figure 1.25), the repeated broken octaves of the opening song of the cycle are recalled in preparation for their reappearance in the song which follows. These octaves contain a degree of tension absent from their initial appearance in the form of clashes of semi-tones and tones supported by the vocal line. This tension and build of momentum is released in the final measure. In this instance then, the role of this recollection is twofold: a unifying device and a contributor to tension and movement toward eventual resolution.

![Musical notation](image-url)

*Figure 1.25*

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52
We have seen that an imaginative use of conventional formal structures, combined with Poulenc's additive style of composition results in development and momentum throughout both cycles. Like his melodies, Poulenc's use of harmony is primarily diatonic with "wrong notes" added for colour. This conforms to the practices of composers preceding him including Debussy, Ravel, Chabrier, Satie and Stravinsky. Edward Lockspeiser remarks that the Romantic composers have also influenced Poulenc and nurtured his lyrical gifts. Thus, "Poulenc has shown that the special magic of diatonic harmony [and] modulation...can...make an effect as poignant as in Schubert himself." Any musician with more than a cursory familiarity with Poulenc's works for any genre will agree that such a comparison is not unwonted. However, the use of the occasional non-chord tone within areas of conservative diatonic harmony serves to emphasize progression or recession of poetic or musical momentum.

Poulenc uses chords with an added seventh and ninth as key centres, following the innovations of the impressionist composers. Once considered dissonant or unstable in terms of the tonal centre, they are often used as primary chords and stable elements of harmony. These important tonal pillars are essential to Poulenc's harmonic language and appear throughout both cycles. Like many impressionists, his "consistent treatment of them as sonorous entities indicates the importance attached to them in unifying a composition".

An example of this occurs in Voyage à Paris of Banalités, where the E-flat major tonality is not a pure one. Rather, it is decorated with the seventh in both voice and piano. An abrupt shift

---

53 Poulenc specifically acknowledges the influences of Debussy and Stravinsky in particular when he refers to his first attempts at composition as being "inferior imitations" of these two composers. Hell, Francis Poulenc, pp. 6-7.


of key centre to G-flat is followed by a series of constantly shifting tonalities which confirm the seventh chord as the tonal centre. These shifts are punctuated by a strong bass movement which eventually migrates back to the original key of E-flat major. This kind of writing bears out Werner's observation regarding tonal centres in Poulenc's harmonic practice: "Even though the texture of the upper...parts may be highly chromatic and studded with a variety of non-harmonic complexities, the bass progression usually defines a clear tonal plane." 

Instances of stylistic resemblance are shown by consistent treatment of various classifications of harmony. His use of seventh and ninth chords as stable tonal centres shows his exploration of innovative harmony. Shifts of these tonal centres are common, such as those which occur in Une ruine coquille vide of Tel jour telle nuit. Here, the use of the G minor-seventh chord is the stable tonal pillar for the first four measures. A shift of tonality to that of C major at measure 6 is short-lived, and a series of shifts follows only to arrive at the original G minor-seventh harmony at the song's conclusion. Within this large progression may be found a basic root movement of descending fifths, masked by a continuous shift of tonality. (see figure 1.26)

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56 Werner, "The Harmonic Style of Francis Poulenc", p. 31.
In Hôtel of Banalités, added seconds, ninths and sixths contribute to the general feel of laziness paramount in the song. The use of uncoloured chords (in this case those of the D major tonality) resolves the suspensions created by the added colour tones. Chords
on the first beat of each measure can be considered appoggiaturas which resolve on the third beat to a consonant or colour chord. (see figure 1.27) These gestures provide harmonic momentum and a propelling motion to the song.

What appear to be traditional harmonies take on a distinct vocabulary as keys are juxtaposed in unique and colourful ways. Poulenc's unique penchant for colour is closely linked with his text interpretations. The series of measure to measure modulations which extend from measures 9-17 of Hôtel disallow any feeling of stability of key centre, corresponding to the poet's laissez faire attitude to life. In the closing voice and piano cadence, Poulenc continues this harmonic ambiguity through the use of both major and minor ninths. (i.e. B-natural and A-sharp) (see figure 1.28)
The G minor tonality and the brief excursions to other key centres in *Une ruine coquille vide* of *Tel jour telle nuit* are similarly embellished by added sevenths and seconds. The mood of the poetry and its striking images are enhanced by this musical treatment.

The addition of "wrong notes" or dissonant harmony often occurs at a cadence and/or climatic point. Functions of this technique are based on highlighting strategic text passages or words, and/or musical climax.

One such use occurs at the final line of poetry in *Chanson d'Orkenise* in *Banalités*. (see figure 1.29) The sustained progression from measures 47-50 may be seen as part of a large cadential motion which extends to measure 53. A short five measure postlude concludes this activity. The prevailing harmony of the progression at measure 47 consists of a G seventh chord with an added flattened ninth scale degree. An inversion of this chord (on the third beat of the measure) provides the harmonic momentum in much the same way as the appoggiatura chords in *Hôtel*. 
Sans ralentir

Cèder à peine

figure 1.29

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58
The clashing C and B-naturals between voice and piano in measures 51 and 52 provide the harmonic function to these measures. A rising chromatic ascending pattern in the piano right hand adds an interesting colouration to the final textual adverb - "lentement". Poulenc's use of the tritone bass progression gives a peculiar slant to what could easily have been a standard I\(\text{V}-1\) plagal cadence. This event, added to the chromatic ascent in the piano, places the entire cadence in a state of flux.

Despite the length of the cadence and its extended linear motion provided by a) the repetition of the progression in measure 47 and b) the sustained dyad of C and B-naturals in measures 51 and 52, the cadence is not strong in a traditional diatonic sense. The song ends on an open fifth between piano and voice. (measures 53 and 54) Rather than using the piano postlude to confirm a major or minor tonality, Poulenc reiterates the open fifth in the song's closing measures. The fifths which begin Sanglots are heard as a recollection of these final fifths, providing another unifying musical feature between the outer poems of Banalités.

Tonality is threatened by Poulenc's use of dissonance in measures 20 and 21 of Figure de force brûlante et farouche in Tel jour telle nuit. Here, the fundamental materials for poetic climax are provided by a striking dissonance between the D-naturals in the voice and right hand of the accompaniment (see figure 1.25), and alternating E-flats and E-naturals in the left hand of the accompaniment. The tonal conflict between the E-flat and E-natural in the piano left hand is resolved with the E-flat pedal tone in measures 22 and 23 and the establishment of the quasi-Neapolitan harmony. Poulenc immediately presents semi-tone clashes in the piano between E-flat, D-natural and C-sharp. The cadence resolves all conflict with the confirmation of the D major tonic chord in the final measure. Reference to the "prison" in this example is musically illustrated through "wrong note" clashes and dissonance.

Examination of two cadences of similar rhythm shows that Poulenc uses the piano postlude as a comment on his impression of the text. In the passage from Sanglots (see figure 1.30), the progression in measure 76 functions within the dominant harmony as
a VII7 of V, but resolves to a second inversion of the tonic rather than the expected dominant. The delayed root further weakens the resolution. This unusual final progression contributes to references to "time" and "death" in the final lines of the poetry. Apollinaire leaves an impression of unsettled sadness which Poulenc reflects in the closing cadence.

The poetry from Hôtel in its final line contains an element of defiance and assurance despite an overall impression of languidness. Together, the strong root movement and perfect cadence, prefaced by a beguiling colour chord, comments on the final poetic utterance and serve as punctuation for the stanza. (see figure 1.31)
Poulenc's fondness for the perfect fifth interval provides him with the harmonic foundation for final comment of a poetic nature. In both the first and last songs of *Tel jour telle nuit*, the final measures take on a unique sonority with the introduction of colour tones. These notes are made even more significant in light of their preparation. Three measures of open fifths ensure the prominence of this interval, and the resultant effect of the added tones. (see figures 1.32 & 1.33)
This event illumines the issues of Eluard's poetry: that of the nature of love and its constant renewal depicted in the final lines of the last poem in the cycle. It is interesting that the colour tone of the lowered seventh scale degree appearing in the first song is enhanced by the lowered third in the final song; Poulenc's final musical comment is ensured poignancy by this addition and comparison.

Parallels may be drawn between the presence or absence of relatively stable harmony and the complex or simplistic nature of the poetry. Hideous poetic images depicted in Une roulotte couverte en tuiles in Tel jour telle nuit are matched with an eerie chromatic line which obscures tonality. (see figure 1.34) The remote migrating harmony in the piano line threatens the pedal point D-natural. The chant-like melody contributes to harmonic tension by enforcing the D-natural.

A continuous build of tension in the poetry is matched by excursions away from the tonal centre of D in the B section. A re-establishment of this centre in a slightly modified repeat of the A section ends in a complete abandonment of tonality. (see figure 1.35) By wrenching away from the tonal centre, Poulenc portrays the poetic image: "this melodrama tears away from us / the sanity of the heart."
Conversely, a more stable tonality and key centre is apparent in songs which contain poetry of a less complex nature. The basic E-flat major tonality prevails through the first six measures of *Voyage à Paris* in *Banalités*, coloured by a series of descending dyads. (see figure 1.36) It is the style of accompaniment and simplicity which characterizes the melodic line that gives a particular charm to this song. The lively waltz hints at music in the tradition of the café-concert and is particularly suited to the poetry. Poulenc says of the verse: "To anyone who knows me it will seem quite natural that I should open my mouth like a carp to snap up the deliciously stupid lines of *Voyage à Paris*. Anything that concerns Paris I approach with tears in my eyes and my head full of music."57 Although some dissonance is used it is resolved immediately; its effect reduced to an anacrusis of passing tones. (see figure 1.37)

57 Poulenc, *Diary of My Songs*, p. 67.
In a broad sense, an examination of Poulenc’s harmonic vocabulary reveals elements that are central to his musical style. Stringer identifies these elements as those of "paradox and diversity".\textsuperscript{58} Roland Gelatt’s remarks concerning Poulenc’s style explains Stringer’s analysis:

Poulenc is very much a contemporary, but not an innovator. He has created no new forms, no unusual harmonic devices; his musical esthetic has about it nothing of the

\textsuperscript{58} Stringer, "Diversity as Style", p. 29.
revolutionary. If he is not strikingly avant-garde, neither is he a classical or baroque composer attired in twentieth-century dress with a taste for sterile-fugues peppered with dissonance. He speaks a language thoroughly his own. He can be dissonant, yet his dissonance is a means to an expressive end, never an end in itself. One could call him traditional but not reactionary, the tradition being that of Chabrier, Satie and late Ravel.  

Such a description of the composer is apt to leave one with the feeling that any attempt to classify his style of harmony would fall somewhat short of the mark. It is, above all, important to remember that "Poulenc himself always wanted his music to strike us as instinctive, spontaneous, and heartfelt".  

Such a statement leads one to believe that it is not formal analysis that is important, but rather an appreciation of the blend of music and text that assures a unique and magical interpretation of these cycles.

* * * 

If they put on my tomb: 'Here lies Francis Poulenc, musician of Apollinaire and Eluard,' I feel that would be my greatest claim to glory.

Francis Poulenc

***


CONCLUSION

Francis Poulenc's statement regarding his system of composition reveals his resistance to an approach based on technical analysis:

My "rules" are instinctive, I am not concerned with principles and I am proud of that; I have no system of writing (for me "system" means "tricks"); and as for inspiration, it is so mysterious that it is wiser not to try to explain it...61

Despite this declaration, examination of poetic and musical elements termed as unifying devices reveals covert and overt linkage which may aid the perception of Banalités and Tel jour telle nuit as song cycles.

Concerning the voice, Poulenc states, "J'aime tellement la voix!"62 (I love the voice so much!) The ideal relationship between Poulenc's inspiratory gestures from the text and the qualities of the human voice perfectly demonstrates this statement. Roger Nichols calls him the "most eligible candidate" for the twentieth century's equivalent to Schubert. Bernac echoes this praise for Poulenc's ability to write for the voice. He says "[Poulenc's] melodic gift, which was the very essence of his music, inspired him to find the appropriate musical line to heighten the expression of the literary phrase."63

Poulenc's paradoxical style masterfully suits the poetry of Apollinaire and Eluard. The composer succeeds in assimilating many of the elements that can be found in the "isms" so prevalent in the

61 Bernac, Francis Poulenc, p. 37.
63 Bernac, The Interpretation of French Song, p. 269.
first half of the twentieth century, among which include neo-
classicism, neo-romanticism and surrealism.

The awareness of unifying devices used by Poulenc in both
*Banalités* and *Tel jour telle nuit* will provide performers with
insights beneficial to the interpretation of the cycles. A carefully
prepared performance, with due consideration given to the analyses
found within this dissertation, will hopefully be the final convincing
argument in support of this premise: that each set is a song cycle in
the truest sense.

***


BANALITÉS (BANALITIES)

CHANSON D’ORKENISE

Par les portes d’Orkenise
Veut entrer un charretier.
Par les portes d’Orkenise
Veut sortir un va-nu-pieds.

Et les gardes de la ville
Courant sus au va-nu-pieds:
'Qu’emportes tu de la ville?'
'J’y laisse mon coeur entier.'

Et les gardes de la ville
Courant sus au charretier:
'Qu’apportes tu dans la ville?'
'Mon coeur pour me marier!'

Que de coeurs dans Orkenise!
Les gardes riaient, riaient.
Va-nu-pieds la route est grise,
L’amour grise, ô charretier.

Les beaux gardes de la ville
Tricotaient superbement;
Puis, les portes de la ville,
Se fermèrent lentement.

Guillaume Apollinaire

SONG OF ORKENISE

Through the gates of Orkenise
a carter wants to enter.
Through the gates of Orkenise
a tramp wants to leave.

And the town guards
hasten up to the tramp:
'What are you taking away from the
town?'
'I leave my whole heart there.'

And the town guards
hasten up to the carter:
'What are you bringing into the
town?'
'My heart to be married!'

What a lot of hearts in Orkenise!
The guards laughed, laughed.
Tramp, the road is hazy,
love makes the head hazy, O carter.

The fine-looking town guards
knitted superbly;
then the gates of the town
slowly closed.

HÔTEL

Ma chambre a la forme d’une cage
Le soleil passe son bras par la fenêtre
Mais moi qui veux fumer pour faire des mirages
J’allume au feu du jour ma cigarette
Je ne veux pas travailler je veux fumer

Guillaume Apollinaire

HÔTEL

My room is shaped like a cage
the sun puts its arm through the
window
but I who would like to smoke
to make smoke pictures
I light at the fire of day my cigarette
I do not want to work
I want to smoke.

FAGNES DE WALLONIE

Overwhelming sorrow
seized my heart in the desolate
uplands
when tired I rested in the fir
plantation
the weight of the kilometres while
blustered
the west wind
I had left the pretty wood
the squirrels stayed there
my pipe tried to make clouds
in the sky
which remained obstinately clear
I did not confide any secret except
an enigmatic song
to the damp peat bog
the heather fragrant with honey
attracted the bees
and my aching feet
crushed the bilberries and the
blaeberries
tenderly united
north
north
life twists itself there
in strong trees
and twisted
life bites there
death
ravenously
when the wind howls

WALLOON UPLANDS

TRIP TO PARIS

Ah! how charming
to leave a dreary place
for Paris
delightful Paris
that once upon a time love must have
created

VOYAGE A PARIS

Ah! the charming thing
Quitter un pays morose
Pour Paris
Paris joli
Qu'un jour
Dut créer l'Amour

Guillaume Apollinaire

Guillaume Apollinaire
SANGLOTS

Notre amour est réglé par les
calmes étoiles
Or nous savons qu’en nous beaucoup
d’hommes respirent
Qui vinrent de très loin et sont un sous nos fronts
C’est la chanson des rêveurs
Qui s’étaient arraché le cœur
Et le portaient dans la main droite
Souviens-t’en cher orgueil de
tous ces souvenirs

Des marins qui chantaient
comme des conquérants
Des gouffres de Thulé des
tendres cieux d’Ophir
Des malades maudits de ceux qui
fuient leur ombre
Et du retour joyeux des heureux
émigrants.

De ce coeur il coulait du sang
Et le rêveur allait pensant
A sa blessure délicate
Tu ne briseras pas la chaîne de
ces causes
Et dououreuse et nous disait
Qui sont les effets d’autres
causes
Mon pauvre cœur mon coeur brisé
Pareil au cœur de tous les hommes
Voici voici nos mains que la vie
fit esclaves
Est mort d’amour ou c’est tout
comme
Est mort d’amour et le voici
Ainsi vont toutes choses
Arrachez donc le votre aussi
Et rien ne sera libre jusqu’à la
fin des temps
Laissons tout aux morts
Et cachons nos sanglots

Guillaume Apollinaire

SOBS

Our love is ordered by the calm
stars
now we know that in us many men
have their being
who came from very far away
and are one under our brows
it is the song of the dreamers
who tore out their heart
and carried it in the right hand
(remember dear pride all these
memories
of the sailors who sang like
conquerors
of the chasms of Thule of the
gentle skies of Ophir
of the cursed sick people of those
who fled from their shadow
and of the joyous return of
happy emigrants)
this heart ran with blood
and the dreamer went on thinking
of his wound delicate
(You will not break the chain of
these causes)
and painful and said to us
(which are the effects of other
causes)
my poor heart my broken heart
resembling the heart of all men
(here here are our hands that
life enslaved)
has died of love or so it seems

has died of love and here it is
such is the way of all things
tear out yours also
(and nothing will be free until
the end of time)
let us leave all to the dead
and hide our sobs
APPENDIX 2  65

TEL JOUR TELLE NUIT (SUCH A DAY SUCH A NIGHT)

BONNE JOURNÉE...

Bonne journée j'ai revu qui je
n'oublie pas
Oui je n'oublerai jamais
Et des femmes fugaces dont les yeux
Me faisaient une haie d'honneur
Elles s'enveloppèrent dans leurs
sourires

Bonne journée j'ai vu mes amis sans
soucis
Les hommes ne pesaient pas lourd
Un qui passait
Son ombre changée en souris
Fuyait dans le ruisseau

J'ai vu le ciel très grand
Le beau regard des gens privés de tout
Plage distante où personne n'aborde

Bonne journée qui commença
mélancolique
Noire sous les arbres verts
Mais qui soudain trempée d'aurore

M'entra dans le coeur par surprise.

Paul Eluard

A GOOD DAY...

A good day I have again seen whom I
do not forget
whom shall I never forget
and women fleeting by whose eyes
formed for me a hedge of honour
they wrapped themselves in their
smiles

a good day I have seen my friends
carefree
the men were light in weight
one who passed by
his shadow changed into a mouse
fled into the gutter

I have seen the great wide sky
the beautiful eyes of those deprived
of everything
distant shore where no one lands

a good day which began mournfully
dark under the green trees
but which suddenly drenched with
dawn
invaded my heart unawares.

---

65 Ibid., pp. 291-298.
UNE RUINE COQUILLE VIDE...

Une ruine coquille vide
Pleure dans son tablier
Les enfants qui jouent autour d'elle
Font moins de bruit que des mouches

La ruine s'en va à tâtons
Chercher ses vaches dans un pré
J'ai vu le jour je vois cela
Sans en avoir honte

Il est minuit comme une flèche
Dans un cœur à la portée
Des folâtres leurs nocturnes
Qui contredisent le sommeil.

Paul Eluard

A RUIN AN EMPTY SHELL...

A ruin an empty shell
Weeps into its apron
The children who play around it
Make less sound than flies

The ruin goes groping
to seek its cows in the meadow
I have seen the day I see that
Without shame

It is midnight like an arrow
In a heart within reach
Of the sprightly nocturnal
Glimmerings
Which gainsay sleep.

LE FRONT COMME UN DRAPEAU PERDU...

Le front comme un drapeau perdu
Je te traîne quand je suis seul
Dans des rues froides
Des chambres noires
En criant misère

Je ne veux pas les lâcher
Tes mains claires et compliquées
Nées dans le miroir clos des miennes

Tout le reste est parfait
Tout le reste est encore plus inutile
Que la vie

Creuse la terre sous ton ombre

Une nappe d'eau près des seins
Où se noyer
Comme une pierre.

Paul Eluard

THE BROW LIKE A LOST FLAG...

The brow like a lost flag
I drag you when I am alone
Through the cold streets
The dark rooms
Crying in misery

I do not want to let them go
Your clear and complex hands
Born in the enclosed mirror of my own

All the rest is perfect
All the rest is even more useless
Than life

Hollow the earth beneath your shadow

A sheet of water reaching the breasts
Wherein to drown oneself
Like a stone.
UNE ROULOTTE COUVERTE
EN TUILES...

Une roulotte couverte en tuiles
Le cheval mort un enfant maître
Pensant le front bleu de haine
A deux seins s'abattant sur lui

Comme deux poings

Ce mélodrame nous arrache
La raison du coeur.

Paul Eluard

A TOUTES BRIDES...

A toutes brides toi dont le fantôme
Piaffe la nuit sur un violon
Viens régner dans les bois

Les verges de l'ouragan
Cherchant leur chemin par chez toi
Tu n'es pas de celles
Dont on invente les désirs

Viens boire un baiser par ici
Cède au feu qui te désespère.

Paul Eluard

UNE HERBE PAUVRE...

Une herbe pauvre
Sauvage
Apparut dans la neige
C'était la santé
Ma bouche fut émerveillée
Du goût d'air pur qu'elle avait
Elle était fanée.

Paul Eluard

A GYPsy WAGON ROOFED
WITH TILES...

A gypsy wagon roofed with tiles
the horse dead a child master
thinking his brow blue with hatred
of two breasts beating down upon

him

like two fists

this melodrama tears away from us
the sanity of the heart.

RIDING FULL TILT...

Riding full tilt you whose phantom
prances at night on a violin

come to reign in the woods

the lashings of the tempest
seek their path by way of you

you are not of those

whose desires one imagines

come drink a kiss here
surrender to the fire which drives

you to despair.

SCANTY GRASS...

Scanty grass
wild

appeared in the snow
it was health

my mouth marvelled
at the savour of pure air it had

it was withered.
JE N'AI ENVIE QUE DE T'AIMER...

Je n'ai envie que de t'aimer
Un orage emplit la vallée
Un poisson la rivière

Je t'ai faite à la taille de ma solitude
Le monde entier pour se cacher
Des jours des nuits pour se comprendre

Pour ne plus rien voir dans tes yeux
Que ce que je pense de toi
Et d'un monde à ton image

Et des jours et des nuits réglés par tes paupières.

Paul Eluard

I LONG ONLY TO LOVE YOU...

I long only to love you
A storm fills the valley
A fish the river

I have formed you to the pattern of my solitude
The whole world to hide in
days and nights to understand one another
to see nothing more in your eyes
but what I think of you
and of a world in your likeness
and of days and nights ordered by your eyelids.

FIGURE DE FORCE
BRÛLANTE ET FAROUCHE...

Figure de force brûlante et farouche
Cheveux noirs où l'or coule vers le sud
Aux nuits corrompues

Or englouti étoile impure,
Dans un lit jamais partagé

Aux veines des tempes
Comme au bout des seins
La vie se refuse
Les yeux nul ne peut les crever
Boire leur éclat ni leurs larmes
Le sang au dessus d'eux triomphe pour lui seul

Intraitable démesurée
Inutile
Cette santé bâtit une prison.

Paul Eluard

IMAGE OF FIERY WILD FORCEFULNESS...

Image of fiery wild forcefulness
Black hair wherein the gold flows towards the south
On corrupt nights

Engulfed gold tainted star
In a bed never shared
to the veins of the temples
As to the tips of the breasts
Life denies itself
No one can blind the eyes
Drink their brilliance or their tears
The blood above them triumphs for itself alone

Intractable unbounded
Useless
This health builds a prison.
Nous avons fait la nuit je tiens ta main je veille
Je te soutiens de toutes mes forces
Je grave sur un roc l'étoile de tes forces
Sillons profonds où la bonté de ton corps germera
Je me répète ta voix cachée ta voix publique
Je ris encore de l'orgueilleuse
Que tu traites comme une mendigote
Des fous que tu respectes des simples où tu te baignes
Et dans ma tête qui se met doucement d'accord avec la tienne avec la nuit
Je m'émerveille de l'inconnue que tu deviens
Une inconnue semblable à toi semblable à tout ce que j'aime
Qui est toujours nouveau.

Paul Eluard

We have made night I hold your hand I watch over you
I sustain you with all my strength
I engrave on a rock the star of your strength
deep furrows where the goodness of your body will germinate
I repeat to myself your secret voice your public voice
I laugh still at the haughty woman whom you treat like a beggar
at the fools whom you respect the simple folk in whom you immerse yourself
and in my head which gently begins to harmonize with yours with the night
I marvel at the stranger that you become
a stranger resembling you resembling all that I love
which is ever new.