Music and Childhood in French Culture, 1880-1914

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ABSTRACT

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Literary scholars have discussed extensively how ideas about childhood were an important imaginative resource in Romantic and modernist thought. Much research in the humanities has considered how art and literature have reflected and influenced the attitudes towards childhood that have been prevalent at particular times and in particular places. This thesis examines the ways in which music composed and performed in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century France seems to have played a significant role in exhibiting, and perhaps in shaping, contemporaneous understandings of childhood.

My study examines four distinct but closely related strands of French culture, in which the idea of childhood was a formative element in the creation, performance and reception of music. The subjects of the four main chapters are: the contrasting but mutually illuminating representations of childhood in two operas – Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel* and Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* – which had their first Paris performances in quick succession at the Opéra-Comique; the collections of *pièces enfantines* produced for the piano sheet-music market, a market which was sensitive to the prevailing social and political ideals of the Third Republic; a controversial ballet staging of Fauré's *Dolly* in 1913, which embodied a perception of the 'childlike' as a corporeal quality; and the relation of Debussy's *La Boîte à joujoux* and two songs by Ravel to artistic and philosophical discourses about the image of the toy. Collectively, these chapters consider music's contribution to several important understandings of childhood in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century culture. These include the use of the idea of childhood to give shape to the notion of human interiority, and to stand for an ideal mode of perception which the adult might reclaim through art.

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A version of Chapter 3 and a small part of Chapter 2 also appear in 'The Nursery as Circus: Dancing the Childlike to Fauré's *Dolly Suite*, 1913', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 142/2 (2017), 277-325.

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Introduction

The notion of childhood, according to Hugh Cunningham, has often served as a fundamental 'idea in a society's explanation of the world'.[1] In recent decades, historical inquiry has been heavily influenced by the view that understandings of childhood are, to some extent, socially and historically contingent.[2] Most notably, and controversially, Philippe Ariès proposed in the 1960s that what we mean (in the West) by 'childhood' is an invention of modernity, emerging only alongside a shifting understanding of what it is to be an adult.[3] Many of Ariès's claims have been the subject of scholarly challenge.[4] But his work, and responses to it, have stimulated much research in the humanities about perceptions of childhood, and how they have been reflected in and influenced by art and literature. In the last decade or so, musicologists have begun to ask analogous questions about childhood and music.[5] This thesis is about the culture of a time and place in which music seems to have played a significant role in exhibiting, and in helping to shape, understandings of childhood. It is a study of the relationship between contemporaneous ideas about childhood and

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[1] Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society since 1500,* 2nd edn. (Harlow, 2005), 2.

[2] Cunningham suggests a distinction between 'children' and 'childhood' as subjects of historical investigation, describing the history of the former as the study of the experiences of 'human beings', and the history of the latter as the study of a 'shifting set of ideas'. *Ibid*., 1. Historians have taken note of relevant discussions in sociology, as in Alan Prout's and Allison James's observation that 'the immaturity of children is a biological fact of life but the ways in which this immaturity is understood and made meaningful is a fact of culture'. Alan Prout and Allison James, 'A New Paradigm for the Sociology of Childhood? Provenance, Promise and Problems', in *idem,* eds., *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood* (London, 1997), 7-34 (p. 7). Cited in Colin Heywood, *A History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times* (Cambridge, 2001), 3.

[3] Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life,* translated by Robert Baldick (London, 1996, first published as *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime,* 1960).

[4] Linda Pollock has provided a sustained critique in *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge, 1983). See also, for example, Heywood, *A History of Childhood* and Adrian Wilson, 'The Infancy of the History of Childhood: An Appraisal of Philippe Ariès', *History and Theory* 19 (1980), 132-153.

[5] See, for instance, Sarah Boynton and Roe-Min Kok, eds., *Musical Childhoods & the Cultures of Youth* (Middletown, 2006); Adeline Mueller, 'Who Were the Drei Knaben?', *Opera Quarterly* 28 (2012), 88-103; David Metzer, '"We Boys": Childhood in the Music of Charles Ives', *Nineteenth-Century Music* 21/1 (1997), 77-95.

some of the music that children and adults experienced, rather than of the part that music played in the lives of children (although the latter is briefly touched on).

A new interest in the significance of childhood was associated with the emergence in the arts of the preoccupations often described collectively as modernism. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, especially in France, a variety of 'avant-garde' figures began to adopt or invent 'childlike' ways of seeing as models for their artistic practice.[6] Artists' turn to 'primitive' imagery – for its simple, direct, unequivocally kitsch-less rhetoric – had a close parallel in contemporaneous interests in children's art.[7] In their studies of how childhood is represented in literature, Marina Bethlenfalvay and Guillemette Tison suggest that the understanding of childhood was especially contested in French culture around the turn of the twentieth century.[8] How did the music produced in this culture participate in that 'contest'? How was music perceived to manifest the 'childlike' modes of being, doing and feeling that seem to have been so important for the French cultural imagination in the decades around 1900?

In life-and-work studies of canonic composers active in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century France – in particular, Maurice Ravel, Claude Debussy and Erik Satie – it has often been accepted that these figures were, and their music remains, in some sense 'childlike'. Paul Roberts, for example, takes up the link made by Alfredo Casella between Debussy's '*grand enfant*' personality and the 'innocence and limpidity of feeling […] characteristic of his art'.[9] In the conclusion of his recent biography of Ravel, Roger Nichols relates the composer's cultivation of 'the world of childhood' to

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[6] See, for instance, Marilynn Olsson, *Children's Culture and the Avant-Garde: Painting in Paris, 1890-1915* (London, 2013) and Jonathan Fineberg, ed., *Discovering Child Art: Essays on Childhood, Primitivism and Modernism* (Chichester and Princeton, 1998).

[7] See Emmanuel Pernoud, *L'Invention du dessin d'enfant en France, à l'aube des avant-gardes* (Paris, 2003).

[8] Marina Bethlenfalvay, *Les Visages de l'enfant dans la littérature française du XIXe siècle: Esquisse d'une typologie* (Geneva, 1979); Guillemette Tison, 'Le récit d'enfance: À (ne pas) mettre entre toutes les mains? (1870–1900)', in *L'Ere du récit d'enfance: En France depuis 1870*, edited by Alain Schaffner (Arras, 2005), 33–48.

[9] Paul Roberts, 'Humor and Childhood: The Interrupted Serenade', in *idem, Images: the piano music of Claude Debussy* (Portland, 1996), 201-237, (p. 201), citing Alfredo Casella, 'Claude Debussy', *The Monthly Musical Record* (January 1933) and Roger Nichols, *Debussy Remembered* (London, 1992), 97-98.

Schiller's conception of the child as a 'representation of the ideal'.[10] Nichols suggests that this notion helps to 'explain the underlying melancholy beneath much of Ravel's music', an essential aspect of its aesthetic of 'perfection'.[11] In relation to Satie, Roger Shattuck made the widely-quoted comment that his music is bound up with the 'revaluation of the very idea of maturity' that developed from the Romantic 'cult of childhood'.[12]

Usually, such observations are specifically related to a number of works whose texts and titles refer in some way to childhood. Over the past few decades, scholarship on French music has identified a small canon of pieces which are taken, implicitly or explicitly, to demonstrate a particular interest in childhood within French musical culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These are principally a succession of piano pieces: Fauré's *Dolly* (1894-96), Debussy's *Children's Corner* (1908), Ravel's *Ma Mère l'Oye* (1910), and Satie's three sets of children's pieces of 1913. Bizet's *Jeux d'enfants* (1871) occupies a slightly marginal position within this group.[13] An interest in childhood expressed in Ravel's music is generally considered to culminate in his opera *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* (1925).

It is customary to interpret these works as in some way manifesting thoughts about childhood: as evoking a world of childhood, enacting childlike behaviour, exhibiting an adult affection for children or nostalgia for childhood; as embodying a way of addressing children, or capturing some form of childhood experience and thereby returning the listener to that experience. Roberts, for example, suggests that *Children's*

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[10] Friedrich Schiller, *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*, translated by J.A. Elias (London, 1985, first published in German, 1795). Cited in Roger Nichols, *Ravel: A Life* (New Haven, CN, 2012), 349. The paragraph in question is partly Nichols's response to Robert Craft's polemic, 'The Nostalgic Kingdom of Maurice Ravel', in *Current Convictions* (London, 1978), 184-195.

[11] Nichols, *Ravel,* 349.

[12] Roger Shattuck, *The Banquet Years. The Origins of the Avant-Garde in France: 1885 to World War One*. (London, revised edition 1969), 31. Ann-Marie Hanlon discusses the frequent use of the epithet 'child-man' to refer to Satie in his lifetime, and subsequently, in 'Satie and the French Musical Canon: A Reception Study' (PhD. thesis, Newcastle University), 2013, 121.

[13] Other pieces with marginal positions include the two sets of *pièces faciles* for piano duet composed by Stravinsky during the War (while based in Switzerland).

Corner is an 'exploration through music of the psyche of a child'.[14] Two doctoral theses have singled out this repertoire, and provided historically informed interpretations of particular aspects of the attitudes towards childhood that it embodies.[15] Emily Kilpatrick's and Julianne Lindberg's studies of these works acknowledge the element of cultural contingency in the understanding of the condition of childhood. Their work suggests the possibility of music's reflecting and informing the development of this understanding.[16] Kilpatrick helpfully identifies a small tradition of nineteenth-century art-music, inherited and developed by Ravel and his contemporaries, which provided influential models of how music could explore the theme of childhood.[17] These models included, in particular, Schumann's *Kinderszenen* ('Scenes from Childhood') and Mussorgsky's *The Nursery*.

The nature of the present study is different from Lindberg's or Kilpatrick's. It considers the broader subject of French musical culture generally around the turn of the century, and also ventures more extensive and closely focused inquiries – which are of necessity selective – into how that musical culture was entwined with the surrounding culture of art and intellectual discourse. Centrally significant was music's capacity for articulating what it was to be 'childlike'. This thesis considers how the presentation of the 'childlike' in music was shaped by literary, artistic, political and educational thought, as well as by contemporaneous theorizing in physiology, psychology and anthropology. Each chapter examines a specific facet of French culture where the idea

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[14] Roberts, *Images,* 205.

[15] Emily Kilpatrick, 'The Language of Enchantment: Childhood and Fairytale in the Music of Maurice Ravel' (PhD thesis, University of Adelaide, 2008); Julianne Lindberg, 'Through the Looking Glass: Child-Inspired Keyboard Albums of the French fin de siècle' (PhD thesis, University of California, 2011). Kilpatrick examines *Ma Mère l'Oye*, the *Trois chansons* for mixed choir (1914-15) and *L'Enfant*. Lindberg's main chapters are studies of, respectively, Fauré's *Dolly*, Debussy's *Children's Corner*, Ravel's *Ma Mère l'Oye*, and Satie's *Menus propos enfantins*, *Enfantillages pittoresques* and *Peccadilles importunes*.

[16] Another instance is Steven Huebner, 'Ravel's Child: Magic and Moral Development', in *Musical Childhoods and the Cultures of Youth*, edited by Susan Boynton and Roe-Min Kok (Middletown, CT, 2006), 69-88.

[17] Kilpatrick provides a synopsis of 'historical and musical cultures of childhood' from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century, as a contextualization of study of Ravel's composition, *The Language of Enchantment*, 23-67.

of childhood was a formative factor in the character of music and music-making.[18] In each of the four chapters, a particular performance venue, musical genre, or idea is selected for a discussion which moves outwards in an attempt to situate it in its context. The four points of focus are: the stage of the Opéra-Comique around 1900; the genre of the *pièce enfantine*, comprising music produced for the piano-sheet market; a controversial ballet staging of Fauré's *Dolly* in 1913; and the aesthetic and philosophical significance of the image of the toy.

Scope of the thesis

The historical period examined in this project begins around 1880, principally because Republican politicians began to implement their pedagogical ideology in the early 1880s, having gained legislative power only in the late 1870s. The outbreak of war in 1914 provides a natural end point. Quite apart from the necessity of limiting the project's scope, the horrors of the Great War seemed to alter the symbolic significance of childhood. During and after these horrors, French culture clung to the figure of the child as a paradigm of moral innocence in an apparent reversion to a perception of childhood especially popular in the mid nineteenth century.[19] This apparent shift also demonstrates why a study of music and childhood in turn-of-the-century French culture does not, as some French music lovers might suggest, need to extend to a study of Ravel's *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*. That opera undertakes a search for the possibility of innocence – for being reaffirmed, like the Child, as 'good and gentle' – in the aftermath of brutal, needless violence that is difficult to comprehend. The nature and urgency of

[18] These discussions concentrate with varying specificity on Paris, as an important centre of musical activity.

[19] Glenn Watkins relates Debussy's *Berceuse héroïque* (1914) and *Noël des enfants qui n'ont plus de maison* (1915) convincingly to (other) French wartime propaganda involving images of children's suffering: *Proof Through the Night: Music and the Great War* (London, 2003), 103-108.

this search only becomes fully clear in light of the wartime context of the opera's composition.[20]

There are, of course, strands of continuity between how the importance of childhood asserted itself in pre-war and in post-war musical culture in France. Scholars sometimes note the role of the spare, nonsense mode of Satie's and Stravinsky's children's piano pieces, and the *style dépouillé* of Ravel's *Ma Mère*, as laying stylistic groundwork for the *rappel à l'ordre* and the aesthetics of objectivity that emerged after the First World War.[21] Chapter 4 examines elements of the mechanical aesthetic in Ravel's and Debussy's music, from which post-war preoccupations with the mechanistic partly developed. From the late nineteenth century onwards, the popularization of medical theories of the unconscious helped to substantiate a perception of childhood as a state of enlightened irrationality, which found its fullest realization in Surrealist writing in the 1920s. The arguments of Chapter 3 make use of this later writing to demonstrate how musical and theatrical culture in Paris began to promote versions of that perception of childhood just before the War.

It might seem surprising that this study does not deal extensively with two canonic piano works of the period strongly associated in today's scholarship with the image of the child: Ravel's *Ma Mère l'Oye* and Debussy's *Children's Corner*. But these have already been considered – if often only briefly – by a number of critical studies in the context of the idea of childhood.[22] Since it was necessary, for reasons of space, to limit

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[20] Moreover, scholars have already suggested various ways in which Ravel's *L'Enfant* is bound up with a history of childhood (if not in the way just outlined). In addition to previously cited works, see Peter Kaminsky, 'The Child on the Couch, or Towards a Psychoanalysis of *L'enfant et les sortilèges*', in *Unmasking Ravel: New Perspectives on the Music*, edited by Peter Kaminsky (Rochester, 2011), 85-110; Emily Kilpatrick, *The Operas of Maurice Ravel* (Cambridge, 2015).

[21] For instance, Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Ravel*, translated by Margaret Crosland (New York, 1959. First published 1939), 37; Scott Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music: From the Genesis of the Concept Through the Schoenberg/Stravinsky Polemic* (Ann Arbor, 1988).

[22] Many of these are biographies and life-and-work studies. For evocative remarks about Ravel's music in relation to the idea of childhood, see Michael J. Puri, 'Adorno's Ravel', *Unmasking Ravel: New perspectives on the Music*, edited by Peter Kaminsky (Rochester, 2011), 63-83, which includes discussion of Adorno's essay 'Ravel', in which childhood is an important theme. Theodor W. Adorno, *Night Music: Essays on Music 1928-1962*, translated by

the number of works discussed, it seemed appropriate to exclude from close examination those which had already received much consideration. By contrast, there has been relatively little discussion of how opera and ballet (the subjects of Chapters 1 and 3 respectively) exhibited important ideas about childhood in France around the turn of the century.[23] The 'canon' of child-related piano works exemplified, imitated and parodied the collections of *pièces enfantines* produced in great quantities for the turn-of-the-century sheet-music market. In Chapter 2, I consider some of the general features of this genre of children's music, together with representations of children's piano-playing in contemporaneous imagery and literature. Chapter 4 examines the piano version of Debussy's *La Boîte à joujoux* (subtitled 'Ballet pour enfants') – a piece neglected by comparison with *Children's Corner* – and two miniature songs by Ravel whose texts and titles do not refer directly to childhood. My discussion of these songs develops critics' brief but evocative suggestions that much of Ravel's music seems to embody a 'childlike' perspective.

A summary of each chapter is provided at the end of this Introduction. Before this, I discuss the general assumptions made in existing scholarship about the significance of childhood for musical culture in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century France, focusing on the work of Vladimir Jankélévitch. This is followed by an outline of some of the broad artistic, cultural and scientific developments in the understanding of childhood that form an overall context for the following chapters. Implicitly and

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Wieland Hoban (Chicago, 2009), 94-103. In addition to previously cited works, see Deborah Mawer, *The Ballets of Maurice Ravel: creation and interpretation* (Aldershot, 2006), 35-78.

[23] Exceptions include Mawer, cited in previous footnote. For discussion of a closely related subject, see Steven Huebner, 'Zola the Sower', *Music and Letters* 83/1 (2002), 75-105. The fin-de-siècle concern about *dépopulation* extended from the question of the numbers of children being born to their health, upbringing and future contribution as citizens of France. Such concern was, unsurprisingly, manifested in a heightened interest in the idea and status of childhood, as well as in active debate about motherhood and the role and position of women. On *dépopulation* and the position of women see, *inter alia*, Joshua Cole, 'There are only good mothers', *French Historical Studies* 19, 3 (1996), 639-672.

explicitly, the thesis tries to show how music both responded to and helped to propel these developments.

Rejecting grandiloquence

Musicologists have suggested in general terms why the image of childhood was important in the French musical imagination around the turn of the century. In his study of musical neoclassicism, Scott Messing observes that French composers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had 'established the child-inspired keyboard album for two or four hands as something approaching a cult, […] which provided [...] an antidote to the hyperbolic musical excesses of the *fin de siècle*'.[24] Material produced for children was generally distinguished by its qualities of simplicity, directness, concision, brevity, naïvety and (usually) humour. Writing children's music, or music presented as evoking a world of childhood, was a vehicle for cultivating these qualities, and legitimating that cultivation. The idea of childhood was a salient rallying point for reactions against highly wrought, 'maximalist' forms of *fin-de-siècle* rhetoric, whether German or French. Critics often acknowledge (at least implicitly) the role of this idea in discussions of the parodic *Tristan* reference in 'Golliwogg's Cake Walk' from Debussy's *Children's Corner*.[25]

The general characteristics of the canonic repertoire noted above are sometimes linked to a set of qualities prized as inherently French. In his biography of Bizet, for instance, Hervé Lacombe notes: 'It is standard to place *Jeux d'enfants* in a lineage [of four-hand piano music] marked out by Debussy's *Petite Suite* (1888), Fauré's *Dolly* (1898) and Ravel's *Ma Mère l'Oye* (1908). Bizet falls right within the scope of a revival of French music'.[26] The repertoire constituting this 'revival' includes a

[24] Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, 95. Cited in Lindberg, *Through the Looking Glass,* 15.
[25] See, for instance, Robin Holloway, *Debussy and Wagner* (London, 1979), 141-142.
[26] 'Il est habituel de situer Jeux d'enfants dans une lignée jalonnée par la Petite Suite de Debussy (1888), Dolly de Fauré (1898) et Ma mère l'Oye de Ravel (1908). Bizet s'inscrit bien

succession of four-hand piano pieces often considered to signify an interest in childhood exhibited by late nineteenth-century French art-music. Discussing the orchestral Suite into which Bizet transformed *Jeux d'enfants*, Lacombe continues: 'Bizet produces [...] what could qualify strongly [...] as a realization of that French art of moderation, *clarté*, and the rejection of sentimental grandiloquence'.[27]

As many musicologists have observed, late nineteenth-century opposition to Wagner's music was often justified through that music's perceived incompatibility with the 'essential qualities of the French genius, clarity and precision'.[28] Pronouncements about compositional taste in the early Third Republic regularly referred to qualities of the 'national genius', such as 'simplicity' and 'measure'.[29] As Jann Pasler has demonstrated, these derived from a particular understanding of 'race', which posited that people of particular nationalities were intrinsically inclined to certain sensibilities.[30] Despite the amount of scholarship devoted to music's involvement in the development of nationalist ideologies in France, the historical nature of this possible link between musical realizations of the 'childlike' and the promotion of a national(ist) sensibility remains relatively unexamined.[31]

The most evocative discussions of the value of the idea of childhood for the modern French musical imagination appear in Vladimir Jankélévitch's writings on music, produced between the late 1930s and 1960s. This work – which focuses almost entirely on Spanish, Russian and predominantly French art-music from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – develops what Arnold Davidson calls 'an aesthetics and

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dans un renouveau de la musique française'. Hervé Lacombe, *Georges Bizet: Naissance d'une identité créatrice* (Paris, 2000), 530-531. See also, for instance, Roberts, *Images*, 206.

[27] 'Bizet réalise ce qui [...] pourrait fort bien passer [...] pour un manifeste de cet art français de la mesure, de la clarté et du rejet de la grandiloquence sentimentale'. Lacombe, *Bizet,* 532.

[28] Interview with composer Victorin Joncière, *Le Gaulois,* reproduced in *Revue Wagnérienne*, (15 April 1887,) 104-109, cited in Jann Pasler, *Composing the Citizen: Music as Public Utility in Third Republic France* (Berkeley, 2009), 515.

[29] See e.g. *ibid*., 603.

[30] See e.g. *ibid.,* 647.

[31] For scholarship on music and nationalism, see for instance Barbara L. Kelly, ed., *French Music, Culture, and National Identity, 1870-1939* (Rochester, 2008).

morality of simplicity in which the virtue of understatement is made to stand out against the excesses of magniloquence.'[32] In his sweeping studies of individual *oeuvres* such as Ravel's and Debussy's, and in his more general writings, Jankélévitch is especially attuned to this music's exhibition of what he sometimes describes as 'the new candor'.[33] His preoccupation with an 'aesthetics and morality of simplicity' emphasizes the importance of the idea of childhood, and the pieces associated with that idea, within the particular canon that his writing both constructs and justifies.

From Jankélévitch's writings, one might gather together a broad-brushed (and sometimes self-contradictory) account of the interest in childhood manifested by what he considers 'modern music'. In *La Musique et l'ineffable* (*Music and the Ineffable*), Jankélévitch seems to outline such an account:

> At this point it will become evident that modern music, in certain respects, longed for a return to the spirit of childhood. The spirit of childhood suffuses Musorgksy's *Detskaya* (The Nursery) and Anatoly Lyadov's children's songs [...]; one encounters it in Novák's *Mlady* as well as in Albeniz's *Yvonne en visite*. The new candor, the new aura that gives rise to child's play and mischief in Bizet, Debussy, Ravel, and Séverac, and Satie's babbling childishness, and Mompou's material ingenuity, and Koechlin's transparent sonatas, represents the spirit of childhood. With twentieth-century composers, no matter what names are cited, the "children's corner" gets bigger and bigger. Contemplating [...] the 'prodigious prodigies' that nature unfurls like a fantastic spectacle for eyes that are still chaste and naïve, Ravel and Rimsky-Korsakov rediscovered the soul of a child in a state of wonder. Only innocence can attain the fresh, almost-too-childish vision that was granted to Rimsky-Korsakov: innocence, because it is a form of purity, is the sole state capable of this kind of ecstatic objectivity.[34]

It would be a mistake to interpret this simply as a passage of free-flowing style history. The context reveals how Jankélévitch's vivid critical observations – especially those concerning childhood – are inextricable from the objectives of his principal activity, as a moral philosopher.

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[32] Arnold Davidson, 'The *Charme* of Jankélévitch: Introduction' to Vladimir Jankélévitch *Music and the Ineffable,* translated by Carolyn Abbate (Princeton, 2003, first published as *La Musique et l'ineffable,* 1983), vii-xii (p. vii).

[33] Jankélévitch, *Music and the Ineffable*, translated by Abbate, 50.

[34] *Ibid.,* 89.

This passage on the 'spirit of childhood' appears in an extended discussion of his idea of 'the Charm'. Several pages earlier, after citing Paul Valéry's remark that poetry engenders in readers a special state of inspiration, Jankélévitch states that '[m]usic, too, makes every listener into a poet, since music has sole possession of a certain persuasive power, called the Charm, and innocence is the condition of its existence.'[35] At points in his writing, the 'Charm' emerges as a particular spirit of engagement with the world, characterized by attitudes of sincerity, openness and disinterestedness. Music, for Jankélévitch, had the capacity to guide listeners towards how it feels to adopt or enact an ideal moral sensibility.[36] The responsibility that he confers on music derives from his quasi-Schopenhaurian conception of its power, as 'an exquisite efflorescence of life itself': 'we live music as we live time [...], with the ontic participation of our entire being'.[37] Jankélévitch records an especially intense way of hearing the repertoire that falls within the scope of this thesis: as a means through which to attain a particular state of being, for which childhood was the most compelling metaphor.

Jankélévitch's writings on music clearly reveal his historical and political position, living in France as the son of Russian Jews through the Nazi atrocities and the Second World War. These circumstances may well account for his preoccupation with innocence and the particular longing for return that he heard in 'modern music'. They may help to explain his tendencies towards a sort of morality of style, which involves comparing music that suppresses 'the Charm' with the techniques of propaganda.[38] As Lindberg observes, there is a potentially disquieting element in Jankélévitch's exclusion of German or Germanic works from his repertoire of 'modern music', and in his constant use of those works to exemplify the qualities against which the proposal of

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[35] *Ibid.,* 87.

[36] At the same time, Jankélévitch claims to reject the idea of an 'ethics' or 'metaphysics' of music, at least as proposed by philosophers such as Plato and Nietzsche.

[37] *Ibid.,* 68, 95.

[38] *Ibid.,* .87.

his own 'canon' was a reaction – qualities that he often presents as morally suspect.[39] Jankélévitch also reveals that his elevation of the childlike qualities of Mussorgksy's, Ravel's or Albeniz's music, as providing lessons in 'chastity', stemmed from more personal beliefs about 'the insufferable erotomania that is one reflection of contemporary cultural moroseness.'[40]

Like other recent work on French modernist music, this thesis makes use of Jankélévitch's expressive critical writing. I mention the possible underlying motivations of that writing partly to distance my arguments from what we might call his politics of innocence. This perhaps needs emphasizing in light of the general, sometimes uncritical, musicological interest that Jankélévitch's writing has attracted in recent years.[41] In traditions of French musical criticism inflected with national or nationalist sentiment, elevations of the childlike sometimes seem implicitly to deny the capacity of innocence to a supposed alien Teutonic mentality. In this respect, Jankélévitch's perceptive criticism has particular relevance to the subject-matter of this thesis. For in some ways, the political position from which he made his observations was comparable to that adopted by earlier French audiences: outrage at the nation's defeat by Prussia in 1870 remained strong in the cultural memory into the twentieth century.

For Jankélévitch, at least, music could configure as well as merely reflect the forms of subjectivity for which childhood was considered a model. The view that music has a unique access to human interiority – taking up 'residence in our intimate self', as Jankélévitch put it – was regularly pronounced in late nineteenth-century French

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[39] For instance: 'Ravel, criticizing Mahler's symphonic immensities, makes a laughing stock of all that *indecent* and loquacious sincerity' [my emphasis], *Ibid.,* 50. See Lindberg 'Through the Looking Glass', 34. On the importance of the 'childlike' perspective in Mahler's Fourth Symphony, see Raymond Knapp, *Symphonic Metamorphoses: Subjectivity and Alienation in Mahler's Recycled Songs* (Middletown, CT, 2003), 209-258.

[40] Jankélévitch, *Music and the Ineffable*, 89.

[41] For a critical assessment, see James Currie, 'Where Jankélévitch Cannot Speak', in 'Colloquy: Vladimir Jankélévitch's Philosophy of Music', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 65, 1 (Spring 2012), 247-251.

culture.[42] In a pedagogical treatise of 1887 (to be discussed in Chapter 2), the influential educationalist Félix Pécaut declared that music 'reaches and shakes those vague and mysterious depths of our being where physical life and moral life have their common roots'.[43] At the same time, various strands of nineteenth-century culture increasingly turned to the figure of the child to give shape to the idea of human interiority, or to suggest a route to that interior.[44] The following section outlines some of these reflections, discussing several broader developments in the understanding of childhood in the nineteenth century. It focuses partly on the history of ideas that informed what Jankélévitch might have meant by the 'spirit of childhood' or the 'soul of a child in a state of wonder'.

Childhood, subjectivity, interiority

In her study of Mozart's Drei Knaben, Adeline Mueller refers to the importance, in post-Enlightenment thought, of the 'recuperation of the inner child out of the recesses of memory', as studied by the historian Carolyn Steedman.[45] Shattuck made a closely related point in his remark about the 'revaluation of maturity' in late nineteenth-century art – '[w]ith Rimbaud, a new personage emerges: the "child-man", the grown-up who has refrained from putting off childish things'.[46] Biographers' presentation of composers such as Debussy and Satie as 'child-men' echoes an important Romantic idea, which likened the creative genius to a child endowed with adult faculties. This image had many connotations. The child, for instance, has yet to be fully shaped by social custom; the artist questions and breaches that custom.[47] The basis of this image

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[42] Jankélévitch, *Music and the Ineffable*, 1.

[43] See Ch. 2, footnote 27, for the original French.

[44] A connection between music and childhood as what we might call a 'form of subjectivity' is suggested, at least implicitly, in the epilogue to Knapp, *Symphonic Metamorphoses* 209-258.

[45] Mueller, 'Who were the Drei Knaben?', 95; Carolyn Steedman, *Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Interiority* (London, 1995).

[46] Shattuck, *The Banquet Years*, 32.

[47] Rosemary Lloyd, *The Land of Lost Content: Children and Childhood in Nineteenth-Century French Literature* (Oxford, 1992). 223.

was childhood's role as standing for an ideal state of perception, intoxicated by a sense of the world's newness. Observing and reimagining how children perceived the world was an essential aspect of Romantic reflections upon the nature of ideal selfhood. In these reflections, childhood was considered to have what we might call its own mode of subjectivity, which could continue to inhabit and inform the adult self.

In the genres of autobiography that developed in early nineteenth-century European literature, recollections of childhood became the focus of a new 'exercise in self-recovery'.[48] As Rosemary Lloyd has observed, the more compelling literary accounts of memories of childhood in French literature represented the childhood self as a peculiar, dissipated thing, not yet a coherent unitary subject. Flaubert's *Mémoires d'un fou* is an exploration of the development of the self, written in 1838 but not published until 1900. In the *Mémoires*, the (young) child's response to the natural world is characterized, as Lloyd puts it, by 'a participation [...] that entails a loss of personal identity, conveyed in the words "*extase*" (literally, standing outside oneself), [and] "*s'abîmer*" (losing oneself in the abyss).'[49] Childhood is a state in which the sense of separation or opposition between subject and world, which characterizes adult knowledge, has not been fully realized.

This understanding of childhood informed Baudelaire's well-known formulation of the analogy between the condition of creative inspiration and the child's inchoate sensations. In his essay of 1863 on the artist Constantin Guys and the experience of the modern city, he famously observed:

> the child sees everything in a state of newness; he is always *drunk*. Nothing more resembles what we call inspiration than the delight with which a child absorbs form and colour. […] But genius is nothing more or less than *childhood*

[48] David Kennedy, *The Well of Being: Childhood, Subjectivity and Education* (Albany NY, 2006), 49. For an account of this exercise in relation to nineteenth-century French literary thought, and some suggestions as to what prompted it, see Edward J. Ahearn, *Rimbaud: Visions and Habitations* (Berkeley, 1983). The following paragraphs are indebted partly to these sources.

[49] Lloyd, *Land of Lost Content,* 122.

> *recovered* at will — a childhood now equipped for self-expression with manhood's capacities and a power of analysis….[50]

In the mode of perception shared by genius and child, sensory information is not subordinated to the organizing principles of the utilitarian adult mind. Baudelaire presents his ideal of intoxication in more direct terms in *Les Paradis artificiels* (one of whose sub-sections is entitled 'Le Génie enfant'): 'great poets [...] can succeed, simply by a free exertion of will, in reaching a state where they are at once cause and effect, subject and object, mesmerist and one entranced'.[51] For Baudelaire, the 'perfect flâneur' can recapture the state of intoxication which is childhood's intrinsic mode of perception. This state entails adopting a kind of intersubjective relation with the chaotic urban environment, into whose shifting, kaleidoscopic identity the subject becomes absorbed. The impression of alienation produced by urban modernity is thereby inverted and transformed into a sort of ecstatic self-loss or self-fragmentation.

These remarks are strikingly different in character from Wordsworth's melancholic observation of the 'shades of the prison-house' closing over the growing child.[52] In an important departure from some Romantic thought, Baudelaire did not mourn the impossibility of returning to what Wordsworth called the 'infant sensibility'.[53] He maintained instead that the adult self could reclaim this sensibility in a more vital and productive form. The most lucid advocacy of this reclamation was that of Schiller, who criticized Rousseau's nostalgic wish 'to restore man to the spiritless uniformity of his first state in order simply to be rid of the conflict within him'.[54] This conflict, Schiller observed, was a necessary consequence of civilization, through which adults

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[50] Baudelaire, Charles. 'The Painter of Modern Life', in *idem*, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, edited and translated by Jonathan Mayne (London, 1964, first published 1863), 8 (emphasis original). As Lloyd points out, Baudelaire's linking of childhood and genius was a common one in contemporaneous thought. *Land of Lost Content*, 102.

[51] Charles Baudelaire *Les Paradis artificiels,* translated by Patricia Roseberry as *Artificial Paradise* (Harrogate, 1999, first published 1860). 175.

[52] The reference is to William Wordsworth's 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood', first published in 1804.

[53] Wordsworth, *The Prelude* ii, 287, written c.1799, but not published until 1850.

[54] Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*, translated by Reginald Snell (New York, 1954, first published in German in 1795), 129.

'surrendered the wholeness of their being', exiled from 'nature' by their attainment of individual self-consciousness.[55] Childhood's status as a 'representation of the ideal' (to return to the passage cited by Nichols in his biography of Ravel) is conferred by the fact that young children appear yet to have fully experienced that exile.[56] For Schiller, the 'wholeness' of the 'infant sensibility' could be gradually reclaimed through aesthetic education.

What Shattuck called Rimbaud's 'revaluation of maturity' was an extreme expression of a desire for this reclamation – the desire, according to Edward J. Ahearn, for a 'transfiguration of world and self that is a re-enactment of the child's primordial ecstasy'.[57] The elements of early childhood experience that Schiller and Baudelaire observed and re-imagined were considered further, and in different ways, by twentieth-century psychologists and philosophers. For example, in the second half of the twentieth century, the psychologist Donald Winnicott suggested that the perceptual state in which early childhood is suspended is a 'transitional space'.[58] Winnicott suggested, as did such writers as Baudelaire, that this space continues to be accessible in adult life through art and religion. In the work of Gaston Bachelard, childhood is an archetypal mode of enchanted experience, in which 'the I no longer opposes itself to the world'.[59] Bachelard's writing is informed by a sense of the world's being subject-like in childhood's particular 'attachment' to it.[60] The idea that childhood is a condition to which adulthood should aspire, rather than seek entirely to overcome, had long been familiar in Western thought in a slightly different form, in which it was

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[55] Schiller, *Aesthetic Education of Man*, 79.

[56] Schiller, *Naive and Sentimental Poetry,* translated by Elias, 104. See Note 10 above for the Nichols citation.

[57] Ahearn, *Visions and Habitations*, 102.

[58] Donald W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London, 2005, first published 1971).

[59] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie: Childhood, Language and the Cosmos*, translated by Daniel S. Russell (Boston, 1971).

[60] For instance: 'We cannot love water, fire, the tree without putting a love into them, a friendship which goes back to childhood. [...] we love them in a new found childhood'. *Ibid*., 126.

related to morality and a perception of the child's innocence.[61] This particular understanding of the childlike as a model of adult moral sensibility is, however, less directly important to the aspects of nineteenth- and twentieth-century culture that are examined in this thesis.[62]

To function as it did in nineteenth- and twentieth-century thought, 'childhood' needed to be understood not as a mere inchoate adult subjectivity, but as having its own form of knowledge. One of the most influential elaborations of this understanding appeared in 1762, in Rousseau's *Émile, or On Education*, which insisted that: 'We must view the man as a man, and the child as a child' – 'nothing can be more foolish than to seek to substitute our ways for theirs'.[63] The Rousseauvian principle of child-rearing was developed by nineteenth-century educationalists such as Froebel, whose ideas had some impact on Third Republic education policies. Universal schooling – which was partly the consequence of nation states' desire to supervise the raising of future citizens – helped to mark childhood as a 'time span' distinct from adulthood, by specifying the age bands for which particular curricula were most suitable.[64] By the end of the nineteenth century, child development increasingly came to be viewed as progress through relatively distinct stages marked by age, an understanding that was reinforced by the newly developed disciplines of psychology and linguistics.

The idea of childhood was a crucial element in the widespread preoccupations with general notions of growth, development and progress in nineteenth-century European culture. The autobiographical literature written in France in the early to mid nineteenth century often justified the attention given to childhood by appealing to the idea that 'the

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[61] As in, for instance, Jesus's exhortation: 'except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven'. *Matthew:* 18.3.

[62] On the development in nineteenth-century French literary thought of the relation between childhood's innocence and what Schiller called the 'wholeness of its being', and between its innocence and its sexuality, see Ahearn, *Visions and Habitations*, 22-30.

[63] From Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile or On Education*, Book II, as reprinted in *Emile:* Selections, edited and translated by William Boyd (New York, 1956), 34, 38.

[64] Steedman, *Strange Dislocations,* 7.

Child is father of the Man' (to borrow Wordsworth's well-known formulation).[65] The understanding of childhood development was influenced by so-called Recapitulation theory, which proposed that the ontogenesis of the individual recapitulates the philogenesis of the species. Childhood behaviour, according to this theory, manifested a pre-formed, primitive stage in a universal pattern of development, whose end-point only the civilized (white, male) adult had reached. As Steedman observes, one model of historical narrative that was derived from evolutionary theory proposed that the shape of a life is 'already latent' in its earliest versions.[66] If the progression of child to adult follows a hidden law of development, calculable in theory, then the former may attain the status of a kind of progenitor of the latter – the father of the Man. Childhood, then, could be seen as forming the basis of, and somehow remaining within, adulthood itself.

Through ideas such as these, Steedman argues, childhood became the principal idea giving shape to the notion of human interiority in the early twentieth century. Some historians, at least, would suggest that this development is also dependent on a phenomenon tied to modernity's emphasis on the distinction between public and private life – the individual's sense of self as radically *inside*, revealed in but also shielded by exteriority.[67] Freudian psychoanalysis, she observes, reformulated 'a great many nineteenth-century articulations of the idea that the core of an individual's psychic identity was his or her own lost past, or childhood'.[68] Baudelaire, for instance, had noted in a study of Edgar Allan Poe that

> the character, the genius, the style of a man are formed by the apparently unexceptional circumstances of his youth. If all those who have occupied the

[65] Lloyd, *Land of Lost Content,* 39. Wordsworth, *Poems Referring to the Period of Childhood I,* 'My heart leaps up', first published in 1807.
[66] Steedman, *Strange Dislocations,* 80.
[67] *Ibid.,* 12.
[68] *Ibid.,* 4

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> world's stage had noted their childhood impressions, what an excellent dictionary of psychology we would have![69]

For Freud, the 'childhood' that gives shape to adult interiority was a kind of dark spot formed through the repression brought on by trauma. There were many alternative, and more positive, ways of imagining the adult's 'inner child'. In popular, aesthetic and scientific thought in turn-of-the-century French culture, childhood sometimes took up a position at the centre of the adult self in ways comparable to, but less formalized than, those postulated by Freud. That thought was comparable to Freud's mainly in its recruiting of the child as a kind of keeper of the domain of the adult unconscious.

In the following chapters, I consider more specific historical contexts for the understandings of childhood embodied in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century French music.[70] The above discussion indicates several general ways in which the idea of childhood was significant for French culture towards the end of the nineteenth century. Four of these are: childhood as giving shape to human interiority; childhood marked as a 'time span' distinct from adulthood, with a mental kingdom of its own that was embraced by politicized education policies; childhood as manifesting a 'primitive' stage of development (whether of an individual or a culture); and childhood as remodelling the adult's self-world relation. These four themes, respectively, are important subjects of discussion in the four chapters of this thesis.

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[69] Charles Baudelaire, 'Edgar Allan Poe. Sa vie et ses oeuvres', published as the introduction to Poe, *Histoires extraordinaires*' Vol.1, translated by Baudelaire, 1856. Cited (and translated) by Lloyd, *Land of Lost Content,* 101.

[70] For a detailed history of attitudes towards childhood in French society, see Colin Heywood, *Growing Up in France: From the Ancien Régime to the Third Republic* (Cambridge, 2009), esp. Part 1: 'Representations of childhood and adolescence in France', 17-106. In the nineteenth century, these attitudes continued to vary greatly according to social class. See also Colin Heywood, *Childhood in Nineteenth-Century France: Work, Health and Education Among the 'Classes Populaires'* (Cambridge, 2002).

Chapter summaries

On the stage of the Opéra Comique around 1900, in front of its principally middle-class audiences, several important operas realized quite different, but mutually illuminating, conceptions of the 'childlike'. Chapter 1 considers how the reception of these operas, and the works themselves, elevated music as a means through which adult audiences might reclaim a childhood spirit, or access the childhood that remained within them. The French reception of Humperdinck's *opéra féerie*, *Hänsel und Gretel* – whose first performance in Paris (in May 1900) was met with great acclaim – also offers a unique illustration of the complexities that arose from the appropriation of childhood by nationalist thought. Humperdinck's opera exhibited the 'childlike' partly through its inclusion of arranged and invented 'folk' tunes. In France (as elsewhere), both folk-song and fairytale were deemed to embody national and racial traits. According to many commentators, the underlying commonalities of French and German fairytale plots, and the perceived commonality of some 'folk' melodies, showed national difference to be a natural variation upon a shared human heritage. Throughout the nineteenth-century, both childhood and the 'folk' could stand for a deeply idealized state of simplicity, which civilized bourgeois man had lost. Capturing the experience of reading fairytale, Humperdinck's opera purportedly allowed its audiences to reclaim the 'simple soul' of childhood.

In Debussy's *Pélleas et Mélisande*, which premièred just as the run of *Hansel et Gretel* was finishing, childhood became a darker facet of adulthood, as much inescapable as reclaimable. The opera presented a version of the inner child that adulthood had now acquired. Almost all the principal characters – Mélisande in particular – are described as childlike, in a way closely linked to the other metaphors for the human condition that permeate Maeterlinck's play: blindness and lostness. According to Maeterlinck, studying the strange anxieties of childhood was a means of rediscovering a shadowy point of interiority shut away by the 'walls of artifice' erected by the adult self. Some of the first critics of Debussy's opera perceived its characters

as figures whose interiorities had been somehow laid bare. The basis of this perception was the fragmentary, repetitious, anti-lyrical character of Debussy's vocal writing, which critics described as 'puérile' ('childlike'), and which is taken to an extreme in Yniold's music in Act 3, scene 4.

Making the 'childlike' an adult vocal ideal could also be a way of infantilizing the female body, as in Ambroise Thomas's immensely popular *Mignon* (1866), which continued to run at the Opéra-Comique in the early 1900s. Like Mélisande, Mignon is both child and woman, and other characters remark on her striking voice. Indeed, Mélisande exhibits many of the features of the Mignon archetype which Thomas's opera stripped from Goethe's original character: an innocence that does not preclude sexuality, for instance, and proximity with death. Unlike Mélisande's, Mignon's 'childlike' singing, signifies a vessel of divine innocence, who becomes the passive, manipulable object of sexual desire. The significance of both characters may be understood in the context of the increasing public attention given, in the late nineteenth century, to adolescence – an intermediate stage of sexual development between childhood and adulthood.

The perception of children as political capital intensified in the cultural atmosphere of the Third Republic, in which influential thinkers and politicians turned to pedagogy as an essential way of ensuring the continuity of the Republic, and avoiding a repeat of France's capitulation to Prussia in 1871. Numerous literary scholars have investigated how children's books set out to socialize their audience into the prevailing ideologies of the Third Republic. Two kinds of musical material invite the same investigation: children's songs (produced for use in the schoolroom) and children's piano pieces (for use in the *salon* of the bourgeois home). Chapter 2 examines the latter. Piano playing was an essential part of bourgeois childhood, and in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, a large market of piano music for children developed, from comprehensive technical manuals to collections of 'recreational' pieces. This chapter provides a survey of important characteristics of collections of *pièces enfantines* in the late nineteenth and

early twentieth century, in connection with representations of children's piano playing in contemporaneous literature and visual imagery. In these representations, it was usually girls who were playing the piano.

Children's stories promoted piano playing as a means of attaining an attractive, harmonious femininity. With the popularity of Dalcrozian ideas in the early years of the twentieth century, music became a means of disciplining the body, acculturating 'la jeune française' into ideals of corporeal civility. In line with the Rousseauvian tenets guiding educational thought, children's piano pieces generally appealed to a sort of spirit or affective world of childhood. Chapter 2 suggests that the simple, cheerful, diatonic character of this music became a sort of implicit prescription of the childlike. This construction had much more in common with Humperdinck's jovial, playful characters, sealed off from the world of adulthood, than with Debussy's lost, vulnerable child-adults. This chapter introduces the subject of dolls, and their importance in the wider cultural imagination,. Dolls were considered essential vehicles for little girls' rehearsal of motherhood, and the 'Doll's Lullaby' (one of the most common sub-genres of *pièces enfantines*) provided a sort of affective model of this rehearsal. Adapting an argument of Greg Thomas's about depictions of children in the popular press, I also suggest that the *pièce enfantine*'s conflation of the childlike and the mechanistic unwittingly illustrated the way in which children had become objects of a commodified consumer culture.[71]

A general concern with bodily health across much of Europe towards the end of the nineteenth century joined with the mid-century surge of interest in childhood's physiological traits. Physiologically oriented understandings of childhood rested upon the idea that children exemplified a 'Primitive' state, shared – according to the tenets of Recapitulation theory – by people such as France's colonial subjects. Chapter 3 examines how music contributed to the perception of 'Primitive' corporeality in early

[71] Greg M. Thomas, *Impressionist Children: Childhood, Family and Modern Identity in French Art* (London, 2010).

twentieth-century France. To do so, it turns to dance, focusing on a specific cultural event: a highly successful but controversial production at the Théâtre des Arts in Paris in 1913, which choreographed Fauré's *Dolly* Suite to the frenetic performance style of circus entertainment, in a spectacle involving professional clowns and music-hall performers. The reception of the ballet cast it as a critical project, which sought to distance Fauré's music from a particular image of childhood popular in literary and visual culture of the day, and promoted by much of the music discussed in Chapter 2. This image, intended principally for adult self-indulgence, presented joyful, deeply idealized children at the centre of touching and tender domestic scenes. The ballet, in contrast, aligned itself with literary reactions against this image, reflecting conflicting views of childhood in early twentieth-century French culture.

According to popularized medical theory, the 'corporeal unconscious' could be observed in the behaviour of the hysteric, breaking free from the command of the civilized, rational adult mind, and taking control of the body. Chapter 3 observes how audiences perceived music-hall and circus performance styles in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century as staging this relinquishing of control, which music could supposedly induce through its action upon the nerves. In primitive states that the 'civilized' European adult had supposedly surpassed (such as the child's or colonial subject's), the 'corporeal unconscious' had not yet been subordinated to rationality. Childhood's corporeal traits laid bare this central but normally hidden feature of the individual. This pre-war conception of the unconscious was the basis of a proto-Surrealist interest in childhood, perceived as a corporeal condition signifying an enlightened irrationality. Music and dance were essential means of developing that interest, as exemplified by the choreographic treatment of Fauré's music at the Théâtre des Arts. As the ballet illustrated, these artistic interests in the unconscious tended towards the comic, as opposed to the solemn mystique of Symbolism discussed in Chapter 1.

From Plato to Rilke, the toy has had a long history as a vehicle for reflecting upon the nature of subjectivity. Chapter 4 considers how early twentieth-century French art music participated in this discourse, extending in another direction the discussion in Chapter 2 of the toy's importance to late nineteenth-century French culture. It studies one important but neglected work by Debussy – *La Boîte à joujoux* – and two songs by Ravel – 'Le Grillon', from *Histoires Naturelles*, and 'Noël des jouets'. The discussion of these songs develops Jankélévitch's evocative suggestion that Ravel's music in general rediscovers the child's 'microscopic perspective'. Nineteenth-century art and literature, from Hugo to Baudelaire, delighted in representing the child's transfiguration of domestic space through play. Through their words and images, the works discussed in this chapter exemplify a closely related fantasy of entering, or participating in, a toy-world.

To do so requires a kinaesthetic empathy (as we might now call it) with inanimate things. 'Noël des Jouets' enacts this empathic association; *La Boîte* invites it, in the mode of domestic performance that the original storybook version demands. This chapter suggests that Debussy's 'ballet for children' invites the listener to inhabit imaginatively the toy-like corporeality embodied in Debussy's music and André Hellé's illustrations. The evocations of the toy-like in these pieces exemplify versions of a general mechanistic aesthetic, exhibited by other pre-war art-music, which embodies what Jankélévitch calls 'an automaton humanity', poised between the animate and inanimate.[72]

Chapter 4 introduces a notion of interiority distinct from, but closely related to, that discussed in Chapter 1. Finding hidden life in the inanimate characterized a wider late nineteenth-century disposition, much discussed in art history, to construe the domestic interior as a sort of container of the *chambre mentale*, sheltered from the street's enervating effects. André Hellé's preface to *La Boîte* marks it as a work in some way about the city. Developing Hellé's observation, I suggest that Debussy's and Ravel's

[72] Jankélévitch, *Music and the Ineffable*, 44.

musical evocations of toy-worlds manifested an aesthetic strategy of the modern urban-dwelling subject, recuperating within domestic space. This chapter returns, then, to Baudelaire's suggestion that childhood's ideal perceptual state offered a way of dealing with the exigencies of urban modernity. It argues that *La Boîte* searches playfully for a version of the self-world relation that many nineteenth- and twentieth-century thinkers attributed to childhood.

CHAPTER ONE | Restoring Childhood at the Opéra-Comique

By the end of the nineteenth century, cultural and scientific developments had – as Rosemary Lloyd puts it in her study of French literature – 'altered the general perception of childhood, and coloured, if they did not destroy, the Romantic topoi of purity, innocence, intensity of vision, and pleasurable melancholy'.[1] This certainly corresponds to the established impression of a general shift in attitudes in artistic culture towards the end of the century, in which childhood became less an idealized state of innocence lost to the adult self, and more a locus of irrationality and trauma remaining within that self. Of the works first performed on the French operatic stage around 1900, and immediately invested with cultural significance, the two operas examined in this chapter are arguably the richest musical expressions of these two quite different understandings. New understandings did not rupture the continuity of established patterns of sentiment, but informed alternative perceptions and qualified existing ones. In this chapter, I shall demonstrate the persistence of the 'Romantic topoi', and consider the significance of the co-existence of contrasting attitudes towards childhood within the same cultural space. The space in question is the Opéra-Comique – a focus of the social and leisure activities of Parisian bourgeois families – where these two operas were first performed in quick succession, receiving detailed and provocative reviews, often by the same critics.

The first opera is Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*, first performed at the Opéra-Comique in May 1900, with a second run the following year. Across nineteenth-century Europe, Romantic views of childhood offered perspectives in which traditions of nationalist thought could find the materials to affirm themselves. The French reception of Humperdinck's opera offers a singular opportunity to examine the complexities that arose, in a musical context, when one national culture witnessed a rival version of this affirmation, closely equivalent to its own. These complications

[1] Lloyd, *Land of Lost Content,* 109.

were tempered by the opera's expression of a desire to protect and preserve childhood, which chimed strongly with prevailing sentiments in contemporaneous French culture. The second opera is Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, whose notorious première took place in April 1902. The value of juxtaposing these works, just as the schedule of the Opéra-Comique did, is that their contrasting – even opposed – ways of thinking about childhood throw each other into relief. In this chapter, these ways of thinking are successively elaborated, as exemplifying two general attitudes towards childhood important to discussions later in the thesis.

Maeterlinck observed that '[a]ll art is the faculty of becoming a child again and once again seeing things for the first time'.[2] Critics credited both operas, implicitly and explicitly, with the faculty of restoring a childlike condition in their spectators. The operas seemed to give childhood an imagined location of its own, a distinct domain of thought and feeling, separated from adulthood even if hidden within it. *Hänsel und Gretel* fulfilled a nostalgic desire to think of childhood as a distant realm, in a magical past of the imagination more than of the memory. *Pelléas et Mélisande* brought childhood back into the anxieties of the present and placed it at the dark centre point of adult selfhood.

The operas embodied comparable interactions between the childlike (a set of musical, dramatic and verbal characterizations) and the operatic (a mode, or modes, of theatrical discourse). In the critical reception of both works, realizations of the childlike – as a vocal timbre, form of diction, and quality of narrative voice or plot – were interpreted, albeit sometimes implicitly, as means of questioning and of renewing prevailing ideals of the operatic. This stemmed from, and confirmed, a sense of the childlike as a form of subjectivity somehow foreign to the theatre of human feeling

[2] 'Tout l'art est la faculté de redevenir enfant et de voir encore quelque chose pour la première fois'. Maurice Maeterlinck, *Le cahier bleu* F° 49, 1888, quoted in Maeterlinck, *Introduction à une psychologie des songes (1886-1896),* textes réunis et commentés par Stefan Gross (Brussels, 1985), 82. Cited (and translated) in Richard Langham Smith, '"Aimer ainsi": Rekindling the Lamp in *Pelléas'*, in *Rethinking Debussy*, edited by Elliott Antokoletz and Marianne Wheeldon (New York, 2011), 76-95 (p. 76).

shaped by those ideals. I consider how the perceptions of childhood presented in the operas were informed by different reactions to the same concerns about childhood in contemporaneous French culture. These included the questions about childhood and sexuality that troubled public consciousness at the turn of the century. Humperdinck's innocent, divinely protected child and Debussy's unknowing, enigmatic child each represented a kind of answer to those questions.

'Folk' children

Engelbert Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel* arrived at the Opéra-Comique in Paris on 30th May 1900. The opera's rapturous reception throughout Europe was widely known, and Paris's audience, as Paul Milliet put it in *Le Monde Artiste*, 'clapped its hands with the same enthusiasm as Weimar's'.[3] Catulle Mendès had provided a verse translation of the libretto by Adelheid Wette (Humperdinck's sister); Albert Carré's staging was acclaimed as widely as ever. Reviewers were much taken by the opera's origins: Humperdinck's setting of four folk songs from the Grimms' fairy tale, performed for Wette's children, which were expanded into a small *Singspiel* also privately performed in the Wettes' home. As Albert Dayrolles put it, the opera began as something 'intended for a little family party'.[4] Such descriptions almost always preceded accounts of the work, framing Humperdinck's music as a gesture of domestic affection writ large on the operatic stage, and investing it with a familial quality congenial to the cultural identity of the Opéra-Comique.

The opera was publicized as a 'true family spectacle', and extra matinée performances were introduced to its runs in both 1900 and 1901, purportedly at the

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[3] 'l'auditoire de Paris a battu des mains avec le même enthousiasme que celui de Weimar'. Paul Milliet, *Le Monde Artiste*, 3 June 1900, 339-340 (p. 340).

[4] 'destiné à une petite fête familiale'. Albert Dayrolles, 'Musique', *Les Annales Politiques et littéraires*, 10 June 1900, 361-362 (p. 361). See also Adolphe Jullien, 'Théâtre Nationale de l'Opéra-Comique: Hansel et Gretel', *Le Théâtre* 37 (July 1900), 10-15, (p. 13); Étienne Destranges, *Hansel et Gretel: étude analytique et thématique* (Paris, 1899), 10; Edouard Sarradin, 'Courrier des théâtres, *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, 31 June 1900, 3; Arthur Pougin, 'Semaine théâtrale', *Le Ménestrel*, 3 June 1900, 170-171 (p. 170).

request of 'a large number of families'.[5] As with equivalent works of *féerie*, children under the age of ten were given a 50% discount for certain seating areas. Adorno noted that Humperdinck's opera 'made the Brothers Grimm commercially viable', by avoiding what could undermine the image of the devoted parent.[6] Wette's libretto made various alterations to the original Grimm fairy tale: rather than being deliberately abandoned in a forest at their step-mother's suggestion, Hänsel and Gretel become lost there after being sent out by their (biological) mother to pick strawberries. These alterations were potentially judicious ones in the context of the strong sentiments of *famille* promoted in numerous ways in turn-of-the-century French culture. Dayrolles observed that details had been 'happily modified', as if the tale had been updated for a more sympathetic, enlightened present.[7]

Within the opera's idealized fairy-tale world, Hänsel and Gretel are poor but vivacious children who embrace frivolity in the face of their destitution. In the first scene, the two children sing and dance while they work (or avoid working) in their family's cottage. The opening of Act 2, which finds the children in the Forest, reintroduces the simple, idealized world of dance and song that Hänsel and Gretel inhabit. French critics were keen to point out the arrangements or imitations of folk song that Humperdinck, a 'savant folkloriste', had woven into his score.[8] Partly through Gretel's singing of folk song arrangements at the beginning of the first two Acts, the qualities that distinguish the opera's 'folk' elements – a simple, diatonic jollity – are also musical realizations of the childlike. The dance that Gretel teaches to Hänsel in the opening scene, described by Étienne Destranges in his analytical study of the opera as 'd'allure populaire', epitomizes this realization (Example 1.1).[9] It also

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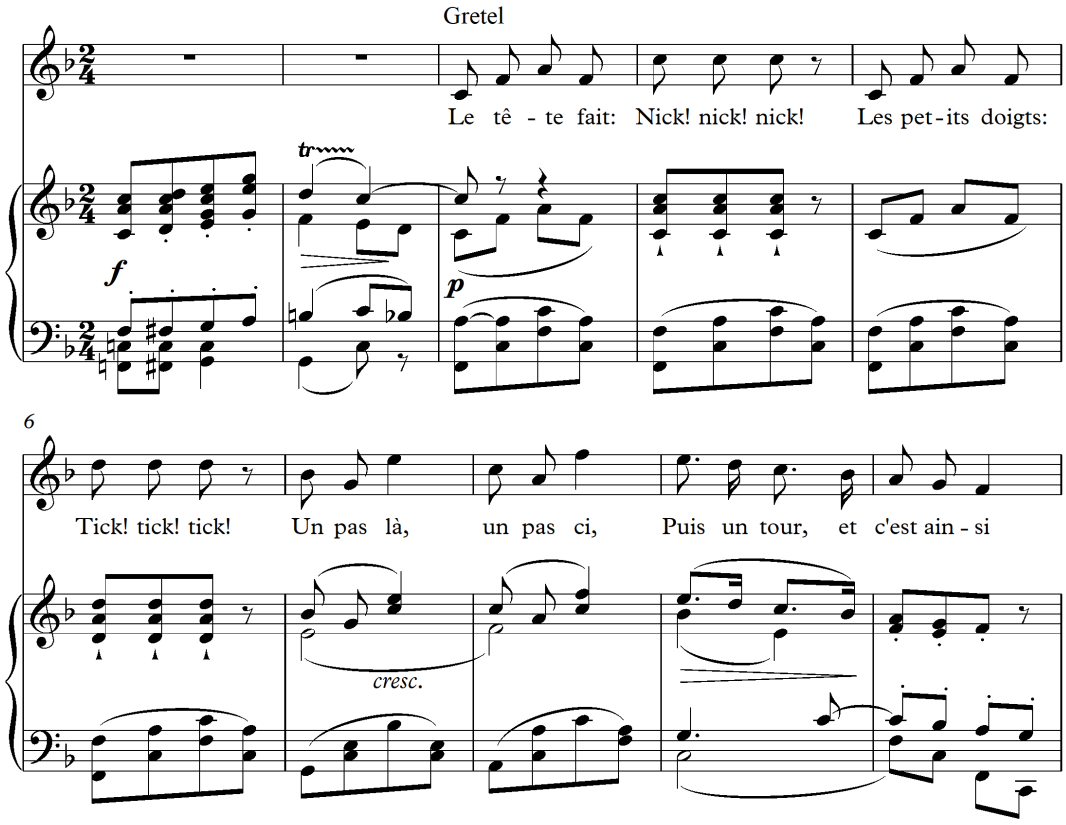
[5] 'un véritable spectacle de famille'. *Le Figaro,* 8 April 1901, 4; 'au désir exprimé par un grand nombre de familles'. *Le Figaro*, 9 August 1900, 5. See also equivalent advertisements on 18 April 1901, 5 and 26 December 1901, 4.

[6] Theodor W. Adorno, 'Bourgeois Opera', in *idem, Opera Through Other Eyes*, translated and edited by David J. Levin (Stanford, CA, 1994, first published 1955), 25-43, (p. 32).

[7] 'heureusement modifiés'. Dayrolles, 'Musique', 361.

[8] Alfred Bruneau, 'Les Théâtres', *Le Figaro*, 31 May 1900, 6.

[9] Destranges, *Hansel et Gretel*, 15-16.

Example 1.1. Engelbert Humperdinck, *Hänsel und Gretel*, Act 1, scene 1, Gretel teaches Hänsel to dance. Engelbert Humperdinck, Catulle Mendès, Richard Kleinmichel, *Hänsel et Gretel: conte lyrique en 3 actes et 5 tableaux* (Paris: Schott, 1897).

'With your head go: Nick! nick! nick! / With your fingers: Tick! tick! tick! One foot here, one foot there, / Then you turn, that's how it goes.' Mendès's translation of the libretto was incorporated into Richard Kleinmichel's vocal score reduction, which was also available in France from 1895 with the German libretto.

afforded an opportunity to present an image of the 'childlike' in dance. Critics of the Parisian performance implied that Craponne (as Hänsel) and Rioton (as Gretel) realized the stylized exuberance that the music invites: 'laughing, leaping, singing and dancing like crazy'.[10] Critics praised the singers' performance for their combination of 'naïvety' and 'mischievousness'.[11] Marthe Rioton was full of 'charming *gaminerie*'.[12] The characters' mischievousness is more an aspect of their innocence than an exception

[10] 'riant, sautant, chantant et dansant comme des fous'. Pougin, 'Semaine théâtrale', 170.

[11] 'espièglerie', Gaston Salvayre, 'Premières représentations', *Gil Blas*, 31 May 1900, 3. 'espiègle et naïve'. Milliet, 'Hansel et Gretel', 340.

[12] 'charmante de gaminerie'. A. Biguet, 'Premières Représentations', *Le Radical*, 1 June 1900, 2. Pierre Lalo suggested that Rioton, recently successful as Charpentier's Louise before her illness gave Mary Garden an unscheduled Opéra-Comique debut, was 'tout à fait "petite fille"', although for Milliet, she was 'un peu trop femme'. Pierre Lalo, 'La Musique', *Le Temps*, 5 June 1900, 3; Milliet, 'Hänsel et Gretel', 340.

to it. An image of the two characters, as they appeared in Act 1, is reproduced in Figure 1.1.[13]

Figure 1.1. Rioton as Gretel (left) and Craponne as Hänsel at the Opéra-Comique, *Le Théâtre*, July 1900, 11. Bibliothèque nationale de France.

[13] The costumes were designed by Charles Bianchini.

As operatic characters, Hänsel and Gretel embody a connection between childhood and the 'folk' that was intrinsic to much nineteenth-century thought. This connection inhered in the widely held view noted in the Introduction: that the development of an individual recapitulates the development of a culture or species. The idea of the 'folk' was, in part, the result of a nostalgic mindset applied to a primitive stage of a culture's development as opposed to an individual's. An influential French example of this entwining of personal and cultural nostalgia was Gérard de Nerval's short story 'Sylvie', published in 1853.[14] Here, the (adult) protagonist returns on a sudden whim to the Valois countryside where he spent part of his childhood, driven by his memories of a dream-like land of children's song and dance, in which an idealized rustic spirit is preserved. In Nerval's story, childhood itself – not just the protagonist's – seems to be obscurely located in this land. The images both of the child and of 'folk' culture served as ways of imagining a state of bliss or wholeness, in communion with nature, that had been lost either to adulthood's utilitarianism or to the effects of urban modernity. Hänsel and Gretel have a close affinity with the rustic characters imagined in stories such as Nerval's. Like the Romantic child of nature, they are naturally inclined to express themselves in song.

The opera merges several remote, idealized realms of imagination or fable, each belonging to some form of remote past: childhood, 'folk', and fairy tale, with its distinctive spatio-temporal dislocation. Over the course of the opera, the musical character initially associated with children's song and dance is gradually spread over every character. Even the Witch (called Grignotte in Mendès's libretto) sings with what Alfred Bruneau called 'a sort of tender joviality'.[15] The 'childlike' gradually becomes a property of the opera's overall narrative voice. Bruneau remarked several times on the 'cordialité populaire' of the opera as a whole, as if in reference to a general way in which the opera told the fairy tale. This merging consolidates the

[14] Gérard de Nerval, *Sylvie et autres contes* (Paris, 1951, first published 1853).
[15] 'une sorte de jovialité tendre'. Bruneau, 'Les Théâtres', 6.

opera's presentation of childhood – the idealized object of nostalgia – as itself occupying a kind of distant fictional realm.

Nationalism and nostalgia

The cultural nostalgia evoked by Humperdinck's incorporation of folk tunes had an important political dimension: as with equivalent interests in Germany and England, *chansons populaires* were the musical focus of a longstanding nationalist project in France.[16] In a study from 1886, Jean-Baptiste Weckerlin reiterated an old idea – that the *chansons populaires* of a particular nation expressed that nation's unique 'type', 'physiognomy' and 'other characteristics'.[17] One purpose of the transcription and arrangement of these songs was the cultivation of a sense of national cohesion: folk songs could be used to illustrate the existence of a diverse national cultural heritage that nonetheless transcended class and region. Those songs could also, however, become instruments for cultivating distinct regional identities that resisted incorporation into an overall national one – an incorporation central to the Republican agenda in France in the final decades of the nineteenth century. During these decades, especially, folk songs were promoted for the aesthetic value of their simplicity – the 'charm of their free inspiration' and 'naïve grace'.[18] According to Jann Pasler, they provided models of clarity and simplicity through which an intrinsically French school of composition, it was believed, might be preserved and developed.

The *chansons populaires* that characterized the atmosphere of some of Humperdinck's opera were universally received as German.[19] The performance of *Hänsel und Gretel* in France therefore forced audiences to contend with certain

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[16] Pasler, *Composing the Citizen,* 352-6; *idem,* 'Race and Nation: Music Acclimatization and the Chansons Populaires in Third Republic France', in *Western Music and Race*, edited by Julie Brown (Cambridge, 2007), 147-167.

[17] Jean-Baptiste Weckerlin, *La Chanson populaire* (Paris, 1886). Cited in Pasler, *Composing the Citizen,* 353.

[18] Gabriel Vicaire, 'Nos idées sur le traditionnalisme', *Revue des traditions populaires*, 7, 25 July 1886, 189. Cited in Pasler, *Composing the Citizen*, 392.

[19] See, for instance, *Le Temps,* 1 June 1900, 3.

complexities produced by the nationalist connotations of folk song, as they did in other situations.[20] In his analytical guide to the opera, Destranges noted that the melody of the Father's song in Act 1 'has a considerable analogy with the first bars of a Breton song that I rapidly noted down, struck by the identity'.[21] This comparison might have been developed in a way that affirmed Brittany's distinct, potentially separatist, identity. In a study of Breton folk songs, published in 1885, Louis Bourgault-Ducoudray had distinguished the 'race' of Northern Brittany as 'more serious and more reflective' (and implied that this was preserved in, and perpetuated by, these songs).[22] This was not the conclusion that Destranges drew from the 'curious similarity' between the Breton and German tunes. For him, the comparison seemed to exhibit 'the heritage of popular motifs from different countries' more generally.[23] His observation illustrated how nationalist ideologies, when attached to cultural objects in a particular way and brought together in an international context, could point towards transnational commonality as much as national difference. This was almost certainly encouraged by the infantilizing approach to folk song that Humperdinck's opera exemplified in an especially literal way, lending these tunes a highly generic, diatonic character.

In nineteenth-century culture, fairy tale served a comparable cultural purpose to that of folk song. As stories supposedly born in an obscure, distant past and transferred orally across generations, fairy tales provided a cultural locus of the kind of 'imagined community' that constituted the idea of the nation.[24] Contemporaneous French anthropologists and literary scholars were aware of the purpose of the Grimm tales as

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[20] For example, in 1887, the International Congress of Popular Traditions put on a concert of folk song from various European countries which 'encouraged listeners to compare melodies and rhythms from across Europe and the French provinces'., Pasler, *Composing the Citizen*, 560.

[21] 'offre une grande analogie avec les premières mesures d'une chanson bretonne que j'ai rapidement notée, frappé de l'identité [...].' Destranges, *Hansel et Gretel*, 18.

[22] Louis Albert Bourgault-Ducoudray, *Trentes mélodies populaires de la Basse-Bretagne* (Paris, 1885). Cited in Pasler, *Composing the Citizen*, 659.

[23] 'la parenté des motifs populaires des différents pays'. Destranges, *Hansel et Gretel*, 18.

[24] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*: *Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 2006).

an attempt to form a sort of building block for the cultural construction of German identity. In the turn-of-the-century French imagination more generally, a fairy tale was simply a children's story, but this was bound up with the assumption that the genre manifested and preserved some essence of national identity.[25] People of all classes were purportedly steeped in these tales by their mothers from an early age, and the unique qualities of each nation's versions of these tales were therefore deemed to perpetuate, and to exhibit, a character intrinsic to that nation. Most reviews of the opera's Parisian première compared the opera's libretto with 'Petit Poucet' from Perrault's *Contes de Ma Mère l'Oye*. Regardless of a writer's particular judgement, it was almost always *notre* 'Petit Poucet' – a tale intrinsically 'of' the nation.[26] That many of the plot's distinctive features were of Wette's invention did not prevent commentators from taking the storyline of *Hänsel und Gretel* as representative of both Grimm and a Germanic sensibility more generally.

For several commentators, the opera's realization of fairy tale provided a platform for accentuating national difference, and touting French cultural superiority. The general lack of action in the opera's plot, compared with the lively twists of 'Petit Poucet', was a point of contention. Immediately after the work's première, for example, a notice in *Le Temps* stated that Perrault's equivalent tale has 'a liveliness which doesn't appear in this rather heavy, rather flat tale by the Grimm brothers'.[27] The notice continued: 'It is possible that the Grimm brothers appeal more to certain aspects of the Germanic sensibility'.[28] Writing in the same newspaper several days later, Lalo acknowledged that 'to French minds, there perhaps isn't quite enough

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[25] For contemporary literary-historical scholarship on the genre, see, for instance, Jack Zipes, *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: The Cultural and Social History of a Genre* (Princeton, 2012).

[26] 'cet Haensel et Gretel (Jeannot et Margot) qui correspond pour les Allemands à notre Petit Poucet et à la naïve complainte anglaise des Enfants dans les bois …'. Dayrolles, 'Musique', 361.

[27] 'a un agrément qui ne se retrouve pas dans le conte, un peu lourd, un peu plat, des frères Grimm'. 'Théâtres'. *Le Temps*, 1 June 1900, 3.

[28] 'Il est possible que les frères Grimm touchent advantage certains coins de la sensibilité germanique'. *Ibid.*

action'.[29] The nationalist sensibilities embodied in traditions of *féerie* were also revealed in Humperdinck's setting – especially in its symphonic and developmental aspects. In *Gil Blas*, Gaston Salvayre observed disdainfully that 'a less excessive sonority would better suit French ears for the musical illustration of this sort of subject'.[30] Dayrolles noted that Delibes, setting the same tale, 'would [...] have charmed us by the grace of his ingenuously malicious distractions.'[31] By contrast, '[t]he temperament of M. Humperdinck, just like the nation to which he belongs, didn't predispose him towards that sort of tender finesse'.[32]

For the majority of critics, however, the nationalist ideologies attached to the notion of fairy tale led to conclusions similar to Destranges's remarks concerning Humperdinck's *chansons populaires*. Many reviewers, satisfied with Wette's retelling of Grimm, played up the shared heritage of storytelling that the opera revealed. In his glowing review for *Le Figaro*, Bruneau, for instance, observed that Wette's libretto 'evokes the memory of numerous stories from this or that country, stories among which we [...] are happy to recognize our Petit Poucet.'[33] Bruneau also considered both the tale and its setting as representative of a national type: he insisted that it is 'very much a work of pure German reverie that we've just heard'.[34] But his review, like others, promoted this national difference as a vital, natural variation upon a shared human heritage, as revealed by the commonalities between national versions of fairy tale. It was not lost on Dayrolles that Paris's first encounter with this distinctly German opera

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[29] 'l'action y manque un peu trop peut-être pour les esprits français'. Lalo, 'La Musique', 3.

[30] '[élégantes proportions plus de fantaisie ailée et] une sonorité moins excessive, conveindraient mieux à des oreilles françaises pour l'illustration musicale d'un pareil sujet'. Salvayre, 'Premières représentations', 14.

[31] 'nous aurait charmé par la grâce de ses divertissements d'une malice ingénieuse'. Dayrolles, 'Musique', 362.

[32] 'Le tempérament de M. Humperdinck, tout comme la nation à laquelle il appartient, ne le prédisposaient pas à se contenter de ces gentillesses menues.' *Ibid.*, 362.

[33] 'évoque le souvenir de nombreux récits de tel ou tel pays, récits parmi lesquels nous nous plairons [...] à reconnaître notre Petit Poucet'. Bruneau, 'Les Théâtres', 6. See also Jullien, 'Théâtre Nationale de l'Opéra-Comique', 14.

[34] 'C'est donc bien une oeuvre de pure reverie allemande que l'on vient d'entendre'. Bruneau, 'Les Théâtres', 6.

mirrored, or inverted, the situation playing out on a larger scale in the city at the *Exposition Universelle*, where 'the rest of the world has gathered to appreciate *our* latest national products'.[35] The spirit of commonality, as well as competition, that marked the reception of *Hansel et Gretel* could have been fostered by this coincidence. Whatever predispositions underlay the opera's reception, the majority of commentators presented fairy tale – and by extension childhood – as a space of cultural harmony and exchange.

Opera as childlike

To French critics, the fairy tale plot helped to lend the opera itself a childlike property, which extended beyond the individual characters and the '*populaire*' quality of its music. In *Le Théâtre*, Jullien described Humperdinck's composition as 'of a completely childlike innocence and simplicity', linking this 'innocence' with its origins as a musical story written for Wette's children.[36] He suggested that

> the charm evoked by this piece perhaps arises partly, for inured spectators used to less naïve spectacles, from this very candour and childishness, [...] a tale ingenuously told in which the mind had to search neither for myths nor symbols.[37]

The opera was described in similar terms by other critics. Lalo praised its underlying story as free from 'anything ambitious or pretentious, [...] a simple children's story simply told'.[38] These observations placed the opera in implicit opposition to a predominant model of operatic composition – one that verged on the pretentious, demanding that audiences mine it for philosophical content. (They also, of course,

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[35] 'l'étranger est convié à apprécier nos plus récentes productions nationales'. Dayrolles, 'Musique', 362. Emphasis added.

[36] 'd'une innocence et d'une simplicité tout enfantines'. Jullien, 'Théâtre Nationale de l'Opéra-Comique', 13.

[37] le charme qui se dégage de cette pièce provient peut-être un peu, pour les spectateurs blasés ou habitués à des spectacles moins naïfs, de cette candeur même et de cette puérilité, [...] un conte ingénument conté où l'esprit n'avait à chercher ni mythes, ni symboles.' *Ibid*., 13.

[38] 'ce grand charme de ne contenir ni mythes, ni symboles, ni rien d'ambitieux et de prétentieux, d'être un simple conte d'enfants simplement conté'. Lalo, 'La Musique', 3. Dayrolles's review contained very similar phrases, 'Musique', 361-362.

presupposed that children's stories were intrinsically devoid of the symbolic and philosophical.)

The distinctive features of *Hänsel und Gretel* as a composition turned on the ways in which childhood-related elements, both narrative and musical, had been incorporated into an operatic form. The juxtaposition of Wagnerian passages with children's songs and the adoption of a Wagnerian language to realize a children's story were, unsurprisingly, matters of extensive critical discussion in the French press.[39] For some, this combination was unsuccessful, Humperdinck's developmental, richly orchestrated music swamping the naïvety of the *féerie* that it sought to realize.[40] Comparing specific passages with *Die Meistersinger*, Lalo insisted that 'what could serve appropriately to paint the passionate love of Walter and Eva [...] appears overabundant, immoderate, oppressive when it's meant to express the little joys, the little sorrows and the little anxieties of two little children'.[41] Lalo's remark partly illustrates one of the functions of the image of childhood in turn-of-the-century musical thought. The expressive expectations prompted by that image – a mode of 'littleness', in Lalo's terms – left the Wagnerian in an exposed position, perceived as somehow oppressive. As I observed in the Introduction, other composers turned to childhood as an imaginative resource for inventing modes of 'littleness' that offered an antidote, rather than a complement, to the grandiose rhetoric associated partly with the Wagnerian.

The 'stylistic inconsistency' of *Hänsel und Gretel*, as Dahlhaus described it, also assured its success.[42] To the majority of French critics, Humperdinck's symphonic treatment of fairytale was an adroit, engaging synthesis of the high and the low, the Wagnerian and the *populaire*. Describing the unorthodox interaction of subject and

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[39] For an account of German attitudes towards fairy-tale opera as a form of post-Wagnerism, see Adrian Daub, *Tristan's Shadow: Sexuality and the Total Work of Art after Wagner* (Chicago, 2013), 74.

[40] Biguet, 'Premières Représentations', 2.

[41] 'ce qui pouvait justement servir à peindre l'amour passionné de Walther et d'Eva [...] paraît surabondant, démesuré, accablant lorsqu'il s'agit d'exprimer les petites joies, les petits chagrins et les petites angoisses de deux petits enfants [...]'. Lalo, 'La Musique', 3.

[42] Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music,* translated by J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley, CA., 1989), 343.

setting, Jullien noted that it was 'without doubt a new staple for musical success'.[43] Critics did not refer directly to ongoing French debates about the future direction of opera, but the critic for *Le Ménéstrel* did claim the hybridism prompted by Humperdinck's subject-matter as a distinctly French approach: 'M. Humperdinck [...] has given to his work, as much as he could, the form of our opéra-comique'.[44] Such commentaries presented Humperdinck's musical *féerie* not as infantilizing Wagner, but as questioning or destabilizing established operatic rhetoric, through adopting a communicative mode that was somehow childlike – showing an ingenuousness, as Jullien put it, in its telling of the fairy tale.

This ingenuousness was sometimes credited with a capacity to restore to adult audiences an element of childhood experience. Referring to the opera as a fairy tale with a 'delightful popular feel', Destranges insisted: 'You have to know how to listen to it with the simple soul of the children who, everywhere, have just applauded with their little hands the adventures of Hänsel and Gretel'.[45] Humperdinck's music invited an attitude of listening through which adults might re-attain the child's purportedly ingenuous outlook. Jullien concluded that 'all children, large and small' should see the opera.[46] Where critics were more precise about the opera's ability to return them to childhood, they focused on the idea of dream. Milliet noted the popularity with audiences of 'childlike tales' such as that realized by Humperdinck's opera: 'it seems that [these tales] rejuvenate them, that they bring them back to their first dreams'.[47] With its combination of polyphonic richness and naïve sentiment, the music was, for

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[43] 'sans doute un nouvel aliment pour le succès musical.' Jullien, 'Théâtre Nationale de l'Opéra-Comique', 14. See also Destranges, *Hansel et Gretel,* 12.

[44] 'M. Humperdinck [...] a donné à son oeuvre, autant qu'il le pouvait, la forme de notre opéra-comique'. Pougin, 'Semaine théâtrale', 171.

[45] '[...] son exquis sentiment populaire. Il faut savoir l'écouter avec l'âme simple des enfants qui, partout, sont venus en foule applaudir de leurs petites mains, les aventures d'Hänsel et de Gretel.' Destranges, *Hansel et Gretel*, 29.

[46] 'tous les enfants, petits et grands'. Jullien, 'Théâtre Nationale de l'Opéra-Comique', 15.

[47] 'il semble qu'elles le rajeuniessent; qu'elles le ramènent à ses premiers rêves'. Milliet, *Le Monde artiste*, 340.

Bruneau, 'the poem of childhood, of the childhood of beautiful smiles, of beautiful dreams'.[48]

Critics also suggested that the opera transferred onto the stage the imaginative intensity of the childhood experience of reading fairytales. This was partly attributed to the spectacular *vérisme* of Lucien Jusseaume's décor and Carré's stagecraft, which 'opens on a grand scale the book in which genies and ogres, fairies and giants, take shape and become tame.'[49] Bruneau emphasized the sense of immersion offered by the staging – the perception of being able to step within the fairy tale's fantastical world. For Bruneau, the opera's recapturing of a childhood experience of reading was principally musical. Humperdinck's setting was 'a score of dream, of fairytale, opening to the spectator, through the miracle of symphony and melody, the gate of the mysterious beyond.'[50] The notion of a 'beyond' opened up by fairy tale was described perhaps most astutely later in the twentieth century by C.S. Lewis. Fairy tale, Lewis suggested, instils in both the child and adult reader 'the dim sense of something beyond his reach and, far from dulling or emptying the actual world, gives it a new dimension of depth'. Reading about enchanted woods 'makes all real woods a little enchanted'.[51] Fairy tale, in other words, furnishes readers with a sharpened state of perception, by defamiliarizing the familiar. This state exemplifies, of course, the faculty of 'fresh sight' that much nineteenth-century thought associated with the condition of childhood.

Bruneau slightly clarified his compelling description of Humperdinck's music as a score *of* fairy tale, as rendering in sound a kind of environment that *féerie* establishes. He observed that Humperdinck 'himself creates, through the magic of sounds, the

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[48] 'le poème de l'enfance, de l'enfance aux beaux rires, aux beaux songes.' Bruneau, 'Les Théâtres', 6.

[49] 'sa mise ne scène nous ouvre tout grand le livre où prennent un corps et où s'apprivoisent les génies et les ogres, les fées et les géants'. Milliet, *Le Monde artiste*, 340.

[50] 'une partition de rêve, de féerie, ouvrant au spectateur, par le miracle des symphonies et des mélodies, la porte du mystérieux au-delà.' Bruneau, 'Les Théâtres', 1900, 6.

[51] C.S. Lewis, *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories* (London, 2002), 65.

atmosphere in which he wants his characters enveloped'.[52] A similar remark appeared in *Le Ménéstrel*: the music 'above all had that quality of fitting marvellously with the subject'.[53] The use of 'merveilleusement' here invoked the established use of *merveilleux* to describe the sort of fantastical narrative substance of fairy tale. These comments, and others like them, suggest that Humperdinck's music brought into audibility an enchanted realm, radically distinct from our own, in which the listener is temporarily immersed. As Bruneau's reaction to the Dream-Pantomime implied, this realm was not only fairy tale, but childhood – the dreamt past of the childhood of nostalgia, somewhere between memory and imagination. Commentators reached for a quality in Humperdinck's music that might be called 'enchanted homeliness', which it owed principally to the sure-footed simplicity of its harmonic language, buttressed and enlivened by constant chromatic touches, and moulded into regular phrase-structures which evoke a sense of enclosure.[54] This sense of enclosure belonged to, and helped to evoke, the nature of the opera's merged realms of pastness – as both protected and protective.

Childhood protected

One interpretation of the 'atmosphere' in which fairy tale characters are 'enveloped' had appeared in a brutal parody by Arthur Rimbaud, published in 1886. 'Conte', a prose-poem, imagines the actions of a fully human consciousness caught within a fairy tale world.[55] Annoyed by the 'vulgar acts of generosity' that he incessantly repeats, a Prince seeks instead to experience 'the truth [...] of essential desire', and devotes

[52] 'Il crée lui-même, par la magie des sons, l'atmosphère don't il veut que soient envelopes ses personnages.' Bruneau, 'Les Théâtres', 1900, 6.
[53] 'avait surtout cette qualité de cadrer merveilleusement avec le sujet'. Pougin, 'Semaine théâtrale', 170.
[54] On metric procedures, see Daphne Leong, 'Humperdinck and Wagner: Metric States, Symmetries and Systems', *Journal of Music Theory* 51/2 (2007), 211-243.
[55] 'Conte' was published in Arthur Rimbaud, *Illuminations* (Paris, 1886).

himself to acts of savagery.[56] For instance, he kills all the people who follow him, but finds that they simply continue to do so. The Prince's barbaric actions are instantaneously reversed by the inexorable progression of the fairy tale's narrative. Indeed, at the end it remains slightly unclear whether the events described in the first part of the tale have in any sense happened. Rimbaud's tale reveals how predetermination is written into the very fabric of the fairy tale, and is inseparable from the constancy with which their simple plots are told and retold. It exposes how fairy tale characters are by their nature subordinated to beneficent forces that determine the outcome of the events in which they are involved. This aura of protectedness is one manifestation of the narrative substance of fairy tale which Humperdinck's opera seemed to realize, through its *gemütlich* (inviting, affirming, or restful) character.

In Humperdinck's opera, the mysterious agency exposed in Rimbaud's story is reified in the acts of divine intervention that Wette introduced to the Grimms' version. In the latter, God has an unobtrusive presence, but Wette's alterations bind explicitly Christian symbols of divine power to the acts of enchantment that guide the development of the fairytale. The angels that descend to watch over the sleeping children in the 'Dream Pantomime' at the end of Act 2, in response to Hänsel and Gretel's celebrated Evening Prayer, take up the work of the Sandman who has gently put to sleep the lost and terrified children, and implicitly prompted them to recite their prayer. The 'Dream Pantomime' scene staged a stock nineteenth-century image of the angel watching over the sleeping child, which appeared everywhere from adult poetry (of varying degrees of sentimentality) to children's song books.[57] The image summarized a conventional ideal of the child as a peaceful being of moral innocence, proximate to the divine. Most importantly, it symbolized an urge expressed with particular intensity in nineteenth-century literature: to protect and preserve childhood.

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[56] Translation from *Arthur Rimbaud: A Season in Hell and Other Works,* translated and edited by Stanley Appelbaum (New York, 2003), 52-53.

[57] For instance, 'L'ange protecteur', in Henri Gautier, *La lyre enfantine. Recueil de petits Chants à l'usage de toutes les écoles* (Paris, 1880), 123.

This urge was manifested in a character-type that appeared constantly in nineteenth-century fiction: the lost child. Lloyd observes that perhaps the most prevalent child-figure in mid-late nineteenth-century French fiction was that of 'the orphan, the foundling, the child separated from its parents, or the child rejected by family or peers'.[58] One of the most popular French instances had appeared in Hector Malot's *Sans famille*, first published in 1878, in which a foundling becomes a travelling musician before eventually rediscovering his family.[59] Versions of these child-figures appeared, of course, throughout European writing, in the fiction of Goethe and Dickens as well as Hugo. Literary images of vulnerable, abandoned children had their roots in social reality, and gave emotional shape and impetus to the political movements which, over the course of the century, gradually removed children from the streets and from horrific working conditions in factories.[60] Linda Pollock notes that the understanding of childhood as a state to be protected had been 'enshrined as a political thing across all classes by the end of the nineteenth century'.[61] Her metaphor of 'enshrining' aptly suggests the sense in which childhood, to the wider cultural imagination, was sacrosanct – made inviolable through its contact with the divine. Images such as those staged by the Dream-pantomime were central to the establishment of this understanding.

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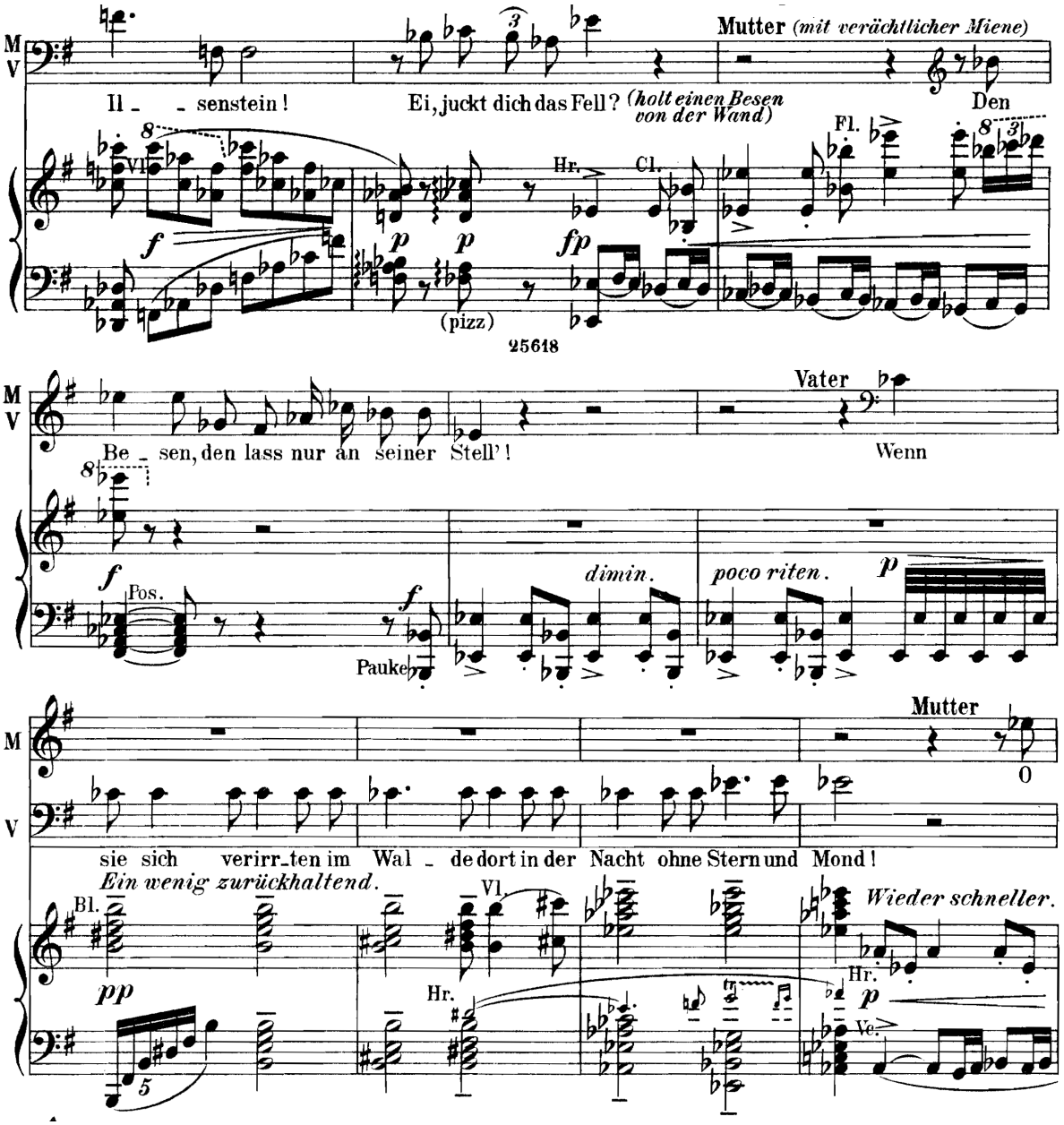
[58] Lloyd, *Land of Lost Content,* 241.

[59] The book was reissued in numerous editions in the late 19th and early 20th century, with the first of four film versions made in 1913.

[60] Steedman, *Strange Dislocations*, see, for example, pp. 115-120.

[61] Linda A. Pollock, 'Foreword', in *Picturing Children: Constructions of Childhood between Rousseau and Freud*, edited by Marilyn R. Brown (Aldershot, 2002), xv-xix (p. xvii).

Example 1.2. Humperdinck, *Hänsel und Gretel*, Act 1, scene 3, the Father's fear about his children astray in the Forest. Engelbert Humperdinck, Adelheid Wette, *Märchenspiel in drei Bildern* (Mainz: Schott, 1894).

Father (*taking a broom from the wall*): 'Ilsenstein! Well, do you want a beating?'; Mother (*with an expression of contempt*): 'The broom, leave it in its place!'; Father: 'What if they're lost out there by themselves in the forest, in the night without moon and stars!'

Humperdinck and Wette updated Hänsel and Gretel into versions of these lost children. In Act 1 scene 3, the Mother reveals to the Father that their children, banished from the house, might have gone to the Ilsenstein Forest where Grignotte lives. The Father's exclamation that they might be lost there (see Example 1.2) is a

sudden elevation of register, suspending the motion of the scene. French reviewers singled out the sudden intensity of this passage.[62] Its shift in affective register echoed a central motif in representations of childhood – the deep spiritual import of a child in danger. Lloyd provides an additional suggestion about the literary obsession with finding lost children. These characters could also, she proposes, become a metaphor for an adult figure – the nineteenth-century urban subject, forced to confront an experience of increasing alienation, and to seek an individual identity in the rapidly shifting cultural and social conditions of modernity.[63] Lloyd's suggestion is certainly one way of clarifying a sense that the enshrinement of childhood as a protected realm also secured childhood, for adults, as a *protective* realm of the imagination.

Humperdinck's opera also gives musical shape to a more prohibitive aspect of the image of the divinely protected child. Its embodiment of an urge to protect childhood is also an urge to keep children childlike. When they sing their Evening Prayer, the children are, strangely, 'ensommeillé' ('sleeping' or 'half-asleep'). The passage points towards the way in which the moments of divine intervention seem to divest Hänsel and Gretel of their agency. The moment in which the children pass the test of maturation – the crux of the fairy tale itself – is, of course, the moment when Gretel turns the Witch into the victim of her own plan, tricking her into demonstrating how to peer into the oven, before pushing her in. But Humperdinck's setting of this moment (Example 1.3), despite its brief climax, seems to pass over its importance. Musically, the opera's structurally climactic passage comes at the end of the previous scene, in the rich elaboration of the Evening Prayer music that constitutes the 'Dream Pantomime' (Example 1.4). In his analytical study, Destranges asserted that this was 'the culminating point of the work'.[64]

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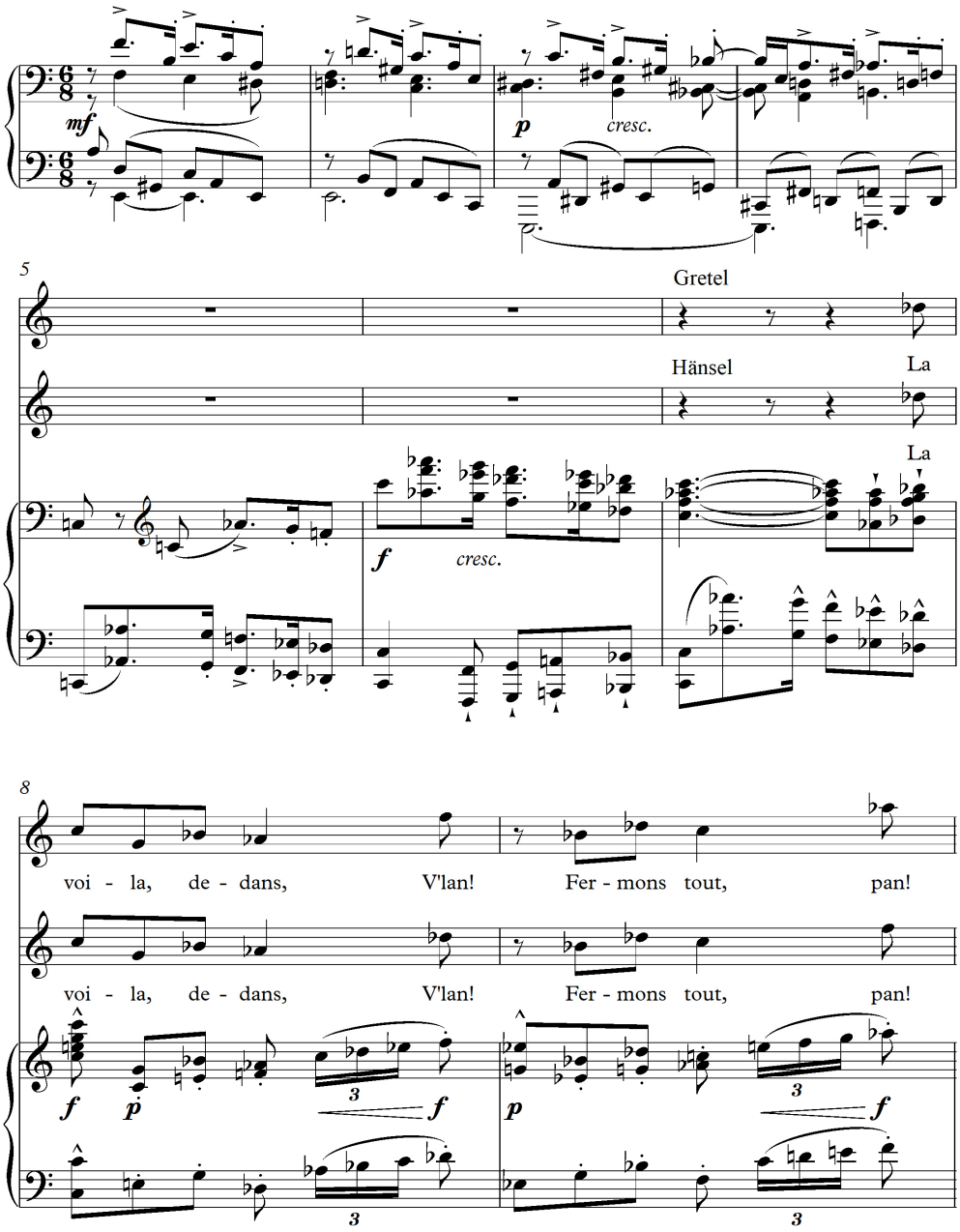
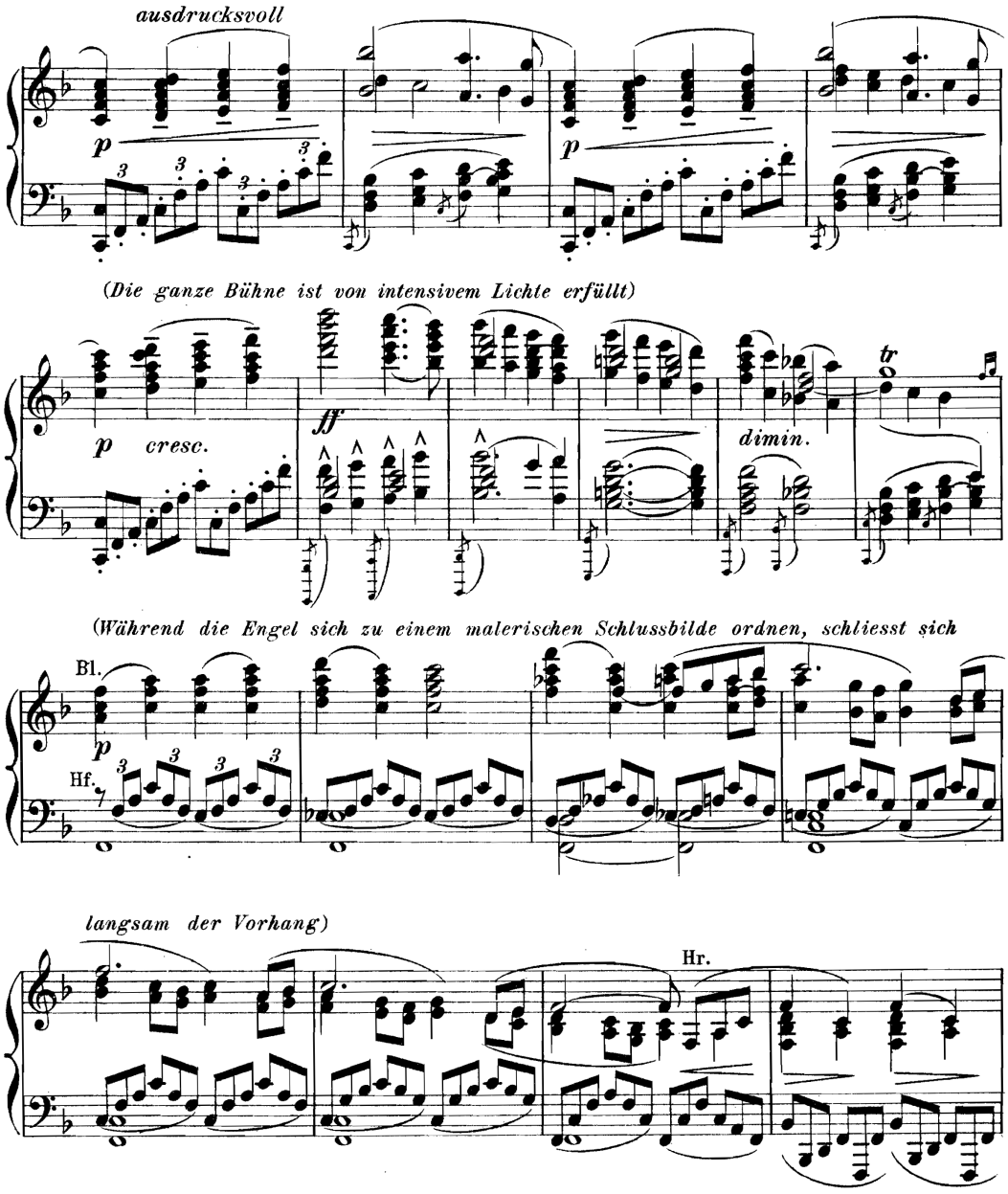
[62] Jullien noted:'here we come within an inch of grand opera' ('ici, nous frisons de bien près la grand opéra'). 'Théâtre Nationale de l'Opéra-Comique', 14.
[63] Lloyd, *Land of Lost Content*, 241-2.
[64] 'le point culminant de l'oeuvre'. Destranges, *Hansel et Gretel,* 22.

Example 1.3. Humperdinck, *Hänsel und Gretel*, Act 3, scene 3, Gretel pushes Grignotte into the Oven. Engelbert Humperdinck, Catulle Mendès, Richard Kleinmichel, *Hänsel et Gretel: conte lyrique en 3 actes et 5 tableaux* (Paris: Schott, 1897).

During the orchestral passage, Grignotte goes up to the oven, muttering. As she reaches it, Hänsel and Gretel push her in and shut the door, immediately beginning to celebrate. They sing: 'There you are, inside, wham! Let's lock it up completely, bang!'

Example 1.4. Humperdinck, *Hänsel und Gretel*, Act 2, scene 3, *Traumpantomime*, final climax. Engelbert Humperdinck, Adelheid Wette, *Märchenspiel in drei Bildern* (Mainz: Schott, 1894).

The stage directions in Mendès's translation of the libretto are as follows for this passage: 'Tout le théâtre est inondi d'une intense lumière, les anges [r]esplendissent en un harmonieux tableau; le rideau se ferme [l]entement.' ('The whole theatre is flooded with an intense light, the angels shine as part of a harmonious scene; the curtain falls slowly.')

The angel's intervention, then, threatens to displace, rather than complement, the moment of the children's maturation. In Act 3, when Hänsel and Gretel are thanked by the other children whom they save from Grignotte, Hänsel exclaims, as if in explanation of their success: 'The angels spoke to us in a dream'.[65] In the opera's conclusion, the Father does not attribute the crucial moment to the children's wits, exclaiming: 'Through the law of the lord our God, evil deeds do not last long!'[66] The *mise-en-scène* of the Dream Pantomime in the Paris production only heightened the relative significance of the angels' intervention. Almost all critics praised the majesty of this moment, Dayrolles providing a detailed description of the luminous, multi-coloured staging.[67] In the Grimms' version, the children return to find their father after out-manoeuvring the Witch; in Humperdinck's opera, they are found *by* their parents. Noting that childhood in the nineteenth century was less firmly defined in terms of an age range, Linda Austin describes how narratives of growing up would often 'set the boundaries of childhood by individual experiences'.[68] Childhood gave way to the next stage of life after a particular event or action seemed to mark the end of a former self. In one sense, the crux of the fairy tale narrative *is* this experience – the one which the opera seems to minimize.

The adult as child

The understanding of the child as agent – a mysterious but enlightened being, guiding the adult world – had been sidelined by a variety of cultural factors towards the end of the nineteenth century.[69] As in *Hänsel und Gretel*, the 'child' in Debussy's opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* is in an essentially vulnerable condition. If Humperdinck's opera indulged a widespread desire to secure a protective realm for this vulnerability,

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[65] 'Les anges nous ont dit en rêve ...'.
[66] 'Par la loi de siegneur Dieu / L'oeuvre du mal dure peu!'
[67] Dayrolles, 'Musique', 361.
[68] Linda M. Austin, 'Children of Childhood: Nostalgia and the Romantic Legacy', *Studies in Romanticism* 42/1 (2003), 75-98 (p. 80).
[69] For this understanding, see Mueller, 'Who were the Drei Knaben?', 95.

rendering it an object of nostalgia necessarily remote, *Pelléas* reflected an emergent artistic use for that condition – as giving shape to the intimation of a half-hidden aspect of the adult psyche. The controversial first performances of Debussy's opera at the Opéra-Comique in April 1902 have been the subject of considerable scholarly attention.[70] The following discussion draws highly selectively from press discussion of the work, not attempting (as the study of *Hänsel und Gretel* has done) to suggest an overall picture of the opera's reception. Despite the amount of scholarship devoted to *Pelléas et Mélisande*, the opera's elaboration of the theme of childhood remains largely unexplored.[71] Musicologists have sometimes noted the relevance of the category of the childlike, especially in relation to Mélisande.[72] But there exists little sustained discussion of the fact that the peculiar state which envelops almost all Debussy's characters – and which some commentators perceived the opera to induce in themselves – is presented as childlike.

In his review of Debussy's opera in *Le Théâtre*, at the end of his summary of the opera's plot, Jullien quoted from Arkel's farewell to Mélisande just after her death: 'She was such a tranquil little creature, so timid and silent ... She was a poor little mysterious creature, like everyone … She lies there as if she were her child's elder

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[70] See, for instance, Jann Pasler, '"Pelléas" and Power: Forces behind the Reception of Debussy's Opera', *Nineteenth-Century Music* 10/3 (Spring 1987), 243-64. For details of the staging, see Michela Niccolai, *Debussy's* Pelléas et Mélisande*: The Staging by Albert Carré*, translated by Lesley Wright (Turnhout, 2017).

[71] The main discussion of Yniold's scene focuses on detailed analysis rather than general dramatic themes: Annie Labussière, 'Du schème au mode, du jeu au silence: Le traitement mélodique dans la "Scène des moutons" (Claude Debussy, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Acte IV, scène 3)', *Musurgia* 8/2 (2001), 7-48. Related subjects of discussion include the theme of 'innocence' in, for instance, Elliott Antokoletz and Juana Canabal Antokoletz, 'Pelléas et Mélisande: Mélisande as Christ Symbol—Life, Death, and Resurrection—and Motivic Reinterpretations of the Whole-Tone Dyad', in *idem*, *Musical Symbolism in the Operas of Debussy and Bartók: Trauma, Gender, and the Unfolding of the Unconscious* (Oxford, 2004), 147-172.

[72] In particular, Jann Pasler, 'Mélisande's Charm and the Truth of Her Music', in *Rethinking Debussy*, edited by Elliott Antokoletz and Marianne Wheeldon (London and New York, 2011), 55-75; Langham Smith, 'Aimer Ainsi'. Maurice Emmanuel identified a 'child' motif, in his *Pelléas et Mélisande de Claude Debussy: étude historique et critique, analyse musicale* (Paris, 1925).

sister'.[73] To Arkel, Mélisande herself seemed still a child – more her daughter's sister than her mother. His suggestion that 'everyone' is a 'little mysterious creature', like Mélisande, is the culmination of an important theme in the opera's libretto. Throughout the opera, all the principal adult characters except Arkel (who is defined by his elderliness) are described, or describe themselves, as children. Layers of passing reference to being 'like a child' slowly accrete, their context attributing to the 'childlike' the qualities of fragility, vulnerability and a sort of inexplicable sense of fear. As individual statements, these references are unremarkable. They usually appear as part of the tuneless lyricism that constitutes the opera's basic fabric – 'chant without form and colour', as Raymond Bouyer described it in *La Nouvelle revue*.[74] But their overall effect is that Arkel's farewell to Mélisande formulates a thought that seems already to have been expressed. The following paragraph compiles most of these references in illustration of their gradual layering.[75]

In Act 1 scene 2, Golaud reports to Pelléas, in a letter read by Geneviève to Arkel, that he knows nothing of his new wife, Mélisande, including her age. She must, he believes, 'have suffered some terrible misfortune. And if you ask her what happened, she bursts into tears like a child'.[76] In Act 2 scene 2, the injured Golaud tells Mélisande that he needs no more help and 'will sleep like a child'.[77] Mélisande then begins to weep, admitting that she too is ill and unhappy in the castle. She can explain only that 'it is something stronger than myself', at which Golaud remonstrates: 'You are no

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[73] 'C'était un petit être si tranquille, si timide et si silencieux ... C'était un pauvre petit être mysterieux, comme tout le monde … Elle est là, comme si elle était la grande soeur de son enfant.' Adolphe Jullien, 'Théâtre national de l'Opéra-comique: Pelléas et Mélisande', *Le Théâtre* (June 1902), 5-15 (p. 8).

[74] 'une psalmodie sans forme et sans couleur'. Raymond Bouyer, 'Revue Musicale: *Pelléas et Mélisande* ou le Crépuscule du Drame musical', *La Nouvelle revue* (May 1902), 276-280 (p 279).

[75] All references to and translations from the libretto and Maeterlinck's original playscript are taken, or slightly adapted, from the text and its translation by Hugh Macdonald, in Claude Debussy and Hugh Macdonald, *Pelléas & Mélisande* (London, 1982), 40-95.

[76] 'Et quand on lui demande ce qui lui est arrivé, elle pleure tout à coup comme un enfant'.

[77] 'Je n'ai besoin de rien; je dormirai comme un enfant'.

longer a child'.[78] 'I would like to go away with you', Mélisande insists; Golaud baulks at this strange irrationality – 'They will think it is all childish dreams'.[79] At the end of Act 3 scene 1, Golaud catches Pelléas playing with Mélisande's long hair as she leans down to him. 'You are children', he scolds them. 'Don't play like that in the dark. You are children! What children! What children!'.[80] Two scenes later, the brothers see Mélisande again at a window, and Golaud repeats: 'I overheard what passed between you [...] last night. I know quite well it was children's games; but that must not happen again. She is very fragile.'[81] In Act 3 scene 4, Golaud questions his son, Yniold, about what Pelléas and Mélisande do when they are together. Met only by the child's nonsensical, contradictory responses, his father exclaims: 'I am here like a new-born babe in the forest'.[82] At the beginning of Act 4 scene 4 (the opera's climax), Pelléas, about to meet Mélisande for the last time and declare his love, exclaims 'Everything must finish … I've been playing like a child near something of whose existence I had no idea.'[83] And at the end of the opera, moments before her silent death, Mélisande reflects her childlike qualities back onto her own 'new-born babe'. 'She does not smile', Mélisande observes, 'She is tiny … She is going to cry, as well'.[84]

The condition of being childlike that grips many of the opera's adult characters is often akin to the metaphors of blindness and lostness which establish themselves in a similar way throughout the drama. This adult-as-child theme was embraced by critics listening to the first performances. At the beginning of his summary of the plot, Jullien described Pelléas and Mélisande as 'two children'; Mélisande on her death bed was

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[78] 'Tu n'es plus une enfant'.

[79] 'On va croire à des rêves d'enfant'.

[80] 'Vous êtes des enfants ... Ne jouez pas ainsi dans l'obscurité. – Vous êtes des enfants … Quels enfants! … Quels enfants! …'.

[81] 'j'ai entendu [...] ce qui s'est dit hier au soir. Je le sais bien, ce sont là jeux d'enfants; mais il ne faut pas que cela se répète. Elle est très délicate'. Even after observing their love-making, Golaud, distraught by his reactive violence, repeats the assertion that 'they were kissing like children'. 'Ils s'étaient embrassés comme des petits enfants'.

[82] 'Je suis ici comme un nouveau-né perdu dans la forêt'.

[83] 'J'ai joué comme un enfant autour d'une chose que je ne soupçonnais pas'.

[84] 'Elle ne rit pas ... Elle est petite ... Elle va pleurer aussi ...'

'the fragile child that the least emotion would kill'.[85] Debussy's adjustments to Maeterlinck's play emphasized that the descriptions of Mélisande as a child were not attributable solely to her extreme youth. Mélisande's exact age remains unknown, like many things about her. Debussy excised various lines of Maeterlinck's that place her clearly at the end of puberty – a child-woman in the sense of an adolescent. Golaud's description of Mélisande in Act 3 scene 3 as 'just grown up' or 'scarcely a woman' is cut.[86] In the same passage, another reference to Mélisande's age is also removed: 'She is very fragile' replaces 'Mélisande is very young and very impressionable'.[87] In the discussion of her identity in Act 1 scene 2, Debussy also cuts Arkel's direct reference to the extreme age gap between Golaud and his wife: 'He is more than ripe in years and like a child he has married a young girl'.[88] Through these adjustments, Mélisande appears more as *both* child and woman – 'childlike' in a sense more akin to her nature as a 'poor little mysterious being', which according to Arkel she shares with everyone.

Childhood is directly embodied, of course, in the character of Yniold. His solo scene (Act 4 scene 3) was cut from the opera's first performances.[89] The significance of his remaining scene – the dialogue with Golaud in Act 3 scene 4 – is its representation of a world of childhood coming into contact, and conflict, with a world of adulthood. The wider function of this representation is to emphasize a connection between Mélisande and Yniold, helping to substantiate her identity as an 'adult' character in whom the condition of childhood somehow inheres. This connection, which fully registers only in Act 5, is partly made through often minor dramatic details that nonetheless lodge in the memory. For instance, Yniold's exclamation about Golaud's beard, interrupting his questioning, recalls Mélisande's similar exclamation

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[85] 'deux enfants'; 'le frêle enfant que la moindre émotion devait tuer', Jullien, 'Pelléas et Mélisande', 5, 8.

[86] 'à peine femme'.

[87] 'Elle est très délicate'; 'Mélisande est très jeune et très impressionable.'

[88] 'Il a passé l'âge mûr et il épouse, comme un enfant, une petite fille'. This is one of only two references to childhood that Debussy cut from Maeterlinck.

[89] Jullien was confused as to why this scene was cut ('Pelléas et Mélisande', 8). I have also chosen to focus on Act 3 scene 4, rather than Act 4 scene 3, because of the existence of Labussière's close reading of the latter.

when she and Golaud first meet. Both passages reveal a character unacquainted with social custom, to whom physical signs of age are curious and alien. At the end of the scene, Yniold is overtaken by a fear whose object is not clearly explained – nor, perhaps, clearly explicable. This fear, allayed only by physical escape, is a relatively extreme instance of a feeling which overwhelms other characters at various points in the opera, and is emphasized musically with a sudden a-lyrical intensity (the first instance is Mélisande's response to Golaud's simple offer to retrieve her crown in Act 1 scene 1). Yniold and Golaud's dialogue also exemplifies a more general scenario that is both dramatically and musically thematic, which Jankélévitch calls 'innocence interrogated by worry'.[90]

Enigmatic children

This scenario characterizes almost all of Golaud's interactions with Mélisande: their first encounter, his attempt to understand her malady in Act 2 scene 2, his confrontation with her in Act 4 scene 2, and his final questioning in Act 5. In Act 3 scene 4, Yniold's responses to Golaud's questions suggest their own obscure logic, or worlds of association: 'Do they kiss sometimes? No, no. Ah! Yes, papa, yes, yes; once ... once when it was raining'.[91] Golaud's failure to extract clear answers produces only paroxysms of frustration, as in equivalent situations. Yniold's answers present childhood as its own thought-world, opaque to the adult's. Towards the end of the scene, Golaud takes Yniold on his shoulders to spy upon Pelléas and Mélisande as they sit in her room. The act takes on a deeper significance, as a dramaturgical summary of the content of the overall scene: an adult attempting – and failing – to see through the eyes of a child.

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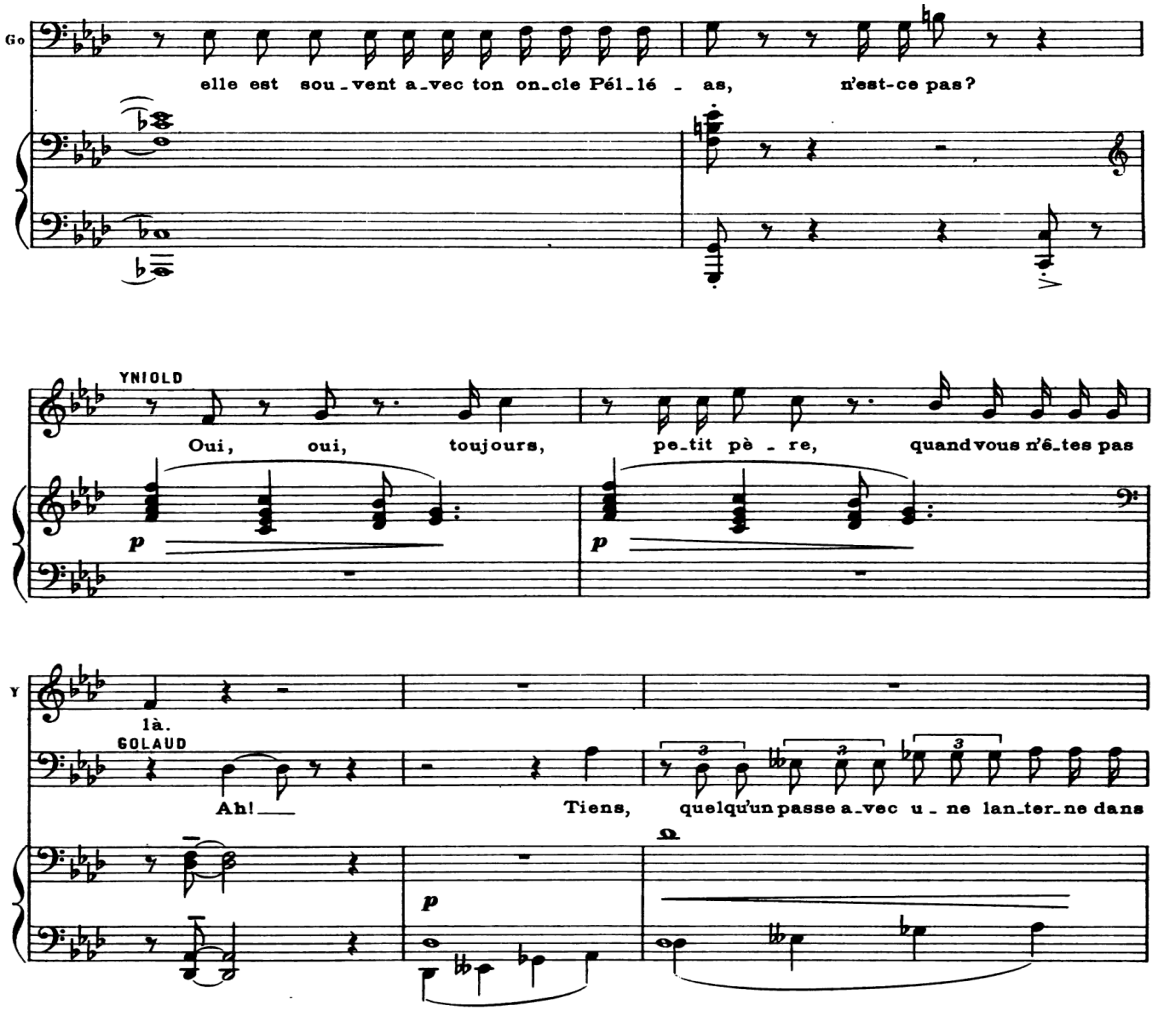
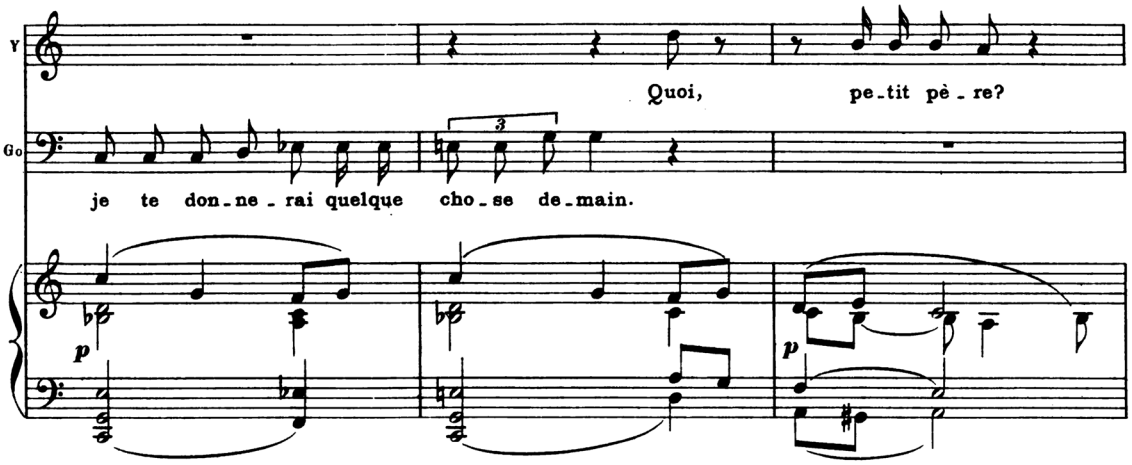
[90] 'L'innocence interrogée par le souci', Vladimir Jankélévitch, *La Vie et la mort dans la musique de Debussy* (Neuchâtel, 1968), 101.

[91] 'Qu'ils s'embrassent, petit-père? – Non, non. – Ah! si, petit-père, si, si; une fois ... une fois qu'il pleuvait ...'.

Example 1.5. Claude Debussy and Maurice Maeterlinck, *Pelléas et Mélisande. Drame lyrique en 5 actes et 12 tableaux* (Paris: E. Fromont, 1902) Act 3 scene 4, Yniold's first reply. All subsequent extracts from this work refer to this edition.

'"she spends a lot of time with your uncle Pelléas, doesn't she?" "Yes, yes, always, Papa, when you're not there." "Ah!"'

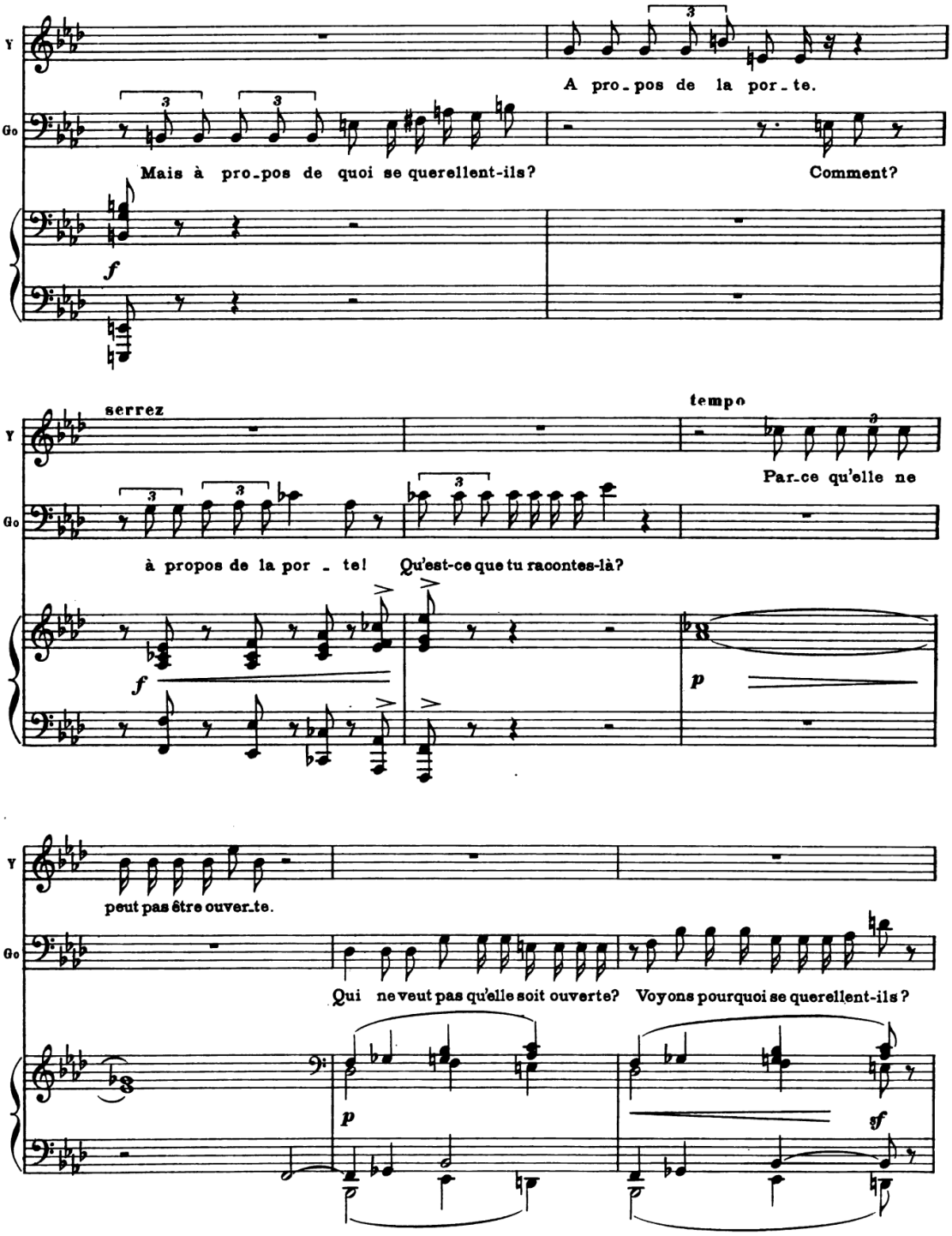
The setting of this dialogue augments the impression of two characters inhabiting distant cognitive and affective realms. In the early part of his interrogation, Yniold's replies are accompanied by a passage or motif which, in developed form, regularly reappears later in the scene. As his first words illustrate, his replies mark moments of rhythmic, harmonic and textural lucidity, insulated from the murky textures, diminished harmonies and unclosed character of the music in which Golaud's questions are framed (Example 1.5). Their ostinato-like nature suggests a self-enclosed mode of thought. In general, as in the remark about the beard, Yniold's responses disrupt the musical logic

of Golaud's questioning, with passages of abrupt rhythmic and harmonic clarity. Only in the moment at which he offers his son a quiver of arrows – when his words are decorated with Yniold's ostinato – does Golaud empathize with, or find a foothold in, the simplicity of Yniold's world (Example 1.6).

Example 1.6. Debussy, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Act 3 scene 4, Yniold's motif in Golaud's offer of the quiver.

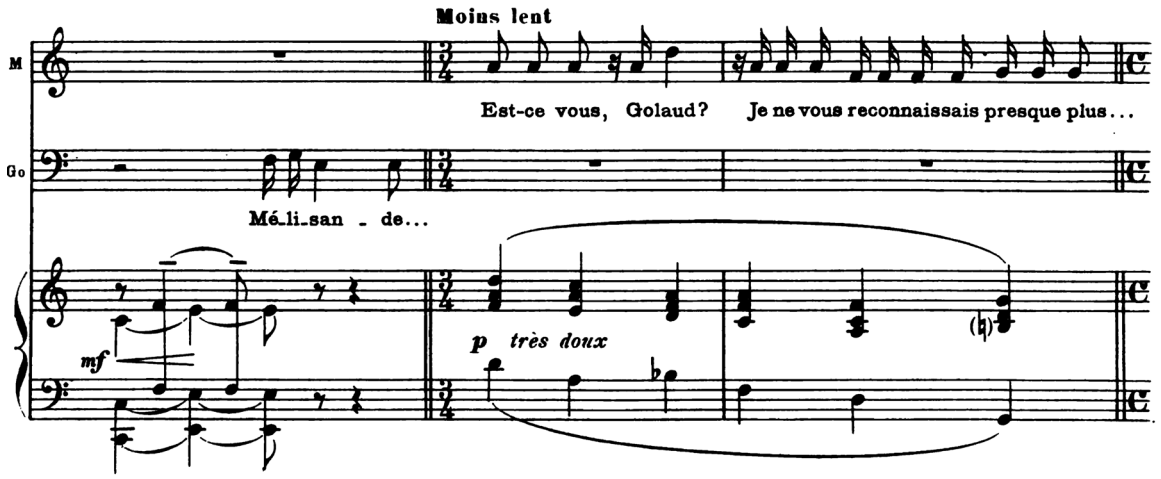
'"I'm going to give you something tomorrow." "What, papa?"'

This sense of distance or dissociation underlying the dialogue is particularly pronounced in the moment when Golaud first tries to make sense of Yniold's remark about the door (Example 1.7). As with his first response, the very simplicity of Yniold's statement, and of its intonation, leads us to weigh it for some further meaning. But the music suggests that Yniold's observation is entirely unburdened by the dangerous implications that the context lends it. Yniold is revealed to be, like Mélisande, innocent in a literal sense of the term – unknowing.[92] It is this unknowingness, in part, that gives an impression of the unknowable. When Golaud, with Yniold on his shoulders, asks his son to see whether Pelléas and Mélisande are close to the bed, Yniold's innocence is extended to the realm of sexuality. His response – 'The bed, Daddy? I cannot see the bed' – deliberatively reiterates his earlier

[92] See, for instance, Carolyn Abbate, *In Search of Opera* (Princeton, 2001), 178.

'innocent' music. The orchestral accompaniment is a gentle, drawn out echo (at the same pitch) of the music that conveyed his delight at Golaud's offer of the arrows.

Example 1.7. Debussy, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Act 3 scene 4, Golaud questions Yniold about the door.

'"In that case what do they quarrel about?" "About the door" "What? About the door! What are you talking about?" "Because they don't want it open." "Who doesn't want it open? Look, why do they quarrel?"'



Example 1.8. Debussy, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Act 5, Mélisande's first 'reliquary'.
'"Mélisande..." "Is that you, Golaud? I can hardly recognize you."'

The musical devices that distinguish Yniold's thought from Golaud's are less pronounced versions of those that underpin Golaud's questioning of Mélisande in Act 5. The most striking realizations of the theme of 'innocence interrogated by worry' are Mélisande's three 'highly formal, even hieratic triple meter replies', which Carolyn Abbate calls 'musical reliquaries' (Example 1.8).[93] In these moments, as Abbate puts it, Mélisande's voice 'recedes to far distances, away from human discourse'.[94] Unlike Mélisande's, Yniold's responses are swept along by the pace of the scene. His fragmentary, sing-song utterances do not usually echo or trace the melodic shape of the accompanying music. But this music marks out comparable moments of recession from Golaud's 'discourse'. At least until his excitement at the gift of the arrows, the music accompanying Yniold's responses during Golaud's first period of questioning manifests a sort of crystalline melancholy, with a triple-metre lilt comparable to Mélisande's. It is characterized by a minor plagal progression, which is abstracted to an extreme in Yniold's remark about the door. One might go as far as to suggest that the 'hieratic' character of Mélisande's reliquary music, with the plagal feel of its first

[93] *Ibid*., 178. Jankélévitch describes them as presenting a Mussorgskian 'theme of innocence' ('un thème d'innocence qui pourrait être de Moussorgski'), *La Vie et le mort*, 101.
[94] Abbate, *In Search of Opera,* 179.

two chords, is distilled from the first manifestations of Yniold's innocence in the face of Golaud's interrogation.

Yniold's responses give musical shape, then, to the mysteriousness or inscrutability with which the libretto invests the quality of the childlike. Yniold and Mélisande might be deemed instances of the 'enigmatic child', a literary archetype identified by Reinhard Kuhn. Both characters exhibit something of what Kuhn calls the 'essence of inscrutability'. They sometimes appear, at least to the adult interlocutor, 'perversely unwilling to reveal the truth'.[95] At times both characters are 'inarticulate', unable to fathom their own thoughts or feelings. But unlike many instances of the 'enigmatic child' that Kuhn identifies, neither Yniold or Mélisande become god-like figures, bearing a mysterious wisdom. Their inscrutability is not a screen for the projection of some divine presence, as it is, for instance, in André Gide's *The Voyage of Urien* (1893).[96] Unlike other child-characters of Maeterlinck's invention, the hint of strange logic provided by Yniold does not provide openings onto an invisible mystic world.[97]

Debussy's music registers an experience of scrutinizing this inscrutability. Act 3 scene 4, like Act 5, places the listener in Golaud's position, seeking to break down the content of Yniold's responses – to reach for the subtext that their sheer simplicity implies, and to grasp the obscure logic guiding his apparently nonsensical answers. But the music of Yniold's responses presents them as exhibiting an extreme lucidity: this is the nature of the distinctness of Yniold's affective realm from Golaud's. The clarity of the music of Yniold's responses seems to deny the very possibility of any further revelation. The taut simplicity of their phraseology resists interrogation. Clarity and opacity seem somehow to become the same thing in these responses, as they do, to a greater degree, in Mélisande's 'reliquaries'. Referring specifically to this passage,

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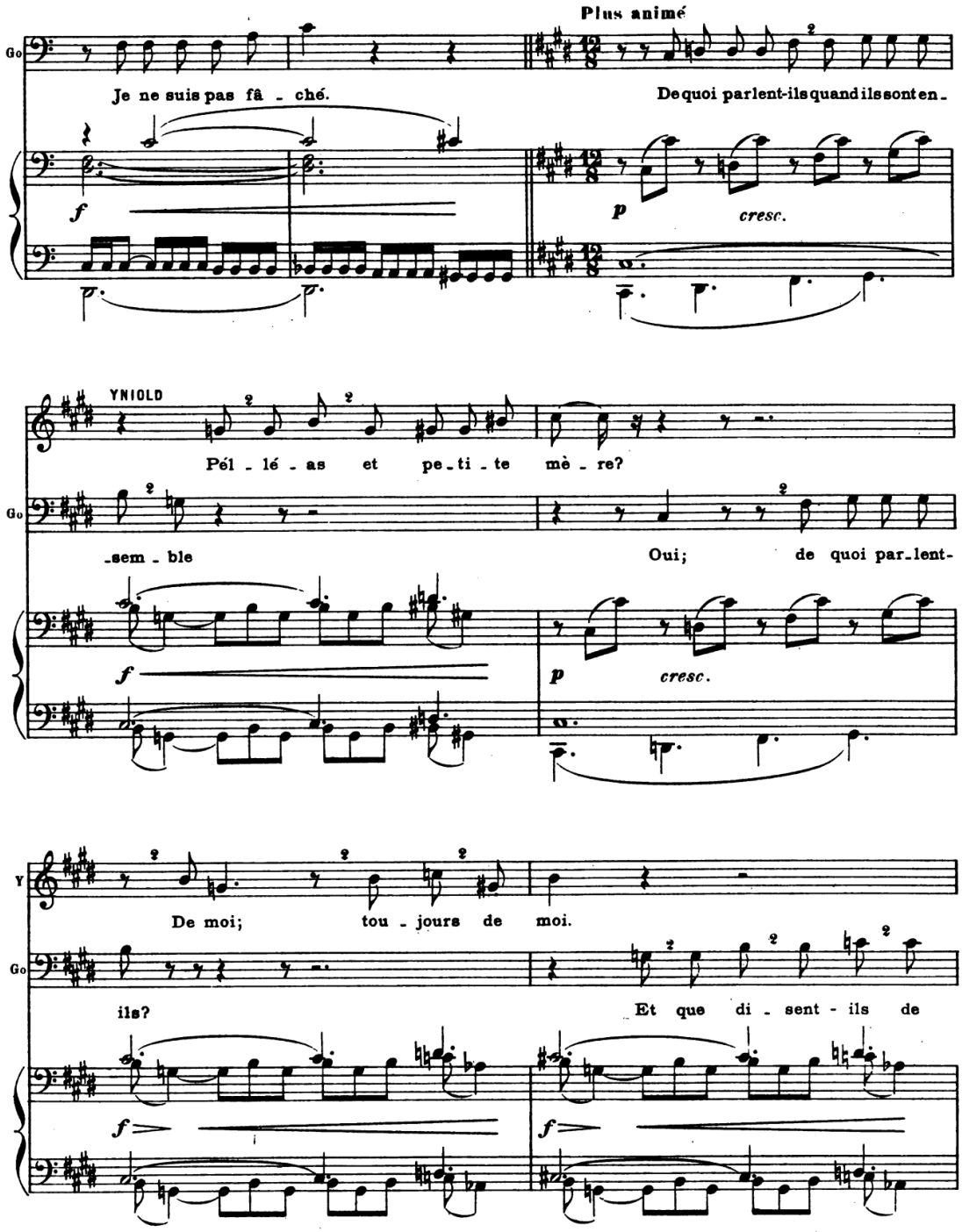
[95] Reinhard Kuhn, *Corruption in Paradise: The Child in Western Literature* (Hanover, 1982), 18, 61.

[96] Cited in *Ibid.,* 18.

[97] See Lydie Parisse, 'Une figure de la médiation dans *L'Oiseau bleu* de Maeterlinck', in *Récits et dispositifs d'enfance*, edited by Suzanne Lafont (Montpellier, 2011), 119-135. *L'oiseau bleu* was first performed in 1909.

Jankélévitch described its quality as 'limpid mystery', which he extended as a description of Debussy's music more generally. For Jankélévitch, this general quality explained a deep interest in the child – the enigmatic child – apparently manifested by Debussy's oeuvre: 'the child [...] represented the limpid mystery par excellence, the mystery of surface depth and of learned ingenuousness without interiority'.[98]

According to Jankélévitch's reading, then, these passages also provide an answer to the enigmatic child's inscrutability, suggesting that this inscrutability does not conceal a hidden truth or secret. In *Pelléas*, interrogating innocence – attempting to find a secret supposedly hidden behind a naturally inscrutable exterior – certainly gets nowhere, and seems to end in violence. This is the tendency that the course of the opera represents, as Golaud's tender bafflement in the face of this innocence turns gradually to frustration and suspicion. In Act 3 scene 4, Golaud's unwitting infliction of physical pain on Yniold exemplifies the violence that seems to occur almost naturally in Golaud's contact with the childlike. This physical violence is a counterpart to a subtler form of suppression that characterizes Golaud's dealings with states of being that are alien to him in their fragile inscrutability. During his interrogation of Yniold, as he starts to ask about Pelléas and Mélisande's conversations, the crystalline music underlying Yniold's responses becomes absorbed into the restless, febrile character of Golaud's interrogation (Example 1.9). It is as if Golaud's worry has taken over Yniold, whose ability to think has been suppressed by his father's questioning. His responses can only reflect his father's anxiety back to him.

[98] 'Pour Debussy [...], l'enfant [...] représentait le mystère limpide par excellence, le mystère de la profondeur superficielle et de la docte candeur sans intériorité'. Jankélévitch, *La Vie et la Mort*, 102. It is certainly true that this is what the child represents to Jankélévitch. He echoes this distinction, and the notion of 'limpid mystery', in his discussion of the 'childlike' that concludes his study of Ravel. *Idem*, *Ravel*, translated by Margaret Crosland (New York: Grove Press, 1959, 1st published 1939), 156-159.

Example 1.9. Debussy, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Act 3 scene 4, Yniold's music absorbed into Golaud's.

'"I'm not angry with you. What do they talk about when they're together?" "Pélleas and Mama?" "Yes; what do they talk about?" "About me; always about me."'

Childlike singing

It was not, of course, the orchestral motifs of Yniold's music that most struck the opera's first audiences. The sing-song character of his enunciation of 'petit-père', repeated constantly throughout Act 3 scene 4, famously provoked laughter in early performances. Like Mélisande's first words, the phrase is a fragment of anti-lyricism that catches in the memory. This piece of vocal writing is the most extreme instance of what Jankélévitch called the opera's aesthetic of 'non-declamatory declamation'.[99] The opera's manifestation of an attempt to recalibrate an ideal of song – and operatic vocality in particular – is, of course, a much-discussed topic.[100] The audience's reaction to Yniold's singing points towards a more general sense in which this recalibration habilitated the employment of childlike diction. Jean Marnold described the opera's vocal aesthetic – in a way intended to be entirely positive – as somehow less than singing: 'the chanting of such simple, sometimes gauche, little phrases, interspersed with childishly repeated exclamations'.[101] Marnold's observation was partly related to a childlike quality of voice that seemed to characterize the opera's first performances. The treble who created the role of Yniold was praised for realizing a 'childish manner of speaking which is just right for little Yniold's brief rejoinders'.[102] More significant was Mary Garden's ability to emphasize, through both her voice and her appearance, the childlike qualities that the libretto attributed to her character. As Pasler observes of her creation of the role, she was strikingly 'petite', and her voice – described by one critic as 'of a delightful freshness' – resembled 'that of a child'.[103]

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[99] 'une déclamation non-déclamatoire'. Jankélévitch, *La Vie et le mort*, 90.

[100] See, for instance, Katherine Bergeron, *Voice Lessons: French Mélodie in the Belle Époque* (Oxford, 2010).

[101] 'On entend psalmodier des petites phrases toutes simples, gauches parfois, entrecoupées d'exclamations puérilement répétées'. Jean Marnold, 'Musique', *Mercure de France*, June 1902, 801-810 (p. 804).

[102] le parler enfantin qui convient les brèves répliques du petit Yniold'. *Ibid.*

[103] Pasler, 'Mélisande's Charm', 61; 'Avec une voix de fraîcheur délicieuse', 'Théâtre national de l'Opéra-Comique', *Les Annales du théâtre et de la musique* (1902), 93-133 (p. 109); 'fraîcheur' can also be translated as 'coolness', suggesting distance.

As scholars have regularly noted, Debussy's renovation of the operatic was presented as a kind of realism, which adhered to the natural flux of human feeling. The project of musically capturing the childlike has developed the status of a kind of model for that realism. This is principally the result of a frequently rehearsed sub-tradition of style history prompted by Debussy himself, which considers Mussorgsky's *The Nursery* – the suite of songs vividly describing a child's domestic activities, first published in 1872 – as a major source of the innovations that Debussy realized in *Pelléas*. In a well-known article about Mussorgsky from 1901, Debussy focused on this song collection, praising Mussorgky's 'art' as 'spontaneous and free from arid formulas', bound by 'successive minute touches mysteriously linked together' rather than by 'any particular form'.[104] This instinctive writing had facilitated the 'truth of interpretation' with which Mussorgksy's songs captured the feelings and attitudes of childhood. *The Nursery* is one of Jankélévitch's points of departure in his account of the development of a modernist urge, manifested in *Pelléas*, to 'strangle eloquence', rejecting the overbearing pomposity of what he described as 'pontificating loquacity'.[105] Jankélévitch's linking of these works involves more than the familiar observation that Debussy drew from Mussorgsky's attempts to incorporate speech-inflections into song.[106] Jankélévitch implies that it was Mussorgsky's musical realization of the childlike which provided the means of imagining a new kind of rhetoric, which might escape the conventional loquacity of the operatic.

In another response to a performance of Mussorgsky's songs, Pierre Lalo stated that 'you could believe you were really hearing a child itself speaking'.[107] He observed that 'several people had been speaking about *Hänsel und Gretel* in relation to this subject',

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[104] Claude Debussy, 'Moussorgski', *La Revue Blanche* (15 May 1901). Reprinted in Claude Debussy, *Monsieur croche antidilletante* (Paris, 1921), 37-39.

[105] 'étrangler l'éloquence', 'pontifiante loquacité'. Jankélévitch, *La Vie et le mort*, 56. See also idem, *Music and the Ineffable*, 17.

[106] See also Pierre Boulez, 'Reflections on Pelléas et Mélisande', in *idem. Orientations: Collected Writings*, edited Jean-Jacques Nattiez, translated by Martin Cooper (London, 1986), 306-317, (p. 313).

[107] 'on croirait entendre en vérité parler l'enfant lui-même'. Lalo, 'La Musique, *Le Temps*, 18 April 1901, 2.

and took the opportunity to continue his denigration of the 'German heaviness' of *Hänsel und Gretel* as belying its childlike subject-matter, and containing an inferior attempt to render in song childlike modes of speech and behaviour.[108] For other commentators, however, Debussy's opera as a whole exhibited childlike qualities in a similar way to Humperdinck's. In his review of *Pelléas*, Jullien observed that composers were attracted so often to dramas 'of a childlike simplicity', noting – in relation to the language of Maeterlinck's play – 'its apparent naïvety and monotony'.[109] The other composers to whom Jullien referred implicitly included Humperdinck: his review of *Hänsel und Gretel* two years earlier had described the plot, and the character of the drama, in exactly the same terms. As with *Hänsel und Gretel*, sympathetic and supportive critics of *Pelléas* provided detailed, insistent descriptions about the effect that the opera seemed to have on them. With Humperdinck's opera, this was described explicitly in terms of a return to childhood, or a restoration of a childlike sensibility. These terms were implicit in reactions to Debussy's opera, although the nature of that childlike sensibility was, of course, quite different.

Grasping interiority

Several critics reported the feeling of having adopted the characters' own states of being. Bouyer described this sensation as the effect of Debussy's intoxicating music: 'it is an art of resigned sadness, a music of opium. Our soul is numbed by a sombre destiny: it becomes the sister of this Mélisande…'[110] Bouyer's sensation is not merely that of identifying with Mélisande, but of somehow adopting her subjectivity. This subjectivity, of course, is one that the opera itself represents as childlike. In an especially indulgent review, Jean Marnold also remarked that listeners themselves

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[108] 'Quelques personnes ont à ce propos parlé de Hänsel et Gretel'; 'cette lourdeur allemande'. Ibid., 2.

[109] 'd'une simplicité enfantine', 'sa naïveté et sa monotonie apparentes'. Jullien, 'Pelléas et Mélisande', 8, 10.

[110] 'c'est un art de tristesse résignée, une musique d'opium. Notre âme est engourdie par la destinée ténébreuse: elle devient sœur de cette Mélisande [...].' Bouyer, 'Revue musicale', 279.

acquire, over the course of the opera, the condition that grips the opera's characters. Marnold suggested that these characters are incarnations of a sort of pure interiority:

> The creatures evoked by the poet of Pelléas and Mélisande are not phantoms, still less are they symbols: they are souls, simple, subtle and profound, like the whole human soul, or what we understand by that word. […] It is our unplumbed and manifold soul that we see in front of us, completely exposed, like a sword drawn from its sheath.[111]

What we experience, Marnold suggests, are beings somehow stripped of their exteriority. The characters manifest an inwardness that is revealed while remaining unknown.

This revelation of interiority was something that the opera achieved with its audience as well as its characters. Marnold then relates his previously cited description of the opera's childlike musical language to a sensation of being turned inwards. He continued:

> One is not transported to an imaginary sphere, to an invented exterior world. One is confined deep within oneself. One feels the rhythmic beating of one's arteries. One hears the chanting of such simple, sometimes gauche, little phrases, interspersed with childishly repeated exclamations, and the aching pulsations that they set off. One puts one's hand to one's throat like Mélisande and thinks with Pelléas 'my heart is on the point of strangling me'.[112]

He tried to specify this experience as a feeling of being buried within oneself, peculiarly attuned to the physical sensations of one's body. The paradoxical character of these observations may reflect the wish of loyal Debussystes to claim affinity with Symbolism by appropriating the idiosyncracies of its language. But critics espousing more balanced judgements made comparable statements about being penetrated and

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[111] 'Les créatures évoquées par le poéte de Pelléas et Mélisande ne sont pas des fantômes, moins encore des symboles: ce sont des âmes, simples, subtiles et profondes comme toute âme humaine ou ce qu'on entend par ce mot. [...] C'est notre âme insondée et multiple que nous voyons devant nous toute nue, comme une épée hors du fourreau.' Marnold, 'Musique', 803-804.

[112] 'On n'est pas transporté dans une sphère irréelle, dans un monde extérieur inventé. On est interné dans le plus profond de soi-même. On sent les battements rythmés de ses artères. On entend psalmodier des petites phrases toutes simples, gauches parfois, entrecoupées d'exclamations puérilement répétées, et les pulsations se précipitent, douloureuses. On porte la main à sa gorge comme Mélisande et on pense avec Pelléas "mon cœur est sur le point de m'étrangler".' *Ibid.*, 804.

moved by the opera's 'dissipation of musical thought'.[113] Another reason to take Marnold's observations seriously is that the attempt to expose a dark spot at the centre of the self belonged to a much wider enterprise of turn-of-the-century culture (one that Steedman dates from between 1895 and 1920).[114] As the Introduction noted, this enterprise gave particular shapes or forms to that point of interiority, one of which was childhood. What sensation Marnold was attempting to describe, and how Debussy's music might have engendered it, are probably intractable critical questions, but some suggestions are made in what follows.

In the Symbolist thought which the opera at least partly espoused, the notion of interiority was a common motif. In a well-known statement from 1890 entitled 'Confessions de poète', Maeterlinck observed:

> I feel enticed, above all, by the unconscious gestures of being, which pass their luminous hands through the slits in the walls of artifice that imprison us. [...] I would like to study […] unexplained, forgotten or extinguished faculties and ideas, irrational motives, […] the mysteries of sleep […], the secrets of childhood, so strangely spiritual with its faith in the supernatural, and so frightening with its dreams of spontaneous horror, as if we really did spring from a source of terror! In the same way, I should like to watch, patiently, for the sparks of original being […].[115]

Maeterlinck points to a disjuncture between the appearance of an exterior self – the self produced by everyday behaviour, known to the world and to us – and the apprehension of some other source of thought deep within us, almost extinguished, which has eluded externalization, brought forth neither to the world nor ourselves. He looks for the

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[113] 'l'émiettement de la pensée musicale', Jullien, 'Pelléas et Mélisande', 13.

[114] Steedman, *Strange Dislocations*, 32.

[115] 'Je me sens attiré, avant tout, par les gestes inconscients de l'être, qui passent leurs mains lumineuses à travers les créneaux de cette enceinte d'artifice où nous sommes enfermés. [...]. Je voudrais me pencher [...] sur les facultés et les notions inexpliquées, négligées ou éteintes, sur les mobiles irraisonnés, [...] sur les mystères du sommeil [...]; sur les secrets de l'enfance, si étrangement spiritualiste avec sa croyance au surnaturel, et si inquiétante avec ses rêves de terreur spontanée, comme si réellement nous venions d'une source d'épouvante! Je voudrais guetter ainsi, patiemment, les flammes de l'être originel [...].' Maurice Maeterlinck, *Confessions de poète", un texte-manifeste de la creation poétique symboliste*. In *idem Introduction à une psychologie des songes (1886-1896),* textes réunis et commentés par Stefan Gross (Brussels, 1985), 81. My translation draws on that provided by Patrick McGuinness in *Maurice Maeterlinck and the Making of Modern Theatre* (Oxford, 2000), who cites part of the same passage (pp.132-133).

traces of this source of thought that linger in our behaviour. One means of seeking this intimated point of interiority is trying to remember, and perhaps to observe, the attachments and feelings of childhood, in which this state of 'original being' had freer reign. As Maeterlinck suggests, the interiority that he seeks is in some sense, of course, the unconscious, but it is essential to bear in mind the emergent and highly contested status of this idea in turn-of-the-century French culture, both scientific and artistic.[116]

Not only Mélisande, but other characters in the opera have moments of strange behaviour and experience in which the residue of childhood feelings and perceptions identified by Maeterlinck come to the surface. Some of these moments have been noted: sudden thrills of terror, moments when characters' thoughts seem inaccessible, and completely contradictory. They find themselves momentarily adrift on what Maeterlinck calls the 'interior sea' within the soul, 'where strange storms of the unexpressed and inexpressible break'.[117] Mélisande is an adult who, in Maeterlinck's terms, has yet fully to build the 'walls of artifice' that confine and conceal the gestures of the unconscious. This emphasis on interiority might seem to contradict Jankélévitch's description of the childlike state of being that Debussy's music invests in Mélisande: 'the mystery of appearance and of ecstatic objectivity, […] without any depth of consciousness'; 'pure and innocent exteriority'.[118]

Mélisande is without interiority in the same way that she is without exteriority: her state of being does not admit of the distinction. Jankélévitch's observations relate to what Stanley Cavell calls 'Mélisande's fear of and astonishment at words as such, at

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[116] See, for instance, Jeremy Stubbs, 'Between Medicine and Hermeticism: "The" Unconscious in *fin-de-siècle* France', in *Symbolism, Decadence and the* Fin de Siècle, edited by Patrick McGuinness (Exeter, 2000), 144-174.

[117] 'Il y a dans notre âme une mer intérieure, [...] où sévissent les étranges tempêtes de l'inarticulé et de l'inexprimable.' Maeterlinck, *Confessions,* 81.

[118] 'le mystère de l'apparence et de l'objectivité extatique, [...] sans aucune profondeur de conscience'; 'pure et innocente extériorité'. Jankélévitch, *La Vie et la mort*, 100. This passage, then, begins to clarify what Jankélévitch meant by 'ecstatic objectivity' in his discussion of the 'spirit of childhood' in 'modern music', in *Music and the Ineffable*, as cited in the Introduction.

there being a world, one that seeks to know her'.[119] Catherine Clément hints at Mélisande's undeveloped sense of distinctness from the world, in noting how she is found almost as an animal, 'not entirely human'.[120] Mélisande does not possess the level of self-consciousness that would allow her to distinguish between having a thought and expressing it, or to the possibility of being able to disguise the expression of a thought. The expression of a feeling to the world is an expression of it to herself – this is why she famously 'does not know what she knows'.

In his article about *The Nursery*, Debussy noted Mussorgsky's ability to evoke 'shadowy sensations of trembling anxiety which move and wring the heart'.[121] It is these sensations to which Maeterlinck was drawn, and which overtake the opera's characters. Debussy attributes their presence in Mussorgsky's music to his substitution of a succession of ever-changing, minute touches for the solid continuity of fixed forms. Jullien's review cited another remark of Debussy's, in an attempt to explain the renovation of operatic language realized in *Pelléas et Mélisande*:

> *Mélodie* [...] is essentially suited to song which bears out a fixed feeling. I have never allowed my music to push around or slow down, as a result of the demands of technique, the movement of the feelings and passions of my characters. [My music] disappears as soon as it's appropriate to leave them the complete freedom of their gestures and cries ...[122]

In 'mélodie', then, music *does* the feeling of the characters, rather than following the subtlety of their feeling. The characters' very capacity to feel is subtly handed over to the medium of musical thought.

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[119] Stanley Cavell, 'Opera and the Lease of Voice'. In *idem. A Pitch of Philosophy: Autobiographical Exercises* (Cambridge, MA, 1994), 129-170, (p. 162).

[120] Catherine Clément, *Opera: Or The Undoing of Women*, translated by Betsy Wing (London, 1997), 111-112.

[121] Debussy, 'Moussorgski', 37.

[122] 'Le mélodie [...] convient essentiellement à la chanson qui confirme un sentiment fixe. Je n'ai jamais consenti à ce que ma musique brusquât ou retardât, par suite d'exigences techniques, le mouvement des sentiments et des passions de mes personnages. Elle s'efface dès qu'il convient qu'elle leur laisse l'entière liberté de leurs gestes, de leurs cris [...].' Jullien, Pelléas et Mélisande', 10, citing Claude Debussy, 'Critique des critiques: Pelléas et Melisande', *Le Figaro*, 16 May, 1902.

Turned on its head, Debussy's critique reveals a kind of theory of the affirmative quality that this 'mélodie' provides.[123] The world of *mélodie* is one in which there is no disjuncture between a feeling and its embodiment in a perfectly transparent form, one in which all feelings surface instantaneously as expressible. The consolation of such a world lies in its exclusion of the troubling complexities of 'affect' (in a contemporary sense of the term), its obliviousness to – or even denial of – the perplexing suggestiveness that obsessed Maeterlinck. Music that does not break out into songfulness, which dissipates 'la pensée musicale', is naturally charged with this suggestiveness. For Jankélévitch, we listen to Debussy's music in something like the way that Golaud contemplates Mélisande's expression – attempting to find within it a deeper, more substantial feeling. This was part of its nature as 'insaisissable', as slipping through the fingers, which reviewers constantly remarked upon. It relates to the distinction between 'secret' and 'mystery' that Jankélévitch applied to Debussy's work – the 'Debussyste mystery' which may give the illusion of concealing a hidden depth.[124]

This illusion is what we might call the problem of exteriority (in Jankélévitch's words, the 'mystery of appearance') that generally besets the opera's characters, but is most pronounced in their dealings with Yniold and Mélisande. The distinction drawn by Maeterlinck, and by the opera's commentators, between exterior and interior is, of course, philosophically problematic. But its importance had been established early in the nineteenth century in tracts by authors such as Balzac, somewhere between literature and sociobiology, which assessed how qualities of physiognomy and gait

[123] For other reflections on the status of 'music' in the opera, and its connections with the notion of an interior-exterior relation, see Lydia Goehr, 'Radical Modernism and the Failure of Style: Philosophical Reflections on Maeterlinck-Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*', *Representations* 74/1 (2001), 55-82.

[124] 'le mystère debussyste', Jankélévitch, *La Vie et la mort*, 100. See also Jankélévitch, *Debussy et le mystère* (Neuchatel, 1949), esp. 9-12. For an application of this distinction, see Steven Rings, 'Mystères limpides: Time and Transformation in Debussy's *Des pas sur la neige*', *Nineteenth-Century Music* 32/2 (2008), 178-208.

could be read for meaning.[125] It was presupposed in later physiological studies that discussed how the nervous system might function to produce the bodily features and behaviour that reveal emotion.[126] In Debussy's opera, the characters demonstrate an inability to read each other's physiognomies. The opera makes use of the figure of the enigmatic child as the quintessence of human inscrutability as such. To empathize with these characters is to be intensely aware of the strangeness and fallibility of communication between selves housed within their 'walls of artifice'. The opera invites a heightened awareness of others' conditions, and one's own, as enigmatic objects – as exteriors that do not and cannot reveal what seems to lurk behind them. This, perhaps, corresponded to Marnold's acute awareness of being 'confined within oneself', attuned to the physical sensations of the thing he inhabited.

Mignon's strangeness

Mélisande, as Jann Pasler has observed, bears some relation to the title character of Ambroise Thomas's opera *Mignon*, first heard in 1866. Not unlike Mélisande, Mignon is a '"poor child" of unclear origins who comes by boat from a foreign land, innocent and fearful'.[127] Throughout Thomas's opera, Mignon is referred to as both child and woman – and occasionally as a boy.[128] Although it is revealed towards the end of Act 3, her age is generally unclear, and described inconsistently. The opera's first commentators remarked on the novelty with which the characters' music distinguished their particular temperaments. Pasler notes that Mignon's music, like Mélisande's, keeps close to a speech-like utterance – a 'déclamation épurée' ('declamation without

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[125] Christopher Rivers, *Face Value: Physiognomical Thought and the Legible Body in Marivaux, Lavater, Balzac, Gautier, and Zola* (Madison, WI, 1994).

[126] Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (London, 1872).

[127] *Composing the Citizen,* 675. Pasler suggests that this had the makings of an operatic type, observing that Delibes's Lakmé, who bears the 'look of a child' and refers to her own utterances as 'a naïve song', is an 'exotic' re-writing of Mignon. Her creation was purportedly inspired by a realization of Thomas's Mignon by the American soprano Marie van Zandt, whose appeal was comparable to Mary Garden's. *Ibid.,* 422.

[128] Most nineteenth-century recreations of Mignon are sure that she is a girl, despite the considerable ambiguity in Goethe's original character. See Steedman, *Strange Dislocations,* 23.

ornament').[129] When, at the beginning of Act 1 scene 6, Wilhelm asks Mignon about her past and her parents, he seems to adopt her music – an almost monotone chant, low in pitch and volume. He seems to respond to her frail, mysterious expression, adjusting himself to the subject in front of him.

Pasler observes that critics embraced Thomas's musical realization of Mignon as the embodiment of a new 'more human' operatic expressivity, pitting it directly against the high lyricism of Italian modes of operatic discourse, and the stirring elevation of German ones.[130] As in the two other operas under discussion in this chapter, the attempt to embody a childlike affect became a means of reforming the operatic – retreating from grandiose forms of rhetoric to follow 'the flux of feeling'.[131] As Pasler notes, Thomas's opera was the most successful work to play at the Opéra-Comique at the end of the nineteenth century, and continued to run alongside *Hänsel und Gretel* and *Pelléas et Mélisande* (with more performances than either).[132] Thomas's Mignon was evidently embedded in the contemporaneous musical and cultural imagination, and it seems unlikely that audience members would not have compared her in some way with Mélisande.

Mélisande certainly has much in common with the literary archetype of Mignon that was born with Goethe's relatively peripheral character in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. According to Steedman, this character grew to encapsulate and to prompt a way of thinking about childhood that proved deeply influential throughout the nineteenth century Europe, in social and political spheres as well as artistic ones. Mignon's communication with adults is consistently difficult; her subjective 'universe is to some extent self-enclosed and non-referential', but she seems to emerge in some measure

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[129] Pasler, 'Mélisande's Charm', 62.

[130] *Ibid.*

[131] Pasler, *Composing the Citizen*, 675. Pasler notes this connection between Thomas's Mignon and Debussy's Mélisande.

[132] *Ibid*., 179. In 1900, when *Hänsel und Gretel* received 17 performances, *Mignon* was performed 25 times; in 1901, when Humperdinck's opera received 14 performances, Thomas's received 24; in 1902, the 23 performances of *Pelléas* alternated with *Mignon*'s 25. *Les Annales du théâtre et da la musique*, edited by Édouard Noël and Edmond Stoullig: (1900), 119; (1901), 133; (1902), 133. See also Pasler, 'Mélisande's Charm', 60.

through song, in which she expresses herself naturally.[133] Like Mélisande, she is proximate to death, and, perhaps most importantly, haunted by a past or an experience that she herself seems unable to fathom or to articulate. Steedman considers Mignon to be a child; Terence Cave, in his study of the character's myriad afterlives, emphasizes her identity as hovering between childhood and adulthood.[134] It would not be right to describe Mélisande simply as an example of Mignon's many afterlives: she lacks some of the most crucial of Mignon's diverse characteristics. In some ways, she relates as much to the various mystic savages and child-women produced by the Symbolist (and later the Surrealist) imagination.[135] But the traits that Mélisande does share with Mignon amount almost to a recuperation of the essential features that Thomas's opera, and late nineteenth-century French culture generally, had stripped from the Mignon character.[136]

Thomas's *Mignon* exemplifies a consumerist airbrushing of that character, which removed the challenges that she presented to conventional moral and religious scruples. In an image of the Swedish soprano Sigrid Arnoldson as Mignon (Figure 1.2) which appeared in *Le Théâtre* in 1902, Arnoldson is dressed as a realization of Ary Scheffer's influential representations of the character from the 1830s, which marked the beginning of this type.[137] As Steedman puts it, the 'impulse to make Mignon un-strange, to find the homeless a home in the world, furnishes the plot' of Thomas's opera.[138] Rather than dying, Mignon finally marries Wilhelm, and is given a home in Italy. As Humperdinck's opera did with the Grimms' story, Thomas's drama converts Goethe's strange, tragic plot into the stock nineteenth-century tale of a lost child who is found, and restored to the moral and physical security of *la famille*. Thomas also flattens out

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[133] Steedman, *Strange Dislocations,* 41.

[134] Terence Cave, *Mignon's Afterlives: Crossing Cultures from Goethe to the Twenty-First Century* (Oxford, 2011).

[135] See Michel Hulin, *La Mystique sauvage. Aux antipodes de l'esprit* (Paris, 1993).

[136] For Mignon's French afterlives, see Cave, *Mignon's Afterlives,* 87-124.

[137] *Ibid.,* 96, 113. Pasler notes other echoes of Scheffer's images in 1894, the year of the opera's 1000th performance. *Composing the Citizen*, 184.

[138] Steedman, *Strange Dislocations,* 31.

the Mignon storyline into a plot of two young women vying for Wilhelm's sexual attention.[139] Mignon's music is set against the musical realization of Philine's 'seductive playfulness, pride, and self-confidence': 'laughter and exuberant vocalises'.[140] Philine is marked out as worldly, knowing, and, through her music,

Figure 1.2. Sigrid Arnoldson as Mignon at the Opéra-Comique, *Le Théâtre* 82 (May 1902), 2. Bibliothèque nationale de France.

[139] *Ibid.,* 32.
[140] Pasler, *Composing the Citizen*, 181.

performative – potentially manipulative. Mignon's un-worldliness, by contrast, becomes part of her nature as a vessel of the divine, even a vehicle of divine providence. The opera, in Pasler's words, promotes 'the rewards of docile modesty and innocent sincerity in a paternal society'.[141]

In Mélisande, Mignon is made strange again. The principal value of the comparison is found in Steedman's broadest argument about the historical and cultural significance of the Mignon character as a 'figure to think by'. Steedman suggests that, through her social as well as literary afterlives, Mignon becomes a representation of the dark spot of human interiority that Freud posited in his conception of the unconscious.[142] Certainly, the behaviour that betrays Mélisande's interiority – her manifestations of a 'primitive consciousness', as understood by Maeterlinck – might also be interpreted as signs of a trauma which she cannot quite grasp because it has been repressed. Elliott Antokoletz states that Mélisande displays the signs of a sort of 'post-traumatic stress disorder': 'she avoids places and things that remind her of that event; and she has times in which she suffers intrusive symptoms and other times in which she appears numb, dissociated, not to be responding appropriately.'[143] Antokoletz notes that 'information about the condition of "dissociation", had been published by Pierre Janet in 1880 and by Freud and Breuer in 1893–95'.[144] The danger of pursuing this analogy is its tendency to reduce the complexity of Mélisande's character to that of a psychological case study. But Antokoletz draws attention to the importance of a question that lingers around Mélisande, just as it lingers around Goethe's Mignon: 'What did they do to you?'. Steedman notes that today's imagination immediately supplies a response to that question – sexual abuse.[145]

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[141] *Ibid.,* 255.

[142] Steedman, *Strange Dislocations*, 32.

[143] Elliott Antokoletz, 'Music as Encoder of the Unconscious in *Pelléas et Mélisande'*, in *Rethinking Debussy*, edited by Elliott Antokoletz and Marianne Wheeldon (New York, 2011), 123-147, (p. 143).

[144] *Ibid.*

[145] Steedman, *Strange Dislocations*, 32, 165-8.

Sexualizing childhood

The figure of the enigmatic child formed, to some extent, a focus for an ordinary (adult) tendency to question the possibility of knowing children's thoughts. This character type found another manifestation in a song by Massenet published in 1900, entitled 'Child's gaze' ('Regard d'enfant').[146] The speaker in Léon Pélissier's text is a parent-figure (implicitly, of course, a mother), and the song is addressed to a small child in a cradle, 'fragile and beautiful'.[147] The words of the third verse (see Example 1.10), which returns to the opening music, are:

> Through your pure eyes with their soft looks / What soul mingles with our souls? / Who thus comes back down to us, / What heart reveals itself to ours?[148]

In Massenet's song, the adult's sense of a concealed interior manifested in the child's expression becomes bound up with a promotion of motherhood. The absorption of the image of the enigmatic child into the cult of motherhood may have been facilitated by the mid-nineteenth-century abundance of parenting manuals that continually emphasized the importance of parents' watching their children, studying them for signs of unhappiness and illness.[149] In this instance, the speaker is satisfied by a discovery of what Jankélévitch called a 'secret' behind the child's exterior. The final lines suggest that the speaker recognizes in her child's expression the gaze of another – implicitly, that of the child's dead father. The problem of the 'enigmatic child' is resolved in the song's consoling sentiments of *famille*. Although Massenet's music casts this as a climactic and deeply affirming moment, the earlier questions have not been satisfactorily answered: the speaker succeeds in overcoming the mysteriousness of the child's gaze only by reading into it the suggestion of an already familiar adult subjectivity.

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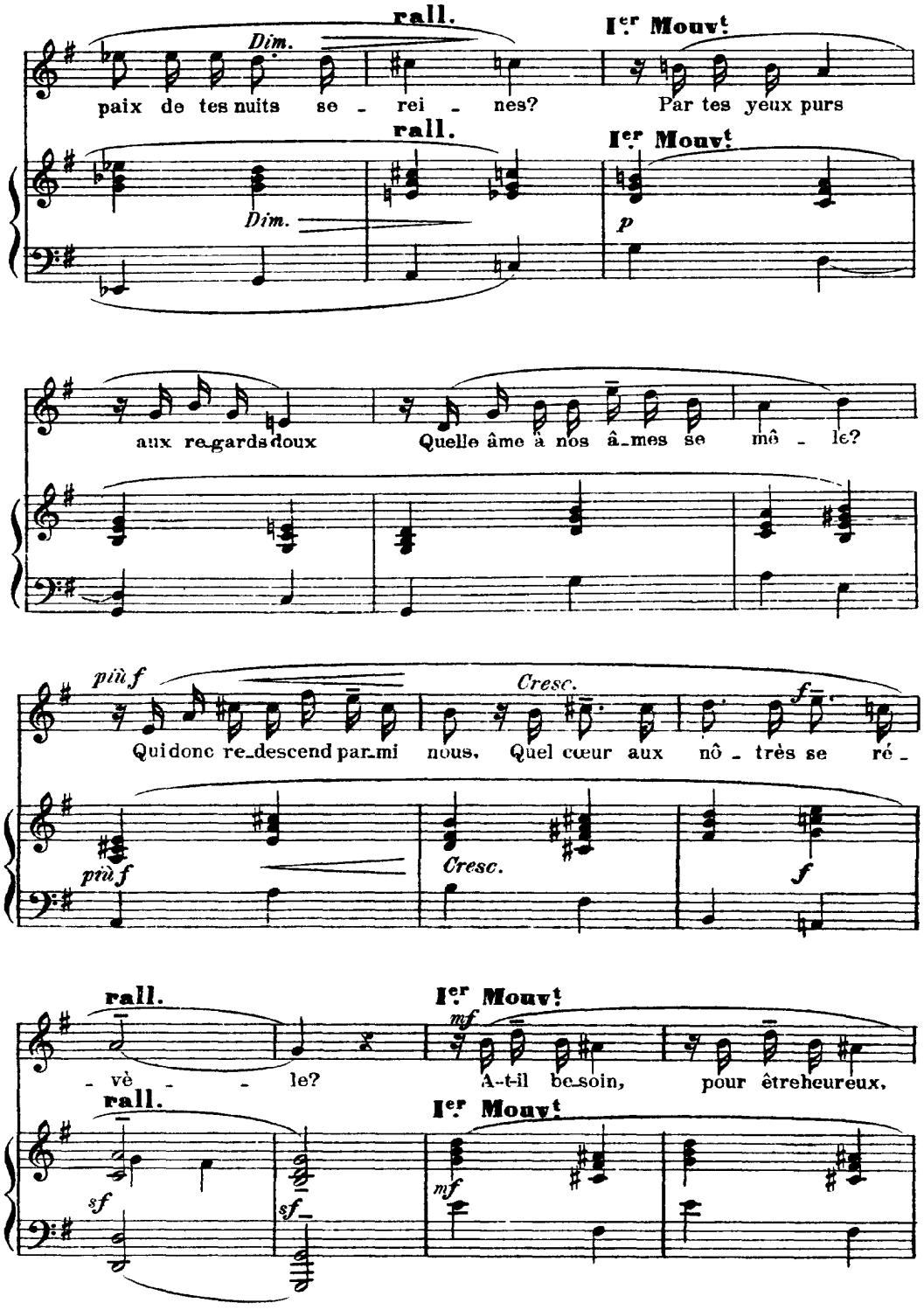
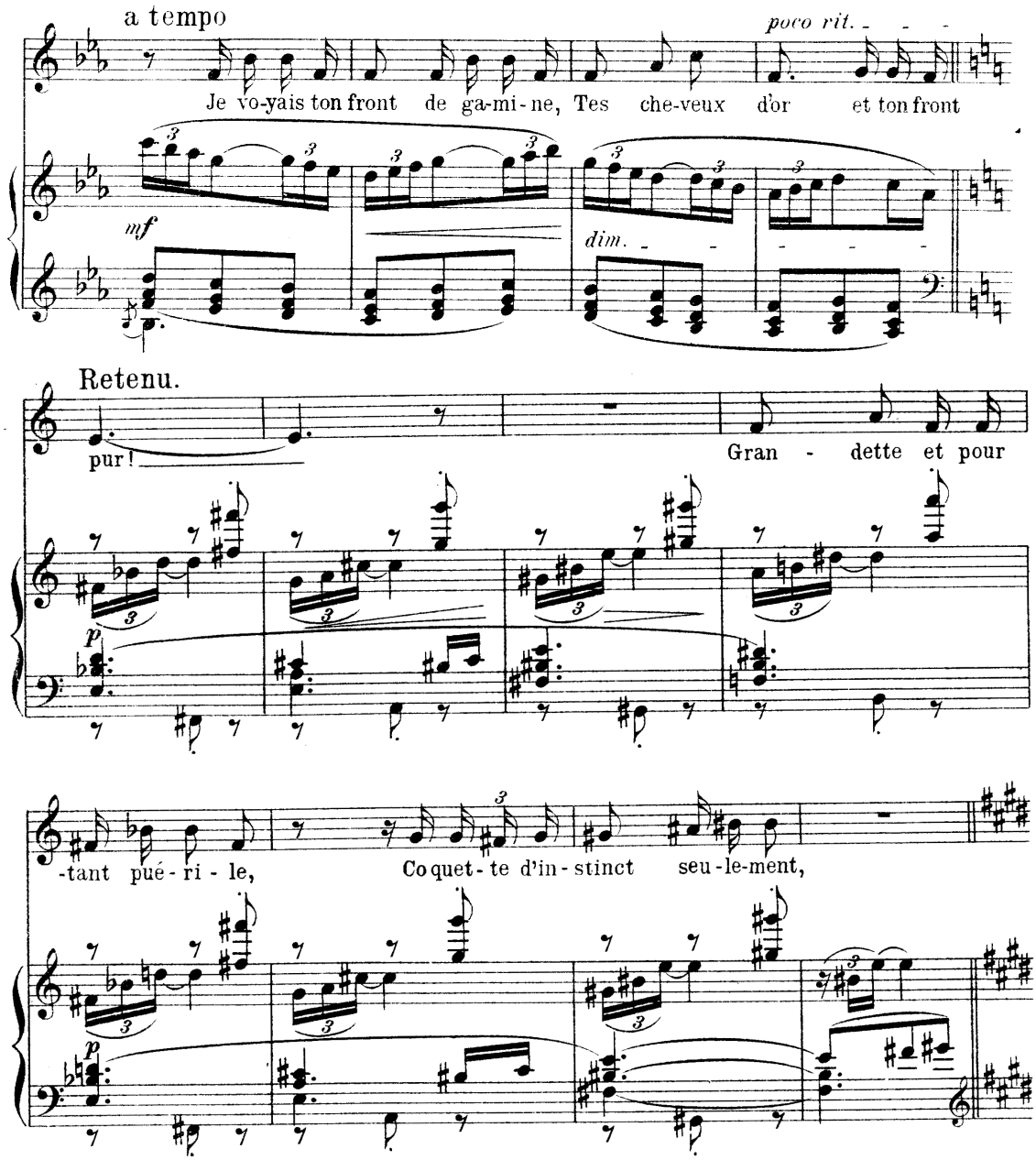
[146] Jules Massenet, 'Regard d'enfant', *Vingt Mélodies* (Paris, 1900), no. 4.

[147] The first line is 'Little child, fragile and beautiful' ('Petit enfant, fragile et beau').

[148] 'Par tes yeux purs aux regards doux / Quelle âme à nos âmes se mêle? / Qui donc redescend parmi nous, / Quel coeur aux nôtres se révèle?'

[149] See Steedman, *Strange Dislocations*, 63-76.

Example 1.10. Massenet (text by Léon Pélissier), 'Regard d'enfant', from *20 Mélodies (Soprano ou Ténor)* vol. 5 (Paris: Heugel & Cie, 1900), bars 18-30.

Another contribution to the sheet-music market from 1905, with music by Debussy, embodies a far more disturbing act of 'reading into' a childlike expression. 'Dans le jardin' belongs to a collection of songs that was apparently the vanity project of an actor, Paul Gravollet, who persuaded a large number of composers (including Caplet, Chaminade, d'Indy, Ravel, Thomé and Widor) to set his poetry to music. The poem set by Debussy is a revealingly celebratory account of hebephilic desire. In the first verse, the speaker recalls lingering furtively in a garden and watching a beloved who is addressed as 'enfant!'. The object of the speaker's gaze is made explicit in the song's central section (Example 1.11): 'Grown and yet childish, / Seductress only by instinct, / The blue eyes shadowed by long lashes / Which gaze with complete calm, / A body delightful and a little fragile, / A voice of May, the movements of April!'.[150] These allusions to spring signify a body at the onset of puberty. The music's moments of languor successfully supply an impression of a state of gentle arousal. The song exemplifies another current exploitation of the image of the 'enigmatic child', in which the very openness of an apparently un-knowing exterior, inscrutable to the knowing gaze, allows it to become a screen for the projection of adult erotic desire. Gravollet's speaker twists this desire back into a reading of the 'child's' comportment as seductive. The twisting is quite self-conscious – the speaker acknowledges the un-knowingness of that comportment. But this self-consciousness contributes to a delicious 'agony' that is itself twisted into the projection of the 'child' as a temptress.

[150] 'Grandette et pourtant puérile, Coquette d'instinct seulement, Les yeux bleus ombrés de longs cils Que regardent tout gentiment, Un corps un peu frêle et charmant, Une voix de mai, des gestes d'avril!' Claude Debussy and Paul Gravollet, *Dans le jardin* (Paris, 1905). In his text to 'De Grève', from *Prose lyriques* (composed 1892-3), Debussy himself developed a bizarre metaphor, bordering on the hebephilic, in which waves are compared to little school-girls in green silk skirts.

Example 1.11. Debussy (text by Paul Gravollet), 'Dans le jardin', in *Les Frissons. Poésies de Paul Gravollet mises en musique* (Paris: Hamelle, 1905), 20-24, bars 30-57.

In the late nineteenth century, 'adolescence' was increasingly recognized as a specific intermediate stage of sexual development between childhood and adulthood.[151] This new attention was partly a consequence of the increased emphasis on understanding childhood as an age range defined by certain biological characteristics. It was also, to some extent, a consequence of shifting attitudes towards sexuality.

[151] Beth W.A. Gale, *A World Apart: Female Adolescence in the French Novel, 1870-1930* (Lewisburg, 2010).

Steedman implies that the notion of adolescence became significant, in part, for implicitly sanctioning a view of the adolescent, no longer a child, as a potential object of sexual desire.[152] For Terence Cave, the importance of the Mignon character type in nineteenth-century culture includes her potential identity as a pubescent female. Significantly, the Mignon craze that developed in late nineteenth-century France, partly in the wake of Thomas's opera, bred parodies that included the 'sexually knowing or corrupt Mignon'.[153] Through her contrast with Philine, Thomas's child-woman – with her own 'voice of May' – becomes an infantilization of the feminine. Her love for Wilhelm is clarified as early as Act 1, and she is then upheld as manifesting a docile sexuality that conforms to the desires of the principal male character, and to the workings of a 'happy' resolution of the plot. Her innocence lies partly in her lack of understanding of her own desires, which are therefore entirely available for Wilhelm to mould. The function of her angelic status is partly to imply that these desires will only ever be directed at Wilhelm.

The act of projection onto Mignon's mysterious innocence invited by Thomas's opera is analogous to the act of projection revealed in Golaud's dealings with the equivalent child-woman in *Pelléas et Mélisande*. It is another instance of the violence that Golaud commits in his interactions with the characters that the opera marks as un-knowing. In Act 4 scene 2, against Arkel's insistence on the innocence of her expression, Golaud continues to attempt to grasp the 'secret' behind Mélisande's 'great eyes'. Clément observes that her 'secret is entirely the projection of questioning men'.[154] In both this scene and the love scene later in Act 4, what both Golaud and Pelléas try to divine from Mélisande's expression is the possibility of erotic desire and sexual knowledge. The earlier scene describes Golaud's growing awareness of the extent to which Mélisande is the screen for his projections. He acknowledges that it is

[152] Steedman, *Strange Dislocations*, 8.
[153] Cave, *Mignon's Afterlives*, 120.
[154] Clément, *The Undoing of Women*, 115.

not her but her 'eyes' that he has seen 'at work' – her charms are 'd'instinct seulement', as Gravollet phrased it.

The inscrutably open gaze whose simplicity so easily held Golaud's projections now becomes, through that very simplicity, diabolical, in refusing to reveal the knowledge that he seeks. This is the essence of Clément's comparison of Mélisande with the figure of the witch: 'She speaks a language that is made for being accused, a charming, guilty language'.[155] Golaud's physical violence at the end of the scene certainly has the character of an exorcism. In moments such as these, the opera reveals the hazards of attempting to scrutinize the childlike, and of speculating about its very openness as the paradoxical veil of secret thoughts. According to Jankélévitch's hearing, the 'limpid mystery' of Mélisande's music amounts to a sort of lesson in reading the childlike. It is just this – limpidity – that the child's expressions and behaviours display: a state of being which we in fact read clearly, even if we cannot fully make sense of what we read.[156]

The context of childhood's sexualization provides, perhaps, the best illumination of the impulse embodied in *Hänsel und Gretel* to protect children. What the children are saved from at the hands of Grignotte could certainly be taken as a metaphor for sexual violation. This possibility forced its way into the wider consciousness at the end of the nineteenth century, as the evil of child prostitution became a subject of public discourse.[157] Since the eighteenth century, in which eroticized images of children were sometimes prominent, a marked shift in attitudes had rendered 'the sight of child sexuality intolerable'.[158] Images of Romantic childhood had propelled and reflected

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[155] *Ibid.*, 114.

[156] Jankélévitch is himself guilty of sexualizing inscrutability in *La Vie et la mort*, 100.

[157] Legislation produced in response to a report of 1883 introduced harsher punishments for those prostituting children, a common practice. Alain Corbin, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, translated by A. Sheridan (Cambridge, MA, 1990), 228, 230. See also Laure Adler, *La Vie quotidienne dans les maisons closes, 1830-1930* (Paris, 1992), 178-88. On the general question of childhood and sexual experience, see Colin Heywood, 'Innocence and Experience: Sexuality among Young People in Modern France, c. 1750-1950', *French History* 21/1 (2007), 44-64, esp. 62.

[158] Higgonet, 'What do you want to know about children?', 204.

this shift, through their insistence on the child's almost divine moral innocence. This insistence blocked the acknowledgement of inchoate sexual feelings in childhood: as Anne Higonnet puts it, 'Romantic childhood was [...] above all the condition of not knowing sexuality'.[159] Following Higonnet, we might also suggest that in neutralizing Hänsel and Gretel's moment of maturation, the opera sought to deny any hint of a moment of sexual awakening. The significance of Mélisande's innocence, unlike Hänsel's or Gretel's, is that it does not preclude a strange, fluid sexuality (and thereby restores another aspect of Goethe's original). But unlike Mignon's, of course, the direction and the expression of this sexuality does not conform to the desires of the male characters.

These divergent notions of innocence exemplify the contrasting understandings of childhood embodied by the operas examined in this chapter, which were introduced to French culture at successive historical moments. Versions of these strands of thought will feature in following chapters: Chapter 3 considers their inter-relation directly, by examining a single cultural event that seemed to stage a contest between them. In this chapter's discussion of *Hänsel und Gretel*, I have tried to show how fairy tale, through its status as material for children, could function as a vehicle of thought about nationhood. Children themselves were also the objects of political agendas, and the next chapter examines the use of musical material adapted to the function of socializing children in accordance with the prevailing ideals of the Third Republic. An important instrument of this socialization was the domestic object that would have greeted virtually every bourgeois family returning home to their *salons* after seeing Humperdinck's opera – a piano.

[159] *Ibid.*, 205.

CHAPTER TWO | The Child at the Piano

In June 1887, the leading column in the parenting journal, *La Jeune mère*, took as its subject 'Music in children's education'.[1] Written by a Dr E. Toussaint, it was a response to a controversy initiated by a piece in *L'Enseignement secondaire des jeunes filles* by its editor, the Republican civil servant Camille Sée, who had questioned the nature of the laborious technical training sometimes given to girls by their piano teachers, 'as if they should be entering the conservatoire'.[2] Sée had solicited advice from Charles Gounod in response to enquiries from mothers about what room should be made in girls' education for learning the piano, and he suggested that it was unnecessary to impose this 'pianolage' on pupils. Toussaint agreed to some extent with Sée, noting how girls occasionally spent eight to ten hours a day torturing their minds and bodies in order to shine in local concerts, or excel in competitions organized by their teachers. He also noted how glad people might be to escape the children's piano recitals that accompanied every family gathering.

Toussaint promoted the general educational importance of music, as a 'salutary gymnastics of the mind'.[3] But he advised that music lessons be reserved for children – both girls and boys – who took a liking to it. He lamented the fact that '[p]eople tell you [...] that a young girl should not pass for well-brought-up if she is not compelled to play the classics arranged for four-hands, and sight-read scores riddled with difficulty'.[4] In doing so, Toussaint attested to the persistence of such an assumption into the late nineteenth century. His article also provides evidence of the establishment of a

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[1] 'Causerie du docteur': 'La Musique dans l'éducation des enfants', *La Jeune mère ou L'éducation du premier âge: journal illustré de l'enfance* 14/6 (June 1887), 82-83. The journal provided mothers with advice about child-rearing; it sometimes offered its readers free or discounted sheet music.

[2] 'comme si elles devaient entrer au conservatoire'. *Ibid*., 82; in response to Charles Gounod and Camille Sée, 'Le Piano dans l'education des jeunes filles', *L'Enseignement secondaire des jeunes filles* (January 1887), 145.

[3] 'gymnastique salutaire de l'esprit'. Toussaint, 'Causerie du docteur', 82.

[4] 'Des gens vous disent très sérieusement qu'une jeune fille ne saurait passer pour bien élevée si elle n'est de force à jouer à quatre mains les morceaux des grands classiques, et à déchiffrer des partitions criblées de difficultés.' *Ibid*., 83.

viewpoint that resisted this idea. Toussaint's resistance did not arise, however, from sympathy with the feminist impulses that were beginning to register in contemporaneous French culture. For him, young women's marriage prospects rested on more important abilities: girls' education should also focus, he suggested, on more practical house-keeping duties.[5]

This flurry of public discussion gives an insight into the status of children's piano playing in the educational and domestic culture of the bourgeois classes in late nineteenth-century France. How exactly the piano should be taught was a subject of discussion, as were equivalent questions relating to bourgeois private life – the precise nature of women's domestic responsibilities, opposing fashions in interior design, and the appropriate role of men in the home.[6] But the suggestion that only enthusiastic children should be taught music had for decades been falling on deaf parental ears. By the end of the nineteenth century, piano playing was slightly less prevalent as a bourgeois domestic activity than it had been at the middle of the century. The ability to play the piano continued, however, to be an expected part of the so-called 'aesthetic dowry', and was therefore important for girls to acquire.[7] Piano playing by both boys and girls also remained a central resource of family entertainment. Children's musical ability was an arena of social competition, in which 'public proof of a good education' could be displayed.[8] The first stages of piano teaching, at least, were often undertaken

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[5] *Ibid*., 83.

[6] See Philip Nord, *The Republican Moment* (Cambridge, MA, 1998), 226, 242.

[7] Philippe Ariès *et al*, *A History of Private Life* vol. 4 (London, 1991), 531. For the (continued) significance of piano-playing as a decorous feminine domestic activity, see Nord, *The Republican Moment*, 226, and Bonnie G. Smith, *Ladies of the Leisure Class: The Bourgeoises of Northern France in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, 1981), 32, 73.

[8] Ariès, *A History of Private Life*, 531. The introduction to a music course from the late 1870s suggested the value of children's musicality as a token of social advancement: 'parents will have the certainty that their children's studies are at the same level as children of the same age, who follow courses in the major cities'. ('[L]es parents auront la certitude que les études de leurs enfants sont au niveau de celles des enfants du même âge, qui suivent les cours des grandes villes'.) Madame Anna Fabre, *Cours complet d'enseignement musical à l'usage des maisons d'éducation des mères de famille et des institutions* (Paris, 1878), 3.

by mothers in the home.[9] The sound and sight of the child at the piano remained an important element of the instrument's status as a symbol of domesticity, contributing to the forging of bourgeois identity in the private sphere.

Scholars of French literature have investigated in considerable detail how books, poems and journals sought to steep children in particular social and cultural values.[10] The subject-matter of these studies includes well-known works from the 'golden age' of French children's literature (roughly 1860 to 1900), such as the Comtesse de Ségur's or Jules Verne's. It also includes more transient elements of what Greg Thomas calls the 'unprecedented barrage of texts and images about childhood' to which middle-class adults and children were subjected in mid to late nineteenth-century France.[11] Historians of Third Republic culture note the importance of piano playing, as well as the importance of reading, to bourgeois domestic life. But no study has examined in detail how musical material produced for children's consumption in the home might have played a part in their acculturation. The 'barrage' of print material about childhood included copious amounts of music, as well as 'texts and images' about music. Musicologists sometimes remark upon the considerable quantity of piano music composed for children in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century France, in the course of discussing art-music from the period whose titles refer in some way to childhood. Perhaps surprisingly, such remarks rarely make it clear that this art-music contributed to, imitated or parodied a mass of material produced for the sheet-music market that developed alongside the widespread practice of children's piano playing.

The child at the piano, as both a genre of painting and an idea more generally, was an important motif in early Third Republic culture. To some extent, children's piano music was a sort of extension of this motif, the sound-world attached to it in the

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[9] Parents were recommended to start their children at various ages. Fabre's courses suggested seven to eight (*ibid*., 4). In 1901, readers of *La Jeune mère* were told five to six, before children learned to read. Madame P.G. 'Causerie Musicale', *La Jeune mère* 28 (1901), 238.

[10] See, for example, Penny Brown, *A Critical History of French Children's Literature* (London, 2008).

[11] Thomas, *Impressionist Children*, x.

contemporaneous imagination. In literature, painting, parenting journals and sheet-music itself, the image of the child at the piano – which was usually an image of a girl at the piano – embodied a set of wider cultural ideals that informed perceptions of the activity of children's piano playing. In particular, the image communicated an idealization of how children could shape themselves into model citizens through playing the piano. In this chapter, I focus on the essential features of a particular kind of material produced for the sheet-music market in early Third Republic France: the *pièce enfantine*. The chapter is organized according to important themes that characterized both this material and the cultural ideals that guided the understanding of its purposes. These are: the valuation of domesticity, the display and disciplining of the female body, the distinction of gender roles, the glorification of *la patrie*, the perpetuation of racial stereotypes, and the cultural fascination with the figure of the doll.

This is not an investigation of children's experiences of learning the piano. Autobiographical writing reveals relatively little about learning the piano from children's own perspectives.[12] Brief remarks in the autobiographies of Colette (born in the Yonne region in 1873), Simone de Beauvoir (born in 1908 in Paris) and Nathalie Sarraute (who moved to Paris in 1909 aged 9) confirm the centrality of piano-playing to bourgeois girls' domestic education around the turn of the century. Sarraute recalls a culture of domestic piano tuition which suggests a version of the 'pianolage' to which Sée and Toussaint objected: 'I agree without complaint [...] to start over and over again, never-endingly, the most boring things in the world, exercises and scales'.[13] Diaries

[12] In his study of four-hand piano playing in nineteenth-century culture more generally, Adrian Daub also notes the paucity of first-hand accounts of this prevalent activity: *Four-Handed Monsters: Four-hand Piano Playing and Nineteenth-Century Culture* (Oxford, 2014), 7-8.

[13] Nathalie Sarraute, *Childhood*, translated by Barbara Wright (London, 1984), 203. See also Simone de Beauvoir, *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*, translated by James Kirkup (London, 2001), e.g. 22, 68-69; Colette, *Earthly Paradise: Colette's Autobiography Drawn from her Lifetime Writings*, translated by Helen Beauclark *et al,* edited by Robert Phelps (London, 1966), 84.

often listed the books that children read, but gave little indication of specific music that children played.

Pièces enfantines

The core of the piano music produced for children's consumption was the piano tutorial manual – the *méthode*. Among the most widely distributed of these were Czerny's, Cramer's, Leduc's and Le Carpentier's.[14] These manuals usually included short 'recreational' pieces, which were sometimes easy arrangements of works by famous composers, and sometimes specially composed.[15] Towards the end of the nineteenth century, collections of these recreational pieces became increasingly popular. The phrase *pièces enfantines* also became an increasingly standard title for them (and is used in this chapter to refer in general to pieces composed specially for children). These collections also continued to bear titles such as *pièces faciles*, *scènes enfantines*, or descriptions such as 'morceaux pour les petits mains'. Children's pieces were often simple dances, such as polkas, mazurkas, gavottes and minuets. Their titles tended to refer to activities in which a child might engage, such as 'Promenade' (going for a walk). The 'Berceuse' was among the most common sub-genre of *pièce enfantine*. Titles also often presented children's music as representing figures and characters deemed important to the child's world, such as 'La Poupée' (the doll).

Explaining his decision to compose *La Nursery* in 1905, Désiré Émile Inghelbrecht noted the profusion of 'poor' and 'insipid' works generally composed for children to play.[16] Example 2.1 shows a waltz from a collection of pieces entitled 'Enfantillages'

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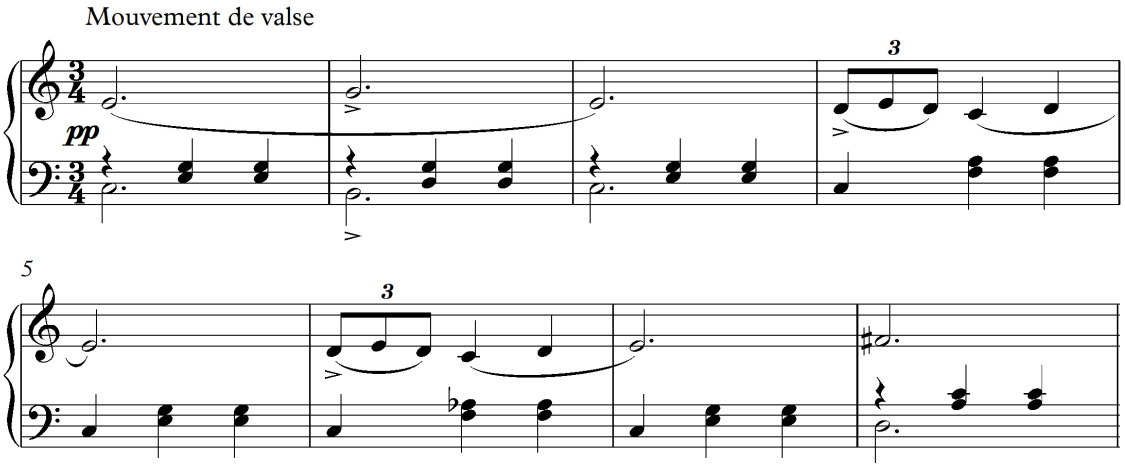
[14] In 1888, the publishers of Le Carpentier's *Méthode* produced 80,000 copies – more than in any previous year – of a manual that had many popular rivals (and which was republished in a new edition annually for decades). Adolphe-Clair Le Carpentier, *Méthode de Piano pour les enfants,* edited by A. Noel (Paris: 21st edition, 1888), front cover.

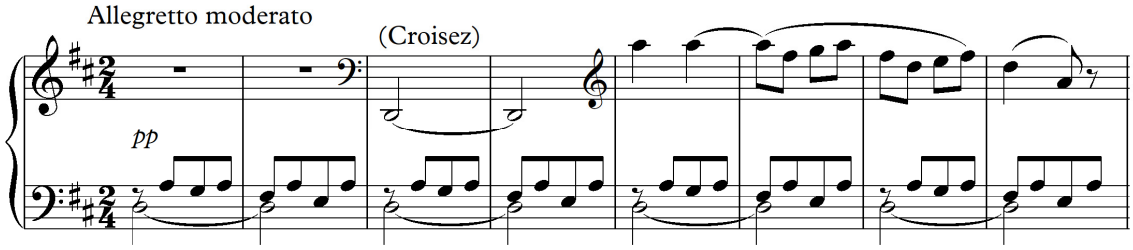
[15] As with their reading, of course, children were given relatively simple material not written directly for them, as well as material designed for their use. Simone de Beauvoir recollects sight-reading 'sonatinas' as well as learning 'Czerny exercises' for examinations. See *Memoirs,* 69. She also notes performing the piano at school. See also 22, 68.

[16] See Kilpatrick, *The Language of Enchantment*, 56-60.

('Childishnesses' or 'Childish Things').[17] Like Examples 2.5 and 2.7, it illustrates the general character of the *pièces enfantines* produced in large numbers towards the end of the nineteenth century (Example 2.1 is a relatively harmonically adventurous instance). The dance forms of children's music shared this cheerful, diatonic character with thousands of similar pieces written for the adult sheet-music market. General shifts in the character of children's pieces followed equivalent stylistic changes in piano sheet-music more generally. Children's pieces were distinguished musically by their *naïf* qualities, which arose essentially from their requisite technical simplicity. This is illustrated by an easy, two-hand arrangement of the 'Berceuse' from Fauré's *Dolly* Suite (Example 2.2), which loses the lilt and lift provided by the semiquavers in Fauré's original, lending it a simplistic, pared-down quality.[18] This jovial, simplistic idiom amounted to its own *topos* – one which was not, of course, unique to children's music produced in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century France.

Example 2.1. J. Reyba, *Enfantillages. Collection de petites pièces et de danses arrangées très faciles pour le piano* (Paris, 1902), waltz, bars 1-8.

[17] J. Reyba, *Enfantillages. Collection de petites pièces et de danses arrangées très faciles pour le piano* (Paris, 1902).

[18] This is not the case in, say, Alfred Cortot's two-hand arrangement of this piece, published by Hamelle in 1899.



Example 2.2. Gabriel Fauré, arr. Théodore Lack, 'Dolly, Berceuse' (Paris, 1905), bars 1-8

An important forerunner of the late nineteenth-century *pièces enfantine* collection was Schumann's *Album fur die Jugend*, written in 1848. In her discussion of Schumann's *Album*, Roe-Min Kok notes one of the most important senses in which such collections, and the musical characters that they embodied, were 'for children': they provided the parents who purchased them with a gratifying image of their child at the piano. As they listen to their children playing, adults' 'trust can securely and comfortingly be invested in the innocent, "natural" creature at the piano'.[19] Similarly, the general character of later *pièces enfantines* provided an image of good little citizens enacting their simple, joyfully childlike natures, while engaging in 'salutary' mental exercises and developing their 'intelligence'. Across nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European cultures, what most distinguishes the children's music of a particular time and place are often specific patterns of presentation (the accompanying words and images) and the cultural contexts that lend specific connotations to those patterns.

Kok assesses Schumann's *Album* in the context of the pedagogical theories and political climate of mid-century Germany. She describes the collection as

> a culturally nationalistic pedagogical project designed to indoctrinate the young; to shape, within the privacy of family life, 'homogeneous national subjects with a particular sort of historical consciousness and sense of community' by having children learn and play character music that imaginatively describes Germanic life, customs, and attitudes towards the Other.[20]

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[19] Roe-Min Kok, 'Of Kindergarten, Cultural Nationalism and Schumann's *Album for the Young*', *The World of Music* 48/1 (2006), 111-133, (p. 122).

[20] *Ibid.,*114. The quotation cites Sharon Stephens, 'Editorial Introduction: Children and Nationalism', *Childhood* 4/1 (1997), 5-17, (p.7).

The *Album* is a form of musical and cultural instruction in which musical topics are linked, through carefully chosen titles, with simple ideas, themes and activities, immersing the child in a repertoire of images through which a national identity was emerging. Like much children's music produced since the mid nineteenth century, the recreational music examined in this chapter was 'character music' of a similar kind to Schumann's. Some of it might also be considered to constitute an equivalent 'pedagogical project', realized through comparable means.

Republican ideology

As Kok observes, children had been understood since the French Revolution as 'political capital whose education should be directed towards their future roles as citizens of the state'.[21] This attitude towards children only intensified in the cultural and intellectual atmosphere of the early Third Republic, in which the project of raising French citizens became a matter of especial urgency and significance. Children were a particular target of the forceful, widespread promotion of Republican values by politicians, civil servants and thinkers haunted by the spectre of the Republic's collapse.[22] The institution of universal secular education, mainly through legislation passed in the early 1880s under Jules Ferry, was a prime vehicle of the attempt to establish a ubiquitous belief in republicanism as the natural, legitimate and intrinsically French form of governance. Free and compulsory for children aged between 6 and 13, the new education system allowed Republicans to forge an environment in which every future citizen could absorb the enlightened tenets that would supposedly ensure a lasting democracy. The nature of this profound educational reform exemplified the anti-clerical aspect of Republican policy, which sought to diminish the social and cultural influence of the Catholic Church, and by extension, of monarchist loyalists.

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[21] Kok, 'Of Kindergarten', 111.

[22] The following summary is partly indebted to Steven Huebner, 'Review: Composing the Citizen [...] by Jann Pasler'. *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 63/3 (2010), 690-703.

This reform, which involved imitations of educational policies enacted elsewhere in Europe, was partly an attempt to rectify the conditions perceived to have caused France's defeat by Prussia in 1871. These included French citizens' relatively weak sense of national unity and pride – a pride which Republicans placed at the heart of their political identity, and which was deeply stirred by the thought of ultramontane clergy seeking to promote loyalty to Rome above *la patrie*. The centralized, universal aspect of the new school system was designed to unite the country under a common language, its curriculum ensuring children's devotion to the nation and its protection. The pedagogues who drew up the curricula also sought to cultivate in future citizens greater faculties of self-government and independent judgement, in the belief that these had been suppressed in the generation that capitulated to the Prussians, by schools' over-emphasis on rote learning.[23] Of course, curricula were intended to cultivate those faculties only in so far as they did not undermine the general Republican agenda.

Republican pedagogues turned to music, as well as to literature and the visual arts, as a potentially important tool. As Jann Pasler in particular has shown, some Republican educationalists and likeminded figures from the musical world proposed developing a culture of choral singing in schools, as other European nations had done.[24] This proposal was set out, among other places, in the first part of the *Dictionary of Pedagogy and Primary Instruction*, a repository of Republican theory published fully in 1887.[25] The entry for music was written by a prominent educational reformer and inspector, Félix Pécaut, who emphasized music's nature as a 'subtle and powerful instrument of moral culture', not merely an 'art of leisure' ('art d'agrément').[26] Music's unique power arose from its simultaneous physiological and psychological

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[23] Patricia A. Tilburg, *Colette's Republic: Work, Gender, and Popular Culture in France, 1870-1914* (New York, 2009), 46-74.

[24] See Pasler, *Composing the Citizen*, 85-92, and specific references below.

[25] Ferdinand Buisson, ed., *Dictionnaire de pédagogie et d'instruction primaire* (Paris, 1887). Buisson would later chair the committee that oversaw the separation of Church and State in 1905. The first part of the *Dictionnaire* was described as 'un vaste traité de pédagogie théorique'. On Pécaut and the dictionary, see also Tilburg, *Colette's Republic*, 46.

[26] Félix Pécaut, 'Musique' in Buisson, *Dictionnaire*, 1993-1996.

effects: music 'shakes those vague and mysterious depths of our being where physical life and moral life have their common roots'.[27] Pécaut insisted on the capacity of music to reach directly into the 'childhood soul'.[28] He asserted that 'the great principles of moral life, beauty, good, duty, humanity, *la patrie*, family etc., are hardly made known to children in the impoverished form of reasoned categories'.[29] Music 'transforms these great ideas [...] into living emotions'.[30] For Pécaut, the capacity of singing to bring children together would assist their internalization of these principles. This proposal was certainly implemented. Pasler has shown how the production of school song-books from the 1880s sought to steep children in Pécaut's 'great principles' – especially *la patrie*.[31]

Given the zeal of Republicans' attempts to infuse French culture with their ideology, it would be easy to simplify and exaggerate connections between official policy and commercially produced material. As Steven Huebner stresses, 'cultural *dirigisme* à la André Malraux [...] did not seem to have been the order of the day' in the early Third Republic.[32] Composers and publishers of children's piano music did sometimes implement specific elements of official educational discourse. Pasler notes, for instance, how a set of exercises by Mathis Lussy replicated the new curricula's emphasis on pupils' self-direction and creativity, by encouraging pupils to create their own exercises.[33] A *méthode* from 1912 by Arnoud Krever, entitled *La Populaire*, incorporated *chansons populaires* into its material. These would, the author

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[27] 'elle touche et ébranle l'être à cette profondeur vague et mystérieuse où la vie physique et la vie morale ont leurs racines communes'. *Ibid.,* 1994. Pécaut's article reuses earlier published pronouncements cited in Pasler's discussion of music's significance in Republican pedagogical thought: see *Composing the Citizen*, 85-92, 319-320.

[28] 'l'âme enfantine'. Pécaut, 'Musique', 1995.

[29] 'les grands principes de la vie morale, le beau, le bien, le devoir, l'humanité, la patrie, la famille, etc., ne se révèlent guère à nos enfants que sous la forme appauvrie de catégories logiques'. *Ibid.*

[30] transforme ces grandes idées [...] en emotions vivantes'. *Ibid.*

[31] See also Michèle Alten, *La Musique dans l'école de Jules Ferry à nos jours* (Paris, 1995).

[32] Huebner, 'Review: Composing the Citizen', 703. For the state's involvement in arts teaching and administration in the 1870s, see Pasler, *Composing the Citizen*, 268-273.

[33] Mathis Lussy, *Exercises de mécanisme à composer, à écrire, à exécuter par l'élève* (Paris, 1878). Pasler, *Composing the Citizen*, 323-324.

proclaimed, be 'easily grasped by the child's mind'.[34] Krever's *méthode* may exemplify the percolation of official ideas into the realm of commercially produced piano music: Pécaut had declared that composers should fashion new school songs from *la musique populaire*, so as to capture the imagination of pupils from all social classes. In Krever's hands, this music was arranged into a *naïf* diatonicism, with all lyrics in French – a treatment likely to have allayed possible Republican anxiety about these songs' capacity to promote regional identity above, or instead of, national identity.[35]

In a study that tries to explain the successful establishment of Republicanism after 1870, Philip Nord argues that values intrinsic to a Republican *mentalité* permeated the middle-class home towards the end of the nineteenth century.[36] One of the conduits of these values, Nord states, was the consumption of children's literature. In the literary world, a few individual figures oversaw a large proportion of the production of materials for children. Pierre-Jules Hetzel, one of these figures, regularly proclaimed both his Republican convictions and the importance of children's literature in forming future citizens.[37] A closely analogous state of affairs seems not to have prevailed in the equivalent musical sphere. Contributors to official discourse on music, such as Louis Albert Bourgault-Ducoudray (a professor of music history at the Conservatoire) did compose children's piano music.[38] Individuals such as Théodore Lack both produced a lot of material for consumption in the bourgeois home and occupied authoritative

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[34] 'qui seront aisément saisies par l'esprit des enfants'. Arnoud Krever. *La Populaire. méthode complète de piano* (Paris, 1912).

[35] On composers' preoccupation with 'chansons populaires' and the politics of this activity, see Jann Pasler, 'Deconstructing d'Indy, or the problem of a Composer's Reputation', *Nineteenth Century Music* 30, 3 (Spring 2007), 230-256 (esp. pp. 239-240).

[36] See Nord, *The Republican Moment*, 218-244. The extent and the significance of the differences between broader Republican and Catholic worldviews is a matter of debate. See Katharine Ellis, *The Politics of Plainchant in fin-de-siècle France* (London, 2013), esp. xv. See also Jane Fulcher, *French Cultural Politics and Music: From the Dreyfus Affair to the First World War* (Oxford, 1999).

[37] Hetzel (1814-1886) edited *Le Magasin d'éducation et de recreation* in the 1860s and 1870s, in which many children's stories were published, as well as writing children's books himself (under the pseudonym P-J Stahl).

[38] See Pasler, *Composing the* Citizen, 88.

positions as pedagogues. But such figures do not seem to have dominated the production of children's music, as Hetzel did with literature, through highly integrated publishing networks.

Children's literature attempted, as Brown puts it, to steep its audiences in the 'values of travail, famille and patrie that underpinned the ideology of the Third Republic'.[39] The promotion of such values was not, of course, confined to material produced at this time, or in France. Underlying Brown's remark is the suggestion that this material promoted with particular directness the interpretation placed on these values in Third Republic culture. This interpretation reflected some of the broader *mentalités* of the era, as well as the principles that Republicans considered central to their cause. Lisa Tiersten has demonstrated the development of what she calls a 'marketplace modernism' in fin-de-siècle France, in which commercial professionals promoted an image of the bourgeois female consumer that remained carefully in keeping with both the Republican valuation of civic responsibility and more general concerns of the day, including the maintenance of ideals of French taste.[40] The mass of children's piano music produced in the early Third Republic fits with this model of 'marketplace modernism', in offering a means of socializing children into the same essential values that were promoted through children's literature.

This material, then, is not inconsistent with Pasler's assertion that the 'ideology of republicanism permeated [almost] every aspect of musical life, private as well as public practices, and most genres'.[41] It is sometimes possible to hear a specifically Republican ring to the ideals promoted by *pièces enfantines* – a recognizable trope of 'self-motivated civic responsibility'.[42] This was perhaps the point. It would be fair to say that most publishers and composers interested in selling piano music to aspirational

[39] Brown, *Critical History,* 143.

[40] Lisa Tiersten, *Marianne in the Market: Envisioning Consumer Society in Fin-de-siècle France* (Berkeley CA, 2001).

[41] Pasler, *Composing the Citizen*, 92.

[42] Huebner, 'Review: *Composing the Citizen*', 692. This was most pronounced when piano music was used to illustrate children's stories, as in Lucien de Flagny's *Trott au Village* (Paris, 1905), a musical spin-off of André Lichtenberger's highly successful Trott stories.

bourgeois parents tried to give their material a character that was entirely consonant with Republican ideology. The *moeurs* promoted by this body of music, as a whole, corresponded more closely to Republican values than to those of the various political movements with which the Republicans came into conflict in the volatile political climate of the late nineteenth century. But, as one might expect from material produced mainly for commercial purposes, these *moeurs* were promoted in a way that avoided directly drawing parents' attention to political divisions within French culture.

Domestic harmony

Perlette, a children's novel first published in 1877, exemplifies how late nineteenth-century literature presented children within an idealized vision of the social value of piano playing. Jeanne Cazin's novel was a continuously successful entry in the prestigious *Bibliothèque rose illustré* catalogue.[43] The musicality of its eponymous protagonist is inextricably entwined with the fantasy of bourgeois girlhood that she manifests. Perlette plays the violin and piano, and sings. The novel continually emphasises the significance of the piano as an instrument of social intimacy and domestic harmony. For instance, one of Perlette's friendships (with another girl of her age, Angèle) is founded almost entirely on the activity of playing piano duets. The novel also hinted to its readers that the piano provided the occasion for affirming another form of intimacy. In the epilogue, Perlette's music-making with Marcel des Roches, the equally idealized young boy who reunites her with her relatives, is a summary of the 'happily ever after' that she eventually achieves.

Perlette and Marcel's music making corresponded to a widespread nineteenth-century understanding of the piano as, in Thomas Christensen's words, the 'sonic

[43] *Perlette* (Paris, 1877) combines various stock genres of nineteenth-century children's novel: the adventure story, orphan tale, and the novel of domestic realism. According to the designation for the second series of the *Bibliothèque rose illustré*, published by Hachette, its intended audience was children between eight and fourteen, and primarily female. The novel received fresh print runs in 1900 and 1913.

hearth' around which the nineteenth-century family gathered.[44] As in many nineteenth-century images of the instrument, the piano in Renoir's *Jeune filles au piano* of 1892 (Plate 1) functions as 'an analogical referent to social harmony and domestic order', to borrow Richard Leppert's phrase.[45] The postures of the two girls are drawn together into the composition's broader rhythms; their heads nestle at the centre of the image. Renoir evidently relished this harmonious composition, painting six versions of the scene. In the Musée d'Orsay version, the details of the interior are clearly defined, and the girls become one with the rhythms of that interior: the fall of the curtain is picked up by the body of the seated figure, as part of a sweeping gesture that runs the length of the painting.[46] As Charlotte N. Eyerman notes, the piano 'anchors' the scene, in both compositional and narrative terms.[47]

This trope was often specifically associated, as in *Perlette*, with the piano duet. In his study of the practice of four-hand playing in nineteenth-century culture, Adrian Daub argues that the image of this activity served (among many other things) as a utopian model of human relations.[48] Playing duets side by side, two 'independent actors create a harmonic whole out of their own autonomous subjectivity'.[49] Children's piano music often took the form of duets, with a conventionalized division of roles: a more difficult 'seconda' part allocated to a parent, teacher or older sibling, and a much simpler 'prima' part for the child to play. The titles of these duets sometimes presented them explicitly as a means of developing the affection for *famille* that Pécaut, among many others, insisted should be actively instilled in young citizens. A duet by Édouard

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[44] Thomas Christensen, 'Four-Hand Piano Transcription and Geographies of Nineteenth-Century Musical Reception', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 52/2 (1999), 255-298, (p. 284).

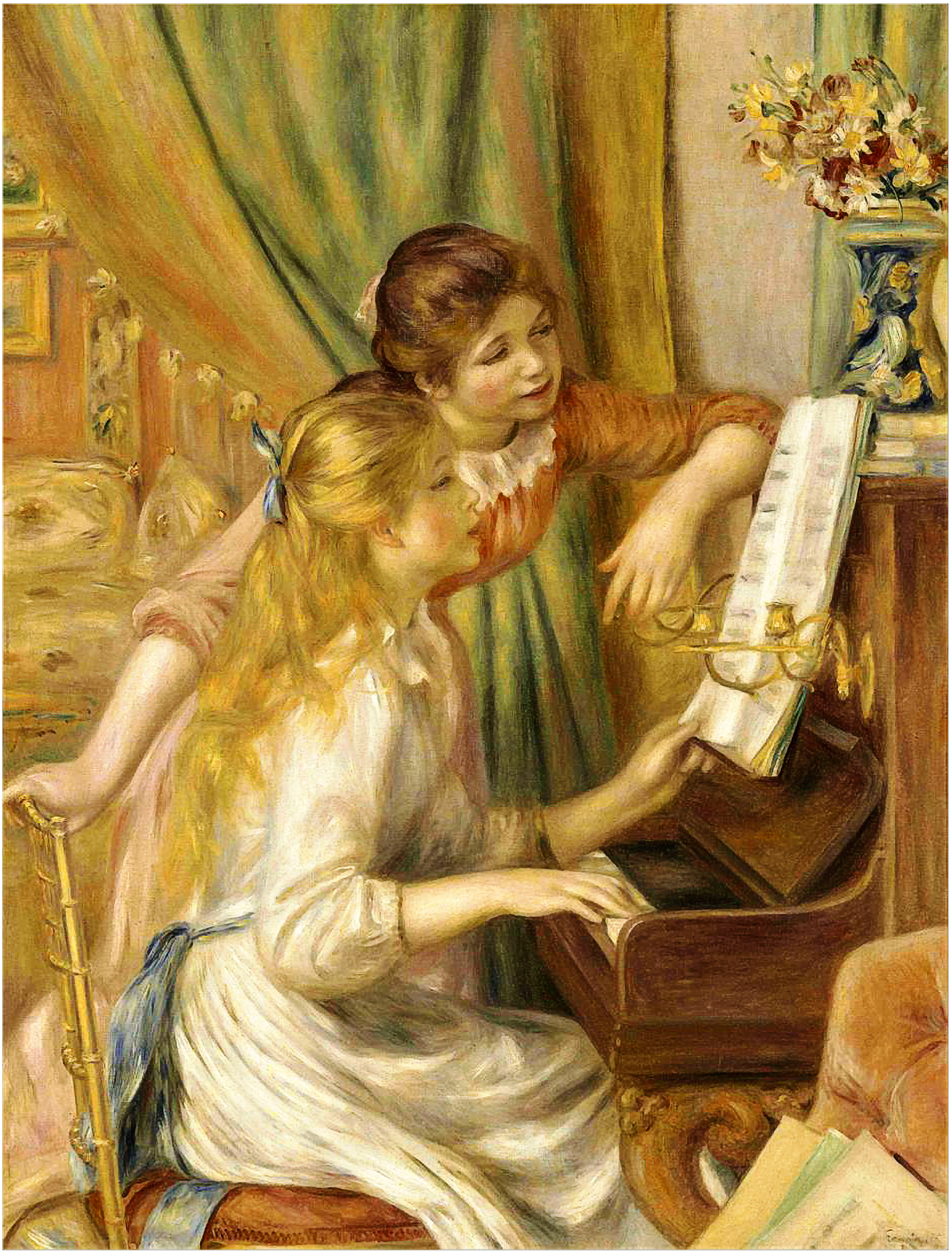
[45] Richard D. Leppert, *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* (Berkeley CA, 1993), 139.

[46] Charlotte N. Eyerman, 'Playing the Market: Renoir's Young Girls at the Piano Series of 1892', in *Music and Modern Art*, edited by James Leggio (New York, 2002), 37-59, (p. 37).

[47] *Ibid*., 40.

[48] Daub, *Four-handed Monsters*, 182.

[49] *Ibid*., 184.



1. Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Jeunes filles au piano,* 1892
Oil on canvas, 116 x 90 cm
Grand Palais (Musée d'Orsay), Paris

Lalo from 1873, with this division of roles, is entitled *La mère et l'enfant*.[50] The first piece in Inghelbrecht's *La Nursery*, a gentle Andantino, is entitled 'Petit Papa'.[51] In the next chapter, I consider how Fauré's *Dolly* Suite – an especially popular set of piano duets – was associated with the sort of vision of domestic harmony celebrated in Renoir's painting. Pieces for a single player were also intended to realize the principle of *la famille* as, to borrow Pécaut's term, a 'living emotion'. An example is the winding, *affettuoso* melodic lines of the fifth of Adrien Manceau's *Scènes Enfantines*, entitled 'Petite soeur'.[52]

Of course, the musical promotion of these sentiments was not unique to Third Republic culture. Such promotions did, however, find a new significance within that culture. An equivalent piece composed in the Second Empire was Le Carpentier's 'Première prière, dialogue entre une mère et son enfant', published in 1860.[53] The publication has a sort of subtitle: 'A young mother holds her child on her knees and teaches the child its first prayer, which the child repeats after her'.[54] The piece is not a piano duet, but certain passages are labelled 'la mère' and are then repeated an octave higher beneath the inscription 'l'enfant'. The piece presents domestic intimacy as bound up with, and tending towards, religious feeling. This manner of presenting familial intimacy (as well as the piece's gushing, climactic ending) seems quite unlike what is found in otherwise analogous publications produced later in the century. Into the twentieth century, the 'Prière' maintained its status, to some extent, as a sub-genre of *pièce enfantine*. The vast majority of titles referred, however, to secular themes.

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[50] Édouard Lalo, *La mère et l'enfant: deux petites morceaux à quatre mains*, Op. 32 (Paris, 1873).

[51] Désiré Emile Inghelbrecht, *La Nursery: douze petites pièces pour piano 4 mains (premier recueil)* (Paris, 1906).

[52] Adrien Manceau, *Scènes Enfantines. Suite de quinze petites pièces pour piano* (Paris, 1887), no. 5.

[53] Adolphe-Clair Le Carpentier, *Première prière, dialogue entre une mère et son enfant*, Op. 225 (Paris, 1860).

[54] 'Une jeune mère tient son enfant sur ses genoux et lui apprend sa première priere, que l'enfant répète après elle'. *Ibid.*

The idea of domestic harmony became especially politicized in early Third Republic France. As Nord observes, an important objective of Republican reform was the 'moralization of the home, the fashioning of a fit environment in which to raise future citizens and mothers of citizens'.[55] The influential historian Jules Michelet considered it essential that 'the French learn the domestic virtues conducive to a democratic public life'.[56] This moralizing mission, Nord argues, was founded on the propagation of a caricature of existent domestic practice: the 'civil code, the Roman Catholic religion, and the persistence of aristocratic habits had poisoned family life, breeding authoritarian and violent attitudes in men, inciting women to coquetry'.[57] Promoting the idea of the family as a microcosm of the state (and the state as a macrocosm of the family) encouraged citizens to conceive their private, domestic relations as an extension of, rather than retreat from, their civic duties.[58] One of the 'domestic virtues' to which Michelet referred – familial tenderness – was promoted as if it were an especially Republican value.

Significantly, the final painting in Renoir's *Jeune filles au piano* series was his only work to be purchased directly by the state. The picture might have been begun with this arrangement in mind.[59] As Eyerman implies, the purchase seems to exemplify an attempt by official Republicans to claim as their own the valuation of intimacy and tenderness within the home. The purchase also amounted to a sort of official recognition of the piano's potential role in eliciting a suitable kind of domestic harmony. In elevating the family as the primary model of social organization, Republicans claimed the values of family life as their own, with the intention of detaching it from the ambit of the Church, and from the influence of its models of that life. From the 1870s, the overwhelmingly secular, vigorous, salubrious qualities of

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[55] Nord, *The Republican Moment*, 232.
[56] *Ibid*., 220. Nord cites Thérèse Moreau, *Le Sang de l'histoire: Michelet, l'histoire et l'idée de la femme au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1982), 11.
[57] Nord, *The Republican Moment*, 243.
[58] For this idea in children's literature, see Brown, *Critical History*, 80.
[59] See Eyerman, 'Playing the Market', 47-49.

children's sheet-music remained essentially in keeping with the particular character with which Republican thought invested the ideal domestic realm.

The production of children's music had the potential to become an arena of direct contest between Republicans and Catholics attempting to infuse the domestic realm with their own particular values. In 1905, the Schola Cantorum – a private, Catholic institution often perceived (both then and now) as an assertively oppositional force in musical culture – published an album of piano pieces 'for children large and small', and advertised as 'écrites pour petites mains'.[60] This was a large, hardbound volume, with a cover illustration by Maurice Denis (who had created murals for the Schola Cantorum itself, and for whom both music and childhood were important themes). Denis's peculiar image, shown in Figure 2.1, presents the piano as a 'sonic hearth', facilitating not just familial bonds but connections with the musical figures hovering on the right hand side of the image. In comparison with the vast majority of collections of children's music, its contents are, like Debussy's and Ravel's children's pieces, distinctively 'modern'.[61] As an introduction to 'modern' tastes, the volume emphasizes the relevance of religious sentiment to domestic practice – as exemplified in d'Indy's four-hand 'Petite chanson grégorienne', Estrienne's 'La croix de pierre sur le vieux chemin', and the reverent tone of Alquier's 'Deux petites pièces à 4 mains'. But the volume as a whole, with its highly diverse contents, certainly does not constitute an attempt at pro-Catholic indoctrination, and tends to confirm revisionist accounts of the Schola, by illustrating the commonalities of d'Indy's compositional practices with those of more Republican-minded colleagues.[62]

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[60] Schola Cantorum de Paris, *Album pour enfants petits et grands. Recueil de pièces de Piano, à deux et quatre mains, composées par un groupe de musiciens de la Schola Cantorum* (Paris, 1905).

[61] The Album was advertised in other volumes produced by the Schola as 'designed to introduce the young to modern music' ('destinées à initier la Jeunesse à la musique moderne').

[62] Notable contributions to the Schola album included Albeniz's 'Yvonne en visite', Roussel's 'Conte à la poupée', and Sévérac's, 'Le soldat de plomb'. The volume might be understood specifically in the context of the climate of *rapprochement* of the 1890s (see, for example, Pasler, *Composing the Citizen*, 614-620).

Figure 2.1. *Album pour enfants petits et grands. Recueil de pièces de Piano, à deux et quatre mains, composées par un groupe de musiciens de la Schola Cantorum* (Paris, 1905), cover illustration by Maurice Denis. Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Indeed, in practice, Catholics and Republicans could find much common ground through their understandings of the moral significance of domesticity, including the desire to preserve the traditional values of public masculinity and domestic femininity.[63] Pictures such as Renoir's could not but echo a stock image of nineteenth-century culture, to be found in fashion magazines, satirical journals, popular literature and paintings: the woman at the piano. Nineteenth-century literary discourse had established the piano as a possible metaphor for 'woman' herself – an 'instrument of pleasure' housed in the domestic interior, as Balzac had put it.[64] As proto-feminist

[63] For a discussion that touches on shared values in the context of girls' education, see Linda L. Clark, 'The Socialization of Girls in the Primary Schools of the Third Republic', *Journal of Social History* 15/4 (1982), 685-697.

[64] Charlotte N. Eyerman, 'Piano Playing in Nineteenth-Century French Visual Culture', in *Piano Roles: Three Hundred Years of Life with the Piano*, by James Parakilas *et al* (London,

satires of the 'woman at the piano' image attested, the piano could symbolize women's confinement within, as well as affinity with, the domestic realm.[65] Through its implicit connection with this motif, Renoir's painting presented the two girls, bound into the rhythms of the domestic interior, as rehearsing their absorption into the private sphere.

One variant of the 'woman at the piano' motif depicted a male companion gazing at the woman playing.[66] Nineteenth-century culture had acknowledged that the intimacy afforded by the activity of girls' piano playing could be dangerous and potentially transgressive. In Daumier's satirical depiction of a piano lesson of 1843 (Figure 2.2), 'the male piano teacher's body language reveals decidedly non-musical intentions as he leans suggestively toward the young woman'.[67] Eyerman provides a fine translation of the accompanying caption, which records the teacher's sexual advances, cloaked in the form of a solfège lesson: '[i]f you only knew how pretty you are! pretend you're playing, DOn't talk. - You don't like me SO - I hope you'll always like MI.'[68] Late nineteenth-century imagery of girls playing the piano often presented them as in some degree on display. The arm of the sofa in the bottom right-hand corner of Renoir's *Jeunes filles*, with a pile of sheet-music upon it, invites the viewer to imagine occupying a specific position within the room itself. Girls' piano playing was a culturally sanctioned occasion of display, where the erotic was not entirely concealed. Renoir's image invited one critic to note that the 'entire body [of the standing figure] reveals the most charming, impish engagement'.[69]

2000), 216-235 (p. 220-221); citing Honoré Balzac: *Physiology du mariage, ou méditation de philosophie eclectique sur le bonheur et le malheur conjugal*, vol. 1. (Paris, 1830).

[65] Eyerman notes an image from around 1880 that satirized this idea, and the Ferry laws on girls' secondary education, by showing a woman playing the piano with her right hand and stirring a pot with her left. 'Playing the Market', 58.

[66] Versions of this genre included the piano lesson, and a male companion either watching the player or in reverie nearby.

[67] Eyerman, 'Piano Playing', 220-221.

[68] 'Si vous saviez comme vous êtes jolie; faites semblant de jouer. - Taissez-vous *do*. Vous ne m'aimez pas si. Et je serai toujours! la mi.' *Ibid*., 221-222.

[69] Eyerman, 'Playing the Market', 52. See also Daub's interpretation of a drawing by Paul Helleu (1859–1927), *Four-handed Monsters*, 44.

Figure 2.2. Honoré Daumier, *Les Musiciens de Paris*, no. 6, *Le Charivari*, 1843. Reproduced in Charlotte N. Eyerman, 'Piano Playing in Nineteenth-Century French Visual Culture', in *Piano Roles: Three Hundred Years of Life with the Piano*, by James Parakilas *et al* (London, 2000), 220.

Display and discipline

At the turn of the century, children's piano playing continued to function as a way of 'present[ing] the family to the outside world'.[70] In children's piano competitions, or the school piano concerts recalled by Simone de Beauvoir, this presentation was straightforwardly public.[71] But in his article in *La Jeune Mère* in 1887, Toussaint also noted the pervasive practice of daughters performing to guests at domestic gatherings.[72] In early Third Republic France, the piano was an essential feature in a well-appointed *salon* – the room in which, as Nord puts it, 'the family shows its face to the world and makes its claim to distinction'.[73] Children's performances of their musical abilities evidently made a claim to the distinction of the parents that had raised them.

Children's literature emphasized the possibility of piano playing as a means of ensuring one's social attractiveness. Throughout *Perlette*, the protagonist's music-making is the principal means through which she gathers friendship, praise and attention. When she puts her fingers to the piano, people gather round her. The narration of Perlette's activities during a sea voyage makes clear the connection between musicality and social success. Other passengers ask to sit beside her as she plays the onboard piano: 'she soon had a sizeable and enthusiastic audience'.[74] At times, even her looks are apparently the corollary of her musical accomplishment. Praising her abilities as a pianist and singer, the fishermen continue in the same breath: 'and with that, [she's] the prettiest and most gracious child you could ever see'.[75]

Recreational sheet-music was sometimes quite explicit about the role of piano playing as a tool for cultivating grace and decorum. In Chavagnat's collection of *pièces*

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[70] *Ibid.*, 30.

[71] De Beauvoir, *Memoirs,* 68-69.

[72] Toussaint, 'Causerie du docteur', 82.

[73] Nord, *The Republican Moment*, 219. The public rooms of bourgeois homes were the hall, dining room and salon; the private rooms the boudoir, study, and bedrooms.

[74] 'Les passagers vinrent [...] demander à Madame de Soleure la permission de s'asseoir auprès d'elle et de sa petite protégée, qui eut bientôt un auditoire enthousiaste assez nombreux'. Cazin, *Perlette*, 95.

[75] 'avec cela, la plus jolie et la plus gracieuse enfant qu'on pût voir'. *Ibid*., 259.

enfantines from 1890, each number is accompanied by a short verse that describes the thoughts of an imaginary reader. The verse accompanying 'Mon Morceau de concours' ('My Competition Piece') – a gentle, cantabile Romanzetta in F major – is as follows:

> Allons, travaillons ce morceau,
> Il est, paraît-il, tout nouveau.
> Il n'est pas mal, dit ma maîtresse;
> Il faut, avec délicatesse
> L'exécuter dit-elle aussi.
> Donnons au chant, grâce, souplesse...
> Cela me semble bien ainsi!...
> J'ai du goût; j'ai de la finesse,
> Et je crois qu'au concours prochain
> Je serai la première, enfin!
> Cet espoir chasse ma paresse! [76]
>
> Right, let's work on this piece, / It is, it seems, completely new. / It's not bad, said my teacher; / One must perform it / with sensitivity, she also said. / Let's give it voice, grace, suppleness ... / It seems good like that to me! ... / I have taste; I have delicacy, / And I believe that in the next competition / I will win first prize, at last! This hope dispels my laziness!'

The poem presents a model of how piano playing facilitated the display of 'delicacy', cultivating appropriate and desirable *moeurs*.[77] The final line makes plain the underlying pedagogical value placed on piano practice: as promoting self-discipline through *travail*. Cultural idealizations of piano playing were also a means of engaging children – girls, in particular – in disciplinary practices.

Linda Pollock asserts that the importance of girls' 'breeding' (in the sense of good manners or proper upbringing) increased in the nineteenth century, as 'backboards and corsets trained the body'.[78] Performing at the piano was another means of this training: it presented, in Daub's words, an 'acrobatic display of a perfectly mastered body'.[79] This form of display was especially associated with the form of piano tuition that focused on the *mécanisme* of scales, studies and exercises, perfected through 'solitary

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[76] E. Chavagnat, *Les Miniscules. 6 petites pieces enfantines* (Paris, 1890).
[77] For a discussion of the notion of *moeurs* in Republican thought, see Pasler, *Composing the Citizen*, 171-175. For the cultivation of equivalent *moeurs* in a school song, see *ibid.,* 322.
[78] Pollock, 'Foreword', xvi.
[79] See Daub, *Four-handed Monsters*, 163.

confinement at the piano'.[80] James Parakilas describes the school of tuition that developed from Czerny's methods and instructions as 'a revolutionary musical aesthetic that is at the same time a revolutionary method of child rearing'.[81] For Czerny, fingers were 'little disobedient creatures', implying that the body carried its own wilfulness that needed subjugating to the demands of the mind.

Piano pedagogues in the Third Republic began to distance themselves from this model, a development which conformed with broader changes in educational thought.[82] Republican educators turned to Froebelian thought, and the general principle of learning through play, in striving for the most appropriate learning environment for raising citizens.[83] It would be simplistic, of course, to consider parallel developments in musical culture solely in terms of a Republican valuation of citizens' self-mastery through creativity, against a Catholic insistence on the need to discipline creatures governed by appetites. Indeed, an extreme example of the shifting approach to piano pedagogy is a collection of children's pieces of 1911 by Marcel Orban, published by the Schola Cantorum.[84] In his preface, Orban reproduced Vincent d'Indy's assertion in his 'Cours de Composition' that studies should be banned from teaching. This ban was intended to encourage play and creativity in a particular way – avoiding the suppression of musicality which d'Indy attributed to the performance of studies. Of course, changes in pedagogical thought did not necessarily prompt changes in pedagogical practice. The culture of 'pianolage' to which Sée and Toussaint were objecting in the

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[80] The phrase 'solitary confinement' [Einzelhaft] is from Grete Wehmeyer, *Carl Czerny und die Einzelhaft am Klavier*. Cited in James Parakilas *et al.*, *Piano Roles: A New History of the Piano* (London, 2002), 115.

[81] Parakilas, *Piano Roles*, 117.

[82] Introductions in 'modern' *méthodes,* such as Théodore Lack's of 1909, addressed children in a strikingly more direct, affectionate tone than those of established predecessors such as Le Carpentier's. Lack, *Méthode élémentaire de piano*, Op. 269 (Paris: Leduc, 1909).

[83] See Nord, *The Republican* Moment, 234.

[84] Marcel Orban, *Dix Petites Pièces Enfantines*. *Pour les Jeunes Pianistes* (Paris, 1911), vi.

late 1880s evidently approached the culture of 'solitary confinement at the piano' associated with Czerny's *mécanisme*.[85]

Figure 2.3. Octavie Carrier-Belleuse, *Méthode moderne de piano* (Paris, 1910), illustration, 'How you should sit at the piano'. Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

[85] Parakilas, *Piano Roles*, 115.

Piano playing remained a force of corporeal 'civilizing' in other ways. The instruction in posture provided by the photograph shown in Figure 2.3, from a 'modern' *méthode* published in 1910, extends beyond the question of 'la tenue des mains', becoming a model of comportment and dress more generally.[86] Daub suggests that '[p]osture and movement, what Pierre Bourdieu has called the *hexis corporel*, could be acquired and refined above all through piano playing', as an activity that 'communicated a habitus', exemplifying how to hold the body.[87] But music could also play a more direct role in attuning the body to civilized ideals of comportment. A manual published in 1913 by a member of the Academy of Music and Dance, Henriette Régnier, was entitled *The Harmony of Gesture: Exercises in Grace and Support for the Usage of Young Girls*, and comprised a set of musically accompanied physical exercises 'directed towards the attitudes, gestures and bearing which are most in harmony with the nature and character of women'.[88] Evidently indebted to Dalcrozian eurhythmics (which was practised in France), the exercise reflected and depended upon a contemporaneous understanding of music *as* dance.

As Figures 2.4 and 2.5 illustrate, Régnier's exercises entailed performing a succession of bodily movements to specific pieces of music, with each movement corresponding closely to a particular musical gesture. The selections of piano music were presumably to be played by a mother or sibling in the salon of the bourgeois home. Régnier asks in her Preface: 'Who could dream of effectively modelling the rhythm and harmony of gesture and comportment [...] outside of the rhythm and harmony of music?'.[89] When synchronized to music, Régnier continued, 'the

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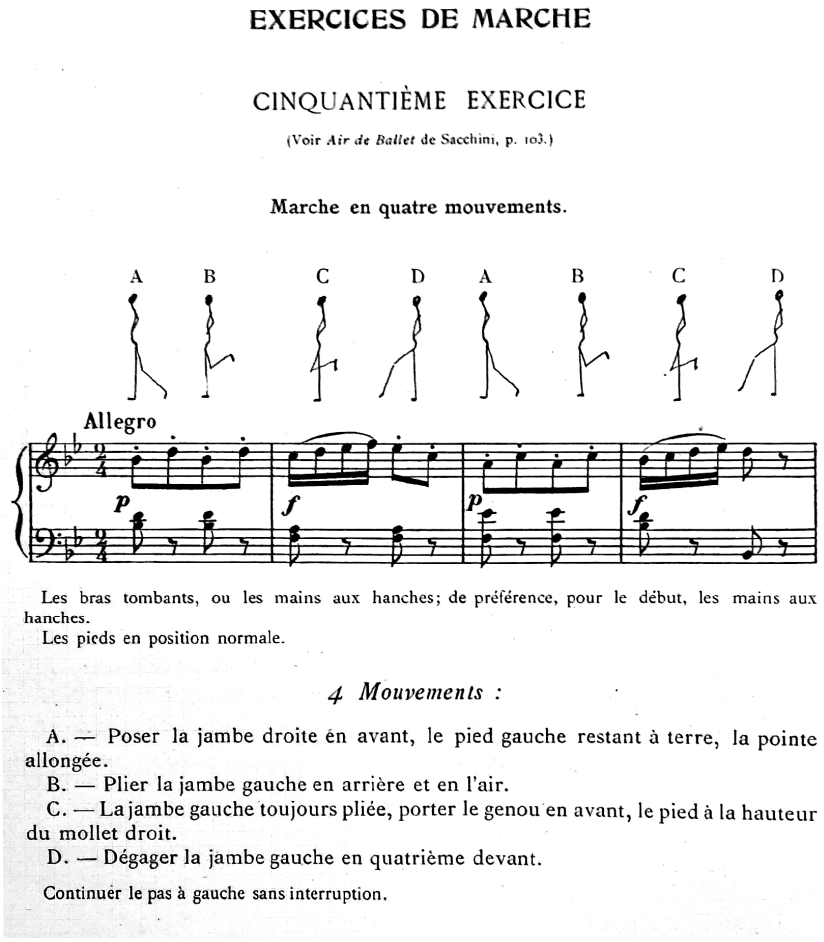
[86] Octavie Carrier-Belleuse claimed that children taught by their mothers tended to adopt unsuitable and harmful wrist positions. *Méthode moderne de piano* (Paris, 1910).

[87] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, (Stanford, 1980), 70. Cited in Daub, *Four-handed Monsters*, 168.

[88] 'conduit à des attitudes, à des gestes, à un port, qui sont plus en harmonie avec la nature et le caractère de la femme'. Henriette Régnier, *L'Harmonie du Geste: Exercises de maintien et de grace à l'usage des jeunes filles* (Paris, 1913), 3.

[89] 'qui pourrait songer à régler efficacement le rythme et l'harmonie des gestes et des attitudes [...] en dehors du rhythme et de l'harmonie de la musique?' *Ibid.*

[physical] movement becomes comprehensible'.[90] Musical rhythm both 'demands and forms some kind of performance' of the exercises themselves.[91] The music supplies and induces the graceful, 'feminine' comportment which the practice of these exercises was to develop. Régnier's musical selections were mainly arrangements of elegant dances such as minuets and gavottes, drawn from eighteenth-century ballet compositions. Pasler argues that by the 1890s such music had become associated with a ce rtain 'fashionable *snobisme*'.[92]

EXERCICES DE MARCHE

CINQUANTIÈME EXERCICE

(Voir *Air de Ballet* de Sacchini, p. 103.)

Marche en quatre mouvements.

A B C D A B C D

Allegro

p *f* *p* *f*

Les bras tombants, ou les mains aux hanches; de préférence, pour le début, les mains aux hanches.
Les pieds en position normale.

4 Mouvements :

A. — Poser la jambe droite en avant, le pied gauche restant à terre, la pointe allongée.
B. — Plier la jambe gauche en arrière et en l'air.
C. — La jambe gauche toujours pliée, porter le genou en avant, le pied à la hauteur du mollet droit.
D. — Dégager la jambe gauche en quatrième devant.

Continuer le pas à gauche sans interruption.

Figure 2.4. Henriette Régnier, *L'Harmonie du geste* (Paris, 1913), 50th exercise. Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

[90] 'Le mouvement se comprend mieux ainsi'. *Ibid.*
[91] 'Il ['un rythme musical'] en commande et en modèle en quelque sorte l'exécution'. *Ibid.*, 2.
[92] Pasler, *Composing the Citizen*, 638.

Figure 2.5. Régnier, *L'Harmonie du geste*, illustration of 'Minuet' comportment. Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Here, music was employed with especial directness as a technology for shaping the young female body. One review of the volume described it as 'really useful', addressing a matter to which 'the young Frenchwoman' no longer pays enough attention.[93] Régnier's Preface echoed Pécaut's theorization of the power of 'rhythm' over the human body, and music's unique capacity to fuse psychological and

[93] 'vraiment utile'. 'VIENT DE PARAITRE', *Comoedia Illustrée*, 20 Jan 1913, 394.

physiological education. The book is not concerned with children's piano music as such, but its use of established understandings of the relation between music and movement suggests possible ways in which that music was received.[94] It suggests, for instance, how the encouragement of musical qualities of 'grace' in pieces such as Chavagnat's extend to a sort of corporeal instruction. Régnier explained that her project derived from a concern with the physical exercises given to pupils in public teaching establishments. Tilburg notes that the programmes of games and exercises introduced to early Third Republic schools – in response to the pedagogical obsession encapsulated in the maxim 'a healthy soul in a healthy body' – failed to sustain traditional distinctions between gender roles, despite proclaimed policy to the contrary.[95] Régnier's manual seems to be an instance of material published for domestic use aiming to alleviate a perceived failure of Republican pedagogy to implement its own agenda.

Gender roles

It would be wrong to assume that children's piano music was, in general, produced specifically for girls. As Steedman notes in relation to nineteenth-century thought generally, when children were observed and written about, 'it was usually a feminized set of qualities (if not a female child) whose image was left behind for our analysis'.[96] This is certainly true of images of children's piano playing produced around the turn of the century in France. When child characters played the piano in children's literature,

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[94] The principles on which Régnier's manual was based certainly influenced piano pedagogy. At the same time that it shifted emphasis away from disciplining the body through studies, Orban's manual kept hold of the body, as it were, by instructing pupils to study music 'par le geste' – a version of the Dalcrozian practice of developing musicality through physical movement. Orban, *Dix Petites Pièces Enfantines*, vi.

[95] 'une âme saine dans un corps sain'. Tilburg, *Colette's Republic*, 47.

[96] Steedman, *Strange Dislocations*, 9. Greg Thomas also discusses this in *Impressionist Children,* 34.

those characters were usually – though by no means always – girls.[97] As the foregoing discussion has suggested, illustrations in children's music usually posited a female 'ideal reader'. It was very rare, however, for children's music to be explicitly addressed to girls rather than boys. As one would expect, prefaces in piano *méthodes* addressed 'les enfants' generally. *Pièces enfantines* were almost always dedicated to particular children, and, perhaps significantly, only a small majority of the dedicatees of children's pieces were girls rather than boys.[98]

Steedman notes the danger of imposing specific elements of our own forms of 'gendered seeing' onto nineteenth-century material about childhood.[99] References to 'girls' (or to 'boys') did not necessarily indicate a distinct 'set of qualities or attributes', attached to members of that gender, which were understood as 'half of a larger category called "boys-and-girls"', being mirrored by an equivalent but different set of qualities attached to the other gender.[100] Into the twentieth century, boys and girls in France were often dressed in the same way (as what we would generally perceive to be 'as girls') until roughly the age of five.[101] The predominance of girls in images of piano playing derived partly from the fact that musical material for children belonged to a print culture geared towards prescribing feminine behaviour. In general, boys' conduct was much less closely prescribed by this culture.[102] It would be anachronistic, therefore, simply to assume that musical material which generally invokes an image of

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[97] The motif of a sister playing the piano in the background was a common one. See for instance, 'L'embarras de Pierre' in *Mon Journal: recueil hebdomadaire illustré pour les enfants de 8 à 12 ans,* 15 February 1887, 67-71 (p. 68), and 'Choisissons bien nos amis' in the same journal, 15 July 1886, 147-158 (p. 156).

[98] The dedicatees of René Vanzande's collection of 1902 were five girls and five boys. This was not a particularly unusual ratio. René Vanzande, *Pièces enfantines* (Paris, 1902).

[99] Steedman, *Strange Dislocations*, 8.

[100] *Ibid.,* 9.

[101] As noted earlier, if parents followed the recommendations of most advice books, children would have started to learn the piano around the beginning of the second stage of childhood (from roughly six to adolescence), when distinctions between girls' and boys' activities emerged more clearly.

[102] See Thomas, *Impressionist Children*, 67

girlhood, when making reference to children of a particular gender, was necessarily presented as 'not for boys'.

Musical advice columns encouraged parents to teach both girls and boys the piano.[103] Such columns sometimes implied, however, that boys would move on to the violin, cello or flute, while girls continued with the piano.[104] In Colette's memoirs, her brothers seem to spend more time at the piano than she or her sister did, but the particular way in which they use the piano is significant.[105] Colette recalls an occasion on which her brothers managed to heave the family piano out of the private space of the drawing room into the public space of a church.[106] The difficulty of this action might be taken as illustrating how the non-portability of the piano tended to restrict its users to the domestic realm. Pasler observes that in 1886, 200 women applied to study piano at the Conservatoire, of which 30 were accepted. In the same year, 13 of the 17 male piano applicants were successful.[107] These statistics have many possible explanations. They do suggest, at least, that more girls than boys continued to pursue seriously the activity of piano playing in their teens. They also reflect a situation where attending the Conservatoire offered women a comparatively rare, culturally sanctioned way of avoiding (at least temporarily) a life focused fully on domestic duties.[108]

In children's literature, the representation of children's piano playing was sometimes a means of promoting an awareness of the distinct gender roles that would determine their adult lives. In *Perlette*, Marcel's piano playing is an important illustration of his ability to participate in domestic activities, and his openness to sentiments of *famille* (he insists on learning to play on his mother's old piano). The narrator, however, is

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[103] Madame P.G., 'Causerie Musicale', *La Jeune mère* 28/395 (6 June 1901), 239.

[104] See *ibid*. The column also suggested that boys should not be made to practice for more than 15-30 minutes a day once they were at school. See also Toussaint, 'Causerie', 81.

[105] Colette, *Earthly Paradise,* 84. Colette's mother tried unsuccessfully to persuade her youngest brother to practise rigorously, in the hope that he 'might become an artiste!'. *Ibid*.

[106] *Ibid*., 90

[107] Pasler, *Composing the Citizen,* 475.

[108] The career possibility available to most female graduates of the Conservatoire – piano teaching – would keep them largely within the private sphere.

careful to emphasize that Marcel's musicality is an appropriate counterpart, rather than an obstruction, to fulfilling a conspicuously masculine career in the public sphere: 'His musical studies hadn't prevented him from preparing [...] for the exam that he would soon take to enter Saint-Cyr, with the intention of becoming a marine'.[109] An analogous assurance is evidently unnecessary for any female character.

Marcel also finds learning the piano a very simple task indeed. A children's poem entitled 'The Piano Lesson', published in 1887, both poked fun at and perpetuated the encouragement of distinct feminine and masculine behaviours in the manner of children's piano playing.[110] The moral of the poem (which describes a little boy and his older sister learning the piano together) is that the quality of *travail*, which the older sister exhibits so well, should be espoused by both boys and girls. The poem attributes only to the brother an ambition of becoming a concert pianist: his glorious existence in the public sphere is unachievable without the work equivalent to that which his sister devotes to piano practice in the privacy of the *salon*.[111]

Children's piano music very occasionally juxtaposed presentations of girls' playing with equivalent presentations of boys'. The third and fourth collections in Georges-Ernest Malézieux's series, 'Album pour les tous petits', were respectively entitled 'Lili virtuose' (virtuoso) and 'Toto déchiffre' (sight-reads).[112] 'Toto' and 'Lili', who were represented on the covers of each volume, were stock character names for boys and girls in children's stories. The title 'Toto Sight-reads' emphasizes boys' piano playing in precisely the manner parodied by the poem in *La Jeune mère* – as a spontaneous activity, implicitly emancipated from the necessity of *travail*. The comportment of

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[109] 'Ses études musicales ne l'avaient pas empêché de préparer [...] l'examen qu'il allait passer prochainement pour entrer à Saint-Cyr, avec l'intention d'opter pour l'infanterie de marine'. Cazin, *Perlette*, 322.

[110] 'La Leçon de piano', *La Jeune mère,* 15 December 1887, 41-42.

[111] As Pasler notes, an article in *Le Figaro* from 1886 explained the greater aptitude of women pianists than men pianists at the Conservatoire as a possible consequence of the relative amount of practice expected of them, *Composing the Citizen,* 475. This may well, of course, have been in itself a way of denigrating women's capabilities.

[112] Georges-Ernest Malézieux, *Lili virtuose. 12 petits morceaux d'auteurs célèbres* (Paris, 1907); *idem.*, *Toto déchiffre. 12 petits morceaux pour le piano sur les motifs d'opéras célèbres* (Paris, 1912).

Toto at the piano (Figure 2.6) is less restrained than that represented by analogous images of girls. There was, however, no significant difference in character between the very easy arrangements comprising each collection.
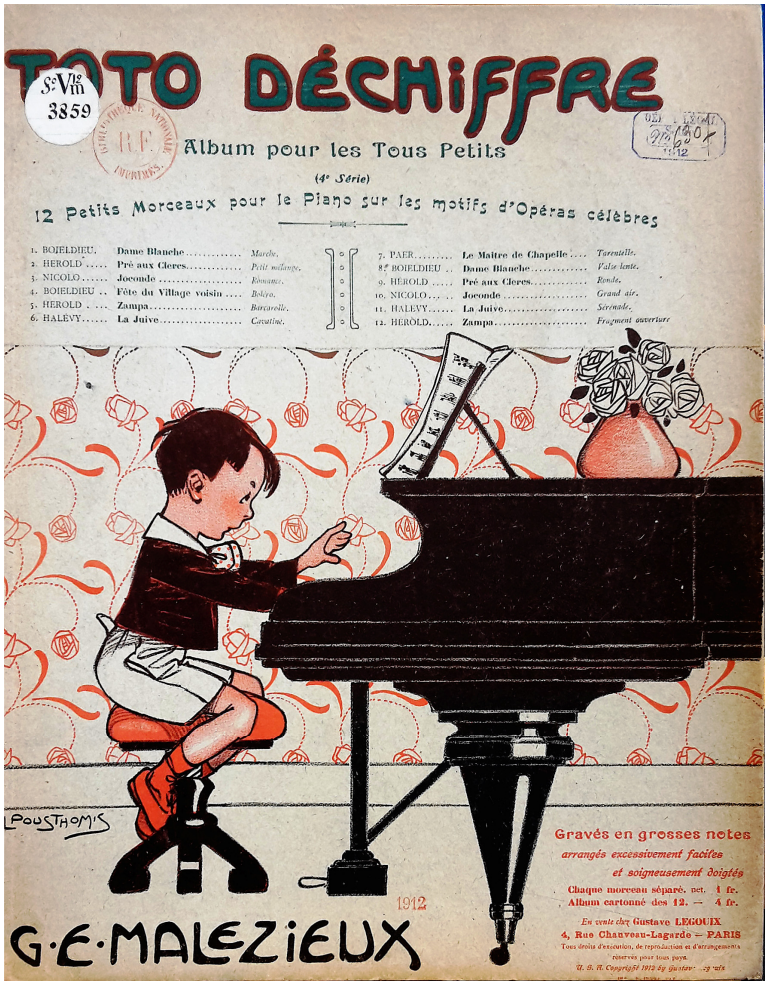
Figure 2.6. Georges-Ernest Malézieux, *Toto déchiffre. 12 petits morceaux pour le piano sur les motifs d'opéras célèbres* (Paris, 1912), cover illustration. Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Musical character could, of course, be a powerful means of perpetuating perceptions of gender difference. Pasler observes how the Conservatoire sight-reading exam in 1886 was a test *of* gender characteristics, or of students' ability to perform according to those characteristics: 'in male pianists strength and expressive flexibility, in female

pianists dexterity and gracefulness'.[113] Massenet's exercise for male students had a chordal, *maestoso* character, while Delibes's exercise for female students was a gentle Allegretto comprising intricate, lilting arpeggiations. Contemporaneous children's sheet-music displayed equivalent musical differences: between, for instance, the marches of military music and the delicacy of lighter dance forms. But these differences were not explicitly presented as describing or encapsulating differences in gender.[114]

Perhaps such presentation would have been redundant. In the late nineteenth century, educational policy continued to establish firm distinctions between gender roles, and other pedagogical material perpetuated the idea that children's musical taste reflected differences in sensibility between genders.[115] For example, in a general introduction to music aimed at children, Jean d'Udine implied that an enthusiasm for military music was an explicitly – though far from exclusively – masculine attribute, describing 'Gustave' (a generic boy) as liking only 'military music going "zim boum zim"'.[116] The final section of this chapter considers how, in the context of wider cultural discourses about the image of the doll, one particular sub-genre of children's music implicitly became a means of acculturating girls to their future roles as mothers.

La Patrie

Children's literature produced in Third Republic France sought, in Brown's words, to implement the 'agenda of instilling a love of the *patrie* and the moral and psychological preparation of its future soldiers'.[117] Between 1880 and 1914, the appetite for *revanche* took many cultural and political forms, and was associated with a variety of political

[113] Pasler, *Composing the Citizen*, 475.
[114] There is no obvious pattern in the dedication of particular sub-genres of children's music, such as Marches or Lullabies, to particular genders.
[115] On this subject, see also Colin Heywood, 'On Learning Gender Roles During Childhood in Nineteenth-Century France', *French History* 5/4 (1991), 451-466.
[116] 'écouter la musique militaire faire "zim boum zim"'. Jean d'Udine, *La Belle Musique* (Paris: 1909), 10.
[117] Brown, *Critical History*, 136.

orientations, but the 'culte du drapeau' was a continuous aspect of official pedagogy.[118] As Pasler states, the best-selling poetry of the radical Republican Paul Déroulède, which promoted a cult of military heroism, was made compulsory reading in primary schools under Ferry. Frequently set to music, Déroulède's verses continued to be used as texts in collections of school songs into the twentieth century.[119] After 1900, the promotion of patriotic sentiments in children's literature took new directions, but a militarist pedagogical agenda was continually refreshed by concerns over the growing empires of France's colonial rivals.[120] Pasler notes that a 1902 edition of a collection of school songs by Julien Tiersot removed pieces that referred explicitly to the Franco-Prussian war, but preserved a patriotic march entitled 'Salut, drapeau', which proclaimed citizens' enthusiasm for answering 'the call of a "new day"' (the call to arms in the event of war).[121]

Piano music produced for children's consumption in the home echoed the character of these songs, in the marches and military topics that were a staple of collections of *pièces enfantines*. The performance of school songs provided a possible model for interpreting the sentiment of, say, Filipucci's 'March héroique'.[122] Pieces such as Thuillier's 'Le Petit Régiment (Marche militaire)' characterize military activity as a splendid, joyful affair.[123] Marches were, of course, stock musical *topoi*, but this genre of children's music also helped to steep children in a sonic vocabulary of military splendour that accompanied public displays of national power. Enthusiasm for *la patrie* was evidently not confined to the Republican segment of the political spectrum,

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[118] On the continuity of the sentiment of *revanche* in public and private discourses as the century turned, see Pasler, *Composing the Citizen*, 644.

[119] *Ibid*., 444. On songs see *ibid*., 320-322, 439-447.

[120] Brown, *Critical History*, 145-148.

[121] Pasler, *Composing the Citizen* 321-322. Sarraute illustrates the success with which school singing instilled an appetite for *revanche* well into the twentieth century. She recalls being taught about the '1870 war' at school, and singing La Marseillaise in chorus, which 'uplifted me, stirred me, I felt that its strain had captured the rage of an unbearable defeat, the desire for revenge, a warlike fervor'. Sarraute, *Childhood*, 215.

[122] Edmond Filipucci, *Douze Petites Pièces enfantines*. (Paris, 1898), no. 10.

[123] Edouard Thuillier, *La Joie des petits pianistes* (Paris, 1910), no. 1. 'Le Petit Régiment. Marche militaire.'

nor was the interpretation of its implications the subject of consensus within it. (Déroulède himself turned against Ferry in the 1880s, and militaristic patriotism was a threat to Republicanism as well as a feature of it, at least from the moment when General Boulanger transformed himself from Minister of War into a right-wing populist.) Pieces such as d'Indy's cheerful 'Petit régiment de l'infanterie' illustrate how the generality of sentiment presented by most children's music avoided entanglement in the political complexity of the period, while promoting ideals on which a broad range of factions could find consensus.

This type of children's music was not limited to a general celebration of soldiering (a celebration that was as common to sheet-music across Europe as toy-soldiers were to the nineteenth-century nursery). Influential figures in the French literary world beside Déroulède explicitly promoted the idea of military self-sacrifice through children's material, especially in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian war. In 1875, for instance, Hetzel emphasized the importance of upholding the 'beauty of dying for one's country, an honour open even to the young'.[124] This agenda was manifested clearly in Théodore Lack's *Le Roman d'une poupée* (*Novel of a Doll*), published in 1906, which mimics various 'doll novel' genres popular in children's literature throughout the nineteenth century.[125] Lack's 'novel' comprises twelve children's pieces, organized by an accompanying text into an illustrated story about the life of a wooden soldier, Captain Sabre-au-Clair, and his wooden Princess (see Figure 2.7). The story's toy-world is a comic representation of Paris itself ('le Tout-Paris-Jouet', for instance, listens to the 'Valse Tricolore' that follows the Captain's marriage to the Princess). In the narrative section concluding the main part of the novel, some cannibal toys invade the display window of the toy shop where the characters live. The narrator promptly reminds the reader: 'When you are a French soldier, be it of wood or lead, such an insult can only

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[124] Cited in Brown, *Critical History,* 145.

[125] Théodore Lack, *Le Roman d'une poupée* (Paris, 1906). Chapter 4 considers its evident connections with Debussy's *La Boîte à joujoux*.

be washed away in blood!'.[126] Although the French victory is predictably emphatic, tragedy strikes: 'the hero of the day has been killed by a cannon ball almost as big as a Clamart pea'.[127]

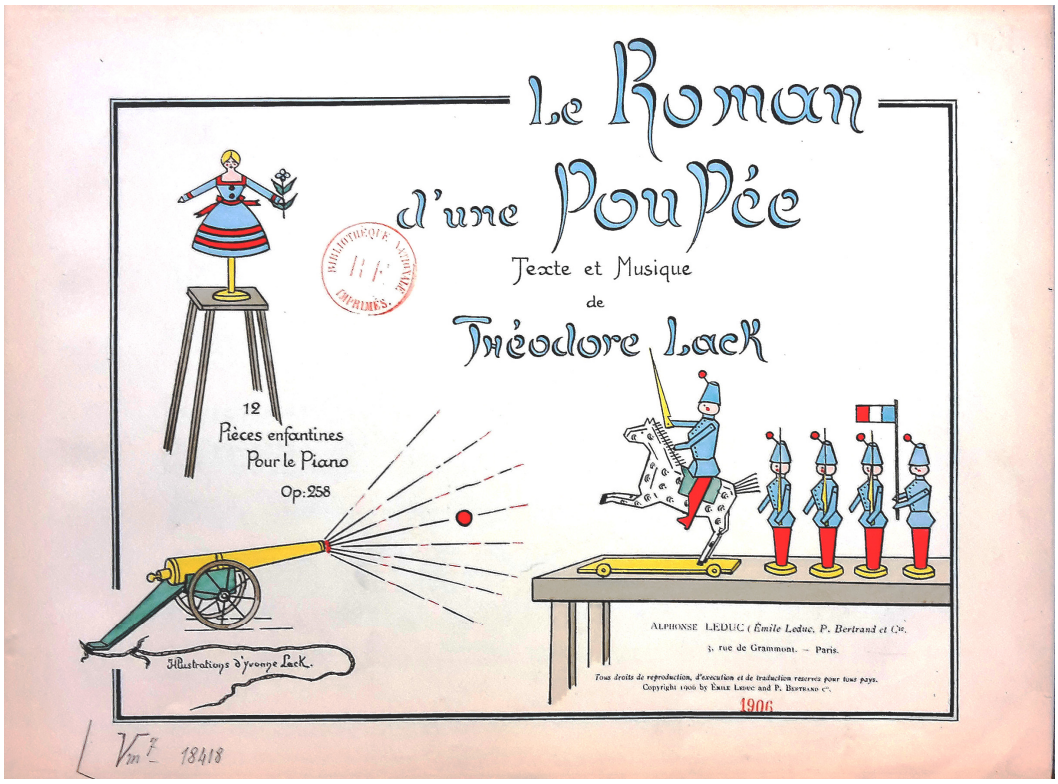

Figure 2.7. Théodore Lack, *Le Roman d'une poupée* (Paris, 1906), front cover. Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

This narrative of national triumph through self-sacrifice then becomes less generic. Learning of her husband's death, 'Madame Sabre-au-Clair gives a searing cry and falls backwards from the top of the window, with her daughter in her arms, onto the floor where both of them shatter into a thousand pieces!'.[128] The sudden suicide and infanticide jars with, and cuts short, the story's humorous, sometimes parodic air. This

[126] 'Quand on est soldat francais, fût-on de bois ou de plomb, une pareille insulte ne se lave que dans le sang!' Lack, *Le Roman d'une poupée*, 21. The 'regiments' referred to in children's music were not usually identified as French, although supplying this detail might have been redundant.

[127] 'le héros du jour a été tué par un boulet de canon presque aussi gros qu'un petit pois de Clamart.' *Ibid*.

[128] 'Madame Sabre-au-Clair pousse un cri déchirant et tombe à la renverse du haut de sa vitrine, avec sa fille dans les bras, sur le parquet où elles se brisent toutes les deux en mille morceaux!' *Ibid*.

was perhaps less true for Lack's first readers, if admiration of the virtue of being prepared to die for one's country had thoroughly penetrated contemporaneous thought. The seriousness and nobility of this self-sacrifice is confirmed in musical terms in the work's Epilogue, a funeral march accompanied by an image of a grand public procession in which the *tricolore* stands out (Figure 2.8). The march's solemnity, and the relative richness of its harmonic language, contrasts strongly with the *naïf* joviality characteristic of contemporaneous children's music (and of the rest of Lack's 'novel'). In a 'heavenly' tonic-major passage (at the top of the page reproduced in Figure 2.8), the motifs that represent the two protagonists are entwined, beneath the inscription 'they are united in Death as they had been in Life'.[129] The Epilogue, as Pécaut would have put it, transforms the 'beauty of dying for one's country' into a 'living emotion'.[130]

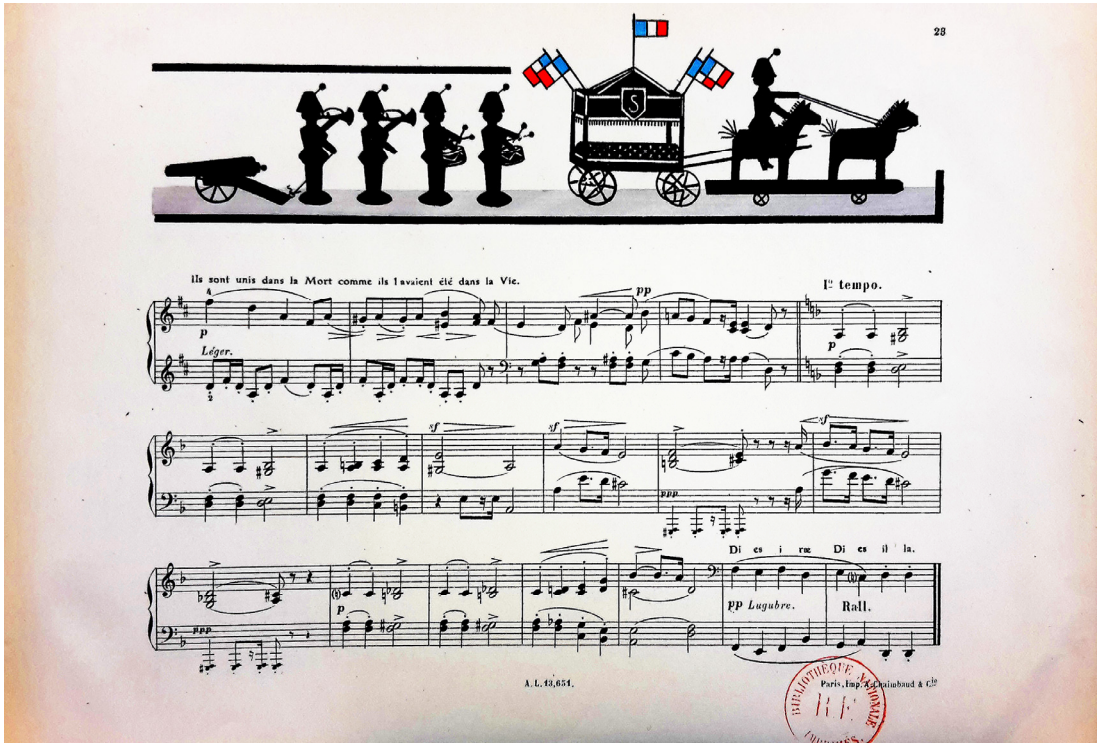

Figure 2.8. Lack, *La Roman d'une poupée*, Epilogue. Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

[129] 'Ils sont unis dans la Mort comme ils l'avaient été dans la Vie'. *Ibid*., 23.
[130] Pécaut, 'Musique', 1995.

Lack's story, then, provides an example of both male and female versions of self-sacrifice. As was the general pattern, the marches and soldier pieces in collections of children's piano music were not explicitly directed at a particular gender (although d'Udine's suggestion about boys' preference for military music might have been well-founded). Lack's story is a slightly strange example of how composers of children's sheet-music sometimes produced feminized versions of the *culte du drapeau*. Cécile Chaminade's 'La fiancée du soldat', with its indulgently turbulent gestures and tertiary harmonic progressions, is markedly distinct from the other pieces in the large collection in which it was published.[131] Chaminade's music (and its title) embodies and elevates the distinctive emotional intensity experienced by a woman engaged to a defender of *la patrie* – an emotional intensity given a more extreme form in Lack's story.

Race

Notions of collective selfhood – of which national identity was one – were partly defined through and against unreflectively imagined 'Others'. Materials produced for children's musical instruction sought to socialize them into prevailing beliefs, informed by evolutionary explanatory paradigms, about 'Primitive' states that were projected by the colonial imagination onto non-Western people.[132] In his introduction to music,

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[131] C. Chaminade, 'La fiancée du soldat', in *Les Pianistes de Demain. Collection nouvelle de 100 morceaux très facile* (Paris, 1912), no.31. The demand for children's music does not seem to have provided as much opportunity for women composers as the equivalent demand for children's literature did for women writers.

[132] This vast topic extends far beyond the scope of this project, and cannot be pursued here at any length. Were this thesis to examine the subject of race more extensively, the following topics and readings would be among the possible starting points. For discourse about race in contemporaneous French culture: Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall, eds., *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France* (Durham NC, 2003); Herrick Chapman and Laura Levine, eds., *Race in France: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Politics of Difference* (New York, 2004); Jan E. Goldstein, 'Toward an Empirical History of Moral Thinking: The Case of Racial Theory in Mid-Nineteenth Century France', Presidential Address to American Historical Association, 2014. On French colonialism at this time: Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford CA, 1997). For contemporaneous writings about race: Jann Pasler, 'Theorizing Race in 19th-century France: Music as Emblem of Identity', *Musical Quarterly* 89, 4 (Winter 2006), 459-504; and, for example, Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, *De la Colonisation chez les peuples modernes* (Paris, 1874);

d'Udine contrasted the musical practices of 'les sauvages' with those of 'les savants'. Indeed, music was presented as an important manifestation of this distinction. Readers were told that 'more primitive peoples sing and play music instinctively – that is to say, without needing to reflect on it'.[133] Bird-song was an important model for the music of 'les sauvages'. Here, music was tied into, and used to support, an important trope in the cultural construction of notions of the 'uncivilized' – as having a direct, and unmediated connection with nature.

In children's literature of the early Third Republic, France's colonial subjects were generally promoted as, in Ruth Capasso's words, the 'comical and foolish performer'.[134] Children's piano music perpetuated and enforced this perception. Figure 2.9 shows the cover illustration of 'Bamboulo', a children's arrangement of a piece by Émile Spencer.[135] The last few staves are presented as a syllabic setting of the following semi-nonsense verse:

> Il s'appelle Bamboulo / Le petit négro / Il est né dans le Congo / Bamboulo / Il dansait la Bamboulette / Et montrait cett'dans'coquette / Le soir sous les noix d'coco, / Bamboulo le p'tit négro.
>
> He's called Bamboulo / The little negro / He was born in the Congo / Bamboulo / He danced the Bamboulette / And showed off this stylish dance / In the evening under the coconuts, / Bamboulo the little negro.

The repetitious, inane line-endings of this verse emphasize, to the performer of this music, a similar musical quality – the gaucheness of the music's jaunty simplicity (Example 2.3). Spencer's brand of 'musique nègre' was quite different from other late

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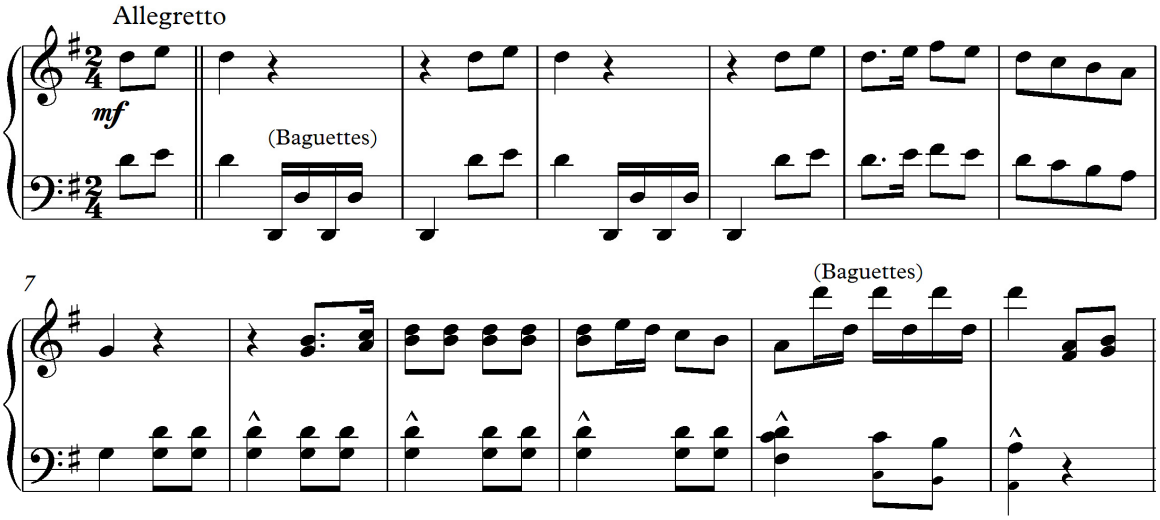
Arthur, Comte de Gobineau, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (Paris, 1884. 2nd edition). For broader musicological discussions of race: Olivia Bloechl, Melanie Lowe and Jeffrey Kallberg, eds., *Rethinking Difference in Music Scholarship* (Cambridge, 2015); Ronald Radano and Philip V. Bohlman, *Music and the Racial Imagination* (Chicago, 2000); Julie Brown, *Western Music and Race* (Cambridge, 2007). For more general 'theory' on race: Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London, 1994), among many other texts.

[133] 'Les hommes les plus sauvages chantent et jouent de la musique instinctivement, c'est-à-dire sans avoir besoin d'y réfléchir'. d'Udine, *La Belle Musique*, 30.

[134] Ruth Carver Capasso, '"La Bibliothèque rose", Children, and Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century France', *The French Review* 77/2 (2003), 274-285 (p. 283).

[135] Emile Spencer, *Bamboulou,* edition enfantine (Paris, 1913), 3.

Example 2.3. Émile Spencer, *Bamboulo Le Petit Négro (Danse nègre), édition enfantine pour piano* (Paris: G. Siéver, 1913), bars 1-12.

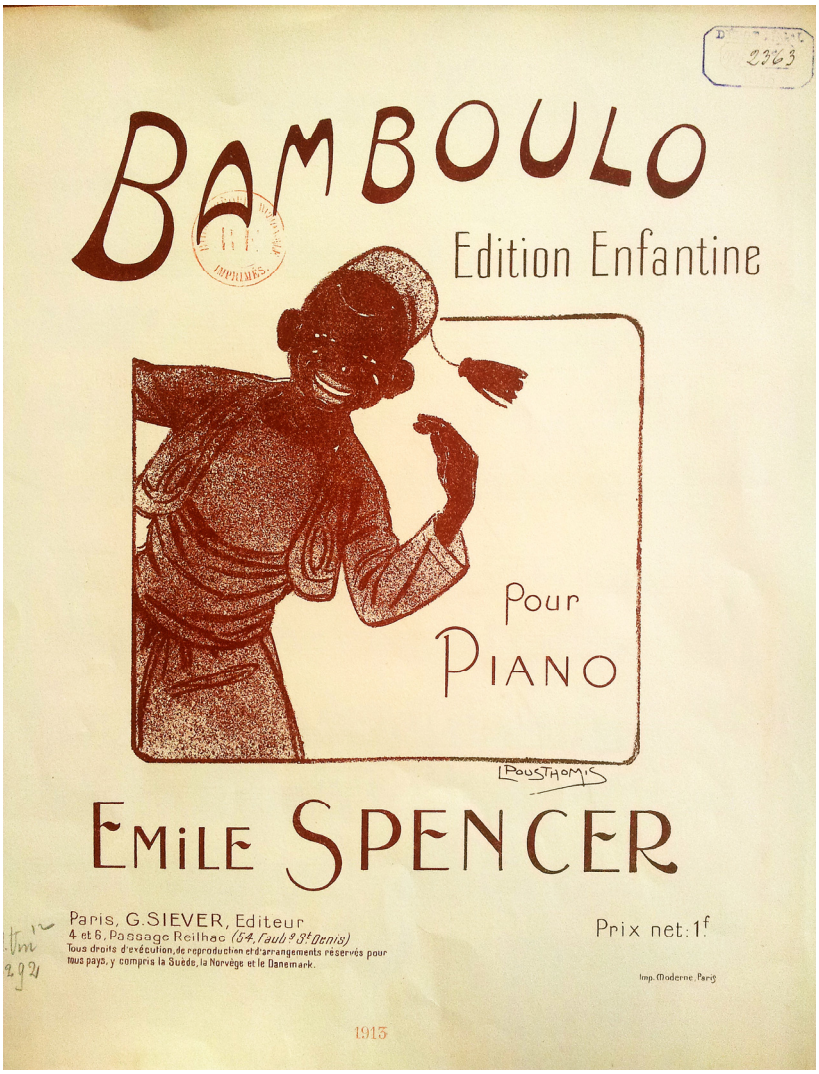



Figure 2.9. Emile Spencer, *Bamboulou, edition enfantine* (Paris, 1913), front cover. Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

nineteenth-century versions: often minor-key pieces with modal cadences. The two topics shared, however, a simplistic and energetic rhythmic character, presented as an embodiment of a primitive mentality and comportment.

Such music evidently propagated the general assumptions on which the Republican *mission civilisatrice* was founded. It did not necessarily fit, however, with official Republican views of appropriate teaching material. Albert Dupaigne, author of the entry on 'Chant' for the first part of the *Dictionnaire de pédagogie,* denounced the cabaret and the café-concert for bringing about 'not only the ruin of *moeurs*, but also without a doubt the ruin of music'.[136] Forms of so-called *musique nègre* were, of course, a staple ingredient of the Exoticist spectacles that characterized these spaces of popular entertainment. In the Preface to his 1909 *méthode*, addressing the 'chers enfants' whose parents had bought it, Lack described the collection of specially composed two-hand pieces by 'modern authors' as a way of 'developing your taste'.[137] The syncopated, often dissonant character of the 39th of these pieces – Debussy's 'The Little Nigar (Cake Walk)', subtitled 'Danse nègre dite Danse du gâteau' – is markedly different from that of its companions. The 'taste' manifested by this transposition of a fashionable music-hall number would evidently have concerned official pedagogues such as Dupaigne.

Studies of Debussy's music have examined the promotion of racial and racist thinking in children's music, focusing especially on 'Golliwogg's Cake Walk' from *Children's Corner*.[138] This promotion wove together the figure of the doll, forms of popular dance, representations of colonial subjects, and childhood. It was informed by the theme in late nineteenth-century children's literature in which African children were

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[136] 'non seulement la ruine des mœurs, mais certainement aussi la ruine de la musique'. Albert Dupaigne, 'Chant', in *Dictionnaire de pédagogie et d'instruction primaire,* edited by Ferdinand Buisson (Paris: Hachette, 1887), 356-363, (p.355).

[137] 'Mes chers enfants, je suis heureux de pouvoir mettre entre vos mains, pour vous développer le goût [...]'. Lack, *Méthode elémentaire*.

[138] Davinia Caddy, 'Parisian Cake Walks', *Nineteenth-Century Music* 30/3 (2007), 288-317; Ann McKinley, 'Debussy and American Minstrelsy.' *The Black Perspective in Music* 14 (3) (Autumn, 1986), 249-258.

gifted to children as 'dolls' to play with and to civilize – in a kind of echo of the colonial strategy of assimilation.[139] Indeed, theories of social and cultural development posited a parallel between domestic education and colonial assimilation, as comparable civilizing procedures. As the Introduction noted, the widely accepted principles of Recapitulation theory proposed that children were 'representatives of the childhood of the human race as a whole', and that they recapitulated states that were, in 'primitive peoples', those of adulthood.[140] The next chapter considers how these 'primitive' states were thought to have had distinctive corporeal manifestations, arising from a particular configuration of the nervous system. The spasmodic, dislocated comportment of various popular dance forms – which was often described as doll-like – supposedly staged those manifestations.

In *Perlette*, music becomes a way of forging a connection between the colonial and the childlike. Perlette was raised on the Île de Réunion (her ocean voyage is her journey to France), and the colonial element of her identity is a condition of her status as an ideal child, embodying a sort of cultural purity. Music is the means through which she displays this colonial identity. At various points in the novel, Perlette somehow performs on the piano versions of the music of the island's native inhabitants, which she has absorbed from her early childhood. This moment exemplified a motif in novels of domestic realism, in which a performance of 'primitive' music in the domestic interior draws other characters into a 'primitive' dance, opening out the fantastical, 'natural' freedom of colonial space within the domestic interior.[141] In these passages, childhood, the primitive and the domestic interior come together as equivalent realms indulging a commodified version of a distinctly modern, Western,

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[139] See Lise Schreier, '"A Toy in the White Man's Hands": Child-gifting, African Civilizability and the Construction of French National Identity in Marie Maréchal's *La Dette de Ben-Aïssa*', *Children's Literature* 43 (2015), 108-138.

[140] See Pollock, 'Foreword', xiii.

[141] See 'Princesse Rosalba', a story serialized in *Le Journal de la jeunesse: nouveau recueil hebdomadaire illustré* (January 1890).

bourgeois fantasy – the possibility of escaping the habituated artifice of the adult self, formed by socialization into public life.

L'ésprit d'enfant

The products of the sheet-music market provided a sort of illustration of the idea that the child itself manifested a primitive state. Discussing his collection of four-hand *pièces enfantines*, *Ma Mère l'Oye*, Maurice Ravel observed: 'My intention in these pieces was to evoke the poetry of childhood, and this naturally led me to simplify my style and restrain my writing'.[142] Ravel suggests that the pieces' *dépouillé* style did not arise from an attempt to write music simple enough for children to play, but from an attempt to present a sort of aesthetic of childhood. The remark corresponded to an established way of hearing the pared-down quality intrinsic to the requisite simplicity of children's music: as embodying the 'childlike', rather than merely signifying 'for children'. This way of hearing was encouraged by the presentation of *pièces enfantines*.

Composers of children's piano music often characterized its jovial, *naïf* character as a mode of littleness, as indicated by the 'Petit' that appeared regularly at the beginning of various stock titles, such as 'Petit régiment', or 'Petit Berger' (of which Debussy's 'Little Shepherd' is a variation). The titles of *pièces enfantines* often referred to activities implicitly performed by children, perhaps echoing a fashion in the second half of the nineteenth century for 'realist' children's novels, which gave bourgeois children an idealized account of their own activities.[143] Cover illustrations sometimes demanded this interpretation. The first of Carlos de Mesquita's collection of children's pieces from 1900, 'En Récréation', is a recreational piece that characterizes the nature

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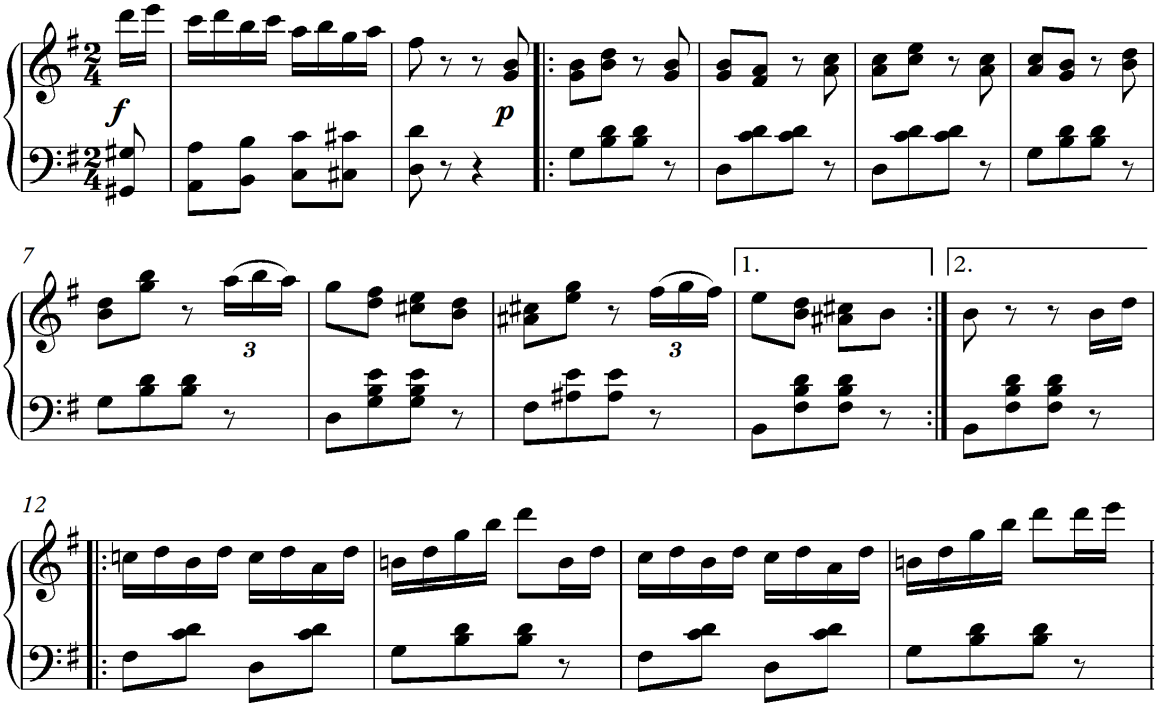
[142] Maurice Ravel, *Esquisse autobiographique*, translated by Arbie Orenstein, in *A Ravel Reader,* edited by Orenstein (New York, 1990), 29-37 (p. 31).
[143] See Brown, *Critical History,* 38-75.

of recreation itself: as a tripping, 'giocoso' waltz.[144] Through this kind of presentation, then, what I referred to earlier as the conventional *topos* of children's piano music became a sort of stock musical poetics of childhood. This dovetailed with a conventional nineteenth-century understanding of the piano as an instrument of self-expression – as, in Daub's words, 'a central cipher for individual subjectivity'.[145]

Example 2.4. Laurent Grillet, *Enfantillages, polka* (Paris, 1896), bars 1-15.

The title of Laurent Grillet's polka from 1896 – 'Enfantillages' (literally 'Childishnesses') – may indicate that the piece is for children, as that title did with the collection of arrangements by Reyba mentioned earlier in the chapter.[146] As an arrangement of an orchestral number with the same title, and lacking any of the subtitles that often accompanied music composed specifically for children, 'Enfantillages' may also have been a simple piece intended for a general audience. The title suggests that the music's energetic, jovial quality (a simplified version of a character shared by so much nineteenth-century sheet-music) is some sort of enactment

[144] Carlos de Mesquita, *20 Pièces enfantines* (Paris, 1900).
[145] Daub, *Four-handed Monsters*, 9.
[146] Laurent Grillet, *Enfantillages, polka* (Paris, 1896).

of childlike behaviour (Example 2.4). This is emphasized by the image on the cover of the sheet-music, shown in Figure 2.10. The ebullience of the gravity-defying stream of children illustrates the polka's levity. The illustration clearly represents childhood as a state of joyful simplicity apart from adulthood – a version of the perception that French audiences found in *Hänsel und Gretel*. The children in the image are physically distant from, and uninterested in, the 'adult' romance depicted in the foreground.

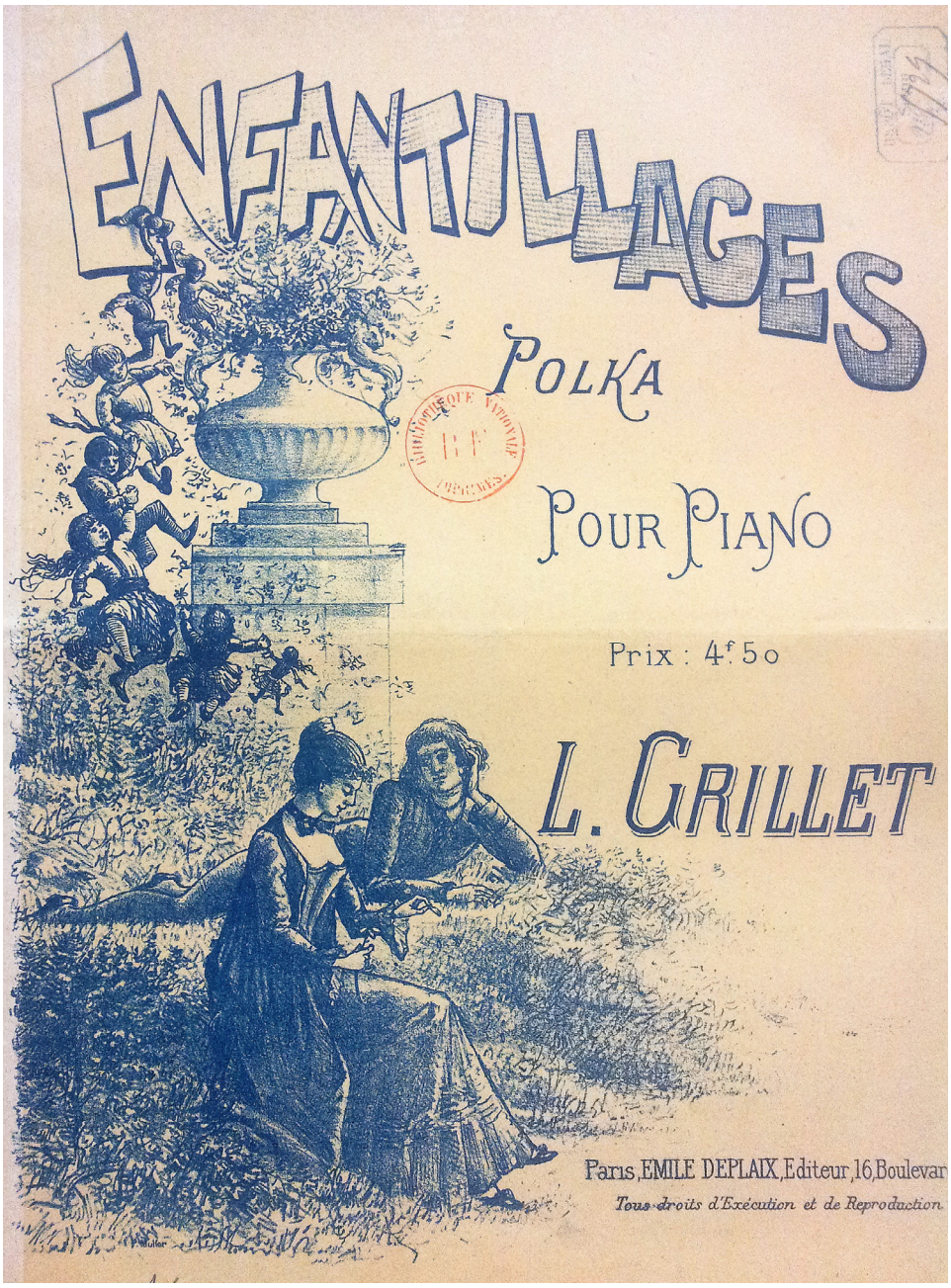



Figure 2.10. Laurent Grillet, *Enfantillages, polka* (Paris, 1896), front cover. Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

As Kok suggests in relation to Schumann's *Album*, it was evidently for the benefit of the listening parent that sheet-music sought to present children, as they sat at the piano, as performing an affirming image of their own childlike natures. The poetics of childhood manifested in most children's music exhibited, and appealed to, a sort of automatic idealization of childhood. The stock poetics of childhood exhibited by this sheet-music contrasts with some of the canonical 'children's music' from the period, as well as with comparable pieces from the Schola's *Album* that have not become part of this canon. The comparison draws particular attention to the distant, fragile melancholy that comes to the fore in the first two movements of *Ma Mère l'Oye*, and the centrepiece of *Children's Corner*, 'The Snow is Dancing'. Walter Benjamin might have noted (as he did in another context) that these movements have the 'merit of declaring seriousness to be the child's realm'.[147] Satie's collections of children's music are sublimations of the inane quality latent in the square, simple, joviality of conventional *pièces enfantines*.

Parakilas describes the pieces included in Schumann's *Album* as 'progressive in their Romantic insistence that children [...] should play music that would awaken their own, distinctly childish imaginations'.[148] This notion of addressing the child was founded upon the attitude underlying Rousseau's philosophy of education – that 'childhood has its own ways of seeing, thinking and feeling', to which education should appeal.[149] As collections based generally on the model of Schumann's *Album*, collections of *pièces enfantines* were evidently designed to awaken or be congenial to the 'childish imagination'. The nurturing of the child's imagination was an important political imperative for Republicans after 1871. In 1900, the influential playwright, educationalist and school inspector Ernest Legouvé declared in the popular family journal, *Le magasin d'éducation et de récréation*, that his pedagogical philosophy was

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[147] Walter Benjamin, 'Toys and Play, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings* vol. 2: 1927-1934, translated by Rodney Livingstone and edited by Michael W. Jennings *et al* (London, 1999), 117-120 (p 118).
[148] Parakilas, *Piano Roles*, 118
[149] Cited in Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society*, 66.

'to find a way into the child's spirit, step by step'.[150] 'One never reaches into the mind of children more reliably than by way of their imagination and their hearts'.[151] This suggests a pedagogical basis for the fashion for presenting *pièces enfantines* – which exemplified in musical form the Republican emphasis on play – as articulating an idealized 'ésprit d'enfant'. In being this, children's pieces became prescriptions as well as descriptions of the childlike, marking out childhood's 'own ways of [...] thinking and feeling' in a manner generally congenial to Republican *moeurs*.

Doll music

One object or image to which the titles of children's music frequently referred was 'la poupée', the doll. Dolls were, of course, familiar protagonists in children's literature. These recurrent references to dolls in the titles and illustrations of children's music also reflected a broader cultural fascination with the figure of the doll in nineteenth-century France, not only in adult reflections upon childhood. As part of the constant expansion of a material culture orientated specifically towards children, the production of dolls increased sharply in the 1880s and 1890s.[152] Late nineteenth-century culture acknowledged the importance of dolls, and also equivalent humanoid toys such as tin soldiers, as instruments of socialization. Although 'la poupée' did not refer exclusively to female dolls (as the characters of Lack's *Le Roman d'une poupée* illustrate), these contexts suggest that 'doll music' may often have been interpreted as addressed specifically to girls.[153]

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[150] 'Pénétrer dans l'esprit des enfants, pas à pas'. Ernest Legouvé, 'Petite leçon d'histoire de France, pour des élèves de douze ans', *Le magasin d'education et de récréation,* no. 121, 1 January 1900, 11.

[151] 'on n'arrive jamais plus sûrement à l'ésprit des enfants qu'en passant par leur imagination et par leur coeur'. *Ibid*. This tenet had been realized in school curricula in the so-called 'intuitive method' (*méthode intuitive*), and the encouragement of children to cultivate their *vie interieure*.

[152] Thomas, *Impressionist Children,* 37.

[153] 'La poupée' may also denote a puppet.

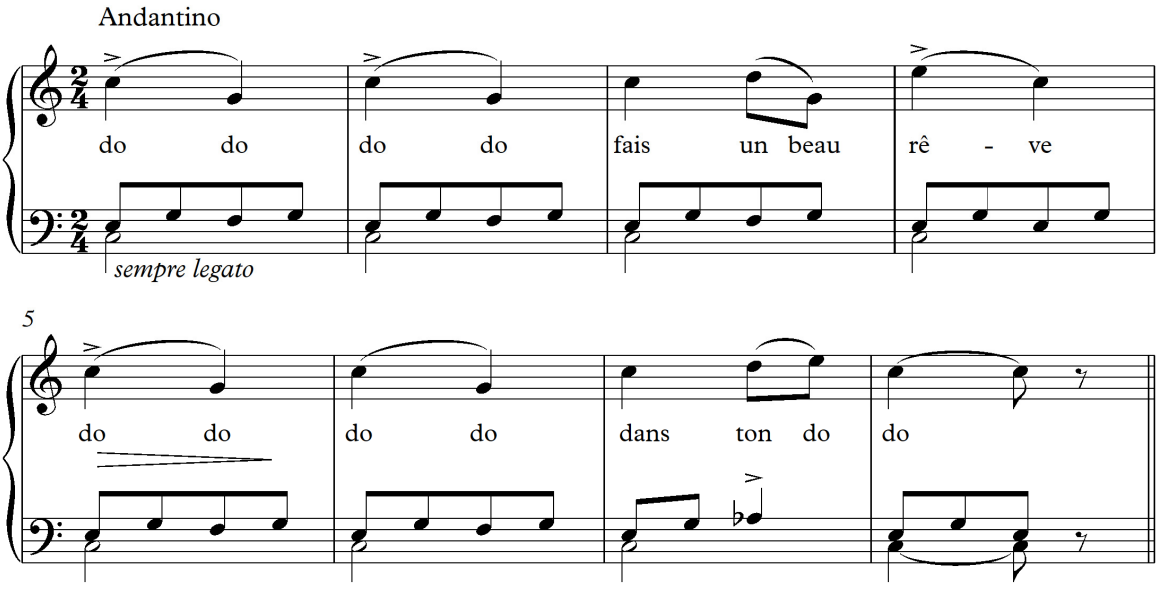
Figure 2.11. Georges Lamothe, *Enfantillages pour piano. Six danses graduées sur les cinq notes* (Paris, 1887), selected cover image. Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

A well-known passage from Hugo's *Les Misérables* outlines an established view of the social function of dolls: 'To care for, to clothe, [...] to teach, to scold a little, to rock, to cuddle, to put to sleep [...] – all the future of woman is there... The first baby takes the place of the last doll'.[154] Children's literature continued to present dolls as things through which little girls practised and explored maternal instincts.[155] Dolls were objects to be civilized, through which children internalized the civilizing procedures of which they themselves were objects. Children's pieces were often presented as descriptions or enactments of the doll-focused activities listed by Hugo. An illustration

[154] Cited in Valerie C. Lastinger, 'Of Dolls and Girls in Nineteenth-Century France', *Children's Literature*, 21 (1993), 20-42 (p.20).

[155] 'L'éducation de la poupée', *La Jeune mère* 2 (9 Feb. 1882), 17-20. Motherhood was the subject of renewed political and cultural pressure around 1900, because of the fear of depopulation. For earlier nineteenth-century instances, including Ségur's famous developments of this theme in her Sophie stories, see Brown, *Critical History,* 52, 69; and Lastinger, 'Of Dolls and Girls', 27.

on the cover of a collection of children's pieces by Georges Lamothe (Figure 2.11) seems to depict a child civilizing her doll through teaching it the piano.[156]



Example 2.5. L. Desvaux, *La Boîte aux jouets, 6 pièces enfantines pour piano* (Paris: Loret et Freytag, 1903), no. 4 'La Poupée (berceuse)', bars 1-8.

A particularly common sub-genre of children's pieces was the 'Doll's Lullaby' – 'Berceuse de la poupée' (or equivalent title). Lack illustrated and affectionately parodied the pervasiveness of this sub-genre by including a 'Berceuse pour endormir la Poupée d'une Poupée' in *Le Roman d'une poupée*.[157] As Example 2.5 shows, the words of a childlike lullaby are arranged beneath the opening bars of Desvaux's 'La Poupée-Berceuse', from a collection entitled *La Boîte aux jouets* and published in 1903.[158] The music is explicitly presented as a song for a child to sing to a doll. Inghelbrecht's 'Berceuse pour une Poupée malade', from the first volume of *La Nursery*, manifests his stated intention to avoid the 'insipid' qualities that he found in contemporaneous children's music such as Desvaux's.[159] The moments of harmonic

[156] Georges Lamothe, *Enfantillages pour piano. Six danses graduées sur les cinq notes* (Paris, 1887).
[157] Lack, *La Roman d'une poupée*, 19.
[158] L. Desvaux, *La Boîte aux jouets*. *Six pièces enfantines* (Paris, 1903).
[159] Inghelbrecht. *La Nursery* (premier recueil). See also C. Carissan. 'Trois pièces a Lili' (Paris, 1887), no. 2. 'Lili berce sa poupée'.

and contrapuntal interest provided by the 'seconda' part evoke, within an overall atmosphere of calm, frissons of anxiety – imaginatively directed, as the title suggests, at an ailing infant-substitute. The gentle pace and intrinsic simplicity of the 'Berceuse' topic made it an obvious choice of genre for children's music. Adopting this title also aligned children's music with the agenda of fashioning a domestic environment in which to bring up, specifically, future 'mothers of citizens'. This music became an attempt to invite pupils to take part in ritual rehearsals of motherhood. In Lack's *Méthode élémentaire de piano* (1909), the chromatic inflexions of the 'Berceuse de poupée' by Bourgault-Ducoudray serve to emphasize the gentle, innocent, tenderness of doll-play.

Dolls could also be a source of anxiety to those concerned about the moral health of family life. In the mid-to-late nineteenth century, the production of dolls became subject to a sort of international manufacturing contest. Lastinger observes how, in the 1860s, the company Jumeau sought to create an unprecedentedly luxurious and 'truly French' doll, which would be awarded prizes at various international exhibitions.[160] Through the application of advances in manufacturing technology, dolls became increasingly realistic and richly dressed as the century progressed, sometimes fitted with mechanisms and an internal phonograph. Lack's 'Ma poupée parle', the third of his *Tableaux enfantins* (1913), probably refers to one of these 'speaking dolls' – the words 'Papa' and 'Maman' appear underneath the piece's principal motif.[161] If, in general, dolls served as an essential 'visual model of girlhood', some commentators questioned whether doll manufacturers' increasing emphasis on lavish clothing and sumptuous appearances would cultivate the wrong kind of woman, encouraging vanity and materialism in the children that played with them.[162]

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[160] 'Of Dolls and Girls', 22.

[161] Théodore Lack, *Tableaux Enfantins* (Paris, 1913).

[162] Thomas, *Impressionist Children*, 36, 41. Commentators sometimes objected to the equivalent encouragement of violence in boys by toy-soldiers. For Hugo's subtle literary questioning, see Lastinger, 'Of Dolls and Girls', 25.

Chavagnat's 'Ma Poupée', from his previously mentioned collection of children's pieces, is a musical example of how the doll also became a way of normalizing and perpetuating the commodification of femininity.[163] The lively D major waltz is accompanied by the following poem:

> Allons, Mademoiselle,
> Il faut nous réveiller,
> Nous chausser, nous coiffer,
> Je veux vous faire belle.
> Nous mettrons le matin:
> Corsage de satin,
> Notre jupe en dentelle,
> Et vous irez danser!
>
> Right, Miss, / We must get up, / Put our shoes on, do our hair, / I'm going to make you beautiful. / This morning we're wearing: / a satin blouse, / our lace skirt / And you're going to dance!

The text presents the music as an embodiment of the doll's elegance, which has been facilitated and enhanced by the material accoutrements that have 'made her beautiful'. It ties the waltz's character to the way in which the doll serves as a 'visual model of girlhood'. Through appealing to the doll's status as a corporeal model of femininity, the waltz itself becomes an implied model of corporeality.

Chavagnat's evocation of a dancing doll does not attempt to evoke a particular 'doll-like' character. Occasionally, as in Lack's 'Ma Poupée parle', composers clearly sought to represent dolls' activities with a specifically mechanistic quality, distinguishable from that manifested by children's pieces generally. Debussy's 'Sérénade à la poupée' is probably the period's best-known exercise in evoking the doll-like. In 1910, the movement was republished as the final recreational piece in Carrier-Belleuse's *Méthode moderne,* for which it was first written.[164] Debussy's title allocated his piece to a specific form of the sub-genre of 'doll music', which itself echoed a sub-genre of

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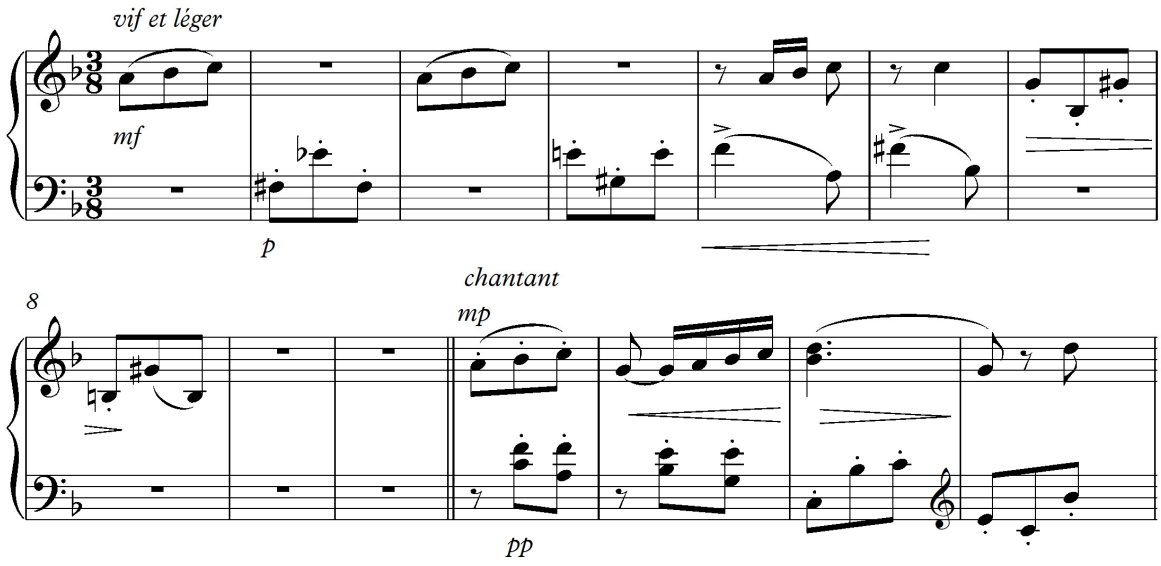
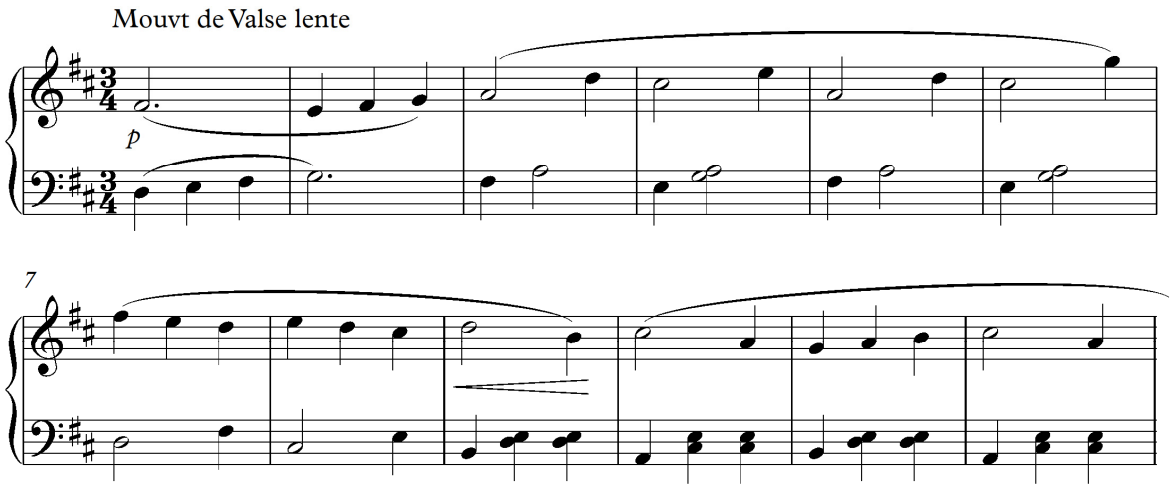
[163] Chavagnat, *Les Miniscules*, no.2.

[164] The piece was sent to Carrier-Belleuse in 1906, published in 1908 in *Children's Corner*, and re-printed as part of the *méthode* in 1910.

nineteenth-century children's literature: stories by, and addressed to, the doll.[165] Debussy's piece was preceded in Carrier-Belleuse's *méthode* by E. M. Delaborde's 'Sérénade à la chère poupée', which shares aspects of character and structure with Debussy's equivalent, having a 'serenading' passage that evokes the mechanistic nature of an animated doll, together with the lightness and agility of its comportment (Example 2.6). In other respects, the inclusion of Debussy's piece in the *méthode* emphasized its distinctness from most children's music: it is considerably longer, more difficult, and more 'modern' than the contributions by fellow 'compositeurs modernes'. Debussy's 'doll-like' topic is also generally idiosyncratic, despite the similarities to Delaborde's. Its disjunct, acciaccatura-laden motifs were more familiar in contemporaneous sheet-music as characterizations of commedia dell'arte figures (an association which, as I discuss in Chapter 4, Debussy would exploit in *La Boîte à joujoux*).



Example 2.6. E.M. Delaborde, 'Sérenade à la chère poupée', in Octavie Carrier-Belleuse, *Méthode moderne de Piano* (Paris: A. Rouart, Lerolle et C[ie], 1910), bars 1-14.

[165] See Brown, *Critical History*, 86, 69. Other interesting examples had appeared in the Schola *Album pour Enfants* in 1905, such as Samazeuilh's 'Chanson à ma poupée' (which includes some strikingly Debussyan moments) and Roussel's 'Conte à la poupée', a flowing contrapuntal piece that seems to describe the human speaker, or the 'tale', rather than the doll.

Example 2.7. Edmond Malherbe, *Pièces enfantines* (Paris: Heugel, 1907), no. 7 'Poupée Valsante', bars 1-12.

In general, the character of pieces referring to dolls in their titles conforms to the *naïf* simplicity typical of *pièces enfantines*. The first series of Malherbe's collection is entitled 'My dolls' (the titles include 'Poupée dormeuse', 'Poupée valsante', 'Poupée parlante' and 'Poupée merveilleuse').[166] Malherbe's music illustrates these titles more imaginatively than that of most other composers, but only 'Poupée valsante' might be considered distinctively 'doll-like'. Its phrases merge into each other in suggestion of a moving body that does not require rest or breath (Example 2.7). In one sense, however, all these pieces exhibit a doll-like topic: their simple stripped-down character is easily heard as an evocation of the comportment and behaviour of a mechanistic being. Indeed, it seems likely that references to dolls in children's music were often a kind of interpretative framing of the simplicity intrinsic to that music, which tends towards the mechanical. This certainly seems to be the case, for instance, in the 'Poupée-Valse' and 'Poupée-polka' in Mesquita's collection of *pièces enfantines* from 1900, which are indistinguishable from equivalent dance movements in other children's music.[167] Considered as a whole, then, the corpus of children's piano music produced for the sheet-music market invokes a sort of musical analogy between the doll-like and the

[166] Edmond Malherbe, *Pièces enfantines* (Paris, 1907).
[167] de Mesquita, *20 Pièces enfantines;* Grillet's *Enfantillages* (Paris, 1896).

childlike, as equivalent realizations of the mode of littleness naturally exhibited by that music.

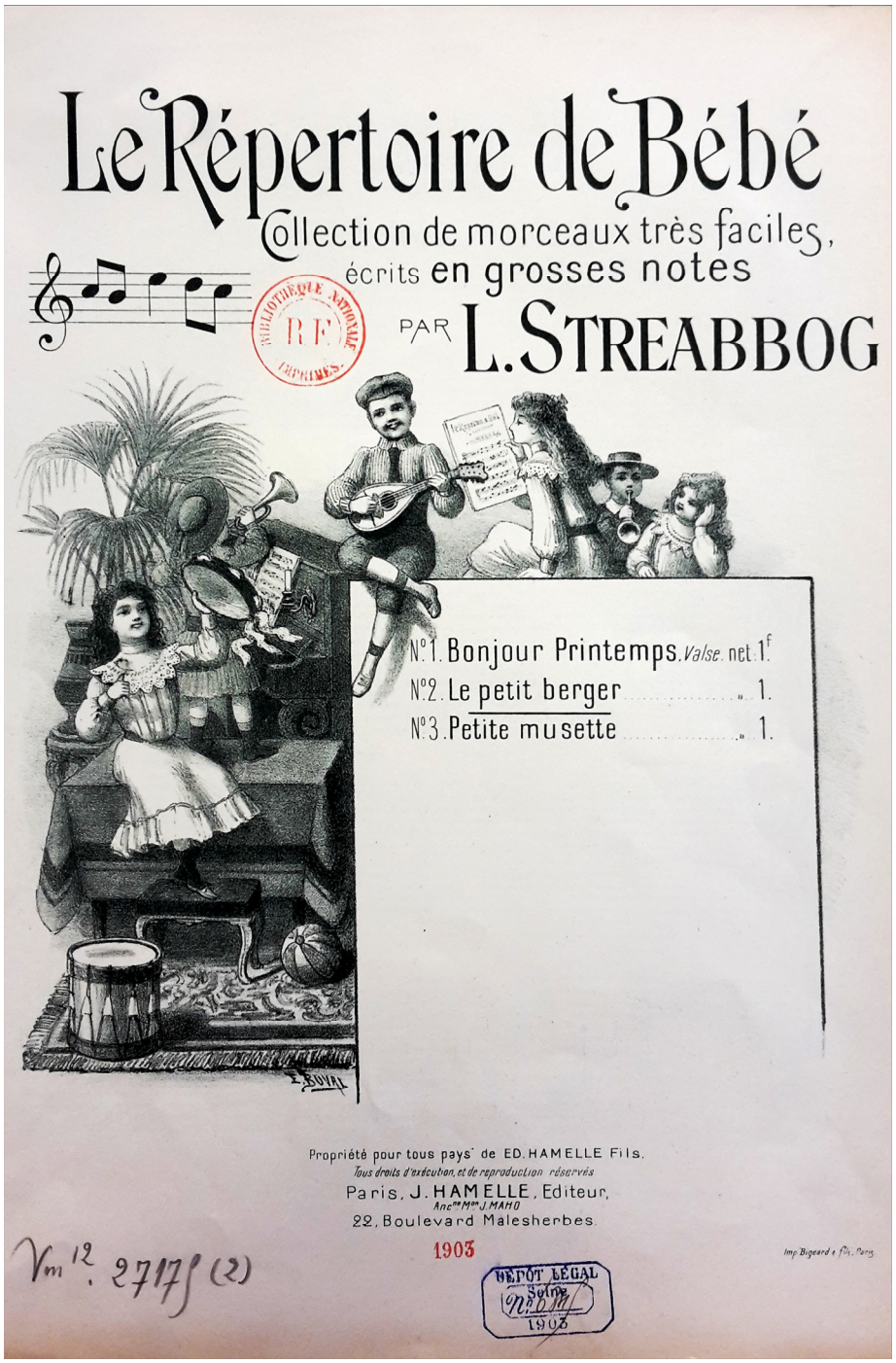



Figure 2.12. L. Streabbog, *Le Répertoire de Bébé. Collection de morceaux très faciles, écrits en grosses notes* (Paris, 1903), cover illustration. Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

This analogy might seem of little cultural significance. But it has a parallel in an important aspect of late nineteenth-century visual culture in France. As Thomas observes, while dolls became increasingly life-like, so representations of children in the late nineteenth-century press became conspicuously doll-like. In the mid to late nineteenth century, publications that focused on children – whether parenting journals, fashion catalogues, or children's magazines – became filled with 'simple schematic drawings of middle-class children without much personality'.[168] These children were rendered object-like or toy-like as a consequence of the low cost at which this commercial material had to be produced. The cover illustrations for children's sheet-music provide good examples. The children making music on the cover of a collection from 1903 (Figure 2.12) are hardly living beings, with their blank faces and fixed postures. The finely dressed child on the cover of Malherbe's collection (Figure 2.13) is more subtly doll-like.[169] The bourgeois girl is almost subsumed by the material objects – dolls, clowns, puppets and sporting equipment – with which she is surrounded.

The drawings to which Thomas refers served to promote a 'modern image of children as free, autonomous members of child-centered bourgeois families'. Commercial material promoted this image in a way that suggested it was realizable through consumption, and that through consumption families could advertise their own 'child-centredness'. Acquiescence with this marketing-inspired ideal of the 'autonomous child' could lead to the treatment of children as emblems of prosperity, in a display of conspicuous consumption where their identity was absorbed into their material accoutrements. For Thomas, the images through which marketing promoted this ideal provided an unwitting allegory for this very process, by showing these children to be doll-like – reduced to the status of material objects. This allegory was not confined to the visual. The musical content of children's pieces echoed the

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[168] Thomas, *Impressionist Children,* 34

[169] Malherbe, *Pièces enfantines.*

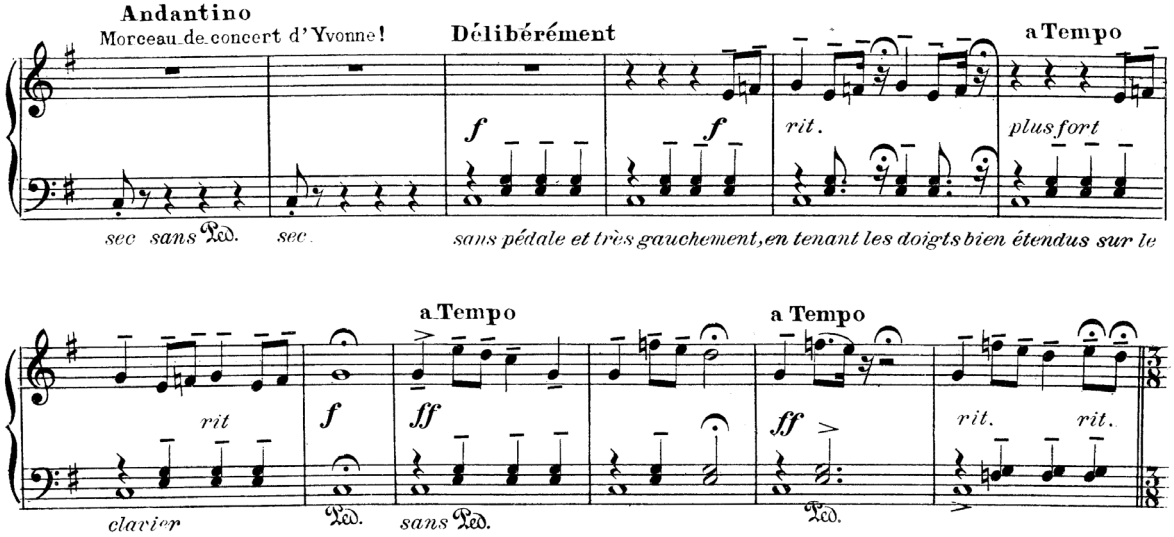
phenomenon that Thomas identifies, unwittingly describing how children became (figuratively) doll-like through the processes of commodification to which that music itself contributed.

Figure 2.13. Edmond Malherbe, *Pièces enfantines* (Paris, 1907), cover illustration. Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

This analogy also hinted at a more general way in which the piano and the doll became equivalent cultural instruments. Perlette referred to the piano as her 'joujou favori' (her 'favourite toy'). The piano was, of course, a plaything; in Cazin's novel it also attains the status of her companion. If, in the Third Republic, the home was reinvented as a 'nursery of citizens', then the piano, like the children's novel, was an important toy within that nursery.[170] Both the piano and the doll were mechanical domestic objects on which children were to train and rehearse emotions, and through which (to echo Pécaut) they might receive and absorb the great principles of moral life

[170] Nord, *The Republican Moment*, 243.

in 'living' form. The image on the cover of Lamothe's collection (Figure 2.11), in which a girl plays with both a doll and a piano, serves as a curious summary of the subtle civilizing mission conferred upon the activity of children's piano playing, in a climate in which play was perceived as a prime vehicle of education.



Example 2.8. Albeniz, *Yvonne en visite* (Paris, 1905), no.2 'Joyeuse rencontre et quelques pénibles événements', Yvonne performing her concert piece.

Children's use of the material discussed in this chapter would often have been characterized by forms of resistance or subversion. In Mary Cassatt's *Little Girl in a Blue Armchair* (1878), according to Thomas's interpretation, the child squirms in the face of society's attempt to discipline her body – an attempt for which music, as this chapter has argued, could be an important vehicle (see Plate 2).[171] Cassatt's paintings of children generally celebrate a loose, happy inelegance with which they hold and inhabit their bodies. In a more directly humorous fashion, Albeniz's 'Yvonne en visite', from the Schola's *Album*, represents the inability or aversion of the eponymous Yvonne to adhere to the ideals of feminine decorum which piano playing was a means of displaying. At one point, the accompanying narrative describes Yvonne performing her 'latest piece' at the piano (Example 2.8). The passage is an imitation of a typical

[171] Thomas, *Impressionist Children*, 59-61, 85.

2. Mary Cassatt, *Little Girl in a Blue Armchair*, 1878
Oil on canvas, 89.5 x 129.8 cm
National Gallery of Art, Washington

children's piano piece, marked '*gauchement*', with instructions to hold 'the fingers stretched out flat on the keyboard'. Albeniz shows a humorous interest in the 'childlike' as a way of holding the body in performance, musically embodying this very embodiment. The next chapter examines how a controversial ballet staging of a canonical *pièce enfantine* realized an equivalent valuation of the 'childlike', as a chaotic, disordered way of moving. The central character of this ballet, an obnoxious bourgeois girl, satirized the ideals promoted by the subject-matter of this chapter – the 'barrage' of material about childhood (musical as well as visual and literary) to which the bourgeois family was subjected in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century France.

CHAPTER THREE | Dancing *Dolly*

> These are little meditations inspired by childhood, offered in homage to childhood, full of tenderness, of softness, sometimes cheerful and lively too, but always intimate and made to evoke a calm 'nursery' atmosphere. […] So isn't it undoubtedly a paradox […] that [Louis Laloy] has gathered together, to illustrate these children's pieces, a pantomime, childlike to be sure, but incoherent, *noisy*, muddled, *set in the open air*, where there are clowns slapping each other about, a hoodwinked nurse, a toy-selling rabbit and who knows what else? And which is in absolute and chaotic disharmony with M. Fauré's exquisite music.[1]

This was Reynaldo Hahn's response to *Dolly*, a highly successful ballet mounted at the Théâtre des Arts in Paris in January 1913. The musical 'meditations' to which Hahn referred were the movements of Fauré's *Dolly Suite*, performed in Henri Rabaud's orchestration.[2] (Since the ballet and Fauré's suite have the same title, I refer in this chapter to the ballet as *Dolly* and to Fauré's music always as the *Dolly Suite*, to avoid potential ambiguity.) As these remarks suggest, *Dolly* exemplified two important elements of early twentieth-century theatrical ballet in France, challenging as it did perceptions of congruity between music and dance, and appropriating circus and music-hall entertainment. Overshadowed by the spectacles of the Ballets Russes, this production has not been investigated in detail. The ballet was presented in the Parisian press as a form of choreographic criticism of Fauré's suite that dismantled the interpretative framework which conventionally guided its hearing.

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[1] 'Ce sont de petites méditations inspirées par l'enfance, offertes en hommage à l'enfance, pleines de tendresse, de douceur, parfois aussi riantes et animées, mais toujours intimes et faites pour évoquer une calme atmosphere de "nursery". […] Aussi est-ce sans doute en manière de paradoxe […] qu'il a combiné, pour illustrer ces pièces enfantines, une pantomime, puérile à vrai dire, mais incohérente, *bruyante*, confuse, *qui se passe en plein air*, où il y a des clowns qui se donnent des gifles, une nourrice bernée, un lapin marchand de jouets, que sais-je encore? et qui est en désaccord absolu et discontinu avec l'exquise musique de M. Fauré' (emphasis original). Reynaldo Hahn, 'La musique', *Le Journal*, 12 January 1913, 3.

[2] Fauré's four-hand original was premièred by Alfred Cortot and Édouard Risler at the Société Nationale in April 1898. Hamelle published Rabaud's orchestration in 1906.

A more favourable critic than Hahn called *Dolly* an 'explosive little intellectual *fantaisie*', an assessment which prompts my examination of the ballet.[3] Making sense of this curious production involves investigating its close relation with diverse contexts and art forms, such as early comic film, music-hall entertainment, the market for children's literature, and medical and anthropological theories. Hahn and his contemporaries (like today's critics) heard the *Dolly Suite* as embodying a particular attitude towards childhood, a perception informed by the work's titles and by knowledge of the circumstances of its creation. For Hahn, Louis Laloy's 'pantomime' sought to intertwine the movement of Fauré's music with 'childlike' movement of a quite different character – 'puérile' rather than 'enfantine'.[4] The ballet sheds light on, and is illuminated by, the highly contested valuation of the childlike (an aesthetic category with important political dimensions, as the previous chapters have shown) in early twentieth-century French culture.

Laloy's choreography, I suggest, sought to distance Fauré's music from a particular mawkish, moralizing attitude towards childhood increasingly scorned by contemporaneous literary thought. *Dolly* marks a revealing moment in a wider artistic revaluation of the childlike as an irrational condition, comic and chaotic, though suffused with innocence. This revaluation reached its conclusion in the heterogeneous movement we call surrealism. Like several other ballets from the 1910s, *Dolly*'s exploration of the theme of childhood involved appropriating the gestural language of clowning. According to popular thought, this language enacted the manifestations of various pathological conditions in which unruly nerves overran the mind's 'higher' faculties. Provocatively and problematically, the ballet implicitly presented Fauré's

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[3] 'Une petite fantaisie intellectuelle explosive'. Émile Vuillermoz, 'Les théâtres', *La Revue musicale S.I.M.*, 1 February 1913, 43–46 (p. 45). 'Fantaisie' had the general meaning of imagination or fancy; as a description of an artwork, it denoted something 'free and capricious' ('libre et de capriceux'), expressing a 'taste for the bizarre and ephemeral' ('goût bizarre et passager'). *Petit Larousse illustré: Nouveau dictionnaire encyclopédique*, 47th edn, edited by. Pierre Larousse and Claude Augé (Paris, 1909), 380 (s. v. 'Fantaisie').

[4] Lindberg gives a cogent account of perceptions of childhood embodied in the *Dolly Suite*, focusing on its manifestations of nostalgia, in 'Through the Looking Glass', 30–59.

music as generating versions of these 'choreas' – nervous disorders characterized by spasmodic physiological symptoms.[5] As Hahn hinted, the established associations of Fauré's music emphasized a perception of this dancing as a corporeal manifestation of the childlike.

Choreographic disharmony

Dolly belonged to the second of three 'spectacles de musique' with which Jacques Rouché concluded his three-year directorship of the Théâtre des Arts. Lynn Garafola calls his directorship 'an important episode in the history of early twentieth-century French theater'.[6] Rouché's directorial ambitions included restaging eighteenth-century lyric repertoire, reviving French operettas from the recent past and promoting contemporary French compositions in their capacities as ballet music, whether arranged or specially created for this purpose. Rouché's theatrical uses of contemporary French music manifested an apparent penchant for childhood-related subject matter. In 1912, he had staged a ballet version of Maurice Ravel's *Ma Mère l'Oye*, arranged by the composer from the original piano version. In April 1913, the theatre would première *Le Festin de l'araignée* (*The Spider's Feast*), a 'ballet-pantomime' comparable to *Dolly*, with music by Albert Roussel and a scenario by Gilbert de Voisins.[7] In his review of *Dolly* in *Le Théâtre*, H. Décé noted that in general Rouché's 'musical spectacles' open 'visions of dream, landscapes from long ago or fairytales from today'.[8]

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[5] See *Trésor de la langue française: Dictionnaire de la langue du XIXe et du XXe siècle (1789–1960)*, 16 vols. (Paris, 1971–94), v (1977), 752 (s. v. 'Chorée'). These disorders are often caused by a disease of the basal ganglia (*Oxford Concise Medical Dictionary*, 8th edn, edited by Elizabeth Martin (Oxford, 2010), 139, s. v. 'Chorea'); the term may simply refer to the physiological symptoms.

[6] Lynn Garafola, 'Forgotten Interlude: Eurhythmic Dancers at the Paris Opéra', *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research* 13/1 (1995), 59–83 (p. 60).

[7] For details of the theatre's repertoire, see *ibid*., 61–2, and Lynn Garafola, *Legacies of Twentieth Century Dance* (Middletown, CT, 2005), 86–87. Novel approaches to the interrelationship of décor, music and dance also characterized Rouché's productions. See also Dominique Garban, *Jacques Rouché, l'homme qui sauva l'Opéra de Paris* (Paris, 2007), 71.

[8] 'Spectacles de musique'; 'des visions de rêve, paysages de jadis ou féeries d'aujourd'hui'. H. Décé, 'Théâtre des Arts', *Le Théâtre*, 340 II (February 1913), 17–20 (p. 17).

The ballet's choreographer, Léo Staats, who worked on most of Rouché's ballets, usually employed dancers 'from the concert stage and commercial world'.[9] The clowns to whom Hahn referred were Tommy and Georgey Foottit, sons of George Foottit (also a clown), who had achieved immense success at the Nouveau Cirque from the 1890s.[10] The sons also played the mantises in *Le Festin de l'araignée*. Laloy, who wrote the scenario for *Dolly*, described it in his 1928 memoirs as 'a sort of danced skit, [which] showed for the first time (to my knowledge) on a theatre stage the burlesque of the circus and the music-hall'.[11] In general, the 'burlesque' as an artistic mode embraced 'extravagant ideas in the service of farcical, even vulgar, expressions'. In the context of language and comportment, it implied 'clumsy buffoonery serv[ing] the purposes of laughter or mockery'.[12] Here, in the sense of 'buffoonery', the term referred especially to a distinctive quality of movement that characterized the performance styles of various interrelated entertainment genres of the day – clown routines, other comic *pochades* (sketches), non-academic dance numbers, acrobatic routines and various styles of singing. To varying degrees, they were all staple genres in the late belle-époque music-hall, café-concert, circus and *fête foraine*, although the extravagance with which they were staged was as varied as these venues' prices and clienteles.[13]

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[9] Garafola, *Legacies of Twentieth Century Dance*, 59.

[10] For descriptions of other music-hall dancers at the Théâtre des Arts, see *ibid*., 87–89.

[11] 'Sorte de sketch dansant, montrait pour la première fois, à ma connaissance, sur une scène de théâtre, le burlesque du cirque et du music-hall'. Louis Laloy, *La Musique rétrouvée* (Paris, 1928), 198.

[12] 'Des idées extravagantes à l'aide d'expressions bouffonnes, voire triviales'; 'dont la bouffonnerie assez grossière porte au rire ou à la mocquerie'. *Trésor de la langue française*, iv (1975), 1072–1073 (s. v. 'Burlesque').

[13] Laloy himself wrote a series of articles on the music-hall in 1913 in *La Revue musicale S. I. M*., which describe the sketches and *revues* at some notable venues. The scholarship I have found especially helpful in understanding the performance styles of popular entertainment has been that of Rae Beth Gordon: 'From Charcot to Charlot: Unconscious Imitation and Spectatorship in French Cabaret and Early Cinema', *Critical Inquiry*, 27 (2001), 515–549; *Why the French Love Jerry Lewis: From Cabaret to Early Cinema* (Stanford, CA, 2001); and *Dances with Darwin, 1875–1910: Vernacular Modernity in France* (Aldershot, 2008). For a detailed study of the large-scale pantomime-ballets that appeared alongside these genres in Paris's largest music-halls, see Sarah Gutsche-Miller, *Parisian Music-Hall Ballet, 1871–1913* (Rochester, NY, 2015).

Laloy's remark implicitly claimed precedence over a series of music-theatrical events that appeared several years after *Dolly*. Indeed, after his brief outline of the ballet, Fauré's biographer Jean-Michel Nectoux speculates that Jean Cocteau might have borrowed some of the characters of *Parade* from the 'tiresome little girl, a dancer, [and] acrobatic clowns' that appeared in *Dolly*.[14] Certainly, various notable productions in the 1910s and early 1920s also choreographed the gestural patterns of 'burlesque' (if in quite different ways) through their own appropriations of music-hall entertainment. They were principally ballets with scenarios by Cocteau and music by Erik Satie and members of *Les Six* – such as *Parade* (1917), a 'spectacle-concert' (1920) and the *pièce-ballet, Les Mariés de la tour Eiffel* (1921).[15] A slightly later instance appears in Colette and Ravel's *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* (1925). Laloy conveniently overlooked earlier, less direct and rather different theatrical realizations of 'burlesque' such as Alfred Jarry and Claude Terrasse's *Ubu Roi* (1896) and Michael Fokine and Igor Stravinsky's *Pétrouchka* (1911).[16] Dolly, the eponymous protagonist of Laloy's ballet, marks the beginning of a succession of musical child-characters that appeared in some of these theatrical works: the Little American Girl of *Parade*, the child-figure in *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel*, and the protagonist of *L'Enfant*. These are transgressive figures at the centre of a surreal world involving the 'burlesque' of popular entertainment. They may not be similar enough to be regarded as instances of a single type, but their affinities suggest a common pattern of thought about the childlike, imagined choreographically as much as musically.

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[14] Jean-Michel Nectoux, *Gabriel Fauré: A Musical Life*, translated by Roger Nichols (Cambridge, 1991), 63.

[15] For details of the production and reception of these ballets, see Frank W. D. Ries, *The Dance Theatre of Jean Cocteau* (Ann Arbor, 1986). See also Nancy Perloff, *Art and the Everyday: Popular Entertainment and the Circle of Erik Satie* (Oxford, 1991).

[16] At least one other possible precedent had appeared at the Théâtre des Arts: a satire of music-hall revues staged in the spring of 1912 with music by Florent Schmitt. See Denis Herlin, 'André Hellé et *La boîte à joujoux*', *Cahiers Debussy* 30 (2006), 98–122 (p. 108).

Hahn was not alone in considering the character of the 'burlesque' and the content of the ballet's scenario to be 'out of tune' with the character of Fauré's music. Pierre Lalo wrote in *Le Temps*:

> [The action] could just as well be superimposed onto whatever other music you want, onto the *Siegfried Idyll,* for example, or indeed *L'Après-midi d'un faune* […]. We've been given, on top of the fine music of *Dolly*, a muddled clownery.[17]

The disconcerted Georges Pioch admitted that 'listening to […] this supple and tender music […] doesn't begin to prompt in me the frolicking which indisputably entertained the public yesterday'.[18] Émile Vuillermoz, a friend of Laloy's who 'shared his taste' for the music-hall, was effectively the ballet's spokesperson in the press.[19] Vuillermoz delighted in, rather than downplayed, the provocative relation between music and action. Using Dolly as a metonym for the production itself, he declared that she had 'abandoned herself to the artists of the music-hall, circus and Montmartre cabaret while calling herself – supreme impertinence! – the Director of the Conservatoire!'[20] He acknowledged that the ballet raised, among many other things, 'aesthetic problems'.[21]

For Lalo, the explanation was clear: 'The Russians […] have managed to corrupt our sense of harmony and unity':[22]

> we've become used to […] applauding choreographic entertainments which gather together a musical work not written for this purpose with an action that has

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[17] 'On la superposerait tout aussi bien à n'importe quelle autre musique, à Siegfried Idyll par exemple, ou bien à l'Après-midi d'un faune […]. C'est ainsi qu'on nous montre, sur la fine musique de Dolly, une clownerie échevelée.' Pierre Lalo, 'Le deuxième "spectacle de musique" du Théâtre des Arts', *Le Temps*, 28 January 1913, 3.

[18] 'L'audience de […] cette souple et tendre musique […] ne m'entraîne à aucun des ébats dont le public s'est, hier, franchement diverti'. Georges Pioch, 'Théâtre des Arts', *Gil Blas*, 10 January 1913, 4–5 (p. 4).

[19] See Laloy, *La Musique rétrouvée*, 198. Vuillermoz had also been Fauré's pupil.

[20] 'Elle l'a livré aux artistes de music-hall, de cirque et de cabarets montmartrois en se réclamant – impertinence suprême! – du Directeur du Conservatoire!' Vuillermoz, 'Les théâtres', 45.

[21] 'De problèmes esthétiques'. *Ibid*.

[22] 'Les Russes […] ont achevé de corrompre en nous le sentiment de l'harmonie et de l'unité.' Lalo, 'Le deuxième "spectacle de musique"'.

> not the least relation to this musical work, or even with a meaning exactly contrary to it.[23]

His pointed reference to *L'Après-midi d'un faune* recalled Nijinsky's choreography of Debussy's tone-poem the previous year. As Davinia Caddy observes, this production is generally considered 'one of the first examples of a dissonant – theorists might call it "anempathetic" – relation between music and visuals'.[24] Garafola describes Rouché's tenure at the Théâtre des Arts as both 'clearly indebted to the fusionist ideology […] of the Ballets Russes' and 'a Gallic antidote' to their 'cosmopolitanism'.[25] Certainly, critics of all persuasions understood *Dolly* through reference to Ballets Russes innovations. Vuillermoz stated:

> We haven't had in France since the revelations of the Ballets Russes an experiment in synaesthesia worthy of comparison with this. […] We can get quick revenge by fighting on the terrain of fantasy, wit and good spirits […]. Only we have the key to certain subtle musical enigmas.[26]

This 'experiment in synaesthesia', Vuillermoz suggested, aimed to create 'new associations of ideas between a melody, a gesture and a feeling'.[27] As well as 'aesthetic problems', the ballet manifested 'criticisms in action'.[28] Vuillermoz explained this idea by invoking a precedent. This was not *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, but Fokine and Bakst's 1910 staging of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*:

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[23] 'nous nous sommes accoutumés […] à applaudir des divertissements chorégraphiques dans lesquels on réunit, une oeuvre musicale qui n'a pas été faite pour cela, une action qui n'a pas le moindre rapport avec cette oeuvre musicale, ou même dont le sens lui est exactement contraire.' Lalo, 'Le deuxième "spectacle de musique"'. See also Lalo, 'La musique', *Le Temps*, 11 June 1912, 3.

[24] Davinia Caddy, *The Ballets Russes and Beyond: Music and Dance in Belle-Époque Paris* (Cambridge, 2012), 68. See also Stephanie Jordan, 'Debussy, the Dance, and the Faune', in *Debussy in Performance*, edited by James Briscoe (London, 1999), 119–134.

[25] Garafola, *Legacies of Twentieth Century Dance*, 86, 59.

[26] 'Nous n'avons pas eu en France depuis la révélation des ballets russes une expérience de synesthésie digne d'être comparée à celle-là. […] Nous pouvons prendre une prompte revanche en luttant sur le terrain de la fantaisie, de l'esprit et de la bonne humeur […]. Nous sommes seuls à posséder la clef de certaines subtiles énigmes musicales.' Vuillermoz, 'Les théâtres', 45.

[27] 'Des associations d'idées nouvelles entre une mélodie, un geste et un sentiment'. *Ibid*.

[28] 'Critiques en action'. *Ibid*.

> [Dolly] seeks to justify herself by evoking that bewitching Scheherazade which, despite its preordained form as a maritime tableau, has become, through the tyrannical imagination of a ballet master, a very eloquent and precise commentary upon an adventure in a harem![29]

For Vuillermoz, Laloy and Staats's ballet sought to exploit dance's proven potential to transform how we hear a familiar piece, replacing or refreshing images that become inextricable from the act of listening. Fauré's suite seemed to occupy both its own sphere of meaning, distinct from that of the action (preserving 'something of its original identity', as a pre-existing work), and the more comprehensive sphere of meaning encompassed by the ballet's 'composite form', in which it found a new identity as one with the action.[30] *Dolly*'s choreography exploited a tension between these two identities.

Physical translations

How exactly could dance serve as 'criticism'? Hahn and Ravel and other reviewers conceived the role of balletic action as 'illustration', a matching of gestural to musical character.[31] As 'illustration', the ballet's choreography tested the possibility of the 'transfer of attributes' (to borrow Nicholas Cook's phrase) from dance to music and vice versa.[32] Vuillermoz conceived the action's role differently, describing dance at one point as 'physical translations' of musical rhythm.[33] In doing so, he reflected a wider preoccupation of the time. In the issue of *Comoedia illustré* that preceded the one

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[29] 'Elle cherche à se justifier en évoquant cette prestigieuse Shéhérazade qui malgré sa prédestination formelle de tableau maritime est devenue, de par la fantaisie tyrannique d'un maître de ballet, le commentaire très éloquent et très précis d'une aventure de harem!' *Ibid*., 45–46.

[30] Stephanie Jordan, 'Choreomusical Conversations: Facing a Double Challenge', *Dance Research Journal* 43/1 (2011), 43–64 (pp. 47–48).

[31] Hahn, 'La Musique'; Maurice Ravel, 'Au Théâtre des Arts', *Comoedia illustré*, 5 February 1913, 417–20, translated by Orenstein, reprinted in *A Ravel Reader*, 362–365.

[32] Nicholas Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia* (Oxford, 1998). This chapter focuses on the imagery employed by contemporaneous commentators to conceive intermedial relations.

[33] See below, note 59.

containing Ravel's review of *Dolly*, a full-page advertisement promoted Régnier's *The Harmony of Gesture*.[34] Régnier's manual illustrates the literalness with which contemporaneous French thought embraced the idea that dance 'embodies' musical character. It also exemplified a prevailing culture against which *Dolly* was reacting – the obsessive cultivation of 'civilized' ideals (including corporeal ideals of femininity) in future citizens.

An important proponent of the Dalcrozian thought from which Régnier's book stemmed was Jean d'Udine, whose writings, as Caddy observes, proposed a 'parallelism between music and movement that exalted their shared basis in […] movements of the soul'.[35] In the work of psycho-physiologists such as Charles Féré, and of philosophers such as Henri Bergson, perception had its basis in (usually) imperceptible muscular contractions – instinctive mimesis of motion in the object of perception.[36] Music was a central example of a sensory stimulus generating motor reaction. Albert de Rochas proposed that music's corporeal effects were automatic and coercive, different 'notes' determining 'different muscular contractions'.[37] These ideas elevated dance's significance as an interpretation of its accompanying music, since the question 'What movement does the music induce?' tends towards the question 'What is the music's character?' Gesture approaches the status of a musical performance, and vice versa (as Régnier's manual demonstrates). Staats and Laloy exploited the currency of these ideas, to which 'disharmonious' choreographies were also a natural reaction, since conceiving gesture as rendering music in physical form threatens dance with redundancy. Pioch's bewilderment at the ballet's 'frolicking' shows the importance of

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[34] Régnier, *L'Harmonie du geste,* 393.

[35] Caddy, *The Ballets Russes*, 102. Jean d'Udine '(whose real name was Albert Cozanet) had promoted Dalcrozian ideas in 'Qu'est-ce que la gymnastique rhythmique?', *Bulletin français de la S. I. M.*, 15 June 1909, 635–651. Like Laloy, Dalcroze had written for *La Grande revue*, which Rouché had edited: Émile Jacques-Dalcroze, 'Le rhythme au théâtre', *La Grande revue*, 10 June 1910, 339–350.

[36] See Caddy, *The Ballets Russes*, 106, and Gordon, 'From Charcot to Charlot', 518–522.

[37] Cited in Caddy, *The Ballets Russes*, 106. The quotations are from Caddy's translation of a passage from a paper by de Rochas entitled 'L'origine physiologique des arts de la musique et de la danse' and given at the Congrès de Grenoble, 1904.

kinaesthetic empathy to contemporaneous thought about dance. The question that underpinned his mode of spectatorship was: Does Fauré's music prompt this in me?

Not all spectators shared Pioch's response to this question. Ravel agreed so far as the 'Berceuse' went: 'The contrast is too obvious between this gracious, slow, and subdued melody, and the angry stamping of a little girl, the pirouettes and slaps in the face of the two Pierrots […], who, between two caprioles, pester […] a frolicsome nurse.'[38] 'But except for this detail,' he continued, 'the action is adapted so skilfully to the music that the music seems to have been composed in order to illustrate it.' In fact, hardly any of the short reviews in daily, non-specialist newspapers remarked on a 'disharmony' between the character of the music and that of the dance. Henri Quittard, for instance, in *Le Figaro*, reported that 'Laloy has arranged a ballet of a subtle and charming fantasy'.[39] The revival of *Dolly* in May was applauded in *Le Matin* as the 'tender, comic and delicious ballet of Messieurs Gabriel Fauré and Louis Laloy'.[40] Hahn himself despairingly acknowledged *Dolly*'s warm public reception. Rouché's packed programme precluded a long run, but significantly he concluded his final show as director of the Théâtre des Arts with a performance of Laloy and Staats's ballet.[41]

Caddy suggests in relation to *L'Après-midi d'un faune* that to become immersed in debates about whether the action 'matched' the dance is to miss the point. She proposes that *Faune*, resisting 'conventional paradigms' of signification, exemplified modernism's broad reaction against the 'comforts of verisimilitude and mimesis'.[42] She refers to Hans Gumbrecht's idea that, in the early twentieth century, artists sought

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[38] Ravel, 'Au Théâtre des Arts', 418, translated by Orenstein, reprinted in *A Ravel Reader*, 365. 'Cabriole' could refer to the balletic gesture, or more generally to a cavorting movement, a tumble or somersault.

[39] 'M. Louis Laloy a disposé un ballet d'une fantaisie subtile et charmante'. Henri Quittard, 'Théâtre des Arts', *Le Figaro*, 10 January 1913, 4. See also Régis Gignoux, 'Avant le rideau', *Le Figaro*, 8 January 1913, 4.

[40] 'Le tendre, comique et délicieux ballet de MM. Gabriel Fauré et Louis Laloy'. 'Théâtres et concerts', *Le Matin*, 20 May 1913, 4.

[41] The theatre put on 44 different shows in three seasons, creating 91 different décors. Garban, *Jacques Rouché*, 157.

[42] Caddy, *The Ballets Russes*, 100, 98.

to evade the systems of signification governing conventional aesthetic interpretation, attempting to rediscover instead the 'sensual qualities' of those elements that had hitherto been primarily 'signifiers'.[43] Nijinsky's choreography, then, 'tests the limits of musical signifiers, strains their significance'.[44] I suggest that we might think of the action of *Dolly*, and the wide range of responses that it generated, in the same ways. The basic role of Laloy's staging of the *Dolly Suite* was to obstruct and unsettle the posing of questions about the music, in so far as their answers were already routine: 'What does it mean?', 'What does it signify?'.

By virtue of being a ballet, *Dolly* in some sense interpreted Fauré's music as 'embodying' the burlesque of the music-hall and circus sketch. But it tested and toyed with the limits of this perception. Like *Faune*, it could also be meaningful in ways clarified by, and demanding, a form of 'audio-visual analysis' that is not 'staunchly analogical'.[45] As Ravel's hearing suggests, it could, like *Faune*, shift between modes of choreomusical relation. Comparable practices became more extreme in later theatrical appropriations of circus *clownerie*.[46] Referring to the inter-art relations of *Parade*, Daniel Albright describes the ballet as 'an exercise in coordinate incongruity'.[47] The phrase might also be applied to *Dolly*. The suggestions of what we might call 'non-sense' in the relationship of music and gesture were central to the ballet's carnivalesque aesthetic and, ultimately, to the particular conception of the 'childlike' that it embodied.

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[43] Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, 'Production of Presence, Interspersed with Absence: A Modernist View on Music, Libretti and Staging', translated by. Matthew Tiews, *Music and the Aesthetics of Modernity*, edited by Karol Berger and Anthony Newcomb (Cambridge, 2005) 343–355, (p. 355), Cited in Caddy, *The Ballets Russes*, 101.

[44] *Ibid*., 97.

[45] *Ibid*., 114.

[46] For equivalents in *Le boeuf sur le toit*, see Perloff, *Art and the Everyday*, 183.

[47] Daniel Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and Other Arts* (London, 2000), 185.

The ballet

A production photograph published in *Le Théâtre* arranged the ballet's characters in representative poses (see Figure 3.1). These are, from left to right, the Gypsy (played by a 'M. Miralès'), Dolly (by the English dancer and mime, Eva Reid), the First Clown (Tommy Foottit), the Dancer ('M. Aveline'), the Toy-Selling Rabbit ('M. Marcel Héronville'), the Second Clown (Georgey Foottit), the Nurse ('Mme Varaille') and the Musician ('Pieri Sandrini').[48] The programme booklet contained an account of the ballet's scenario, as well as reproductions of the sketches for each character's costume by Constance Lloyd, who also designed the set and décor.[49] Figure 3.2 shows Lloyd's sketch for one of the Clowns. The action accompanying each of the movements of Fauré's suite was described as follows:[50]

> I – Berceuse
>
> The Toy-Selling Rabbit crosses the bottom of the garden. Dolly arrives unexpectedly, accompanied by the Nurse. She's a spoilt child, who throws her doll on the ground and lacks respect for the Nurse. The cottage at the bend in the path intrigues her and she decides to stay there, enjoying the armchair under the tree. Resigned, the Nurse tucks her in and rocks her. Dolly's expectations are not disappointed: the cottage door opens, two Clowns slip outside and play tricks on the Nurse, who sets off in pursuit of them.
>
> II – Mi-a-ou[51]
>
> The two Clowns entertain Dolly with their dances and their gambols. She agrees, not without apprehension, to dance with them. But then another character appears at the cottage doorstep. It's the Gypsy, who watches the scene and all of a sudden, savagely, knocks one of the Clowns to the ground, where he lies still. The other, weeping, carries away the body of his brother. In the commotion, the Dancer has left. The criminal is arrested and imprisoned in the house.
>
> III – Le Jardin de Dolly
>
> The Dancer displays all his graces to Dolly; he calls the Musician and begs him to play a serenade on his behalf. Dolly likes him [the Dancer] and finds him preferable to the

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[48] Where inconsistently spelt in reviews, the names of the performers are taken from Ravel, 'Au Théâtre des Arts', translated by Orenstein, reprinted in *A Ravel Reader*, 364.

[49] Louis Laloy, *Dolly* (Paris, Théâtre des Arts, 9 January 1913). Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Arts du spectacle, 8-RO-10939.

[50] Laloy, *Dolly*. The original French is given in Appendix I.

[51] Biographers agree that the titles of the second and fourth movements should be 'Messieu Aoul!' and 'Ketty-Valse' respectively (and that that of the sixth should be 'Le pas espagnol'), in preference to the versions given to them in early editions. As a way of acknowledging that listening is inextricable from spectatorship, I use the titles given in the programme.

dolls. He offers her the most beautiful flower in the garden, while the Musician, indifferent at first, gets gradually worked up, stung by jealousy.

IV – Kitty-valse

Dolly has accepted the invitation of the Dancer, but sometimes gets away from him to listen to the Musician, who prowls around miserably. The Dancer is insistent. Dolly leaves both of them.

V – Tendresse

The Musician and the Dancer compete beside the sulking Dolly. They emphasize their talents, they plead with her; indifferent, she provokes them and runs away from them.

VI – Pas espagnol

Suddenly, the Gypsy breaks down the door of his prison, grabs hold of Dolly without a word and drags her away in a dance so ardent that the Dancer, overcome in spite of himself, comes and joins them, soon followed by the two Clowns, resuscitated by the rhythm. The Nurse also joins in; the Musician accompanies them. Nevertheless, the Gypsy rebukes anyone who approaches his conquest, whom he ends up snatching away, leaving the others stupefied. The Toy-Selling Rabbit passes by.

Figure 3.1. Photograph of the production of *Dolly*, *Le Théâtre*, 340 (February 1913). Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Figure 3.2. Constance Lloyd, sketch for Clowns' costume, in Louis Laloy, *Dolly* (Paris, Théâtre des Arts, 9 January 1913), Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Arts du spectacle, 8-RO-10939.

Le Théâtre designated *Dolly* 'a mimed, acrobatic, choreographed *fantaisie*'.[52] Others, as we have seen, designated it a *clownerie* and a *pantomime*.[53] This last term could, of course, denote a wide range of genres involving dance and mime. The most famous examples of the form of 'pantomime' under consideration here were probably the chaotic, absurdist 'nautical' clowning routines staged at the Nouveau Cirque around the turn of the century, often featuring the clowns George Foottit and Rafael Padilla (see

[52] 'Arrangée […] en fantaisie mimique, acrobatique et chorégraphique'. Décé, 'Théâtre des Arts', 20. See also Aderer, 'Theatre des Arts: Représentations musicales', *Le Petit Parisien*, 13 March 1913, 5; and 'Théâtres', *Le Temps*, 11 January 1913, 4.

[53] See, for instance Décé, 'Théâtre des Arts', 20; and Félix Gàiffe, 'Chronique Parisienne: Théâtre des Arts', *Revue francaise de musique*, 1 February 1913, 346–347 (p. 347).

Figure 3.3).[54] Vuillermoz was eager to assert that, in *Dolly*, the circus-style mime, gesture and acrobatics were precisely choreographed: the dancers 'counterpoint Fauré's music with such precise, meticulously established, skilfully planned gestures, under the guise of a disordered fantasy'.[55]

Figure 3.3 Foottit and Padilla at the Nouveau Cirque, from the dossier 'Footit [*sic*] et Chocolat, artistes de cirque: Documents iconographiques', Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Arts du spectacle, 4-ICO PER-9849.

The press descriptions of *Dolly* give us further details. Images of the Rabbit, the Dancer and Dolly appeared in *Le Matin* (see Figure 3.4). The Rabbit was, Vuillermoz observed, 'a young black rabbit wearing stylish lace trousers'.[56] Ravel described its proto-surreal opening move: 'a large fluffy rabbit […] crosses the stage, pushing a carriage overloaded with red balloons'.[57] The clowns' action (in the 'Berceuse', 'Mi-a-

[54] Padilla was known ubiquitously by the racial slur 'Chocolat'. In a well-known chapter from his memoirs, Jean Cocteau recollects the chaotic, proto-surreal character of one of these pantomimes: *Paris Album, 1900–1914*, trans. Margaret Crosland (London, 1987), 56.

[55] '[Les danseurs] contrepointèrent la musique de Fauré de gestes si précis, si minutieusement établis et si savamment prémédités, sous les apparences d'une fantaisie échevelée.' Vuillermoz, 'Les théâtres', 46.

[56] 'Un jeune lapin noir portant un coquet pantalon de dentelles'. *Ibid*., 45.

[57] Ravel, 'Au Théâtre des Arts', translated by. Orenstein, reprinted in *A Ravel Reader,* 364.

ou' and 'Pas espagnol') were often summarized as *cocasserie* (bizarreness, comical antics).[58] Contemporaneous clowns were highly skilled, acrobatic performers. One of Vuillermoz's exclamations is worth quoting in full: 'Whoever didn't enjoy the purely musical flavour of Tommy's fragmented pizzicato, the trills he performs on his head or the waist-twirling of the astounding Espagnol doesn't know the deep joy of the physical stylizations and translations of a rhythm!'[59]

Figure 3.4. Images of characters in *Dolly* published in *Le Matin* (15 January 1913), 5. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

[58] 'Sens et choses de théâtre', *Le Matin*, 15 January 1913, 5; see also Décé, 'Théâtre des Arts', 20.

[59] 'Qui n'a pas goûté la saveur purement musicale des pizzicati disloqués de Tommy, des trilles qu'il exécute sur la tête ou des tours de reins de l'effarant Espagnol, ignore la joie profonde des stylisations et des traductions plastiques d'un rythme'. Vuillermoz, 'Les théâtres', 46.

Dolly herself – the only character explicitly designated by critics as a mime – was routinely described as manifesting a 'grâce mutine' (impish or mischievous grace).[60] The Dancer's movements (in 'Le jardin de Dolly', 'Kitty-valse' and 'Tendresse') seem to have been essentially *danse d'école*, as opposed to the clowning acrobatics and the 'exotic' or 'eccentric' dance styles of the other characters. Vuillermoz noted that 'all Aveline's grace and classical science can't equal the "character" and originality of his companions!'[61] Almost all reviews noted that this 'elegant' performer was hired from the Opéra.[62] Miralès (the dancer who played the Gypsy) was known to be Spanish himself, and his dancing seems to have drawn on an established exotic dance style.[63] The Gypsy's 'diabolical drive' evidently conveyed the frenzy described in the scenario for 'Pas espagnol'.[64] Most critics did not interpret his snatching away of Dolly as an abduction: Gignoux, for example, stated that Dolly 'abandons all her friends for a Spanish pirate'.[65]

What did this action actually look like? As one critic noted, 'The 'easy-going *clowneries* to which the admirers of the mischievous Dolly have abandoned themselves do not narrate themselves: you have to see them.'[66] No footage apparently exists of *Dolly*. Nonetheless, ample footage does exist of the character of the 'burlesque' that Staats sought to choreograph to Fauré's music – the chaotic hyperactivity of conventional circus clowning, acrobatics and comic music-hall pantomime that Hahn found so inappropriate. Lumière filmed several of Foottit's and Padilla's sketches for the Nouveau Cirque in the early 1900s, including 'Acrobates sur la chaise', 'Chaise en

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[60] See Décé, 'Théâtre des Arts', 20; Gignoux, 'Avant le rideau', 4; 'Sens et choses de théâtre'; 'Théâtres et concerts', *L'Humanité: Journal socialiste quotidien*, 20 May 1913, 5.

[61] 'Toute la grâce et la science classique d'Aveline ne purent égaler le "caractère" et le relief de l'interprétation de ses camarades!' Vuillermoz, 'Les théâtres', 46.

[62] See, for instance, Décé, 'Théâtre des Arts', 20. Aveline was possibly Albert Aveline, a member of the Opéra troupe who would go on to become *premier danseur*.

[63] See Ravel, 'Au Théâtre des Arts', translated by Orenstein, reprinted in *A Ravel Reader* , 364.

[64] 'L'entrain endiablé de M. Mirallès'. 'Sens et choses de théâtre'.

[65] 'Dolly […] abandonne tous ces amis pour un pirate espagnol.' Gignoux, 'Avant le rideau', 4. See also Pioch, 'Théâtre des Arts', 5.

[66] 'Les clowneries bon enfant auxquelles se livrent les adorateurs de l'espiègle Dolly ne se racontent pas: il faut les voir.' Gàiffe, 'Chronique Parisienne', 346–347.

bascule' and 'Guillaume Tell'. Throughout the 1900s, George Foottit worked with his sons so that they could inherit and develop his clowning techniques. In her discussions of late belle-époque popular entertainment, Rae Beth Gordon proposes the existence of a general but distinctive, instantly recognizable quality of gait and gesture that characterized music-hall and circus entertainment. She argues that this quality is the 'frenetic, anarchic movement that is so present in early French film comedy'.[67] There is, she claims, a 'continuous line and directing force running from the cabaret and caf'conc' performances of the last quarter of the nineteenth century through the films of Méliès'.[68]

As Georges Sadoul observes, 'early comic films were drawn primarily from and sometimes simply recorded short, familiar music-hall routines'.[69] Richard Abel states that Georges Méliès saw himself as an 'innovative composer of cinematic *revues*'.[70] Many of Méliès's *féeries* and trick films from roughly 1896 to 1904 exhibit circus acrobatics, *clowneries* and comic pantomimes, with a theatre stage effectively constituting the set. These films' characters proceed, as do Padilla and Foottit in the Lumière footage, with a relentless, frenetic jollity, interspersing acrobatics with constant, spasmodic gesticulations.[71] In *Le Cake-walk infernal* (1903), the opening female chorus is succeeded by two white-clad characters. After some cartwheels, the figure on the left bounces rapidly between supporting himself on his feet and on his hands, in replication of Foottit's strange gestures at the end of 'Chaise en bascule' (see Figures 3.5 and 3.6). It is possible that this was a Foottit; either way, these correspondences illustrate the existence of an established repertoire of clowning

[67] Gordon, 'From Charcot to Charlot', 535, 516.
[68] *Ibid*., 535.
[69] Georges Sadoul, *Histoire générale du cinema*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1947–51), ii: *Les Pionniers du cinéma, 1897–1908* (1948), 192, quoted in Richard Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town: French Cinema, 1896–1914* (London, 1994), 87.
[70] Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town*, 62.
[71] As Gordon suggests, later films show that technology did not determine this aesthetic in early film. 'From Charcot to Charlot', 535.

gestures.[72] This gesture could, conceivably, have corresponded to the 'trills [Tommy Foottit] performs on his head'.

Figure 3.5. Foottit and Padilla performing at the Nouveau Cirque, Auguste and Louis Lumière, 'Vues comiques prises au Nouveau Cirque' (Paris, 1900), 'Chaise en bascule', no. 1140.

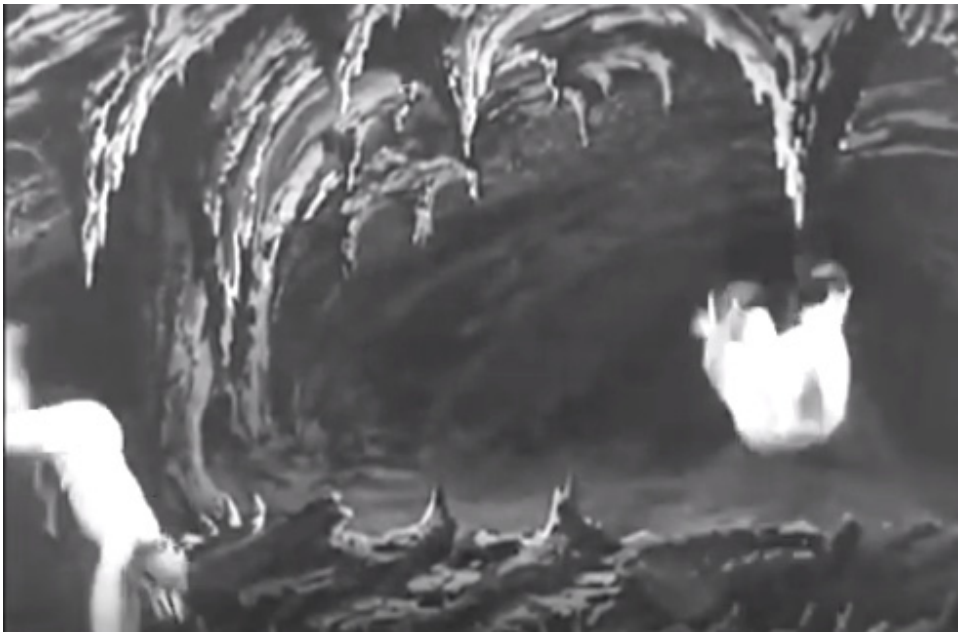


Figure 3.6. Clowning acrobatics in Georges Méliès, *Le Cake-walk infernal* (Paris, 1903).

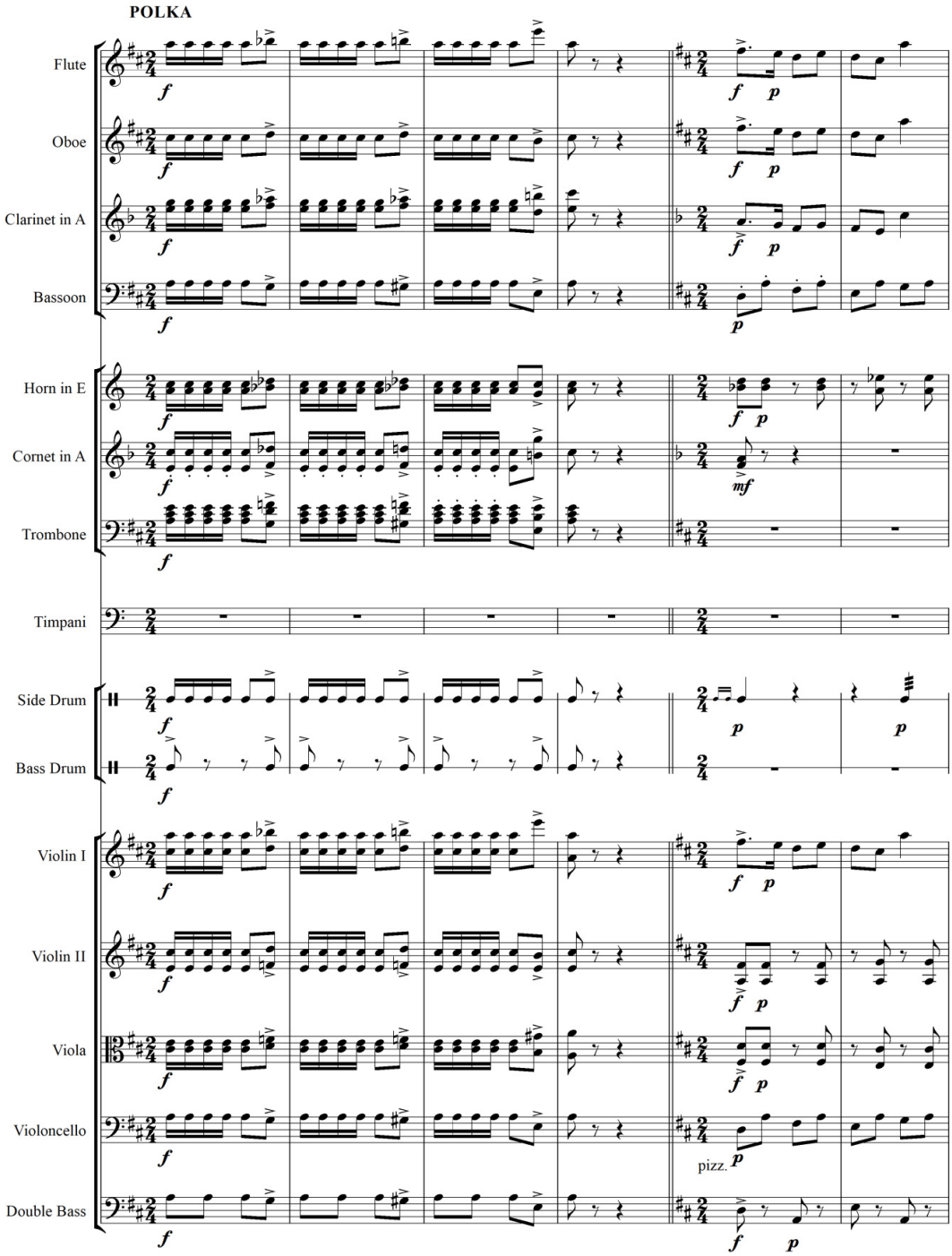
[72] For details of these, see Tristan Rémy, *Entrées clownesques* (Paris, 1962).

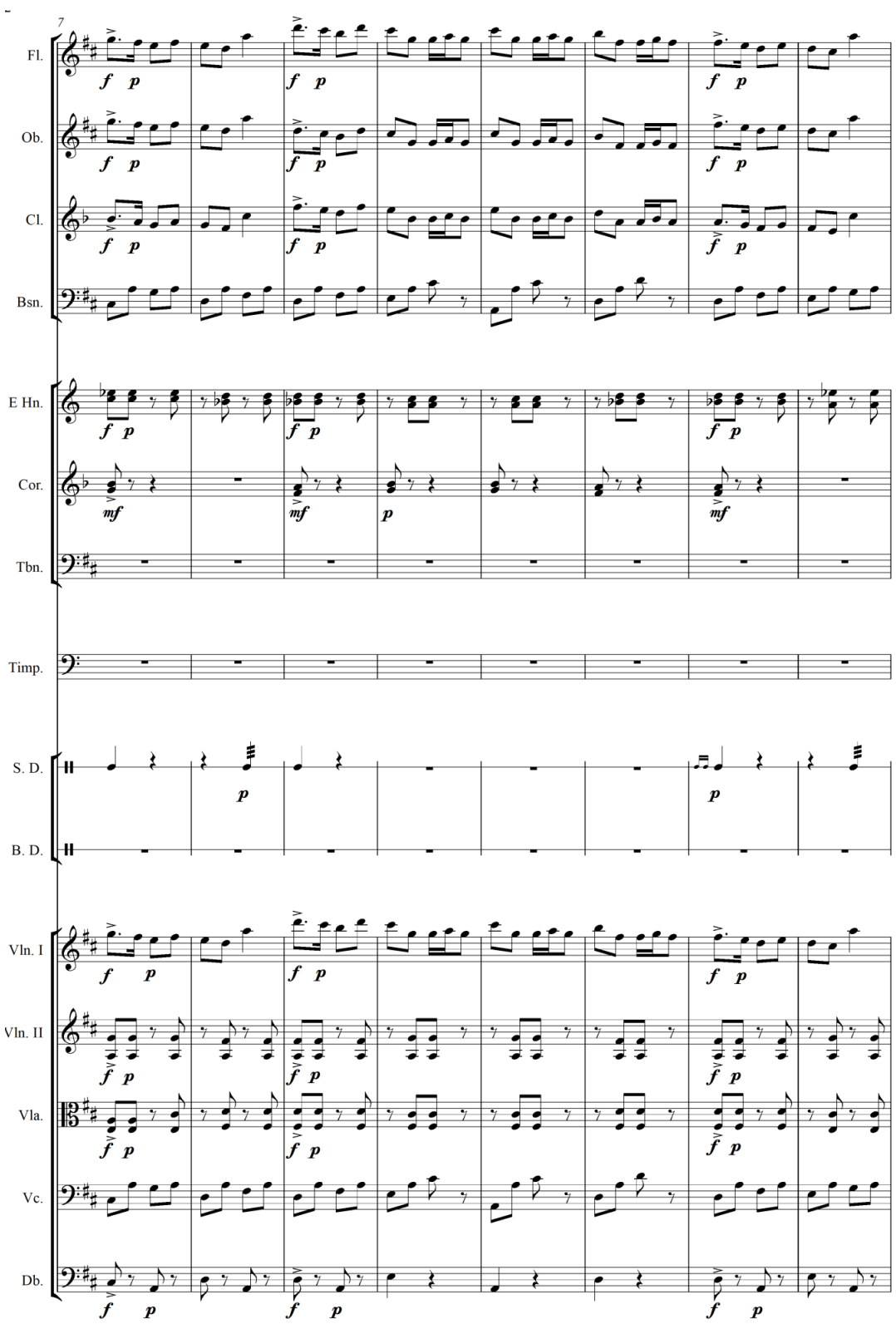
Hahn's, Lalo's and Vuillermoz's responses to the action of *Dolly* arose primarily not from the *way* in which it was a 'clownery', but from the *fact* that it was a 'clownery', and from the character of movement that defined 'clownery' in general. The gestural aesthetic explored by Gordon – this 'frenetic anarchic movement' – was what Staats sought to fit to Fauré's music, above all in the 'Berceuse', 'Mi-a-ou' and 'Pas espagnol'. Almost all reviewers of *Dolly* characterized the ballet in terms of a superabundance of motion. For Aderer, in *Le Petit Parisien*, 'everyone leaps and jumps around'.[73] Several reviews emphasized the performers' toy-like or puppet-like character when describing their frenetic qualities of motion. One described the production as 'a ballet of toys which come alive, dance, race around […], fight each other'.[74] As Gordon has shown, puppets and toys were also common metaphors for the qualities of movement manifested by music-hall and circus performers.[75]

'Criticisms in action'

To what extent, and in what ways, might Fauré's music 'illustrate' or be 'translated' into this 'burlesque'? Circus pantomimes of the day had their own, sometimes specially composed, musical accompaniments. At the Nouveau Cirque, these were usually provided (as was customary) by the circus orchestra's conductor, Laurent Grillet.[76] The title of Grillet's orchestral polka *Footit* [*sic*] *et Chocolat*, whose opening is given in Example 3.1, suggests an attempt to evoke musically the clowns' famous *cocasserie*. Its blithe, diatonic jollity is, of course, broadly characteristic of myriad contemporaneous realizations of popular dance forms, including the polka by Grillet encountered in the previous chapter. The accentuation at the beginning of each iteration of the main theme's principal two-bar motif suggests a manner of performance,

[73] 'Tout cela gambade et sautille.' Aderer, 'Théâtre des Arts'.
[74] 'Un ballet de joujoux qui s'animent, dansent, virevoltent […], se battent'. 'Théâtre des Arts', *Les Annales du théâtre et de la musique*, edited by Noël Édouard and Edmond Stoullig (Paris, 1913), 417–436 (p. 417). For a reference to puppets, see Quittard, 'Théâtre des Arts', 4.
[75] Gordon, *Dances with Darwin*, 34, 46, 49.
[76] 'Échos et nouvelles', *L'Aurore*, 10 January 1899, 1.

signifying 'clowning' in particular, that emphasized its repetitious, foursquare quality. It recalls a wide range of music associated with 'popular' stage forms, from Chabrier to the underlying character of the Barman's theme in Milhaud's *Le Boeuf sur le toit* (a score originally written to accompany a Charlie Chaplin film).[77]

Example 3.1. Opening of Laurent Grillet, *Footit* [sic] *et Chocolat Polka* (Paris, 1899).

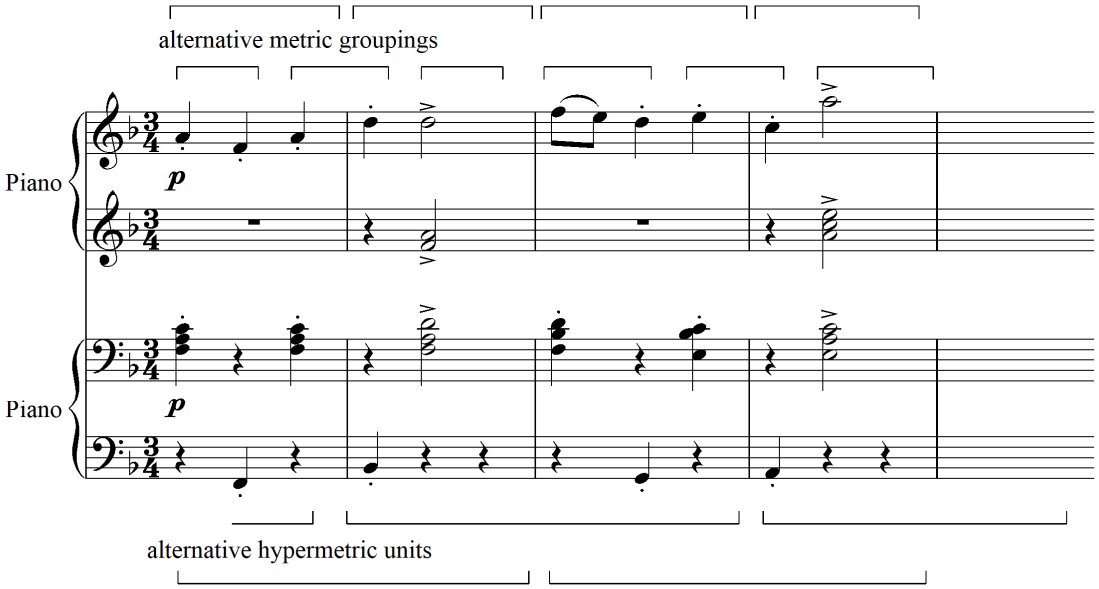
[77] Perloff, *Art and the Everyday*, 44. As Perloff observes, the ballet cast Milhaud as a 'writer of comic circus music'. *Ibid*., 185.

Example 3.1 (continued)

In 1913, *Footit et Chocolat* was arranged in an 'easy' version for the piano sheet-music market, suggesting its continued popularity.[78] The relationship between this music and the clowns' antics might have been perceived in a number of ways: one embodying the other, for instance, or distancing it behind a screen of jollity. Grillet's polka forces us to consider how much our conceptions of the musically 'frenetic' may have altered since 1900, within the wider universe of musical possibilities that determine those conceptions. It supports the idea that a movement such as Fauré's 'Mi-a-ou' ('Messieu Aoul!') could, as Ravel stated, successfully 'illustrate' a version of Foottit's frenetic, spasmodic motions.

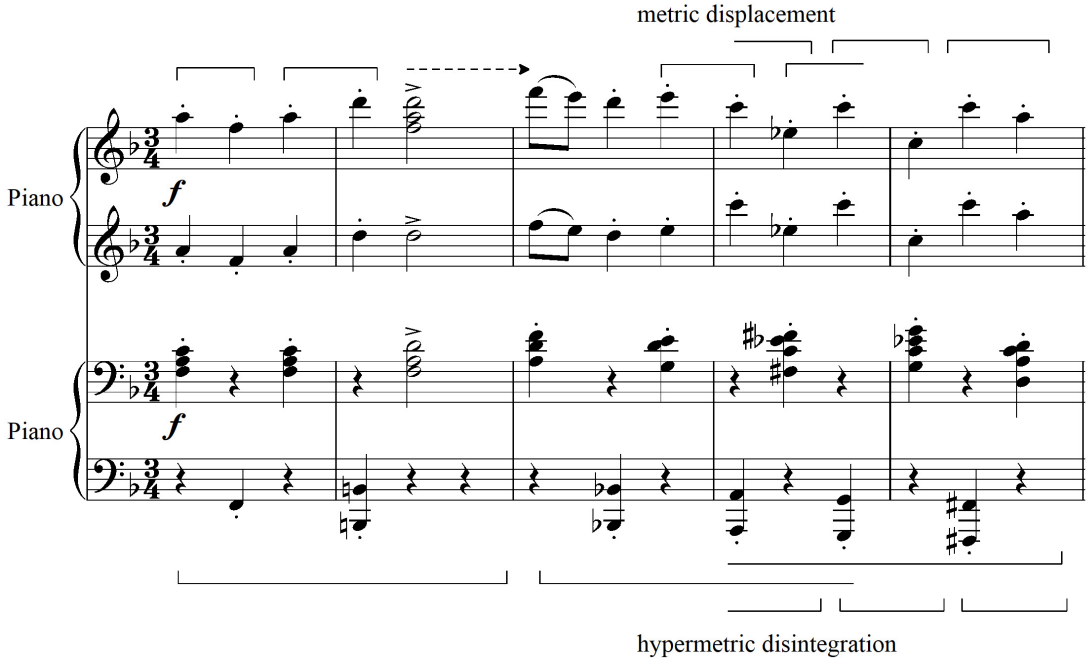
What was the 'fragmented' quality that Vuillermoz found translated in Tommy Foottit's 'pizzicato'? Vuillermoz's remark identifies the A section of the suite's second movement. The main theme of 'Mi-a-ou' is evidently characterized by an infiltration of the triple time by a duple metre. This metric tension is complemented by an underlying hypermetric one: the shape of the melody, harmonic movement and metric instability of the bass part casts the first bar as much as a hypermetric upbeat as anything else (see Example 3.2). In the theme's reiteration at bar 21 (and later at bar 104), these tensions are more pronounced. As Example 3.3 indicates, our expectations establish the same duple metre across the triple time; but from bar 24, both these metric possibilities become overrun by another duple impulse, established by the bass line and the melodic figuration. The two-bar hypermetric pattern is also interrupted at bar 24, and its replacement is then itself cut short at bar 31. The effect approaches a kind of hypermetric freefall that comes abruptly to a halt with the perfect cadence. We can hear these constant dislocations as more than mere surface tension, and instead as irruptive, comically disjointed. The melodic disjuncture in the upper parts accentuates this 'dislocated' quality. The suite's second movement arguably combines the regular

[78] Laurent Grillet, *Footitt* [*sic*] *et chocolat (polka)*, arr. Angelino Trojelli (Paris, 1913).

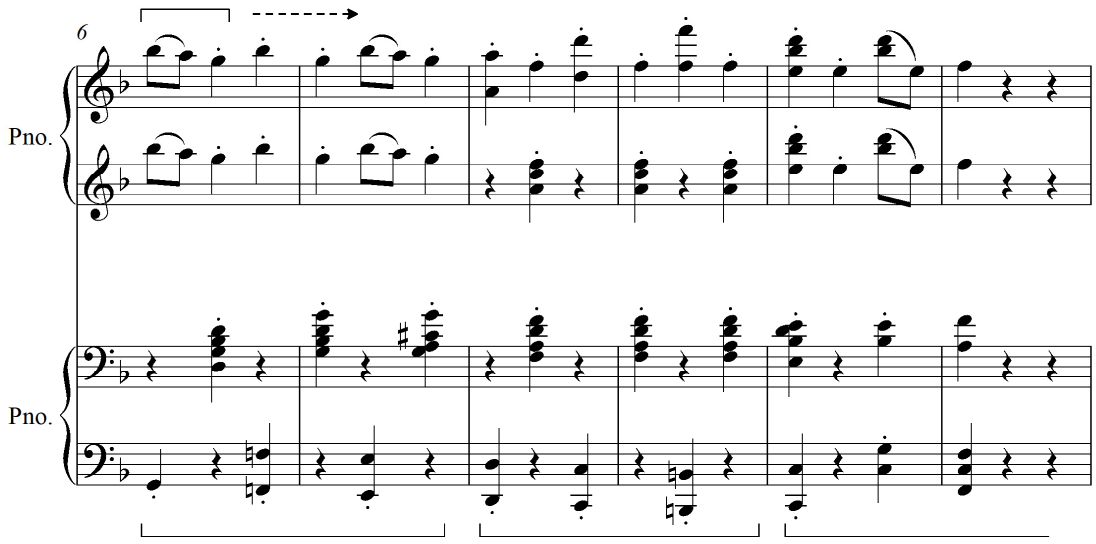
phraseology that accompanied music-hall dancing with an aestheticization of the frenetic, even spasmodic qualities of that dance.[79]



Example 3.2. Metric and hypermetric tension in Gabriel Fauré, *Dolly Suite*, op. 56, 1897 (London, 2010), 'Messieu Aoul!' ('Mi-a-ou'), bars 5–8. All subsequent extracts from this work refer to this edition. (I use the original piano version, rather than the orchestral arrangement that accompanied the ballet, for ease and clarity of reference.)

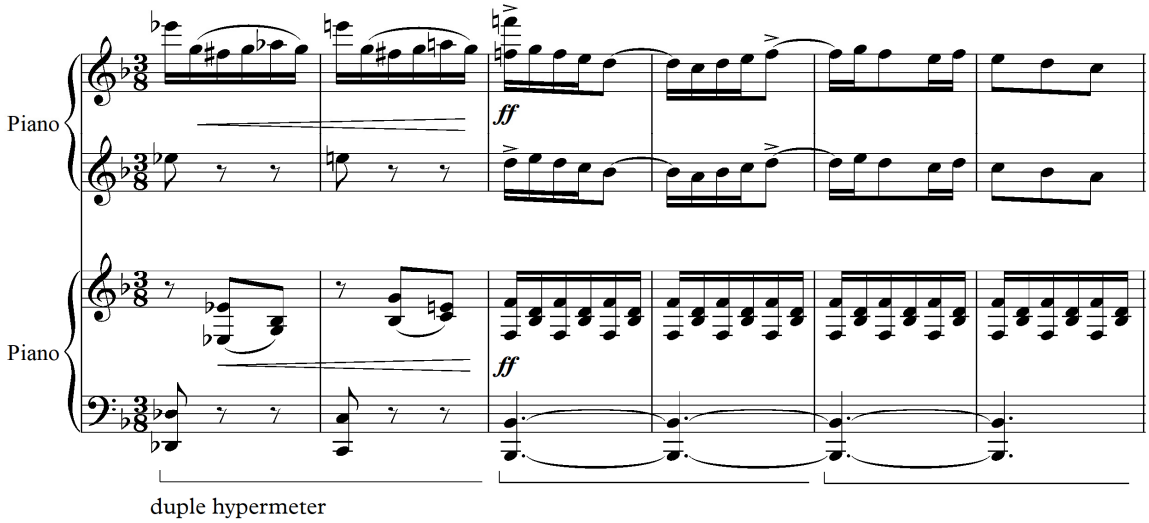


Example 3.3. Metric displacement in Fauré, *Dolly Suite*, 'Messieu Aoul!' ('Mi-a-ou'), bars 21–31.

[79] Perhaps significantly, these features are also central to Satie's music for the Acrobats' show in *Parade*. There, the waltz's opening is, as in 'Mi-a-ou', peppered with hemiola rhythms.

Example 3.3. (continued)

The scenario for 'Pas espagnol', the height of the ballet's *clownerie*, also draws attention to the metric and hypermetric play that characterizes this movement, such as the initial metric ambiguity of the opening phrase and the regular interjections of hemiola patterns. Example 3.4 shows perhaps its most vivacious moment of 'waist-twirling', when the subdominant breaks through in place of what is emphatically prepared as the tonic (bar 139). This breakthrough, with its dynamic swirling figure (first heard at bar 65), spins free from and momentarily disrupts the movement's driving duple hypermetre: with the bass at a standstill, at bar 141 the strong hypermetric beat is not, for once, stressed by the melodic voice, while the following weak beat is confounded by the emphatic hemiola in bars 141 and 142. Roy Howat notes the 'affectionately witty' qualities of 'Pas espagnol', and its significance as an 'obvious riposte to Chabrier's *España*'.[80] The scenario brings the movement's comic strain to the fore. The antics of the pointedly 'exotic' Gypsy figure with his castanets, which appealed to the percussion section introduced by Rabaud's full-blooded

[80] Roy Howat, *The Art of French Piano Music* (London, 2009), 130, 140.

orchestration, insist on the self-consciousness of this musical exercise in 'Spanishness'.[81]

Example 3.4. Fauré, *Dolly Suite*, 'Pas espagnol', bars 137–42

What did the ballet 'do' to the suite's slower movements (to echo Caddy's question about *L'Après-midi*)?[82] For these movements in particular, the scenario's absurdities might read as mocking the tenderness that listeners such as Hahn found in Fauré's music. The 'grotesque' Musician (as several critics described him), who plays in 'Le jardin de Dolly', 'Kitty-valse' and (the scenario implies) 'Tendresse', was an echo of the circus type of 'musical clown'. One famous example was the Fratellinis' *The Cello Parody*, which delivered a 'mock performance of Romantic melodies' on a pigskin 'cello'.[83] There are subtler ways of interpreting the scenario. Lindberg describes the shift to the relative minor in the B section of 'Le jardin', with its broad lyricism (lusciously orchestrated by Rabaud), in terms of an 'almost self-indulgent melancholy', suggesting there to be playfulness, and even self-consciousness, latent in the

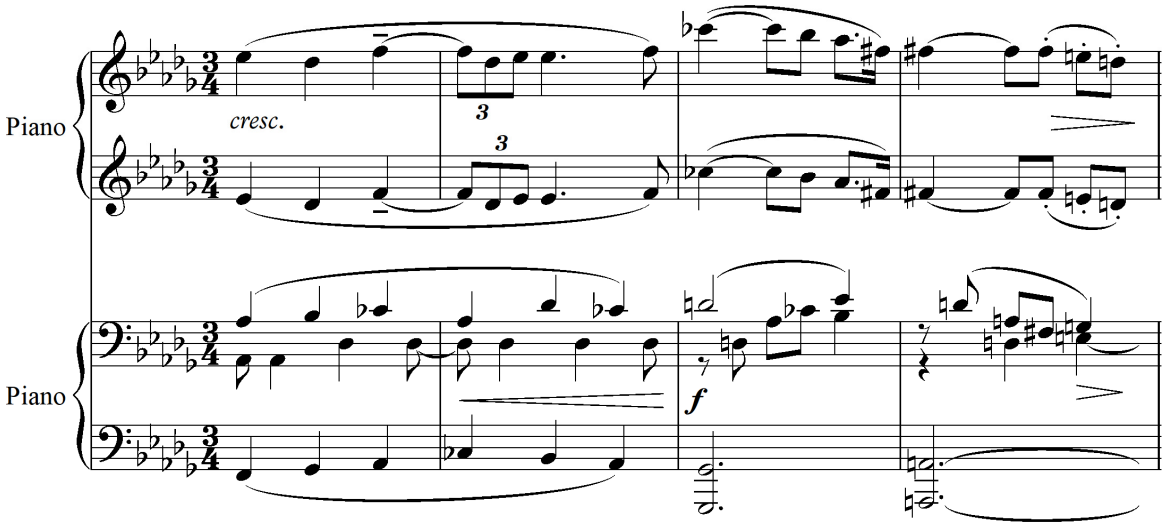
[81] Unlike Bizet's *Carmen*, Chabrier's *España* or Rimsky-Korsakov's *Capriccio espagnol*, Rabaud's orchestration does not involve actual castanets.
[82] Caddy, *The Ballets Russes*, 55.
[83] See Perloff, *Art and the Everyday*, 35, 104.

effusiveness of much of the suite's slower movements.[84] The ballet points directly towards these qualities.

In considering the slower movements, the question is raised of how, as Caddy puts it, the choreography 'conceptualize[d]' the music: whether 'as sonic backcloth, diegetic appendage, temporal yardstick'.[85] In 'Le Jardin de Dolly' and 'Tendresse', as well as 'Kitty-valse', the Dancer courts Dolly, and is eventually joined in this pursuit by the Musician. The Dancer's 'graces' are supplied by the equivalent 'graces' of the music of 'Le Jardin de Dolly'. The playing of the violinist also implies that Fauré's music is in some sense diegetic, contained within the ballet's fictional world.[86] To the extent that it does so, this action, along with the Dancer's, places a kind of aesthetic frame around Fauré's music. Laloy's scenario draws out an exaggeratedly emotive quality from, for instance, 'Le jardin de Dolly', but it re-presents this excess as an exhibition of the drama's absurdity. The proto-surreal action *demands* a comically exaggerated sweetness from Fauré's music, presenting it as knowingly sentimental.

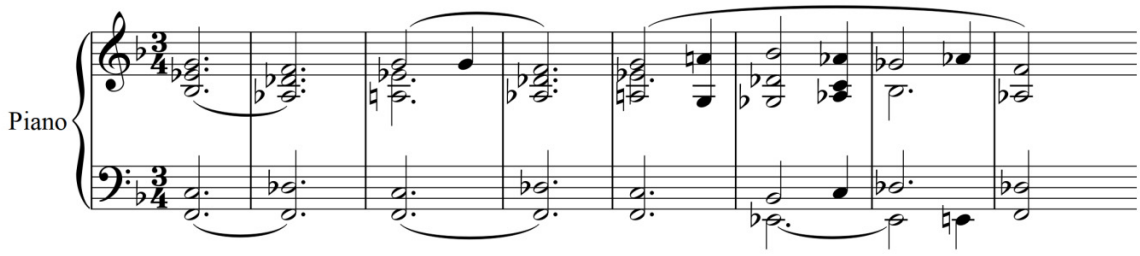
Hugh MacDonald notes that the movement 'Petit mari, petite femme' in Bizet's *Jeux d'enfants* 'really portrays a passion too grown-up for children'.[87] Passages in the A section of 'Tendresse' invite a similar observation. Here, Fauré's harmonic feints and playful voice-leading slips and substitutions (which also characterize the A section of 'Le jardin') produce a distinct emotional turbulence, which is emphasized by the marked contrast of the B section's candour. Fleeting suggestions of anguished yearning stand out from the suite's general character, as in Example 3.5, where a move towards a resolution in G flat (bars 7–8) is overtaken by a pained tritone leap in the melody, reharmonizing the G flat in bar 9 as the bass of an alien B minor 6/4 chord, enharmonically respelt, which dissolves in the continuing progression after the first

[84] Lindberg, 'Through the Looking Glass', 52.
[85] Caddy, *The Ballets Russes*, 73.
[86] In all three movements, we might identify specific moments of diegetic music in the violin part. Fauré's score does not, however, provide moments of monophony equivalent to, say, the Magician's flute-playing in *Pétrouchka*.
[87] Hugh MacDonald, *Bizet* (Oxford, 2014), 177.

beat. This harmonic move, and the harmonic sidesteps that follow it, are repeated with variation three bars later. The scenario thematizes these moments, with their evocations of adult passions, by illustrating them with the pleading gestures of Dolly's admirers, caught in the vicissitudes of a hopeless courtship. This comic setting frames the intensity of the fervent moments of 'Tendresse'. It both satirizes them and casts Fauré's music as an effective participant in absurdist humour.

Example 3.5. Fauré, *Dolly Suite*, 'Tendresse', bars 7–10.

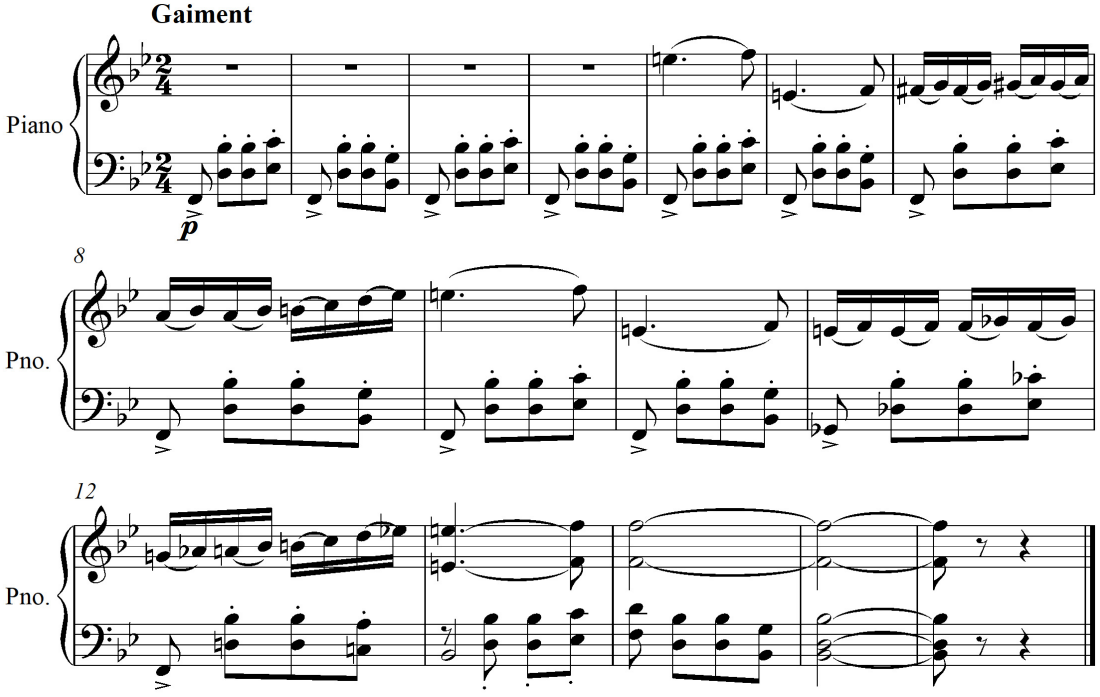
The scenario also enhances the suite's sense of progression, grouping together 'Le jardin de Dolly', 'Kitty-valse' and 'Tendresse'. If we might tend to consider the lyrical, slower movements – the first, third and fifth – as constituting the suite's central thread (as Lindberg's study implies), the ballet emphasizes the other movements as characterizing the suite's essential atmosphere. Certainly, in the ballet's positive reception, Fauré's suite was perceived as fundamentally comic. We can also tentatively reconstruct more specific correlations of music and action. For instance, towards the end of 'Mi-a-ou', the melodic outline of the well-known lullaby 'Do, do, l'enfant do' softly interjects. The harmonic pivoting above the F pedal is melancholically exquisite, an apt instance of Hahn's 'tender "nursery" atmosphere' (see Example 3.6). This passage is the only one that clearly corresponds to the moment when one Clown weeps over his companion, struck down by the Gypsy (whose capture and imprisonment

corresponds to the preceding climax). Hearing this moment as an 'illustration' of this pantomime act affords it a quite different meaning. The *exquise* character is subtly turned on its head, and an indulgently, self-consciously lugubrious quality emerges. The choreography even adapts and distorts the lullaby reference: the Clown has, as the song suggests, 'gone to sleep very quickly', having been knocked unconscious.



Example 3.6. Fauré, *Dolly Suite*, 'Messieu Aoul!' ('Mi-a-ou'), bars 117–24.

It may be useful to distinguish briefly the choreomusical experiment manifested in *Dolly* from those that underlay other music-theatrical appropriations of *clownerie*. In his 1928 memoirs, Laloy noted a piece of music that itself manifested a 'vigorous burlesque': Terrasse's incidental music to Jarry's *Ubu Roi*, given its infamous première in 1896.[88] Gordon argues convincingly that Ubu's savage, absurd, bumbling monstrosity – as realized on stage by Firmin Gémier – drew directly from the music-hall's gestural aesthetic of *bouffonnerie*.[89] The music, as Peter Lamothe notes, is of a 'studied *naïveté*', angular and spare.[90] Example 3.7 gives one of the more strident passages: the introductory music to scene 2, which finds Père Ubu seated at his splendid table. Here, Terrasse defamiliarizes the gestures and phraseologies characteristic of (among many other genres) *opérette*, a music-hall genre in which Terrasse had established himself as Offenbach's successor by 1913.[91] The 'wrong-note' distortion helps to realize musically the *bouffonnerie* that it accompanied.

[88] 'D'un burlesque vigoureux'. Laloy, *La Musique rétrouvée*, 81.
[89] Gordon, *Dances with Darwin*, 243–264.
[90] Peter Lamothe, 'Theater Music in France, 1864-1914', Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 2008, 204.
[91] *Ibid*., 180.

Example 3.7. Claude Terrasse, *Ubu Roi* (Paris, 1897), introductory music for scene ii.

This defamiliarization is reminiscent of, and anticipates, compositions by Satie and Les Six which accompanied many of Cocteau's own theatrical appropriations of circus entertainment, such as Auric's *Adieu, New York!*, with its cheerfully mechanistic, headlong character.[92] This foxtrot also developed the compositional procedures of earlier piano music by Debussy, Satie and Stravinsky which was either presented or perceived as embodying the chaotic buffooning of contemporaneous clowning.[93] As the example of 'Golliwogg's Cake Walk' suggests, children's pieces, or the subject of childhood, were an important vehicle for these earlier explorations. The title of Satie's 'Valse du chocolat aux amandes', from his *Menus propos enfantins*, possibly referred to the clown who accompanied Foottit, and invites the interpretation of its inane, repetitious circling as capturing something of Padilla's clowning.[94]

[92] See also *ibid*., 205.

[93] See Roberts, *Images*, 218–28. For Satie, see Perloff, *Art and the Everyday*, 28, and Barbara Kelly, *Music and Ultra-Modernism in France: A Fragile Consensus, 1913–1939* (Woodbridge, 2014), 48, 54. Alexis Roland-Manuel proposed that the 1913 *Descriptions automatiques*, specifically, were a 'fantaisie de clown'. Roland-Manuel, *Erik Satie*, Lecture given at the Société Lyre et Palette, 8 April 1916 (Paris, 1916), 3. Cited in Kelly, *Music and Ultra-Modernism*, 48.

[94] Perloff, *Art and the Everyday*, 28.

Dolly, of course, appropriated a pre-existent musical work as a basis for the theatrical experiments that, in Cocteau's milieu, would themselves be the basis of musical experiment. In certain passages (the 'Berceuse', perhaps, being one), *Dolly* seemed to pursue expressive possibilities derived from the music's *resistance* to being perceived as embodying *clownerie*, evading – to borrow Caddy's phrase – ballet's 'conventional paradigms' of signification (see above, note 42). The fact that some critics were not exercised by the ballet's combination of music and action might be explained by the immense variety of music heard in circus and music-hall venues. In 1913, selections of concert-hall repertoire continued to appear on the music-hall stage (and not solely for purposes of parody).[95] Laloy himself praised the 'amiable music' that accompanied the 'farces' of a Folies-Bergère show in 1913 involving Tommy and Georgey Foottit: 'a light orchestral framework, popular tunes and fragments of appropriate [concert] works, such as that impression of morning whose naïve tenderness the public savour, without knowing the name of its author, Edvard Grieg'.[96] Here, in the music-hall, music of 'naïve tenderness' seems to have accompanied *clownerie*.

Perhaps this light-hearted combination of tenderness and buffoonery also manifested the 'subtle musical enigmas' that, for Vuillermoz, *Dolly* exemplified. Recent music and dance scholarship has noted a tendency to impose simplistic, anachronistic distinctions between 'high' and 'low' onto the fluid identity of *fin-de-siècle* 'popular' culture. Staats's work for both the music-hall and the Opéra is evidence of what Catherine Hindson calls the 'dynamic relationships between artistic movements and popular performers [...] at the fin-de-siècle'.[97] Nonetheless, Vuillermoz acknowledged the

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[95] See Pasler, *Composing the Citizen*, 489.

[96] 'Une musique aimable accompagne ces exhibitions et ces facéties. […] sur la trame d'un clair orchestre, des airs populaires et des fragments d'oeuvres appropriés, comme cette impression du matin dont le public savoure la tendresse ingénue en ignorant le nom de son auteur, Edvard Grieg.' Louis Laloy, 'Cabarets et music-halls', *La Revue musicale S. I. M.*, 15 April 1913, 52–55 (p. 54).

[97] Catherine Hindson, *Female Performance Practice on the Fin-de-siècle Popular Stages of London and Paris: Experiment and Advertisement* (Manchester, 2007), 168. For equivalent

controversy of choreographing circus burlesque to music composed by the director of the Conservatoire. Laloy's scenario evidently constituted a very general 'criticism in action': it invited spectators to hear Fauré's own 'amiable music' as having, in some sense, an affinity with the atmosphere of the music-hall.

This sense becomes more explicit in the context of contemporaneous debates about the relation between music-hall and concert-hall musical culture. In a 1911 article in *La Revue musicale*, the critic and composer Jean Huré promoted the unpretentious musical styles associated with the café-concert as an antidote to the sensibility that characterized much modern composition.[98] He began: '"Bad music" – the frivolous music that we have agreed to call "bad music" – is always "musical" […]. What we call "good music", well-constructed music, serious music (!) is, most often, empty of invention, spontaneity, natural logic'.[99] A comparable critical objective underpins Laloy's set of articles on the music-hall published in 1913.[100] Of course, it was discourse such as Huré's that propagated the very distinction between 'high' and 'low'.[101] Implicitly appealing to this discourse, Laloy's ballet drew attention to the *Dolly Suite* – with its succession of light, tuneful forms – as a modern composition free from any trace of dry academicism (notwithstanding the canon at the octave in 'Tendresse'). This was the most general sense in which *Dolly* brought together 'popular' entertainment and childhood – as alternative celebrations of the value of unlearnedness. The significance of Laloy's ballet within the artistic culture of its day

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observations more directly concerned with music, see Jann Pasler, 'Material Culture and Postmodern Positivism: Rethinking the "Popular" in Late Nineteenth-Century French Music', in *Writing Through Music* (Oxford, 2008), 417-449.

[98] Jean Huré, 'L'art au Café-Concert', *La Revue musicale S.I.M.*, 15 July 1911, 63–64.

[99] 'La "mauvaise musique" – la musique frivole que nous avons convenu d'appeler la "mauvaise musique" – est toujours "musicale" […]. Celle que nous appelons la "bonne musique", la musique bien faite, la musique sérieuse (!) est, le plus souvent, dénuée d'invention, de spontanéité, de logique naturelle: elle est "antimusicale".' *Ibid*., 63.

[100] Louis Laloy, 'Cabarets et music halls', *La Revue musicale S.I.M.*, 15 February 1913, 53–56; 15 March, 53-55; 15 April, 52-55.

[101] On this intellectual process, see John Storey, *Inventing Popular Culture: From Folklore to Globalization* (Oxford, 2003).

becomes clear when we examine the contentiousness of the idea of childhood, in its aesthetic, social and political contexts, in early twentieth-century French culture.

Childhood contested

In 1913, images of childhood were inseparable from the *Dolly Suite* (in its orchestral as well as its piano version) in the critical imagination. Both Hahn and Ravel, for instance, described Fauré's original duets as a 'homage to childhood'. For Ravel, the musical qualities that bore this association were, much as for Hahn, a 'tender charm and harmonic grace'.[102] In an article on Fauré's piano music of 1910, J. Saint-Jean designated the *Dolly Suite* as 'scènes d'enfant'.[103] This subtitle accompanied versions of Schumann's *Kinderszenen* on the sheet-music market, suggesting reminiscences of childhood whose affective content is given musical form.[104] This conventional interpretation was partly informed by a basic understanding of the circumstances of the pieces' composition. In 1907, Magnus Synnestvedt had described the suite in *Le Mercure musical* as written 'for some little child friends'.[105]

The suite's dedication, on the front of the Hamelle score, was to a Mademoiselle Hélène Bardac, who (as has been well documented since) was the daughter of Fauré's mistress, Emma Bardac, and known as Dolly. The individual movements of the original four-hand version were either written or presented to accompany various events in Dolly's life. For instance, 'Messieu Aoul!' (whose title refers to the way in which Dolly pronounced 'Monsieur Raoul', her elder brother's name) was written for Dolly's second birthday in 1894. A gift for Dolly's fourth birthday, 'Ketty-valse' is, as Nectoux

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[102] 'Le charme attendri, […] la grâce harmonique'. Ravel, 'Au Théâtre des Arts', 418; translated by Orenstein, 364.

[103] '"Scènes d'enfant", pour piano à quatre mains, qui sont un Chef-d'oeuvre de raffinement et d'ingénuité'. J. Saint-Jean [Joseph de Marliave], 'La musique de piano de Gabriel Fauré', *La Nouvelle revue*, 15 January 1910, 256–272.

[104] Two new editions of *Kinderszenen (Scènes d'enfants)* were published in Paris in 1908.

[105] 'Jadis écrivit pour des bambins amis'. Magnus Synnestvedt, 'Concerts Chevillard', *Le Mercure musical*, 15 January 1907, 507.

puts it, 'a whirling portrait of the family dog, Ketty'.[106] The suite's status in 1913, then, was comparable to its status today: as, in Carlo Caballero's words, almost 'an extension of Fauré's private communications', with the title serving both 'to honor its dedicatee and suggest a world of childhood'.[107]

The ways of understanding the 'childlike' that informed Hahn's perceptions had equivalents in much literary and artistic work. Saint-Jean's mention of 'scènes d'enfant' recalls the highly successful genre of popular fiction known as *scènes enfantines*, which flourished roughly from 1885 to 1920. These told simple, undramatic stories of the day-to-day events of children's lives with a sentimental realism. In Marina Bethlenfalvay's words, they emphasized 'the picturesque aspects of this little world through anecdotes, sometimes entertaining, sometimes poignant'.[108] Examples included André Lichtenberger's books centred on a little boy called 'Trott', and similar stories by Paul and Victor Margueritte. These fictions indulged a kind of domestic exoticism, setting out a fantasy child-world into which parents installed their offspring, while pretending that that world was of the child's own making. Their subject was what Guillemette Tison calls 'quilted childhoods in *haut bourgeois* environments'.[109] Tison describes these miniatures as 'l'écriture du petit' ('the writing of littleness'), noting their fragmentary writing and interest in childhood vocabulary.[110] She dates the beginning of this literary fashion to Antoine Gustave Droz's *Monsieur, Madame et Bébé* of 1866, a collection of detailed scenes of family intimacy, both humorous and gushing.[111] Strikingly popular (reaching its 266th edition in 1924), it was praised for its promotion of sensitive, upstanding moral values.

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[106] Nectoux, *Gabriel Fauré*, 62. For details of the genesis of other movements, see *ibid*., 61–62.
[107] Carlo Caballero, *Fauré and French Musical Aesthetics* (Cambridge, 2001), 249.
[108] 'En soulignant les aspects pittoresques de ce petit monde par des anecdotes, tantôt amusantes, tantôt pathétiques'. Bethlenfalvay, *Les Visages de l'enfant*, 120.
[109] 'L'évocation d'enfances ouatées, dans un milieu de haute bourgeoisie'. Tison, 'Le récit d'enfance', 38.
[110] *Ibid.*, 36.
[111] *Ibid*., 35.

The products of the sheet-music market generally conformed in character with the literary fashion for *scènes enfantines*. From the mid-1880s onwards, the term became a relatively common title for collections of piano sheet-music for children. Lichtenberger's stories were transformed into musical storybooks with illustrations.[112] As the previous chapter proposed, the jovial *naïf* character of most children's sheet-music – itself a sort of 'écriture du petit' – was often presented through accompanying titles and images as describing the energetic, innocent, humorous way in which implicitly bourgeois children went about everyday activities. In that chapter, I tried to show how this repertoire could serve as a vehicle for the propagation of values consistent with those of the literary *scène enfantine*. Some of the slower, sentimental numbers presented as embodying affection and intimacy – 'Tendre innocence', 'Doux souvenir' – seem addressed at least as much to the doting listening parent as to the child.[113]

The original four-hand version of the *Dolly Suite* (described by Hahn as a collection of *pièces enfantines*) follows the convention in four-hand music for children noted in Chapter 2, combining a simple *prima* part for a child to play with a considerably more difficult *seconda* part, intended for a teacher or parent.[114] With the possible exception of the final movement, the *prima* part is generally no more technically challenging (at times it is less challenging) than the average *pièce enfantine* available on the sheet-music market of the day. Hahn's, Saint-Jeans's and others' accounts of Fauré's suite – 'always intimate and made to evoke a calm "nursery" atmosphere' – seem to place it, at least implicitly, alongside the more general artistic culture of the *scène enfantine*, and conventional valuations of domestic intimacy, through its nostalgic evocation of a tender, charming world of domestic affection.

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[112] de Flagny and Lichtenberger, *Trott au village*.

[113] Théophile Hirlemann, *Scènes enfantines* (Paris, 1897).

[114] Fauré himself is likely to have performed the piece with children in this way in domestic settings. A photograph from around 1913 shows Fauré and a young girl (a Mlle Lombard) playing four-hand with this arrangement of roles. Nectoux suggests that it depicts their playing the *Dolly Suite* (see *Gabriel Fauré*, 62).

The culture of *scènes enfantines* was symptomatic of a more general aspect of turn-of-the-century French culture, embodied in what Bethlenfalvay calls 'His [and her] majesty the child'.[115] This phenomenon is associated at least partly with the heavily politicized ideals of domesticity noted in the previous chapter. The subject-matter of this chapter brings to the fore an emphasis on the *moral* education and protection of children upheld with particular zeal in Republican discourse on the family. As Sylvia Schafer states: 'Leading politicians and commentators channelled their anxiety about moral decline toward the family, […] consecrating it as the basic educative and social unit of a truly healthy, truly republican polity.'[116] With the harmonious family promoted as a microcosm of the harmonious state, raising 'good' children became effectively synonymous with cultivating the health of the Republic. These ideals percolated into a large market of children's literature: Penny Brown observes of early twentieth-century French children's literature that '[t]he sentimentalised image of the child and the family persisted alongside narratives portraying a transgressive child whom the reader is encouraged not to emulate.'[117]

There was a wide range of artistic reactions against 'Sa majesté l'enfant'. Perhaps the best known was summarized by Jules Renard, in a frequently cited journal entry of February 1890 about how his contemporary authors represented children: 'You have to grind down the child into the sugar that all the Drozs have hitherto given to the public to suck on. The child is an unavoidable little animal. A cat is more human.'[118] These views were realized in Renard's *Poil de carotte* (1894), the bitter, ironic story of a

[115] 'Sa majesté l'enfant'. Bethlenfalvay, *Les Visages de l'enfant*, 119. Bethlenfalvay's phrase recalls Freud's term 'His Majesty the Baby', which appears (in English) in his 1914 introduction to the concept of narcissism. Freud was probably referring to a well-known painting of 1898 with that title by Arthur Drummond, in which a policeman holds up busy traffic as a finely dressed little girl and a woman carrying toys walk across the road towards the viewer.

[116] Sylvia Schafer, *Children in Moral Danger and the Problem of Government in Third Republic France* (Princeton, NJ, 1997), 9, quoted in Andrew Counter, 'Zola's Fin-de-siècle Reproductive Politics', *French Studies* 58 (2014), 193–208 (p. 204).

[117] Brown, *Critical History*, 151.

[118] 'Il faut casser l'enfant en sucre que tous les Droz ont donné jusqu'ici à sucer au public. L'enfant est un petit animal nécessaire. Un chat est plus humain.' Jules Renard, *Journal 1887–1910*, edited by Léon Guichard and Gilbert Sigaux (Paris, 1960), 54.

redhead's abusive treatment by his family. For Bethlenfalvay, Renard's novel belonged to a new generation of writing that 'rejected the ethos of the bourgeois family' as repressive and restrictive.[119] 'With this demystification of the so-called "bonheur familial"', Bethlenfalvay writes, there developed 'an accusatory literature about the family and the child's revolt against the tyranny and hypocrisy of adults'.[120] In early 1913, a new member of this generation had just appeared: Louis Pergaud's *La Guerre des boutons* (*The War of the Buttons*), published in 1912. It was subtitled *Novel of My Twelfth Year* (*Roman de ma douzième année*), but addressed explicitly to adults. It described in controversially vivid, colloquial language a rivalry between two groups of rural children, who 'kill' each other by ripping buttons from each other's clothes. In his preface, Pergaud recorded his intention of describing the 'enthusiastic and brutal life of vigorous wildlings […], that is to say, liberated from the hypocrisies of the family and school'.[121]

The existence of this conflict about the nature of childhood is, in itself, unremarkable. It would be difficult not to find some form of it at any given moment in a modern literary culture. What is noteworthy is the intensity of this conflict and, as both Bethlenfalvy and Tison propose, the state of particular flux in which the idea of childhood found itself at the turn of the twentieth century. Given this, and given Hahn's and Vuillermoz's comments on *Dolly*, it is difficult not to interpret Laloy's ballet as a struggle with the status of the 'childlike', as an ambiguous affective state inextricable from the *Dolly Suite*'s identity. More specifically, we can understand *Dolly* as an attempt to dissociate Fauré's music from the cloying atmosphere of 'Sa majesté l'enfant', with which conventional interpretations implicitly linked it. Transforming

[119] 'Rejettait l'éthos de la famille bourgeoisie'. Bethlenfalvay, *Les Visages de l'enfant*, 123.

[120] 'Avec cette démystification du soi-disant "bonheur familial" commence toute une littérature d'accusation de la famille et de révolte de l'enfant contre l'hypocrisie et la tyrannie des adultes.' *Ibid*., 122.

[121] 'Notre vie enthousiaste et brutale de vigoureux sauvageons […], c'est-à-dire libérée des hypocrisies de la famille et de l'école'. Louis Pergaud, *La Guerre des boutons: Roman de ma douzième année* (Paris, 1912), 9. Pergaud was reacting as much against what he perceived to be the weakening, emasculating effects of the culture of *la famille* as against its distance from the fraught, intense reality of children's lives.

'Dolly' into a spoilt, transgressive figure, Laloy's scenario embodies a reaction against the ethos of *la famille* comparable to Renard's or Pergaud's, but taking a very different form.

As Gignoux wrote (presumably with some understatement), the ballet was 'not without irony'.[122] In one sense, the scenario turns Fauré's music into the accompaniment of a series of *scènes enfantines*, beginning with a little bourgeois girl's trip to a garden with her nurse. But these 'childhood scenes' are given the form and content of a circus pantomime. Dolly's farcical obnoxiousness parodies Droz's saccharine angels. The scenario emphasizes Dolly's rejection of her dolls in both the 'Berceuse' and 'Le jardin de Dolly'. As was shown in the previous chapter, dolls were instruments and symbols of socialization, and Dolly's rejection of them seems to formalize a reaction against society's attempts to socialize her into conventional ideals of bourgeois childhood – and of femininity specifically. Her final elopement with the Gypsy is a striking transgression of familial authority and control, and of the general values that parents and publishers were keen to uphold. It is testament to the ballet's dream-like character that critics did not react more strongly to this final gesture.

Dolly was less a parody of Fauré's music than a parody of a way of hearing that music. Vuillermoz noted that Dolly (the metonym for *Dolly*) 'grants to descriptive music only a vague and imprecise power of evocation'.[123] In one sense, Laloy's scenario carefully realizes an established programmatic interpretation of the suite, derived from a literal dramatization of the movements' titles, which played on the listener's knowledge that the suite was written for a little girl called Dolly. Little details emphasize this fact, such as the moment when, in the 'Berceuse', the Nurse rocks Dolly. For all Hahn's complaints about the 'open air', the ballet's setting is effectively a 'jardin de Dolly'. The humour of Laloy's scenario arises from the fact that this interpretation, at the same time, totally contravenes the tenor of established

[122] 'Non sans ironie'. Gignoux, 'Avant le rideau', 4.
[123] 'Elle n'accorde à la musique descriptive qu'un pouvoir d'évocation vague et imprécise.' Vuillermoz, 'Les théâtres', 45.

programmatic interpretations of Fauré's suite. 'Pas espagnol' is an absurdly literal – as well as literally absurd – dramatization of the movement's title. Caddy suggests that Nijinsky's provocative combination of music and dance in *Faune* in 1912 served to challenge what she calls the 'representational mandate' of Debussy's music.[124] Laloy seemed to do this with Fauré's music on several levels. An interpretation such as Hahn's presented Fauré's music as signifying particular subjects and situations. The ballet's action replaces these subjects and situations with circus caricatures of themselves, thereby calling into question music's presumed ability to signify such things. Here the ballet brings together some themes and preoccupations which would shortly become central to French modernism (both musical and theatrical), and in which childhood was a central motif.

Non-sense

One of these preoccupations was with elevating the apparently nonsensical, together with the closely related categories of the illogical, the inconsequential, the irrational and the absurd. French artists turned increasingly to the music-hall as providing one of its most extensive manifestations. This artistic interest had already taken musical form, as in the narrative illogicality of Debussy's evocation of *clownerie* in 'Minstrels'.[125] The most strident (and deeply problematic) promotion of these qualities appeared later in 1913, with Marinetti's 'Le music-hall: Manifeste futuriste', which glorified its 'abysses of the ridiculous'.[126] For Marinetti, the 'laws that dominate life', as illustrated by the music-hall, included 'the necessity of complications and differing rhythms' and 'the inevitability of lies and contradictions'.[127] His emphasis is on incongruity as a simultaneous, rather than a merely narrative, phenomenon.

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[124] Caddy, *The Ballets Russes*, 74.
[125] See Roberts, *Images*, 218–220.
[126] Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, 'The Variety Theater', *Futurism: An Anthology*, edited by Lawrence S. Rainey *et al.* (New Haven, CT, 2009), 159–164 (p. 159).
[127] *Ibid*., 161.

In *Dolly*, this quality was, in part, choreomusical. At least at times, the relation between music and action manifested the improbable entwinements that Marinetti celebrated. This was, to borrow Ravel's words, the overlaying of the 'gracious, slow' 'Berceuse' with the action's 'angry stamping' and 'pirouettes'. Fauré's music became a crucial component in an aesthetic of illogicality. Through its experimentation in 'coordinate incongruity', *Dolly* qualifies as an early instance of Daniel Albright's conception of Surrealist theatre (a conception based on Apollinaire's understanding of Surrealism).[128] It qualifies through its interest in reaching beyond the limits of music's capacity to embody gesture, exploring forms of non-analogous choreomusical relation.

For surrealists of all kinds, a certain image of childhood also became the vehicle for promoting the virtues of absurdity and irrationality. As André Breton observed (in an essay on Lewis Carroll): 'Accommodation of the absurd reopens to the adult the mysterious kingdom of childhood.'[129] Childhood's enviable condition of being at ease with the irrational received perhaps its most unambiguous affirmation in Breton's 1924 surrealist manifesto, in which he famously observed that 'the mind which plunges into surrealism relives with exaltation the best part of its childhood'.[130] Here, as David Hopkins observes, childhood was an essential symbol of a project of 're-enchantment', which sought to undermine the 'rationalizing, progressivist, and modernizing currents in early twentieth-century French society'.[131] Again, it is difficult not to interpret Laloy's transposition of the music-hall's anarchic silliness as a precursor of this project (if, perhaps, less disconcerting than its successors). Dolly's unpunished transgressions

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[128] Daniel Albright, ed., *Modernism and Music: An Anthology of Sources* (London, 2004), 312.

[129] 'La complaisance envers l'absurde rouvre à l'homme le royaume mystérieux qu'habitent les enfants.' André Breton, *Oeuvres complètes*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1988–2008), ii (1988), 962.

[130] 'L'esprit qui plonge dans le surréalisme revit avec exaltation la meilleure part de son enfance.' André Breton, 'Manifeste du surréalisme', *Manifestes du surréalisme*, edited by Jean-Jacques Pauvert (Paris, 1962), 13–63 (p. 55).

[131] David Hopkins, 'Re-enchantment: Surrealist Discourses of Childhood, Hermeticism, and the Outmoded', in *A Companion to Dada and Surrealism*, edited by *idem* (New York, 2016), 270–286 (p. 271).

anticipate the way in which the bored, delinquent child became both an image of creative fecundity and a symbol of intellectual resistance against social strictures.[132]

The elevation of childhood as society's prime source of the pre-rational reframed the notion of the child's 'fresh sight' (or 'lucidity', in Breton's formulation). As the Introduction suggested, this notion had extended across a range of idealizations from Rousseau to Wordsworth, Baudelaire to Rimbaud.[133] Laloy's scenario appealed to one particular literary exploration of nonsense through the child's perspective, which was also the prompt for Breton's aforementioned linking of childhood and absurdity. This was the dream-world of Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books, with their demonstration of the proximity of the logical and the illogical, when logic is pursued in a certain way.[134] Carroll's central character, as with *Dolly*, is a bourgeois girl thrust into a series of situations that are simultaneously comic, absurd and disconcertingly violent. Part of the significance of the ballet's framing device was surely its subtle evocation of the entry of the rabbit that precipitates Alice's fall down the rabbit-hole into the inner realms of Wonderland. The general role of the rabbit-figure in *Dolly* was to strike an immediate tone of anarchic nonsense. Its toys inaugurate a world of childhood, while its identity as an itinerant salesperson suggests the promises of the fair – a realm of chaotic 'popular' entertainment closely related to the music-hall in the contemporaneous imagination.

The significance of *Dolly* as a piece of theatre derives from its explicit fusion of childhood and music-hall entertainment as closely affinitive realms. This was a familiar synthesis, of course, in the musical world, most obviously in Debussy's inclusion of 'Golliwogg's Cake Walk' in *Children's Corner*.[135] Marking this connection was the figure of the clown. In early twentieth-century theatrical writing, many politicized

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[132] See Breton, 'Manifeste du surréalisme', 55–56.

[133] For the development of this literary idea up to Rimbaud, see Edward Ahearn, *Rimbaud: Visions and Habitations* (Berkeley, CA, 1983).

[134] *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* had been translated (by Henri Bué, as *Aventures d'Alice au pays des merveilles*) as early as 1869, and reprinted with illustrations by Arthur Rackham in 1908.

[135] Caddy's brilliantly contextualized discussion of clowning in relation to this movement does not elaborate this activity's particular link to childhood. 'Parisian Cake Walks', 288–317.

connotations were common to the image of the clown and to the idea of childhood. In Giovanni Lista's words, the clown manifested 'the exaltation of the powers of the irrational against the pretence of rational order asserted by the "logic" of bourgeois thinking'.[136] After claiming *Parade* as a form of children's entertainment, Cocteau goes on to say that Foottit enchanted grown-ups as well as children by 'bringing their childhood back to them'.[137]

According to some contemporaneous thought, this could imply a rather disquieting regression. The fusing of the figure of the child with the chaotic absurdity of popular entertainment belongs to a wider pattern of thought about the childlike noted earlier – that embodied in the succession of musical-theatrical child characters that Dolly anticipated. This pattern of thought brings together diverse images and ideas: clowning, illogicality, the surrealist unconscious and, most importantly, the circus's 'burlesque' corporeality.[138] We gain some insight into the connections uniting these elements by considering medical and anthropological ideas important in French thought in the years before the First World War.

Infantile chorea

As Mark S. Micale notes, the 'language of nervous and mental pathology became a common feature of French social, cultural and political commentary between 1870 and

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[136] 'L'exaltation des forces de l'irrationnel contre l'ordre prétendement rationnel assuré par la "logique" de la pensée bourgeoise'. Giovanni Lista, 'Esthétique du music-hall et mythologie urbaine chez Marinetti', in *Du Cirque au théâtre*, edited by Claudine Amiard-Chevrel (Lausanne, 1983), 48–64 (p. 54).

[137] Cocteau, *Paris Album*, 55.

[138] Massine described the burlesque of the Little American Girl as 'a succession of convulsive leaps', quoted in *Léonide Massine, My Life in Ballet*, edited by Phyllis Hartroll and Robert Rubens (London, 1968), 104. Kenneth E. Silver notes the connection between childhood and popular entertainment in Cocteau's imagination through reference to this character, in 'Jean Cocteau and the *Image d'Epinal*: An Essay on Realism and Naiveté', *Jean Cocteau and the French Scene*, edited by Ashton Doré (New York, 1984), 81–105 (p. 93). In *Le Boeuf sur le toit*, the peculiarly oversized heads of the masks gave the characters childlike bodily proportions (see *ibid*., 97). Later examples of related, non-musical surrealist child figures include Victor from Roger Vitrac's *Victor ou les enfants au pouvoir* (1929).

1914'.[139] Contemporaneous perceptions of belle-époque popular entertainment illustrate this with particular directness. Gordon has exhaustively demonstrated that, from roughly 1875 until 1910, the 'convulsive body language' that characterized music-hall performance style was construed by its contemporaries as a staging of nervous pathology – specifically, of hysteria. 'Epileptic singers' and 'idiot comics' thronged the music-hall stage at the same time that neurological investigations of hysteria – which included the conditions of 'epilepsy' and *idiotisme* – were popularized in the Parisian press.[140] As many scholars have noted, from the 1880s, the demonstration room of the Salpêtrière hospital, in which the clinician Jean-Martin Charcot induced and cured hysterical attacks, became popular spectacles. Music's capacity to induce hysteria, and the hysteric's heightened musical sensibilities, were essential to this 'gestural' pathology. *Dansomanie* was an important symptom of hysteria.[141] One of the most famous epileptic singers, Jane Avril, was diagnosed with St Vitus's dance.[142] In his 1896 book on contemporary entertainments, Georges Montorgueil observed that 'half of the hit songs of this period belong to the jiggling pit of the late Charcot'.[143]

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[139] Mark S. Micale, *Approaching Hysteria: Disease and its Interpretations* (Princeton, NJ, 1995), 200.

[140] See also Caddy, *The Ballets Russes*, 112–13, for a discussion of these phenomena in relation to dance. For a wider study, see Felicia McCarren, *Dance Pathologies: Performance, Poetics, Medicine* (Stanford, CA, 1998). Discussions of realizations of hysteria on rather different musical stages include Brian Hyer, 'Parsifal hystérique', *Opera Quarterly* 22 (2006), 269–320, and Julie Pedneault-Deslauriers, 'Pierrot L.', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64 (2011), 601–645. As Pedneault-Deslauriers discusses, pantomime was intrinsically suited to exhibiting hysteria.

[141] See Bertrand Marquer, *Les 'Romans' de la Salpêtrière: Réception d'une scénographie clinique: Jean-Martin Charcot dans l'imaginaire fin-de-siècle* (Geneva, 2008), 101, and Pedneault-Deslauriers, 'Pierrot L.', 617, 619.

[142] Sydenham's chorea (as St Vitus's dance is now known) is caused by a streptococcal infection; its symptoms are uncontrolled jerking motions, in particular of the face, feet and hands. Rainer Maria Rilke gives a detailed and, by contemporaneous standards, atypically humane account of the symptoms of St Vitus's dance afflicting a Parisian man in *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge,* translated by Michael Hulse (London, 2009, first published 1910), 48–51.

[143] Georges Montorgueil *et al.*, *Les demi-cabots: Le café-concert, le cirque, les forains* (Paris, 1896), quoted in Gordon, 'From Charcot to Charlot', 515.

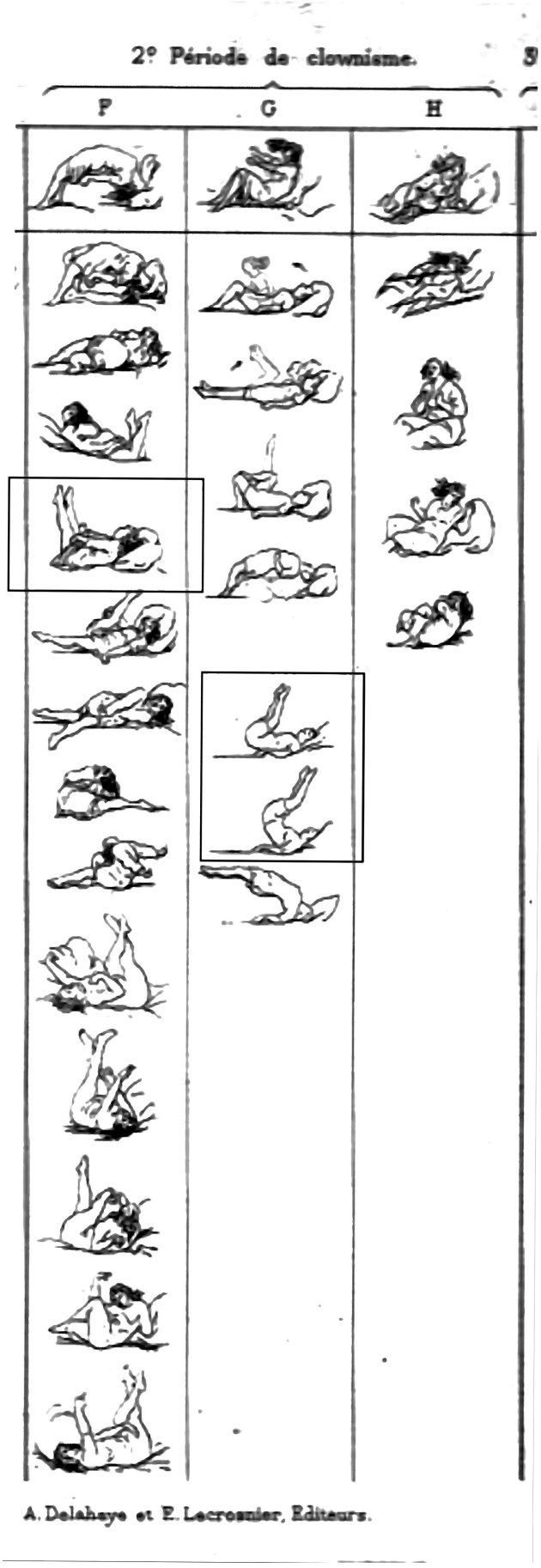

Figure 3.7. Pathological *clownisme* movements as illustrated in Paul Richer, *Études clinique sur la grande hystérie ou hystéro-épilepsie* (Paris, 1885), 166. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Clowning was a particular focus of this pathologization of the body language that characterized music-hall and circus entertainment.[144] *Clownisme* was the second stage in Charcot's influential study of hysteria. As Sophie Basch notes, a 'semantic muddle transformed "clonic spasm" (from the Greek klonos, violent motion) into *clownisme*'.[145] In his 1902 study *Art and Medicine*, the clinician Paul Richer described the stage of *clownisme* as that of 'contortions and great movements', in which the patient displays a 'suppleness, an agility […] guaranteed to astonish the spectator'.[146] In a famous illustration in an earlier study of hysteria, Richer attempted to break down and reproduce these movements (see Figure 3.7).[147] The correspondences are clear between three of these movements in particular (see the boxed illustrations in Figure 3.7) and moments of the Lumière footage of Foottit and Padilla's *bouffonnerie* – notably their tumbling and flailing legs (see Figure 3.8). Michael R. Finn notes that the late nineteenth-century Parisian public was especially captivated by *clownisme*: he cites one journalist's declaration, in response to attending Charcot's demonstrations, that 'everyone is a clown in the circus that is Paris'; 'everyone becomes conscious that she or he is partially hysterical'.[148]

These, then, were the associations bound up with the freneticism of Tommy Foottit's 'pizzicati disloqués'. In her discussion of *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, Caddy suggests that Nijinsky's choreography 'thematizes a spectatorial response to Debussy's score', one which is also pathological.[149] This response is hypnosis: Nijinsky's postures echo popularized images of hypnotized patients at the Salpêtrière. Dolly thematized another

[144] For a discussion of the pathologization of earlier clown pantomimes, see Gordon, 'From Charcot to Charlot', 113–126.
[145] Sophie Basch, 'The Writer's View: Hysterical Clowns, Ridiculous Martyrs', in *Great Parade: Portrait of the Artist as Clown*, edited by Jean Clair (London, 2004), 57–63 (p. 58).
[146] 'Période des contorsions et des grands mouvements'; 'une souplesse, une agilité […] bien faite pour étonner le spectateur'. Paul Richer, *L'Art et la médecine* (Paris, 1902), 149.
[147] In 'The Writer's View', Basch notes that several publications by the Salpêtrière 'alternated portraits of clowns with photographs of patients', 58).
[148] Michael R. Finn, *Hysteria, Hypnotism, the Spirits and Pornography: Fin-de-siècle Cultural Discourses in the Decadent Rachilde* (Newark, DE, 2009), 72.
[149] Caddy, *The Ballets Russes*, 104.

kind of corporeal automatism as a response to Fauré's music. This was 'clowning' itself, the frenetic irrepressible motion noted by almost all reviewers. As one would expect, given that the Foottits themselves were among the dancers, press descriptions of the action are almost interchangeable with Richer's description of hysterical *clownisme* as a 'suppleness, an agility […] guaranteed to astonish the spectator'.

Figure 3.8. Foottit and Padilla's *clownisme* movements, Lumière, 'Vues comiques prises au Nouveau Cirque', 'Acrobates sur la chaise', no. 1139.

This thematization is explicit in 'Pas espagnol', whose 'rhythm', according to the scenario, resuscitates the Clowns and whose ardour compels the Dancer to join in. The Gypsy's castanets and the Musician's violin signify the presence of music within the ballet's world – 'Spanish' music, but also intoxicating exotic music more generally. The 'rhythm' to which the programme referred is, implicitly, that of Fauré's music. Embodied in the Gypsy's movements, it is this that carries out the coercive work upon the characters' bodies within the fictive world of the ballet. The scene proposed, playfully, that Fauré's music shares what Laloy called the music-hall's 'irresistible power' of moving the body.[150] According to established ways of perceiving music-hall dance, the movement implicitly generated by Fauré's music was a hysterical chorea.

[150] 'Pouvoir irrésistible'. Louis Laloy, 'Cabarets et music halls', *La Revue musicale S. I. M.*, 15 March 1913, 53–57 (p. 55).

Dolly, then, exemplified a theatrical work through which music became involved in 'reflecting and shap[ing] the meaning and reality of disability'.[151]

The basis of these dance pathologies was, in Gordon's words, the 'radical division between the higher and lower faculties: reason, judgment, choice, and will as opposed to sensation, motor response, automatisms, and instinct'.[152] This psychological belief combined with the era's basic anthropological vision of a 'ladder of civilization', on whose highest rung stood the 'civilized', European (white) man. The various 'primitive' states that occupied the rungs beneath were characterized, specifically, by the dominance of the 'lower' faculties over the 'higher' ones. In what became a widespread *fin-de-siècle* fear of 'degeneration', born of popular understandings of Darwinism, the 'civilized' could descend to these rungs. If 'Man descends from the Ape', Man could return to that state, both individually and as a society.[153]

As Gordon observes, the dominance of the 'lower' faculties was demonstrated by what was perceived to be the 'common penchant of degenerates and savages for dancing'. This dancing signified and exemplified the control of the so-called 'corporeal unconscious'.[154] That control was staged by the 'burlesque' of the circus and music-hall, with its spectacular and often convulsive movements. These 'burlesque' styles were therefore deemed, in some sense, to embody conditions in which the 'corporeal unconscious' reigned. Together with the hysteric, the 'Primitive' state supposedly manifested by France's colonial subjects was perhaps the most significant type deemed to exhibit those conditions. On nearby rungs were France's own 'lower'

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[151] Joseph N. Straus, 'Normalizing the Abnormal: Disability in Music and Music Theory', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 59 (2006), 113–84 (p. 113). For consideration of a musical embodiment of *clownisme* from the perspective of disability studies, see Straus's discussion of the second of Stravinsky's *Trois pièces pour quatuor à cordes* in 'Representing the Extraordinary Body: Musical Modernism's Aesthetics of Disability', *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Disability Studies*, edited by Blake Howe *et al*. (Oxford, 2016), 729–746.

[152] Gordon, 'From Charcot to Charlot', 533.

[153] *Ibid*., 60.

[154] *Ibid*., 42.

and criminal classes.[155] Like the Primitive, these states had their transmutations in forms of music-hall dance (such as Mistinguett's version of the Apache dance). As Gordon demonstrates, the thrill of the music-hall for middle-class spectators derived partly from the perceived risk of their own degeneration.[156] Pathological states could be acquired merely by aural stimulation and visual suggestion. If all perception involved mimetic movement (at least subliminally), then to watch 'clowning' was in some sense to mimic its performance. Into the second decade of the twentieth century, the music-hall remained a space of nervous contagion.

Childhood, of course, was also a state that occupied the lower rungs of the 'ladder of civilization'. The theory of Recapitulation discussed in previous chapters fused the categories of the primitive and the childlike. In an 1869 tract on education, Jules Michelet described the child as a 'veritable plaything of the nerves' – in thrall to the 'lower' faculties.[157] To the contemporaneous clinician, the childlike was a state in which the 'corporeal unconscious' dominated the 'higher' faculties, although no commentary on these dance pathologies seems to have acknowledged this. This is illustrated most clearly by clinical discussions of 'infantilism', an adult affliction closely related to the conditions of the *idiote* and the *imbécile*. As the specialist Magalhaes Lemos stated in a 1906 article in the *Nouvelle iconographe de la Salpêtrière*, symptoms included 'the various choreas of degenerates' – those that also indicated hysteria and epilepsy.[158] In one of his case studies, Lemos notes a patient's fits of 'excitation' and 'accès maniaque' (in which the patient breaks windows).[159]

In 1911, Henry Meige presented a paper at the 21st Conference of French Psychiatrists entitled 'Mental Infantilism and Motor Infantilism', which was

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[155] *Ibid*., 97.

[156] Gordon, *Dances with Darwin*, 26.

[157] 'le vrai jouet des nerfs'. Cited in Bethlenfalvay, *Les Visages de l'enfant*, 109. See also *ibid*., 121.

[158] 'La chorée variable des dégénérés'. Magalhaes Lemos, 'Infantilisme et dégénérescence psychique: Influence de l'hérédité neuro-pathologique', *Nouvelle iconographie de la Salpêtrière*, 19 (Paris, 1906), 50–75 (p. 52).

[159] *Ibid*., 59.

summarized in the *Revue de psychiatrie.*[160] In line with the principles of psycho-physiology, his thesis was that mental infantilism reveals, and is realized in, motor infantilism. The link between the mental and the motor was a certain category of 'nervous reactions' called 'infantile'.[161] Meige justified his proposition of this link through reference to a conception of the child's corporeality: 'In these individuals suffering from mental infantilism, […] we observe the same kinds of motor reactions as in the child: unstable comportment, clumsiness of movements, […] apparent jerkiness of reactions.'[162] The child's way of moving, determined by the state of development of its 'motor reactions', dovetails with the corporeality of *clownisme*. Meige's description speaks to the puppet- or toy-like quality of movement noted in both reviews of *Dolly* and descriptions of the 'body-madness' (to borrow Marinetti's term) manifested in music-hall performance style.

What *Dolly* controversially imposed onto Fauré's music, then, was in several senses an 'infantile' corporeality. When Hahn described the ballet's chaotic exuberance as 'puérile à vrai dire' (in the remark quoted at the opening of this chapter), his choice of adjective, I suggest, was more precise than one might assume, more than a merely casual turn of phrase. Dolly's manifestation of circus 'burlesque' did more than take aim at the ideals of perfect feminine comportment imposed on children by publications such as *L'harmonie du geste*. The established associations of Fauré's music, as well as the ballet's subject-matter, presented the chorea implicitly exhibited by the ballet's characters as that of infantilism. The spectacle at the Théâtre des Arts emphasized a connection between the 'burlesque' of its dancing and the category of the childlike, realizing a corporeal conception of childhood as a chaotic, irrational, comic, nonsensical state. This remained (as Breton would have insisted) an innocent state, as recognized in a particular version of a general post-Romantic understanding of

[160] *Revue de psychiatrie et de psychologie expérimentale* 15 (August 1911), 330.
[161] 'Réactions nerveuses'. *Ibid*.
[162] 'Chez ces individus atteints d'infantilisme mental […] on observe les mêmes modes de réactions motrices que chez l'enfant: instabilité des attitudes, maladresse des mouvements, […] spasmodicité apparente des reactions.' *Ibid*.

innocence, noted in Chapter 1. That general understanding was one which avoided conflating innocence with virtue.

Indeed, we might consider Fauré's music, in both its congruence and incongruence with the ballet's 'burlesque', as a means of exhibiting a relation between the innocent and the transgressive. Hahn's remarks suggested that the provocative choreomusical relation that characterized *Dolly* manifested another form of provocative relation – between the different perceptions of childhood that music and action implicitly articulated, and which this discussion has sought to elaborate and contextualize. These were comparable to the two general attitudes towards childhood examined in Chapter 1. According to the first, childhood was a distant joyful realm to be celebrated and protected, inviting nostalgia. The second, broadly informed by scientific thought and by ideas about the unconscious, was on the face of it un-idealized: in *Dolly*'s case, it considered childhood a transgressive, unruly condition of pre-rational nervous instability, to which one might regress through contagion. The question which exercised commentators – whether the ballet's action carried a 'meaning' (*sens*) compatible with its music's – extends itself into a question about the compatibility of these perceptions of childhood. Just as *Dolly*'s choreomusical provocations probe the limitations of an interpretation such as Hahn's, so they play with the assumption that these perceptions are necessarily mutally exclusive.

For the surrealists, nostalgic sentiments about childhood were to be a resource for, rather than inimical to, their studiously anarchic rejection of rational, ordered life. Beginning his surrealist manifesto with the assertion that 'Man' inevitably loses his belief in 'real life', Breton insists that 'if he retains any lucidity, he can only turn back to his childhood, which, butchered as it has been by the care of his trainers, nevertheless seems to him full of charms'.[163] More straightforwardly than Rimbaud's, Breton's thought inverts the natural valuation of maturity and immaturity.

[163] 'S'il garde quelque lucidité, il ne peut que se retourner alors vers son enfance qui, pour massacré qu'elle ait été par le soin des dresseurs, ne lui en semble pas moins pleine de charmes.' Breton, 'Manifeste du surréalisme', 15–16.

Consequently, it is the results of regression – a return to childhood's apparent incapacities – that become the object of nostalgia. Degeneration makes possible the return or recuperation for which nostalgia purports to yearn. *Dolly*'s choreomusical relation performed this improbable alignment, by entwining a musical vehicle for tender nostalgia with a choreography that presented that music as opening a path of regression to the infantile.

Laloy's ballet demanded that its audiences discover within the suite's 'nursery atmosphere' – and within the nostalgic impulses which that atmosphere might occasion – something stranger, more dynamic and more comic than they were accustomed to search for. Some listeners were apparently able to make the interpretative stretch of finding in the *Dolly Suite* the affective worlds of both nursery and circus. Lindberg states that 'when Fauré scholars discuss [the] *Dolly* [*Suite*], they tend to remark on three things: its charm, its relative musical simplicity, and its dedicatee'.[164] Laloy's ballet provides a foundation for re-examining Fauré's music within fresh perspectives. Any interpretative light that might be shed by my discussion would also illuminate the aforementioned repertoire that composers and critics considered to embody forms of *clownerie*, especially those presented as for children, or whose titles referred to childhood.[165] We should, however, be tentative in applying these ideas directly to later balletic appropriations of circus 'burlesque'. From the First World War, the medical beliefs that gave rise to the idea of the 'corporeal unconscious' began to fade, although Gordon maintains that the idea was central to later surrealists' obsession with psychic automatism.[166]

Dolly was not the only 'ballet of toys which come alive, dance, [and] race around' that appeared in 1913. This is also an apt description of Debussy's *La Boîte à joujoux*

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[164] Lindberg, 'Through the Looking Glass', 30.

[165] Jody Blake notes the connection between the 'primitive' and the childlike in relation to Debussy's 'Golliwogg's Cake Walk', but not the pathological ideas that unite these categories with clowning: Blake, *Le tumulte noir: Modernist Art and Popular Entertainment in Jazz-Age Paris, 1900–1930* (University Park, PA, 1999), 30.

[166] See Pednault-Deslauriers, 'Pierrot L.', 639; Gordon, *Dances with Darwin*, 268-269.

(*The Toy Box*), a 'ballet for children' whose piano score was published that year. As the next chapter proposes, this score invited an imaginary animation of its toy characters, an invitation founded upon the prevailing understanding of the mimetic dimension of perception discussed in this chapter. In Chapter 2, I noted the cultural preoccupation with dolls – and, more generally, with the inanimate objects of childhood play – in late nineteenth-century French culture. In the final chapter, I attempt to account for a fundamental element of this preoccupation, relating it to broader patterns of aesthetic and philosophical thought, and examining its reflection in early twentieth-century art-music.

CHAPTER FOUR | Toy Worlds

Childhood, writes Tzachi Zamir, 'is partly an experience of not being sharply divided from the world of things, a separation that is constitutive of adulthood'.[1] This oneness with the world of things shows itself in children's play, especially in their play with toys, which transfigures everyday spaces into imaginary worlds, where physical objects take on their own life and agency. Artistic evocations of these worlds may reflect adult desires, acknowledged or subliminal, for imagined reimmersion into a world inhabited by us all before we emerge – so far as we do emerge – into a condition of perceived differentiation of self from its physical surroundings. Such evocations are, in different ways, achieved by the pieces examined in this chapter: two songs by Ravel – 'Le Grillon' ('The Cricket') and 'Noël des jouets' ('Toys' Christmas') – and a piano work by Debussy – *La Boîte à joujoux* (*The Toy Box*). These pieces conjure toy worlds, by giving life to mechanical objects or mechanism-like creatures within the spatial and temporal dimensions of miniaturism.

I consider these works in the light of critical discourse about the cultural significance of the idea of the toy world, and of the appeal of miniature worlds more generally.[2] In particular, suggestive observations by Gaston Bachelard, Walter Benjamin and Susan Stewart are taken up. The music considered here is informed, I propose, by the toy world's fundamental appeal to the modern artistic sensibility: its invitation to commune with things. A predisposition to accept this invitation is found in the wider cultural context in which this music was produced, and is confirmed in various artistic responses to late nineteenth-century urban life. That context could

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[1] Tzachi Zamir, 'Puppets', *Critical Inquiry* 36/3 (2010), 386-409, (pp. 395-396).

[2] The image of the toy, and the mechanical object more generally, is a relatively familiar one in Ravel scholarship, in particular. See, for instance, Carolyn Abbate, 'Outside Ravel's Tomb', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 52/3 (1999), 465-530; Deborah Mawer, 'Musical Objects and Machines', in *The Cambridge Companion to Maurice Ravel*, edited by Deborah Mawer (Cambridge, 2000), 47-70. Such discussions tend not to focus on the fact that toys are objects primarily associated with childhood, and that adult interests in them may reveal a desire to recapture elements of childhood experience. The following discussion examines alternative contexts and discourses, which may shed light on the manifold musical realizations of those interests in early twentieth-century French culture.

include a kind of existential desire, as André Hellé suggested in his Preface to *La Boîte*, to reduce 'towns' to 'toy-boxes in which people live like toys' – a desire which *La Boîte* gives shape to, indulges, and parodies.[3] In this music, the domain of childhood is visited not just for the pleasures of its enchantment, but for the resources it offers to illuminate adult sensibility, and to find and reclaim what has not been completely forgotten at every level of consciousness.

In a letter of 1913, Debussy remarked that: 'The soul of the doll is more mysterious than even Maeterlinck imagines, and does not easily put up with the humbug which so many human souls tolerate'.[4] Though little more than a fancifully worded admission that his work on *La Boîte* was progressing slowly, the remark suggests his awareness of a wider discourse about toys, puppets and automata, in which those objects were vehicles for reflection on the nature of consciousness, and on the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity. The relatively few studies devoted to *La Boîte* have tended to treat it as a kind of playful game of quotation (from the work of other composers and of Debussy himself). In this discussion, I consider the cultural significance of its nature as an extended investigation of the toy-like as a corporeal quality. *La Boîte*, I suggest, involves an exercise in 'feeling into' the toy's condition, by imagining the condition of thinghood, or rather, a movement towards that condition across a continuum stretching between the poles of personhood and thinghood.

At the end of an essay entitled 'Toys and Play', Walter Benjamin observed: 'If the modern poet maintains that for each individual there is an image which engulfs the world, how often does that image not arise from an old toy box?'.[5] Together with other of his remarks, this prompts reflection on the role of the toy in 'modern' artistic sensibility, as a source of imagery that stands in for the world, or is instrumental in negotiating it. There seems to be a connection between Ravel's and Debussy's

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[3] Debussy, Claude and André Hellé, *La Boîte à joujoux: ballet pour enfants* (Paris, 1913).

[4] Debussy to Durand, 27 Sept 1913, reprinted in Debussy, *Lettres à son editeur*, edited by Durand, 117. Cited in Robert Orledge, *Debussy and the Theatre* (Cambridge, 1982), 178.

[5] Benjamin, 'Toys and Play', translated by Livingstone, 120.

evocation of the toy world and a broader current of sensibility in French culture during the years around 1900, which generally took quite different artistic forms. Associated with Symbolist thought, this sensibility involved a predisposition to search for a kind of hidden life in the ordinary objects of domestic space – a search for something analogous to the childhood condition described by Zamir. As I shall argue, it has been plausibly suggested that this propensity was, in part, bound up with a desire to escape the enervating effects of contemporaneous urban life, much discussed in sociological and artistic discourse. This was the context in which composers made attempts to embody in music a condition poised between the animate and the inanimate – attempts that involved reimagining the experiences of childhood play.

Miniature relations

Nineteenth-century art and literature delighted in representing the child's transfiguration of domestic space through play.[6] An early twentieth-century example of artists' interest in this transfiguration is Renoir's depiction of his son Claude playing, produced in roughly 1905 (Plate 3).[7] The painting represents a child absorbed in making, on a table top, a miniature world in which his toys come alive. It also invites the viewer into that miniature world. The object on which one of the toys stands might be a book, or possibly the box from which the toys have been taken. But its representation is sufficiently indeterminate as to facilitate its being seen in accordance with its nature within the child's imaginative world – the toys' world – where it becomes a sort of platform. The painting juxtaposes the human scale of the child with a miniature scale (implied by the toy figures). Significantly, it does not seem to endorse the priority of the human scale over the toys'. The tree, for instance, is marked

[6] On this and related themes, see Maria Sachiko Cecire, Hannah Field, Kavita Mudan Finn, Malini Roy (eds.), *Space and Place in Children's Literature, 1789 to the Present* (London, 2016).

[7] Renoir supposedly liked to keep his sons' hair long, because it gave him pleasure to paint. As noted in Chapter 2, parents often dressed boys and girls in the same way until roughly the age of five.

3. Renoir, *Claude Renoir, playing*, 1905
Oil on canvas, 46 x 55 cm
Grand-Palais (Museé de l'Orangerie), Paris

as a toy tree only through its comparative size. With its life and detail, it seems simply to be a tree that inhabits a world with smaller dimensions than the child's. The painting invites us to peer into the corner where the toys' world is established. After doing so, we might begin to question to what extent the toys are miniature and to what extent the child, with his cherubic yet faintly brutish physiognomy, is a giant.

An especially lucid description of the relation between the world of toys and the world in which it is created is Robert Louis Stevenson's poem of 1885, 'The Land of Counterpane'. Stevenson's work – especially his writing for children – was popular in French translation from the 1880s onwards. Adopting the child's perspective, 'The Land of Counterpane' sets out from its second stanza the spatial transformations wrought by the creation of a toy world.

> And sometimes for an hour or so
> I watched my leaden soldiers go,
> With different uniforms and drills,
> Among the bed-clothes, through the hills;
>
> And sometimes sent my ships in fleets
> All up and down among the sheets;
> Or brought my trees and houses out,
> And planted cities all about.
>
> I was the giant great and still
> That sits upon the pillow-hill,
> And sees before him, dale and plain,
> The pleasant land of counterpane.[8]

Throughout the poem, domestic space both retains its ordinary identity (as 'bed-clothes') and attains a new quality of vastness (as 'hills'). Stevenson's 'pillow-hill' has the same doubleness as Renoir's book-or-box platform. The poem also describes what Renoir's painting hints at – the child's imagined acquisition of the proportions of a giant, through his relationship with a miniature world. This acquisition perhaps

[8] Robert Louis Stevenson, 'XVI. The Land of Counterpane', *A Child's Garden of Verses.* In *idem. Poems*, Vol. 1. (London, 1923. First published 1885), 8.

supplies a more general fantasy of escaping the sense of one's own dimensions, or even the very constraints of scale as such.[9]

Jankélévitch observed of Ravel's music in general that it rediscovers the child's 'microscopic perspective'.[10] Renoir's painting and Stevenson's poem are equivalent imaginings of that perspective, which transforms the dimensions of small, ordinary spaces. Adult interests in recreating this 'microscopic perspective' belong to a wider preoccupation with the form of the miniature, as a sort of category of spatial feeling. Other critical commentary may help to illuminate Jankélévitch's somewhat gnomic statement about Ravel's music. In his discussion of the miniature, which is focused on nineteenth-century French literary thought, Gaston Bachelard relates 'miniature thinking' to, among other things, 'the enlarging gaze of a child'.[11] Several of Bachelard's examples come from Charles Nodier's fantastical, fairytale-themed writings, such as *La Fée aux miettes* (*The Crumb Fairy*), in which the human Michael suddenly finds himself in a fairy's house 'hidden under a tuft of grass'.[12] Bachelard acknowledges that, in this transformation, it is not quite true that Michael shrinks, nor that the house expands. Instead, the fixity of proportional dimension disintegrates. Miniature thinking resists geometric rationalizations of space. As Bachelard puts it, in our experience of the miniature, '[l]arge issues from small, [...] thanks to a liberation from all obligations of dimension'.[13]

One manifestation of what Jankélévitch calls Ravel's 'microscopic perspective' is 'Le Grillon', from the song-cycle *Histoires Naturelles* composed in 1907. The cycle sets several humorous poems from the collection of the same name by Jules Renard. 'Le Grillon' does not deal explicitly with the theme of childhood; it is a laconic

[9] This fantasy is also indulged, or perhaps parodied, towards the beginning of Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, when Alice adjusts her size in an attempt to fit through a miniature door that reveals an idyllic miniature world.

[10] Jankélévitch, *Ravel*, translated by Crosland, 158. A similar idea is part of the impetus behind Emily Kilpatrick's chapter, 'The "big, small world" of *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*', in *The Operas of Maurice Ravel* (Cambridge, 2015), 197-216.

[11] Gaston Bachelard, (trans. M. Jolas), *The Poetics of Space* (Boston, 1969), 155.

[12] *Ibid*., 149, citing Charles Nodier, *La Fée aux miettes* (Paris, 1832).

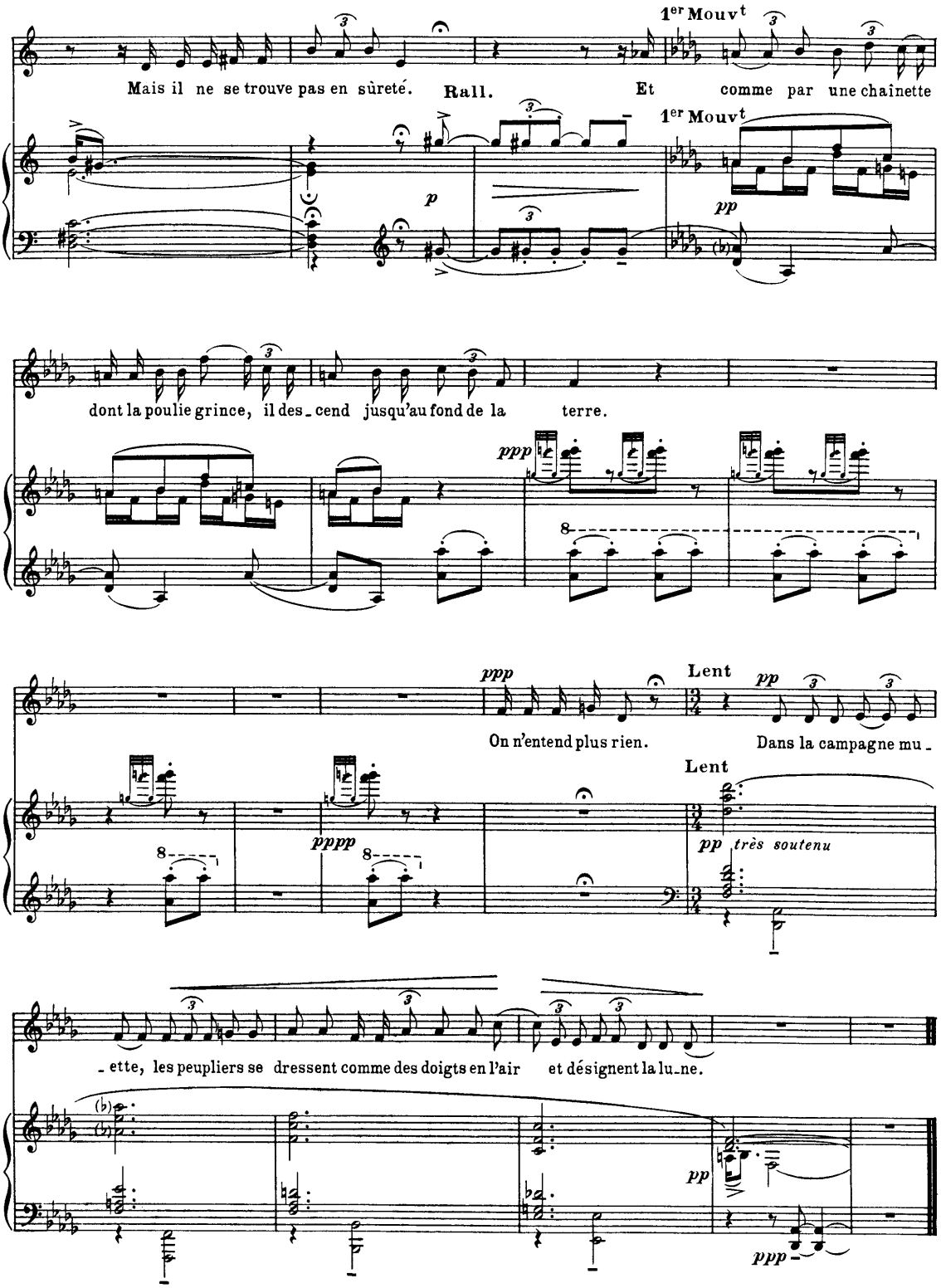
[13] *Ibid*., 154.

description of a cricket going about its domestic duties within its diminutive universe of grass and sand. In the middle of Renard's text, two questions – 'Has he finished? Is it broken?' – maintain a distance or tension between the world of the speaker and the miniature world of the cricket into which the speaker peers.[14]

> It's the time when, tired of wandering, the black insect returns from his walk and carefully tidies the disorder of his domain.
> First he rakes his narrow sand paths.
> He makes some sawdust which he spreads over the threshold of his sanctuary.
> He files the root of the tall grass which is likely to bother him.
> He rests.
> Then he winds his miniscule watch.
> Has he finished? Is it broken? He rests again for a bit.
> He returns home and closes the door.
> For a long time he turns his key in the delicate lock.
> And he listens:
> Nothing alarming outside.
> But he doesn't quite feel safe.
> And, as if on a small chain with a grinding pulley, he descends into the depths of the earth.
> Nothing more is heard.
> In the silent countryside, the poplars rise like fingers in the air and point out the moon.

In the poem's final sentence, the speaker's attention turns from the cricket's universe to the relative vastness of 'la campagne muette' that contains it. Bachelard proposes that '[t]o have experienced the miniature … detaches me from the surrounding world'.[15] The final section of 'Le Grillon' evokes the experience of return to 'the surrounding world', registering the detachment achieved by an absorbed contemplation of the cricket's realm.

'Le Grillon' evokes this realm with a prosaic concision, full of waiting and silence. The function of this concision is to prepare a moment of effortless expansion in the song's closing section (Example 4.1). The music that sets the final sentence is not in

[14] For the original French text, see Appendix 2.
[15] Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 154.

Example 4.1. Maurice Ravel and Jules Renard, *Histoires Naturelles* (Paris: Durand & Fils, 1907), no.2 'Le Grillon', bars 51-68.

itself expansive, but, through contrast with the preceding music, nonetheless conveys a sense of unexpected magnitude. The song's ending, then, registers that immersion in this world has brought about the adoption of an 'enlarging gaze'. The ordinary has been re-sized. The conclusion's sense of expansion derives partly from the fact that, from bar 63, the song is released from a very high and narrow tessitura (f# to e'''') into a lower one which, by comparison, sounds especially full (F' to d-flat'). The expanded quality of the song's final statement also stems from its reiteration of the shape of the opening phrase that described the cricket's world, emphasizing a tension between it and the relative vastness of 'la campagne muette'. The song's shift from earth to sky also registers a new quality of space. At bar 63, the primary chord evokes a suddenly rarefied atmosphere.

The poetic image realized by this music – poplars like fingers, pointing at the moon – suggests a scrambled sense of proportion, as if the human scale has lost its clear place between the microscopic and the cosmic. The image lends a paradoxically miniature quality to the expanse of the 'silent countryside'. At the same time, it casts the human form as newly giant-like. The experience of peering down into the cricket's world seems to have expanded a sense of the scale of the body – not unlike the experience of Stevenson's child, contemplating the land of counterpane. We might say, then, that the song seems to have been released from the obligations of dimension, through its immersion in the cricket's world. In her discussion of the miniature, Susan Stewart suggests that its 'reduction in scale' results in a temporal as well as spatial shift between the miniature realm and the 'everyday lifeworld'.[16] The ending of 'Le Grillon' also articulates this shift, as 'miniature time' gives way to that of the 'everyday lifeworld'. The final bars are no longer driven by stop-start tickings and windings. At bar 65, the D-flat major chord prompts the beginning of a cycle of fifths that roll gently onto each other. No longer isolated harmonic events, these chords are gathered into a

[16] Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (London, 1993), 65.

harmonic flow which sustains the movement of the music in its slowness and concision, and helps to create the ending's striking quality of expansion.

Although the miniature world evoked in 'Le Grillon' is not a child's world of play, it is unquestionably toy-like, as is its one inhabitant. Like other insects, the cricket has an automotive, quasi-mechanical character. The song transposes a natural way of perceiving the headlong scurrying of these tiny, fleshless slaves to instinct. If the toy elicits the question of whether it is somehow alive as well as just a thing, the insect elicits the inverse question of whether it is really just a kind of mechanism. Renard's text describes how the cricket moves as if worked by a pulley, and Ravel's setting emphasizes the mechanistic character of its activities. Two basic segments of musical material accompany the descriptions of these activities. One gives the hint of lyricism first heard when the narrator describes the cricket raking his paths, which reconnects with the opening ostinato figure. This accompanies the speaker's observations of the cricket, lending them a tone of insouciant delight. These observations are then abruptly followed by a brittle, dissonant music that seems to illustrate the actual character of the cricket's activities.[17] The regular staccato pulses in the piano's dry, percussive upper register suggest a spring in action; the acciaccaturas embody the ticking of a tiny mechanism fractionally out of sync with itself.[18] The dialogue between these two types of material articulates a relationship between the animateness of the everyday world and the inanimateness of the miniature one that has hatched inside it.[19]

[17] These are not always aligned, as in bar 23.

[18] In Jankélévitch's words, the cricket goes 'tick-tock like a chronometer'. *Ravel*, 78.

[19] For the purposes of this chapter, inanimateness is the condition of lacking an *animus* – the quality of being suffused with life. The state of being animate is not one that necessarily implies movement. Equally, lifeless objects may also move: their status as inanimate is defined more by the quality than by the fact of their movement.

Inanimateness

This relationship – between the animate and the inanimate – constitutes the interface between the livingness of the child and the thingliness of the toys, a boundary made permeable through the animating actions of the imagination by which the toy world is brought into being. Observing the land of counterpane, Stevenson's playing child acquires another characteristic besides the giant-like: stillness. Renoir's child has the aspect of something almost equivalent. As noted in Chapter 2, Greg Thomas has examined how Impressionist portraits of children often lent them a resemblance to dolls. With Renoir, Thomas proposes, the fact that this resemblance might have been achieved unwittingly does not erase its significance.[20] In the picture of Claude playing, the resemblance between child and toy is achieved mainly through the depiction of the toys as strikingly organic figures. Indeed, they seem to be almost in the process of coming to life: the two figures on the table-top that face the child have lost the board on which they stand, as if their legs have been freed. This is partly how the painting invites the viewer directly into the imaginative world that Renoir's son has conjured. The toy figures have at least as much 'life' to them as the child, with his slightly wooden posture. If becoming immersed in a toy world requires crossing the boundary between the animate and the inanimate, then both Stevenson's poem and Renoir's painting suggest that, when the toy is brought to life, the child must somehow relinquish some of his or her own animateness to move into its world.

Ravel's 'Noël des jouets' clearly enacts a dissolution of the boundary between the animate and the inanimate. The song is another realization of 'miniature thinking', absorbing the listener into the diminutive universe of a toy nativity scene. Ravel's text

[20] Thomas, *Impressionist Children,* 33.

vividly describes the attitudes of various toy characters – sheep, angels, the Virgin Mary – gathered expectantly around the baby Jesus.[21]

The varnished flock of sheep
Rolls in tumult towards the crêche
The rabbit drummers, small and rough
Cover their shrill reed pipes.

Virgin Mary, in crinoline
Her enamelled eyes always open
Waiting for Father Christmas
Watches Jesus, who is sleeping.

For, nearby, under a pine tree,
Furtive, cloaked in the shadow
Of the woods, Belzébuth, the dark dog
Watches the Child of painted sugar.

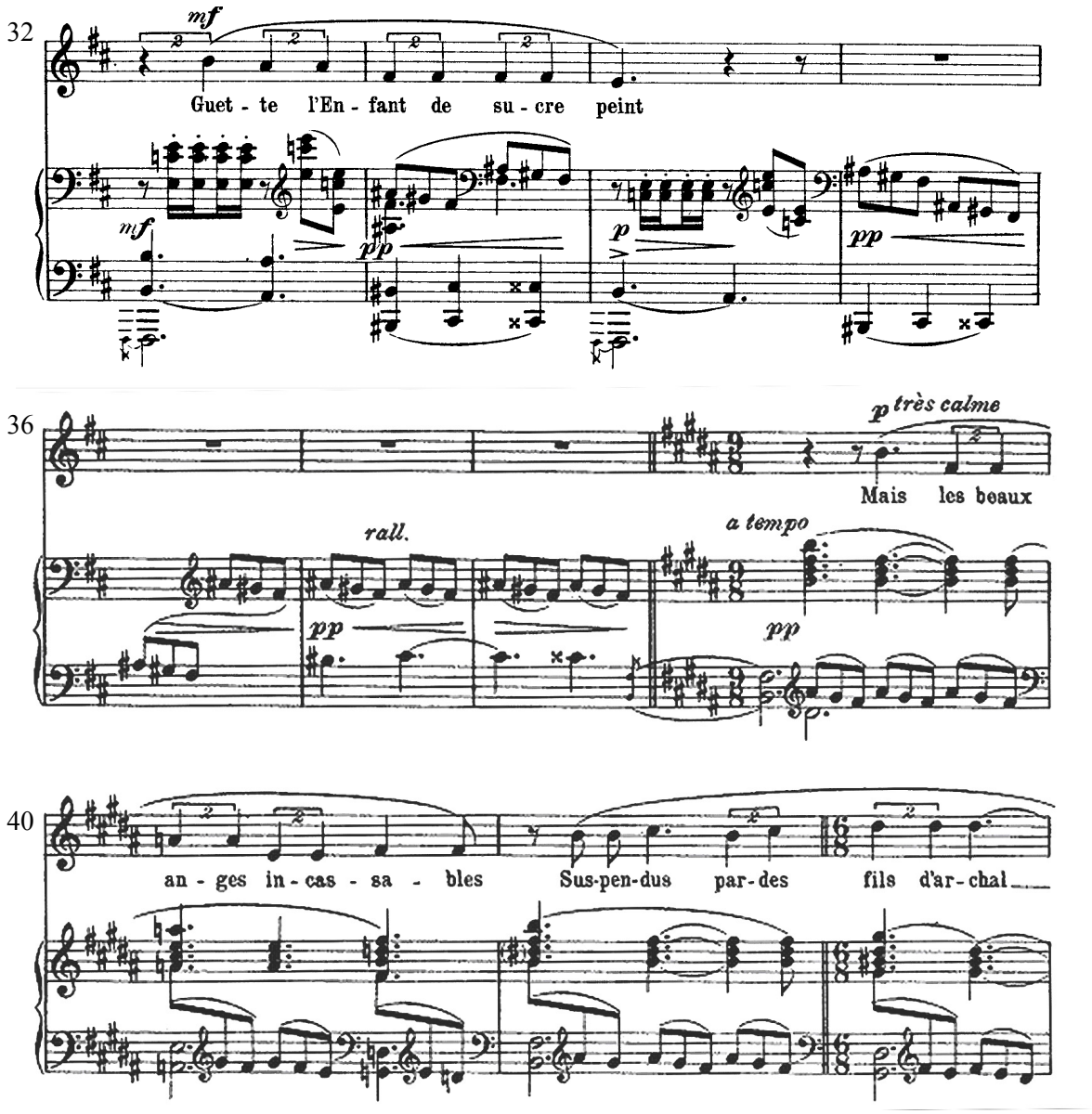
But the beautiful unbreakable angels
Suspended by threads of brass wire
From the top of the winter bush
Assure the peace of the stables.

And their glittering vermilion flight
That jangles in symmetrical sounds
Harmonises with the mechanical animals,
whose thin voices bleat
Noël! Noël! Noël!

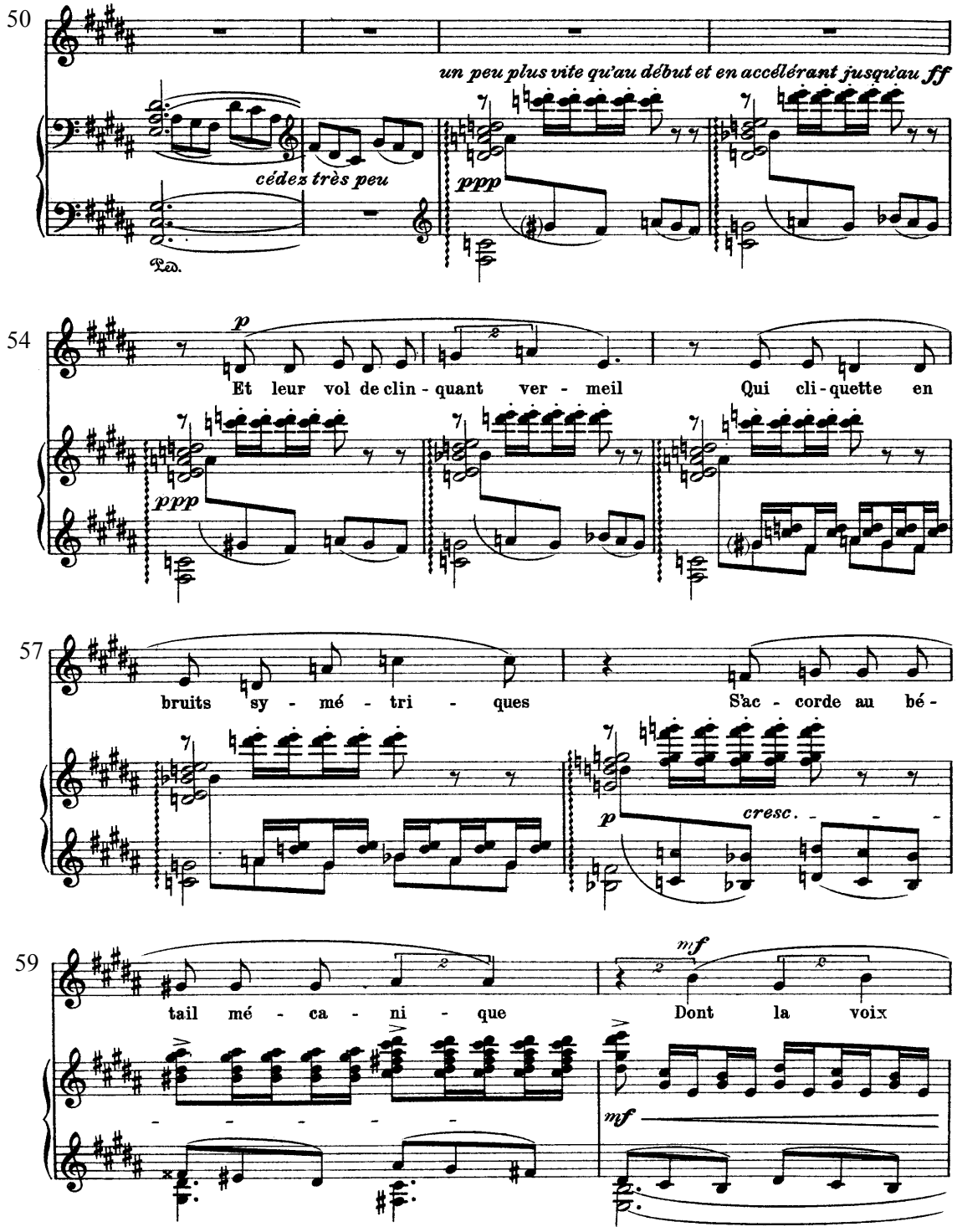
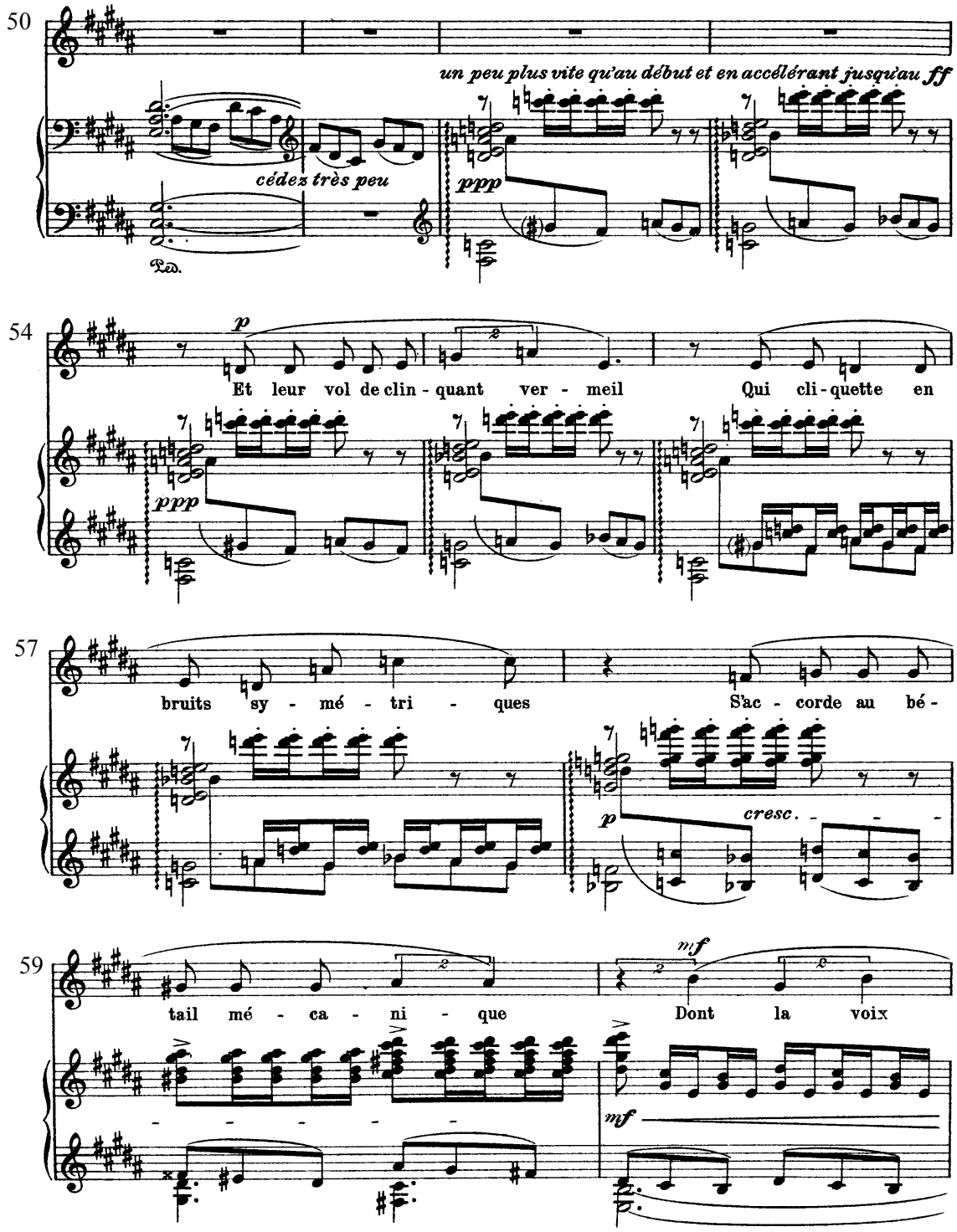
Towards the end of the poem, in Michael J. Puri's words, 'it is revealed that the toys are, in fact, animated – by their toy mechanisms'.[22] This moment corresponds to the song's climax. As Puri observes, '[r]ather than view the animation of toys from an ironic distance that dismisses it [...] as the self-deception of childish minds, 'Noël des

[21] For the original French, see Appendix 3. The translation given here is Emily Kilpatrick's, provided in '"Jangling in Symmetrical Sounds": Maurice Ravel as Storyteller and Poet', *Journal of Music Research Online* 1 (2009), 14. Date accessed 15 September 2017.

[22] Puri, Michael J., *Ravel the Decadent: Memory, Sublimation, and Desire* (Oxford, 2011), 57. Puri describes a relationship between 'animation and reanimation' that appears in other works such as *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*. His understanding of the terms is different from that offered here.

jouets' celebrates it without reservation'.[23] The toys' mechanical motion seems to drive the song from the beginning, which aptly illustrates Jankélévitch's remark that Ravel's music 'preserves the trace of cog-wheels'.[24] The revolving ostinato of the song's opening reappears in bar 33, and is re-established in bar 35 (Ex. 4.2), in a way that suggests its circling movement has underpinned the whole song, winding in and out of audibility.

Example 4.2. Maurice Ravel, 'Noël des jouets' (Paris: A.Z. Mathot, 1914), bars 32-42. All subsequent examples are taken from this edition.

[23] *Ibid*., 57.
[24] Jankélévitch, *Ravel*, 80.

From bar 52, however, with the *accelerando*, the constant turning of the ostinato motif begins to lose the metric regularity that defines it as cog-like (Ex. 4.3). This acceleration does not evoke the thought of a mechanism going haywire. It suggests the quickening process of animation by which the toys' mechanistic nature is transcended.

Example 4.3. Ravel, 'Noël des jouets', bars 50-72.

Example 4.3. Ravel, 'Noël des jouets', bars 50-72.

The final verse of Ravel's text tells us that the sounds produced by the toys – 'Noël! Noël! Noël!' – are a thin, mechanical bleating. It is these sounds that have been presented through the clinking motifs that pervade the song. In bars 62-3, however, there is a discrepancy between the connotations of 'bêle' ('bleat') and its musical realization. The sustained *forte* e'', for instance, with its *portando* flourish, is conspicuously un-mechanistic. In bars 67 and 68, the semi-quaver motif in the accompaniment's upper part, which first represented the 'rabbit drummers' in bar 12, is no longer 'thin', brittle and mechanistic, despite the text's description of these qualities. It has become a fanfare, the articulation markings suggesting an organic shaping. The poem conveys the toys' mechanistic sounds and motions at the moment when the music insists upon their livingness. What explains this apparent discrepancy?

The song seems to have arrived at a transformation of how the toy world is imagined. The mechanical sounds no longer sound mechanical, just as the cog-like motion of the piano's revolving ostinato no longer feels cog-like. Absorbed into the toys' mechanical world, we seem to have internalized their forces of animation. Their mechanical state becomes the livingness described by the song's 'apotheosis' (to borrow Puri's description). This 'apotheosis', then, might be understood as a sort of representation of what is achieved by an absorbed contemplation of the toy world: regaining the experience, in Zamir's words, of 'not being sharply divided from the world of things'.

Feeling into things

Zamir observes that adult interest in puppets reveals a 'wish to revisit a different relationship with objects'.[25] The same might be said of adult interest in toys – of which the pieces discussed in this chapter are examples. Adult interest in toys, then, belongs to a wider interest in the inanimate, which, as Steven Connor observes, 'human beings seem constitutionally unable to believe to be entirely empty of life'.[26] To borrow a phrase of Kenneth Gross's, the toy is 'an ambassador or pilgrim to human beings from the world of things'.[27] The ambassadorial nature of objects such as the toy and the puppet comes from their having been expressly designed as objects that receive and exhibit a derivative form of life. There exists a cultural agreement that they reach beyond the condition of thinghood. Gross describes the puppet as a figure that is 'at home among objects, and that instructs us in the shapes of their life'.[28] The music discussed in this chapter might be considered, more specifically, as an attempt to undertake that instruction.

Zamir observes that the puppet (and by extension the toy) is also a tool for renewing a relationship 'with oneself qua object'.[29] Barbara Johnson attempts to explain our inclination to invest inanimate objects with a form of life. She suggests that our animistic tendencies relate closely to the fact that our capacity to relate to people as subjects involves accepting the necessity of perceiving them as objects. Johnson considers how literary thought has demonstrated that the inescapable personhood of things mirrors the quandary of the inescapable thinghood of persons.[30] Since antiquity, toys have served as important metaphors for the body – specifically, as vehicles of

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[25] Zamir, 'Puppets', 396.

[26] Steven Connor, '"String Theories", review of Kenneth Gross, *Puppet: An Essay on Uncanny Life* (Chicago, 2011)', *Literary Review* 392 (October 2011), 22-23 (p. 22).

[27] Cited in *ibid*., 22. Gross's remark refers to puppets.

[28] Kenneth Gross 'Introduction' to *On Dolls*, edited by *idem* (London, 2012), ix-xx, (p. xix). The remark is part of a gloss on Dennis Silk's essay in this volume, 'The Marionette Theatre', 91-107.

[29] Zamir, 'Puppets', 396.

[30] Barbara Johnson, *Persons and Things* (Cambridge, 2008).

thought about the nature of consciousness. For Baudelaire, the toy was a figure that illustrated the irresolvable paradoxes of substance dualism. To the child, the toy is alive, but its soul cannot be found. Towards the end of his essay 'Morale du joujou' ('Philosophy of Toys'), he observes: 'Most kids want above all to *see the soul* [of their toys]'. This 'is a first metaphysical inclination'.[31] Upon opening up a toy after a great effort, the child is dumbfounded: 'But *where is the soul?* This is the beginning of sadness and stupefaction'.[32]

Travelling in Holland in the same year that he wrote 'Noël des jouets', Ravel described an experience in which he seemed to move across into what Gross calls 'the world of things'.[33] In a letter, he reported observing a landscape comprising 'nothing but revolving vanes', and remarked that '[v]iewing this mechanical landscape, you could end up believing yourself to be an automaton'.[34] Ravel's letter recorded the imaginary sensation of attaining the condition of being automated, through contemplating and becoming absorbed into a space that exhibited only mechanical signs of life. His remark was a curious echo of a sentence in 'Après le déluge', the prose-poem usually placed at the beginning of Rimbaud's *Illuminations*: 'A door slammed, and, in the village square, the child rotated his arms, understood by the weathervanes and cocks on bell-towers, beneath the sparkling downpour.'[35] Rimbaud's image registers childhood's connectedness with the world of things. This is conceived as an interpersonal understanding, an ability to communicate with mechanical 'life' that

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[31] 'La plupart des marmots veulent surtout *voir l'âme* [...]. [...] c'est une première tendance métaphysique': 'Morale du joujou', in *Curiosités esthétiques, L'Art romantique et autres Oeuvres critiques de Baudelaire* (Paris, 1962. First published in 1853), 201-207 (p. 207). In this and other quotations, I have made use of the translation of this essay by Jonathan Mayne in *Charles Baudelaire: The Painter of Modern Life*, 197-203.

[32] 'Mais *où est l'âme?* C'est ici que commencent l'hébétement et la tristesse'. *Ibid*., 207

[33] Gross, *On Dolls,* xx

[34] Ravel, Maurice. 'Letter to Maurice Delage', 24 June, 1905, translated by Orenstein, *A Ravel Reader*, 69-70.

[35] 'Une porte claqua, et sur la place du hameau, l'enfant tourna ses bras, compris des girouettes et des coqs des clochers de partout, sous l'éclatante giboulée.' Arthur Rimbaud, 'Après le déluge', in *A Season in Hell and Other Works*, translated and edited by Stanley Appelbaum (New York, 2003), 46-47.

discovers and reveals a kind of virtual intentionality within it. In both Ravel's and Rimbaud's images, the connection with the world of things is achieved through the perception or imitation of motion – through what we would now call kinaesthetic empathy.

In *Matière et Mémoire* (published in 1896), Bergson describes in detail a process of seeking a much more extreme version of the feeling that Ravel described, whereby subjectivity would be somehow relinquished. The passage in question is a thought experiment in abolishing one's own 'consciousness':

> matter resolves itself into numberless vibrations, all linked together in uninterrupted continuity [...]. Try first to connect together the discontinuous objects of daily experience; then, resolve the motionless continuity of these qualities into vibrations, which are moving in place; finally, *attach yourself to these movements*, by freeing yourself from the divisible space that underlies them in order to consider only their mobility.[36]

Bergson imagines an imperceptible mobility running through the matter of which all objects consist. He asks readers to 'attach' themselves to this mobility, implicitly through a sort of mimetic sensibility, trying to imagine the supremely automotive state of lacking consciousness. There are, as Kenneth Gross suggests, many 'species of animism'.[37] Bergson describes an extreme case: moving over to the side of things, while expressly avoiding investing them with life.

The experiences described by Ravel exemplify the exercise of a perceptual capacity, designated 'Einfühlung', that was central to aesthetic and psychological thought around the turn of the century. This notion of 'Einfühlung' – 'feeling-into' – was the product of German thought, but became an influential concept across Europe.[38] In 1898, in the *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, Lucien Arréat provided a definition: 'the act of imagination through which we enter into the very object of our artistic

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[36] Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, translated by Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (London, 1911), 276. The emphasis is my own.

[37] Gross, *On Dolls,* xix.

[38] This paragraph is generally indebted to Lauren Wispé, 'History of the Concept of Empathy', in *Empathy and its Development*, edited by Nancy Eisenberg and Janet Strayer. Cambridge, 1987), 17-37.

vision, [...] which thus seems to acquire the character of personality and becomes the emblem of our internal states'.[39] The idea was first elaborated in an attempt to explain the intensity and immediacy of aesthetic responses to nature. In the early years of the twentieth century, it was extended by Theodor Lipps into a theory of interpersonal perception (and translated as 'empathy'). As Arréat noted, 'feeling-into' entailed a certain anthropomorphism. Applied to objects, it involved a kind of animism, in which one perceives a thing's form as a sort of posture in which it is eternally settled. Contemporaneous thought suggested that 'feeling-into' involved, or was grounded by, 'inner imitation' ('motor mimicry', in today's terminology) as noted in Chapter 3. Instinctively reproducing some quality of movement, gesture or expression embodied in an object's form, we automatically project the experience prompted in us by this imitation back onto the object of perception. As Lauren Wispé observes, the kinaesthetic basis of *Einfühlung* entails that objects are 'felt as well as seen'.[40]

In Rimbaud's prose-poem, the child's mimetic movement is the vehicle of interpersonal connection between an animate and an inanimate form. Equally, it was the motion of the 'revolving vanes' that prompted Ravel's experience of seeming to enter virtually into the condition of their inanimateness. We might say that 'Noël des jouets' enacts the process of 'feeling-into' the toy world – simultaneously projecting an impression of selfhood onto the toys, and imaginatively inhabiting their bodily condition. From the beginning, the narrator of Ravel's text seeks to 'enter into' the objects under contemplation, endowing the postures of the toy nativity scene with forms of 'personality'. The song's climax, where the mechanistic and organic seem to intersect and merge, is a sort of representation of the moment when these objects seem to have gained hold of our own 'internal states'.

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[39] 'l'acte d'imagination par lequel nous entrons dans l'object même de notre vision artistique, et le transport de notre sentiment à cet object, qui semble acquérir ainsi le caractère de la personnalité et devient le symbole de nos étates internes'. Lucien Arréat, '[Review of] Paul Stern. Einfühlung und Association in der neuren Aesthetik. 1898', *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 46 (1898), 183.

[40] Wispé, 'History of the Concept of Empathy', 20.

The passages from the writings of Rimbaud and Bergson suggest the existence of a wider cultural interest in the imaginative experience of relinquishing one's subjectivity. If this experience is reached through kinaesthetic empathy, then it might be acquired through 'moving with' the music we listen to, if that music embodies movement to which we can 'attach ourselves', to adopt Bergson's phrase. This suggests that we might understand musical attempts to embody the toy-like as inviting listeners to 'feel into' the 'life' of objects. It does so by offering a kind of mimesis of their imagined or virtual movements, or of the completed or potential movement that explains their 'postures'. One of the most detailed and extended musical exercises in articulating the toy-like has received little sustained musicological attention. It is significant that this work was presented as a ballet – music that explicitly requested the performance of movement.

La Boîte à joujoux

La Boîte was first published by Durand in 1913 as a meticulously designed piano score, with a large number of illustrations by the well-known caricaturist and designer, André Hellé. It is subtitled 'ballet for children', and its story is integrated with the score, the words of a scenario running between the lines of music. This story tells how a group of toys emerge from a box in a toy shop, fight in a battle, buy a house in the country, and achieve in middle age the comfortable pleasures of bourgeois existence. Comprising a Prélude, four scenes and an Epilogue, the ballet was fully orchestrated and performed only after Debussy's death.[41] The piano version of *La Boîte* mimics a musical genre discussed in Chapter 2: the illustrated children's story. Its most significant model was Lack's *Roman d'une poupée* of 1906. The setting of Lack's work is 'one of those enchanted palaces [...] that we call a toyshop', where Debussy and Hellé's story also

[41] For a study of the work and its productions, see Simon Morrison, 'Debussy's Toy Stories', *The Journal of Musicology* 30/3 (2013), 424-459. For general information on the work, see also Orledge, *Debussy and the Theatre*, 177-185.

begins.[42] The details are sometimes strikingly similar: in both stories' battle scenes, for instance, the cannonballs are likened to Clamart peas.[43] Like Debussy, Lack weaves various musical references into his toy-story. In both works, for example, a simplified fragment of Mendelssohn's wedding march indicates the toys' marriage. What for Lack is a playful means of introducing children to famous pieces of music becomes, for Debussy, a more extensive and developed compositional game.[44]

With its *dépouillé* character and lean tessitura, *La Boîte* imitates essential elements of the *pièce enfantine*. But it is too long, and its faster passages too difficult, to be a piece of children's music in the way that Lack's toy story is for children. The similarities between *La Boîte* and an established genre of sheet-music clearly show that the piano version of the work was not merely a preliminary step towards a ballet production. As a story with both musical and visual illustration, the 1913 version of *La Boîte* is a very particular kind of artwork: music to be played on the piano while listeners watch a sequence of visual images. Hellé later recalled his own adoption of a version of this listening practice, sitting in an armchair while Debussy played the score at the piano and Durand turned the pages: 'I listened and I saw pass in front of my eyes, in a joyous sarabande, all my jolly little figures, dressed in bright and merry colours, who were born only at that moment'.[45] Of course, only someone with Hellé's knowledge of the characters could make do with following them in the mind's eye, rather than on the pages of the score. Hellé's remark stresses the work's inter-media nature: only in the moment of musical performance did his characters spring to life.

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[42] 'un de ces palais enchantés [...] qu'on appelle un magasin du jouets'. Lack, *Le Roman d'une poupée*.

[43] The peas produced in Clamart were, famously, the first of the season.

[44] For identifications of these references, see Morrison, 'Debussy's Toy Stories'; Orledge, *Debussy and the Theatre;* and José-Eduardo Martins, 'La vision de l'univers enfantin chez Moussorgsky et Debussy', *Cahiers Debussy* 9 (1985), 3-16.

[45] 'assis dans un excellent fauteuil, j'écoutais et je vis passer devant mes yeux, dans une joyeuse sarabande tous mes petits bonshommes, habillés de couleurs gaies et claires, qui naissaient alors seulement'. Cited in Denis Herlin, 'André Hellé et *La Boîte à joujoux*: Interview, conférence et texte intégral de *L'Histoire d'une Boîte à joujoux*', *Cahiers Debussy* 30 (2006), 98-122 (p. 112).

Commentators on the work have noted how, as a whole, it seems to capture an essence of the toy-like. Morrison observes that the musical quotations or near-quotations that pervade the score are 'themselves like toys'.[46] Each quotation supplies a 'smaller, simpler image' of the music to which it refers. These become a 'musical equivalent of the simple, graphic playthings that Hellé designed', and Debussy's score thereby becomes a kind of musical toy-box.[47] So constant are the moments of recognition or half-recognition accompanying these allusions that the work seems to be derived from a musical world outside itself, of which it becomes a reduced image. In some notes for his essay 'Russian Toys', Walter Benjamin referred to Debussy's work in a sequence of thoughts that were left out of the final piece. The notes also include the phrases 'Criterion of simplicity' and 'Against modern toys'.[48] I do not speculate about exactly how *La Boîte* might have contributed to Benjamin's thinking about the image of the toy. But the fact that it does seem to have contributed confirms the potential relevance of Benjamin's ideas to understanding the cultural significance of Debussy's toy story.

In 'Morale du joujou', Baudelaire outlined what amounted to an aesthetic of childhood. For Baudelaire, this aesthetic was manifested in the toy itself –

> that unique form of statuary, which, through its lustrous cleanliness, its blinding flashes of colour, its violence of gesture and decisiveness of form, represents so well childhood's ideas about beauty.[49]

La Boîte undoubtedly realizes this aesthetic. Baudelaire's notion of 'lustrous cleanliness' aptly describes the energetic *dépouillé* character that characterizes much of the piece, which stems partly from its imitation of the limited tessitura of children's

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[46] Morrison, 'Debussy's Toy Stories', 429.

[47] *Ibid*., 430

[48] See, *Walter Benjamin's Archive: Images, Texts, Signs*, translated by Esther Leslie (London, 2007), 105. Benjamin's argument against modern toys was partly that 'primitive' toys generally serve their purpose better, in facilitating the working of the child's imagination.

[49] 'cette statuaire singulière, qui, par la propreté lustrée, l'éclat aveuglant des couleurs, la violence dans le geste et la décision dans le galbe, représente si bien les idées de l'enfance sur la beauté.' Baudelaire, 'Morale du joujou', 202.

piano music. The score's simplified, toy-like allusions emphasize the music's 'decisiveness of form'. This abrupt decisiveness also becomes a structural quality, in the paratactic nature of the work's development.[50] One in particular of the work's toy-like modes encapsulates the 'violence of gesture' intrinsic to the energy of the toy in motion: a scurrying, headlong, accelerated quality, delineated through a lean, compressed texture. This mode is exemplified twice in the first tableau – in the 'round' begun by Pierrot, Arlequin and Polichinelle, and in the scampering return to the box – and once in the second tableau, in the brief segment of battle-music (where it is interrupted by a humorous acknowledgement of the harmlessness of the cannon balls).

The Prélude is an invitation to the listener to 'feel into' the stillness of the toys' inanimate condition (Example 4.4). The hushed, pared-down stasis of its opening bars evokes a charged aura of expectancy, intimating the possibility of life latent within that stillness. With its melancholy atmosphere of enchantment, this music prepares for the emergence of the toys in the first tableau.[51] In Hellé's illustration (Figure 4.1), the stillness of the inanimate is comically displayed as the stillness of sleep. Lois Kuznets suggests that the theme of 'coming-alive-at-night' in toy stories is linked with a 'sense of the secrets of the night, both sensual and sexual'.[52] Although sex is central to it, the gently comic universe of *La Boîte* appeals to different aspects of the nocturnal. Here, the night is a realm of experience that subverts our cruder pretensions to rationality, and is seemingly governed by its own temporal regime.

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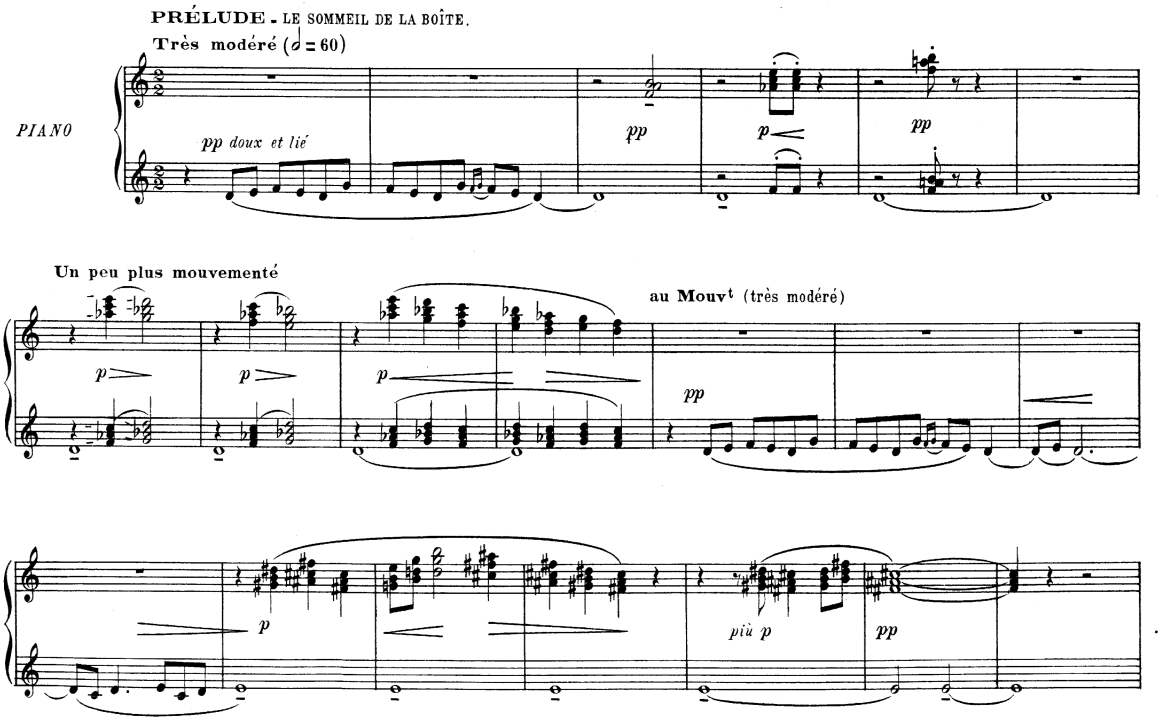
[50] Morrison suggests that the '[s]udden switches between melodies, particularly in the first tableau, recall a child's orneriness', 'Debussy's Toy Stories', 429.

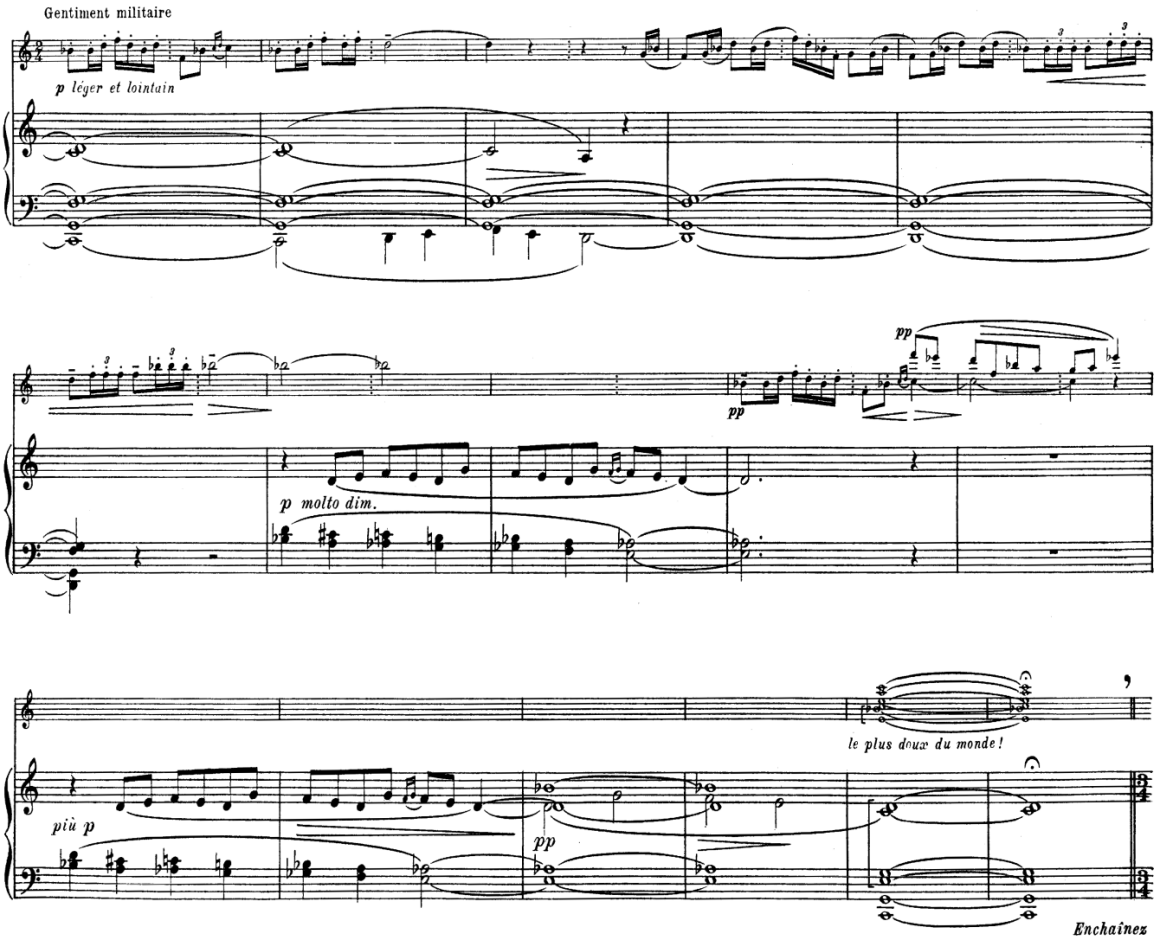
[51] Debussy wrote to Stravinsky to express his admiration of the music through which the magician animates the puppets in *Petrushka* ('le magie sonore, de transformation mystérieuse d'âmes mécaniques qui deviennent humaines par un sortilège'). The 'sonorous magic' of Debussy's Prélude, however, embodies a different kind of animation, of a different kind of mechanical soul. Cited in Herlin, 'André Hellé et *La Boîte à joujoux*', 100.

[52] Lois R. Kuznets, *When Toys Come Alive: Narratives of Animation, Metamorphosis, and Development* (New Haven, CT, 1994), 63.



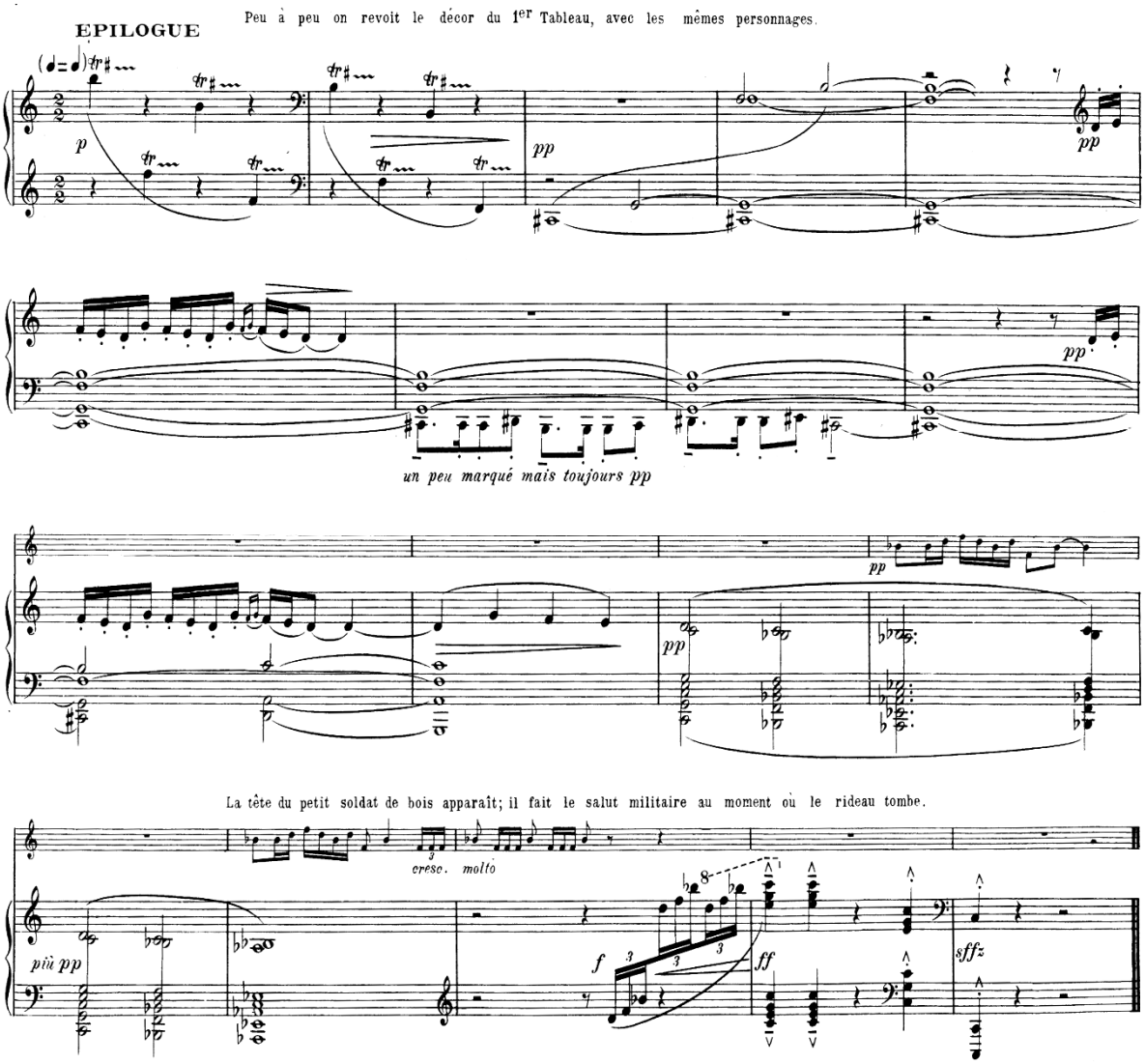
Example 4.4. André Hellé and Claude Debussy, *La Boîte à joujoux* (Paris: Durand & Cie, 1913), Prélude - Le Sommeil de la boîte, opening. All subsequent examples are taken from this edition.

Figure 4.1. André Hellé and Claude Debussy, *La Boîte à joujoux* (Paris: Durand & Cie, 1913), Prélude - 'Le Sommeil de la boîte' ('The Toy Box's sleep'). All subsequent images are taken from this edition.

As with 'Noël des jouets', the spiralling motif of the Prélude's opening bars draws us into a miniature fictive world, populated by inanimate things. The Prélude moves gradually from the 'everyday lifeworld', as Stewart puts it, to the 'miniature world' of the toys, which, like 'Le Grillon', has its own autonomous temporal dimension. The toy's animation, Stewart suggests, initiates 'an entirely new temporal world', which is 'parallel to (and hence never intersects) the world of everyday reality'.[53] The hushed elaborations of the soldier's theme, shown at the beginning of Example 4.5, is designated 'lointain' ('far off"), evoking the distance that separates the toys' dream-like world from the everyday one.[54] As with the comparable iteration of the doll's theme earlier in the Prélude, the echo-like quality of this passage also has the character of

Example 4.5. Claude Debussy, *La Boîte*, Prélude, ending.

[53] Stewart, *On Longing*, 57.

[54] They also anticipate the drama to come: at the end, the two themes become entwined.

recollection. These passages subtly illustrate, then, the circularity of time in the toy box, in which memory is not fully distinguished from premonition. A general impression of circularity, or of circling, underlies the Prélude, partly because of the reappearance of the opening motif.

Ex. 4.6. Debussy, *La Boîte*, Epilogue.

The final passage of the scenario, which realizes the final four bars, reads: 'The head of the little wooden soldier appears; he salutes just as the curtain falls'.

The sudden vanishing of the toy world at the end of the final scene (in the middle of a polka danced by the two children) marks more distinctly its disjunction from 'everyday reality'. In the Epilogue, the scene of the sleeping toys – what might be

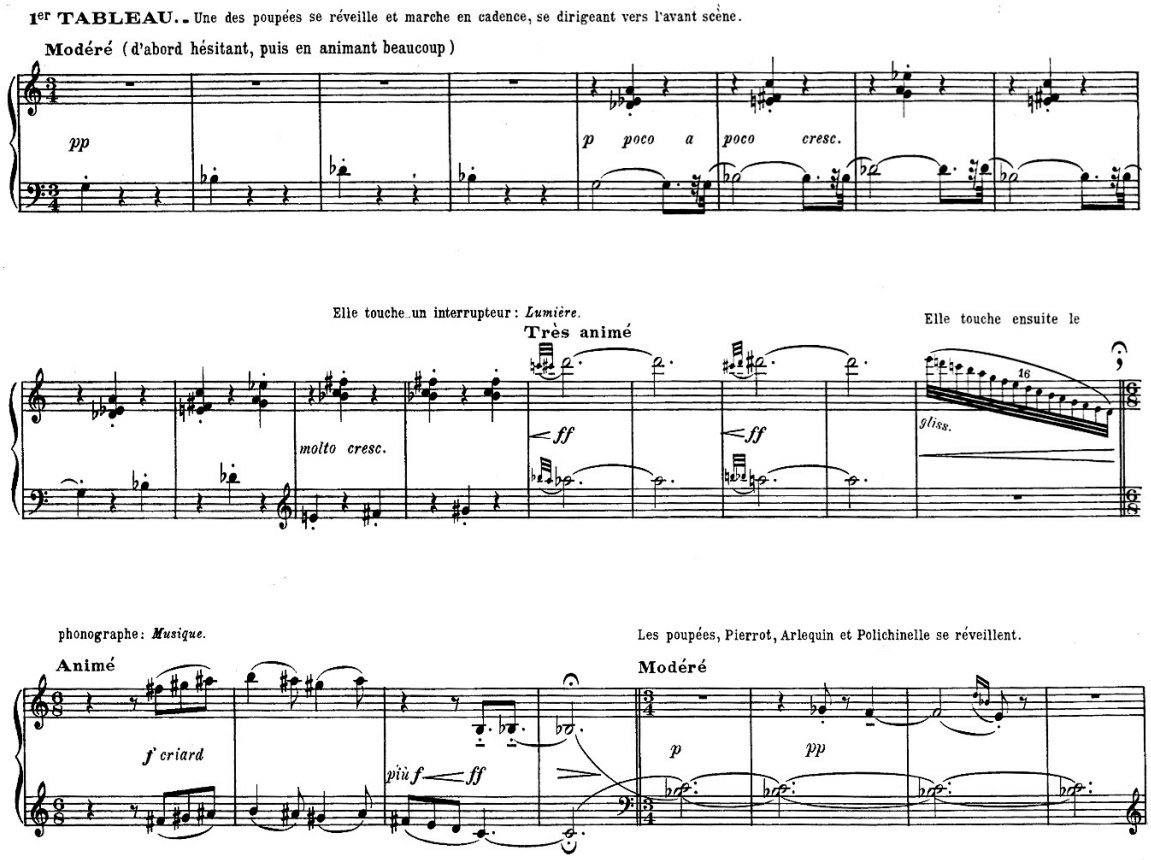
called the liminal realm between the miniature world and the everyday one – reappears. The equivalent liminal realms of the Prélude and the Epilogue touch and become fused only when the spiralling motif, first heard at the opening of the prelude, comes to rest on a 9th chord that echoes the one that closes the Prélude (see Example 4.6). The following succession of parallel 9th chords echoes and re-harmonises the simple motif which, in the Prélude, accompanied the rising of the 'curtain' to reveal the sleeping toys (in an echo of 'Jimbo's Lullaby' from *Children's Corner*). The confirmation of the toy world's temporal circularity is the reappearance of the soldier, restored to youth, just before the 'curtain' falls.

Moving with toys

Morrison makes a thought-provoking remark about the status of Debussy's work as a 'ballet'. After demonstrating that it would be possible to reconstruct the Ballets Suédois's production in the 1920s, he proposes that '[t]o engage in the exercise of reconstruction would be to miss the point of a ballet that embraces the imagined over the real'.[55] This remark prompts the thought that the choreography demanded by the piece's subtitle might best be understood as an imaginary one – a version of the 'joyous sarabande' conjured by Hellé himself. Certainly, this is the activity which Durand's publication invites the listener-spectator, or listener-performer, to indulge in. As the vehicle for an imagined drama, the score directs an adult version of children's play – the animation of toy-figures within the space of the bourgeois drawing-room where the piano stands. As described in Chapter 3, contemporaneous musical culture was swayed by an almost literal understanding of music as embodying movement (in 1910, Jean d'Udine declared that 'all music is dancing').[56] Debussy evidently intended this 'children's ballet' to be staged, but the titles of his compositions at this time also

[55] Morrison, 'Debussy's Toy Stories', 455.
[56] Jean d'Udine, *L'Art et le Geste* (Paris, 1910).

indicate the possibility of extending the application of this notion to characterize listening as involving a kind of virtual dancing.



Example 4.7. Debussy, *La Boîte*, scene 1, 'Le Magasin des jouets' ('The Toy Shop'), opening – the toys wake up.

The piece's subtitle, 'Ballet for children', suggests, if nothing else, the central importance of the qualities of movement embodied in the piece, as realizing a toy-like corporeality. This was certainly Debussy's view. In an interview in 1914, he insisted that in any balletic realization of his piece, '[t]he characters must retain their angular movements, their burlesque appearance as cardboard cut-outs, without which the work would become meaningless.'[57] Hellé described the movement embodied in the work in

[57] Claude Debussy. 'Interview with Maurice Montabré', *Comoedia*, 1 Feb 1914. Cited in Orledge, *Debussy and the Theatre*, 177. What was required (in both cases) were '*movements* rather than traditional *ballet steps*'. *Ibid.,* 178-9. Debussy himself changed his mind about whether the ballet should be realized by marionettes or children themselves, *ibid*., 178. The question of whether and how Debussy's music embodies mechanical ways of moving was a

similar terms – 'the jerky, mechanistic automatism that the gestures of puppets have'.[58] The function of the opening of the first tableau, when the toy world hatches, is to establish this corporeality (Example 4.7). First a single doll, then Pierrot, Arlequin and Polichinelle, and finally the rest of the inhabitants of the toy-shop 'wake up' and bustle around their world. At this point in the first scene, before the procession of toys begins, these figures are marked simply as toys, rather than as individual toy-characters.

The topic elaborated in these bars suggests the jerky, 'burlesque' motions to which Debussy and Hellé referred. There is an ungainliness in the tritone-shaped unfolding of the first doll's theme, which is enhanced by the spasmodic emphases on the bar's weak beats. The off-beats have a certain harmonic 'hardness', emphasizing a sharp but unfluent agility. This 'hardness' derives from the harmonic formulation (a pair of tritones a tone apart) on which much of the music is built: the sharp, mechanical agility of the battle-music is partly conveyed, for instance, through the relentless parallel use of a version of this formulation. The toy topic outlined in the opening bars is comparable, of course, to the light clipped character of the equivalent topic in 'Sérénade à la poupée' in *Children's Corner*. Debussy's toys have a different life from those in Ravel's songs, because they inhabit different kinds of mechanical body. With one exception (the phonograph), Debussy's and Hellé's toys contain no internal mechanism. Debussy's musical shaping of toy-like corporeality goes beyond the characterization in Lack's 'Roman', where the 'toy-like' is a sort of jovial, pared-down character of the *pièce enfantine,* presented in a simple aesthetic framing.[59]

Perhaps the most strident evocation of the mechanistic in *La Boîte* is what might be called the 'animation theme' – the music which accompanies the toys' coming to life

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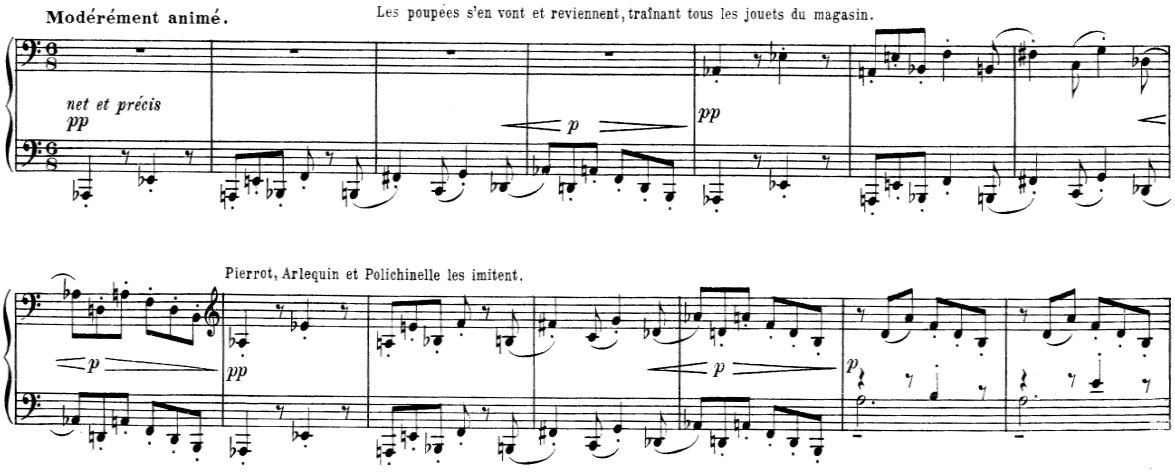
subject of debate arising from later ballet productions. See Morrison, 'Debussy's Toy Stories', 445.

[58] 'cet automatisme saccadé et mécanique qu'ont les gestes des pantins'. This was from an unpublished interview, cited in Herlin, 'André Hellé et *La Boîte à joujoux*', 109.

[59] Other works of a similar genre, such as Déodat de Sévérac's *Le Soldat de plomb* in the Schola's *Album pour enfants petits et grands* (1905), do not seem to be directly concerned with articulating a 'toy-like' character.

and going about the toy-shop (Example 4.8). The passage facilitates a vivid imaginary choreography. Hellé's illustration of the corresponding scene (Figure 4.2) specifies, as it were, the music's distinct quality of movement. The toy characters shown in the



Example 4.8. Debussy, *La Boîte*, scene 1, the 'animation theme'.

Figure 4.2. Hellé, *La Boîte à joujoux* (1913), Scene 1, 'Le Magasin des jouets', illustration of the 'animation scene'

image, some leaning at humanly improbable angles, have a blocky, stiff and highly simplified character. Incapable of subtle, fluid movement, they conduct themselves in

an awkward, whole-bodied manner. As an accompaniment to this image, Debussy's disjunct theme captures the jerky comportment of a body with minimal internal articulation. With intervals no smaller than an augmented fourth, its inanity embodies the clumsy rocking from side to side through which these rigid bodies must move around. Rather than rising to the octave and down again in one lyrical action, the movement of the animation theme breaks down into a series of crude, distinct motions. As the theme develops and accelerates, more toys join in, and the clumsiness of individual characters becomes submerged in a more general impression of motion.

Hellé's illustrations show how the character of the toys' actions is determined by the restrictions imposed by the extreme simplifications of their block-like bodies. The humour of this demonstration entices the spectator into the empathy of imagined kinaesthetic perception. An analogous exercise of imagination is invoked by what is, perhaps, the most important model for the genre of toy-soldier story that *La Boîte* exemplifies: Hans Christian Andersen's literary fairytale, 'The Steadfast Tin Soldier'.[60] Andersen's story demands that the reader imbues the natural rigidity of a metal object with a particular moral character – that of 'steadfastness', the quality that the eponymous tin-soldier unceasingly exhibits. For instance, after describing the toy's dizzying travails in a paper boat, the narrator observes: 'But he remained steadfast, and without moving a muscle, he looked straight in front of him and kept his rifle on his shoulder'. As his danger increases, the 'poor tin-soldier held himself as stiffly as he could'.[61] To have grasped the humour of passages such as these, the reader must already have 'felt into' the stiffness of Andersen's imaginary toy, conceiving it not as the rigidity of lifelessness, but the rigidity of a military bearing impeccably maintained.

In the second tableau of *La Boîte*, Hellé's soldiers display their own version of steadfastness. The comedy of these figures lies in their stiff military bearing,

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[60] Charles Simond's French translation (as 'Le petit soldat de plomb') was reprinted in Paris in 1913, the original story having been first published in 1838.

[61] Hans Christian Andersen, *Andersen's Fairy Tales* (London, 1993), 100-102 (first English translation by Mary Howitt, as *The Constant Tin Soldier,* published in 1846).

exaggerated into absurdity by the rigidity inherent in their bodies' being constituted by a few, barely articulated, wooden blocks. These images exemplify the manner of mobility, which, as Hellé suggested, Debussy's music imparts to the score's illustrations. The soldiers' entrance and their manoeuvring before the battle (Figure 4.3) correspond to the two combined parodies of the 'Danse des adolescents' from Stravinsky's *Le sacre de printemps*, and the Soldier's Chorus from Gounod's *Faust* (see Example 4.9). The comedy of the soldiers' deportment is accentuated by the parodic invocation of these works, with their respective connotations of savagery and of military grandeur. Against the music's mechanistic energy, Hellé's soldiers seem to fall into a march.

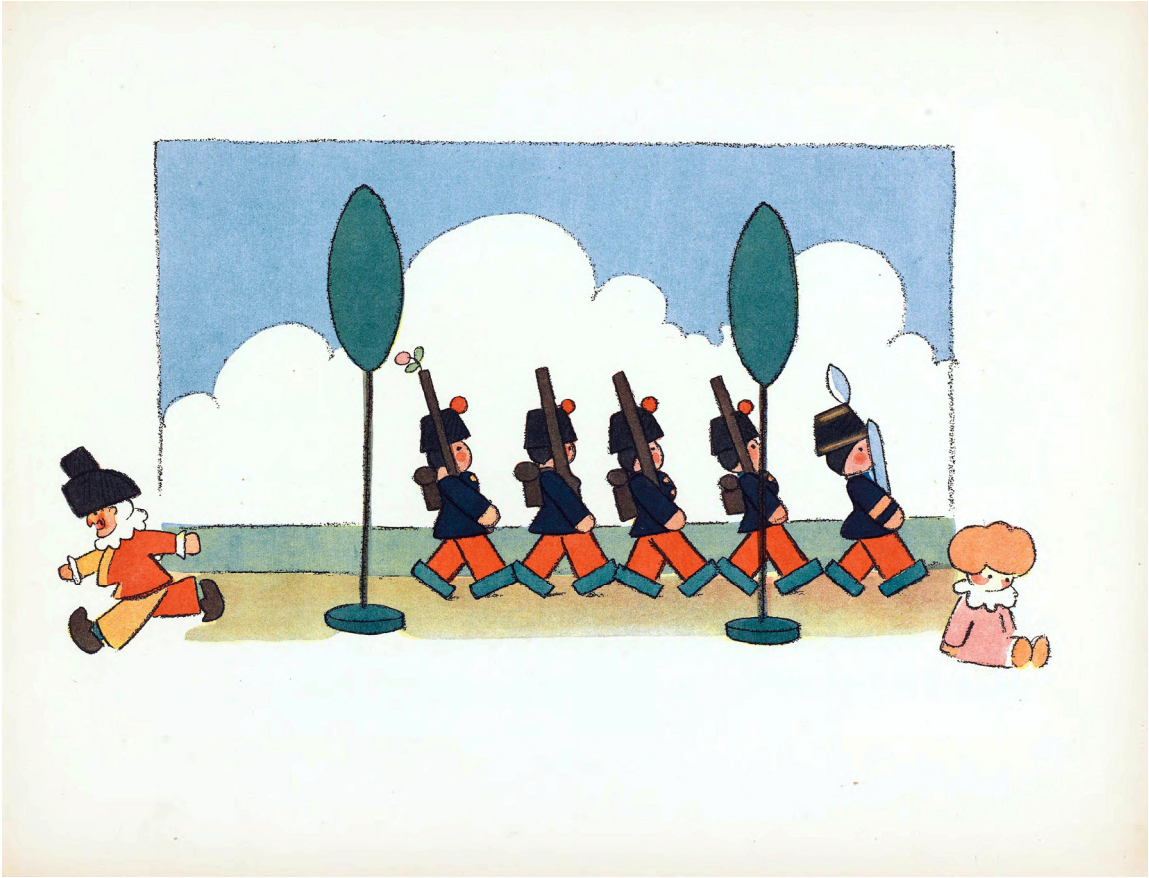
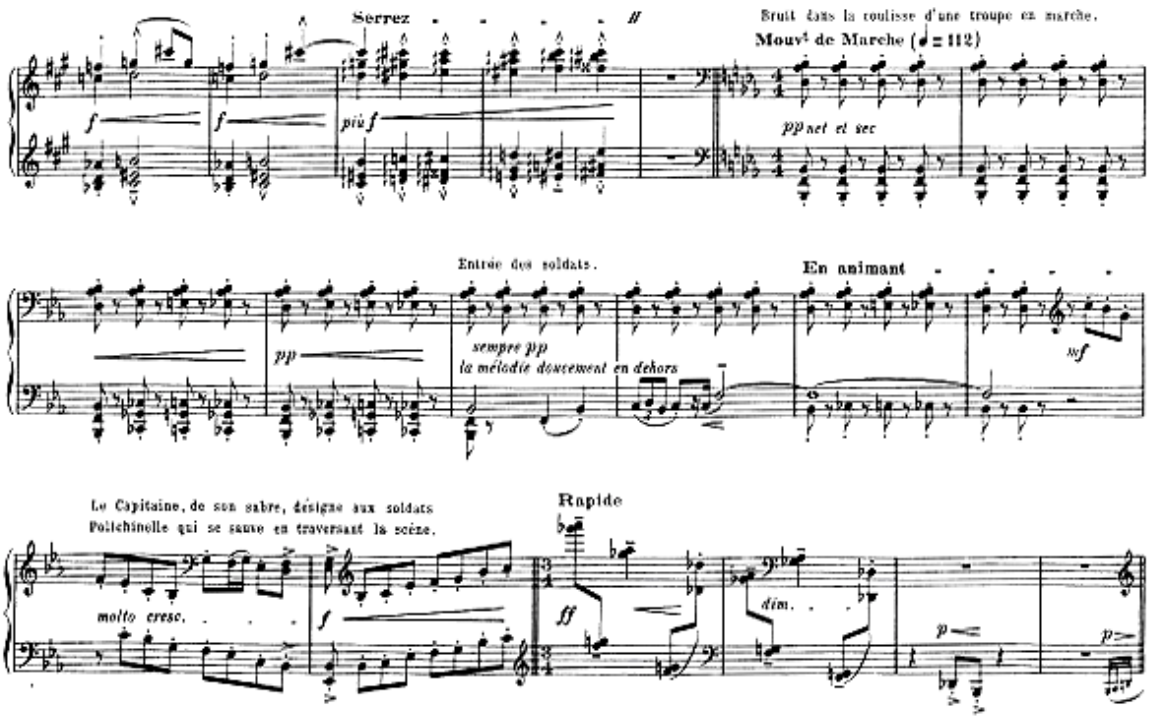


Figure 4.3. Hellé, *La Boîte à joujoux*, Scene 2, 'Le Champ de bataille', soldiers' entrance and manoeuvring.

Example 4.9. Debussy, *La Boîte*, scene 2, 'Le champ de bataille' ('The Battlefield'), the soldiers arrive and Polichinelle flees.

The animation of un-living things may, of course, be disturbing. The final gesture of *La Boîte*, like many aspects of the work, clearly refers to Stravinsky's *Pétrouchka* – specifically, the concluding appearance of the puppet's soul (as the scenario describes it) above the puppet-theatre's roof. This ending reveals, among other things, the tragedy of Pétrouchka's condition: in being ultimately incapable of life, he is also incapable of death. His reappearance could certainly be claimed as an attempt to elicit the uncanny. Freud argued convincingly against Ernst Jentsch's suggestion that this sensation was necessarily prompted by an (imagined) uncertainty about whether something is inanimate. The child's 'idea of a "living doll" excites no fear at all'; its animation is not unsolicited or unwelcome.[62] In fact, this form of animism has much in common with the imagined 'ensouling' that is intrinsic to many exercises of aesthetic perception. The soldier's simple fanfares are evidently different from Pétrouchka's manic, anguished ones. The contrast reveals that toys – Debussy's toys at least – do

[62] Freud, Sigmund. 'Das Unheimliche' (1919) 'The Uncanny', translation by Alix Strachey in *Sigmund Freud, Collected Papers*, Vol. 4. The psychologist Ernst Jentsch's essay, 'On the Psychology of the Uncanny' had been published (in German) in 1906.

not have what Steven Connor calls the 'violent hunger for being that seems to be the particular characteristic of puppets'.[63] Their enchantment has not endowed them with the fictional consciousness of lacking something.

The world reduced

This contentment in the condition of thinghood was central to the wider significance of *La Boîte*, and of the image of the toy world more generally. Early in the Preface, Hellé draws a direct connection between the human world and the toy world: 'Toy boxes are in fact kinds of town in which toys live like people. Or rather towns are perhaps only toy boxes in which people live like toys'.[64] To the extent that *La Boîte* bespeaks the delights of a 'secure bourgeois existence', it evidently parodies that existence.[65] Lack's toy society also suggests a comparably gentle satire of the human equivalent, in moments such as the wedding ball, when 'All-Toy-Paris is out in force'.[66] The wit of this image derives partly from the widely acknowledged theatricality of life in Paris at the turn of the century. The notion of people living 'like toys' recalls the existence of the man-made objects of Andersen's stories. H.J. Schwarcz notes that these objects are 'so much wrapped up in their narcissistic memories that they never realize that they are not free to act'.[67] Their self-absorption inhibits them from becoming sufficiently alive to register that they are not fully living. Schwarcz sees the inertness of the toy world's inhabitants – their woodenness – as allegorizing the absence of curiosity or wonderment, which may seem to define the adult world's utilitarian routines and self-absorbed mentality.

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[63] Connor, 'String Theories', 23.

[64] 'Les Boîtes à joujoux sont en effet des sortes de villes dans lesquelles les jouets vivent comme des personnes. Ou bien les villes ne sont peut-être que des boîtes à joujoux dans les quelles les personnes vivent comme des jouets'. 'Preface', Debussy and André Hellé. *La Boîte à joujoux.*

[65] Adorno asserted dismissively that Debussy's childhood-related piano music manifested 'the affectionate bonhomie of secure bourgeois existence'. 'Ravel', in *Night Music*, 94-103 (p. 98).

[66] 'le Tout-Paris-Jouet'. Lack, *Le Roman d'une poupée.*

[67] H. J. Schwarcz, 'Machine Animism in Modern Children's Literature', *Library Quarterly* 37 (1967), 78-95 (p. 79). Cited in Kuznets, *When Toys Come Alive,* 80.

Hellé's remark also echoed a statement in Baudelaire's 'Morale du joujou'. In play, Baudelaire proposes, 'toys become actors in the great drama of life, reduced by the *camera obscura* of their little brains'.[68] For the child, this reduction of the human world serves as a way of learning and rehearsing its patterns. For the adult, that reduction has a different function. In his meditations on a toy exhibition in Berlin, Walter Benjamin observed:

> When the urge to play overcomes an adult, this is not simply a regression to childhood. [...] the adult, who finds himself threatened by the real world and can find no escape, removes its sting by playing with its image in reduced form.[69]

Bachelard made this point, in a more gnomic way, in relation to adults' constructions of miniature worlds more generally. The miniature allows the possibility of being 'world conscious at slight risk'.[70] The miniature world does not contain its observers, whose view therefore escapes the restrictions of any one perspective. Because of its miniaturization, that world offers the therapeutic fantasy of placing its entire nexus of events within human comprehension.

Hellé's references to 'towns' in his Preface suggest that the work is in some way about the city.[71] In conjunction with Benjamin's remarks, they prompt the thought that *La Boîte* offers some way of coming to terms with modern urban life, through an exercise of imagination, in which that life is distanced and reframed. Through the possibilities opened up by its comic form, Debussy and Hellé's work registers a connection between a musical interest in states of inanimateness and a wider cultural preoccupation with a sort of communion with things.

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[68] 'les joujoux deviennent acteurs dans le grand drame de la vie, réduit par la chambre noire de leur petit cerveau.' Baudelaire, 'Morale du joujou', 203.

[69] Benjamin, 'The Toy Exhibition at the Märkisches Museum', translated by Rodney Livingstone, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings* vol. 2: 1927-1934. (London, 1999. 1st published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, March 1928), 98-102 (p. 100). Benjamin goes on to suggest that this explains the growth of interest in children's games after the First World War. This chapter suggests that we might conceive the 'sting' of the world in other terms.

[70] Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 161.

[71] Hellé, 'Preface', Debussy and André Hellé, *La Boîte à joujoux.*

Animating domestic space

As Stewart observes, '[t]he inanimate toy repeats the still life's theme of arrested life'.[72] Cézanne described himself as regarding ordinary domestic objects with what we might call an 'animistic gaze' usually reserved for toy-like beings: 'People think that a sugar bowl has no physiognomy, no soul. [...] One has to know how to take them, flatter them, these gentlemen. These glasses, these plates, they speak to each other [...].'[73] The adoption of such an 'animistic gaze' exemplifies how the perceptual orientation embodied in Ravel's songs and Debussy's 'ballet' had a close affinity with an ostensibly distinct pattern of *fin-de-siècle* artistic thought. This was the widespread preoccupation, discussed by art historians, with perceiving ordinary domestic space and its contents as imbued with personality or virtual subjectivity. In a passage about a character's bedroom in *Within a Budding Grove*, Proust observed that: 'we alone can, by our belief that they have an existence of their own, give to certain of the things we see a soul they afterwards keep, which they develop in our minds'.[74] Perhaps the least ambiguous manifestation of this belief appeared in drawings produced by the Belgian artist Xavier Mellery in the 1890s, first exhibited under the title *The Life of Things* (Plate 4). These imbue the natural stasis of half-lit interiors with an atmosphere of waiting. Objects such as a jug or a hat attain the status of characters to which the composition gently draws attention. As Sharon Hirsh observes, they speak to the 'inner life of inanimate objects that could be awakened and appreciated by proper contemplation'.[75]

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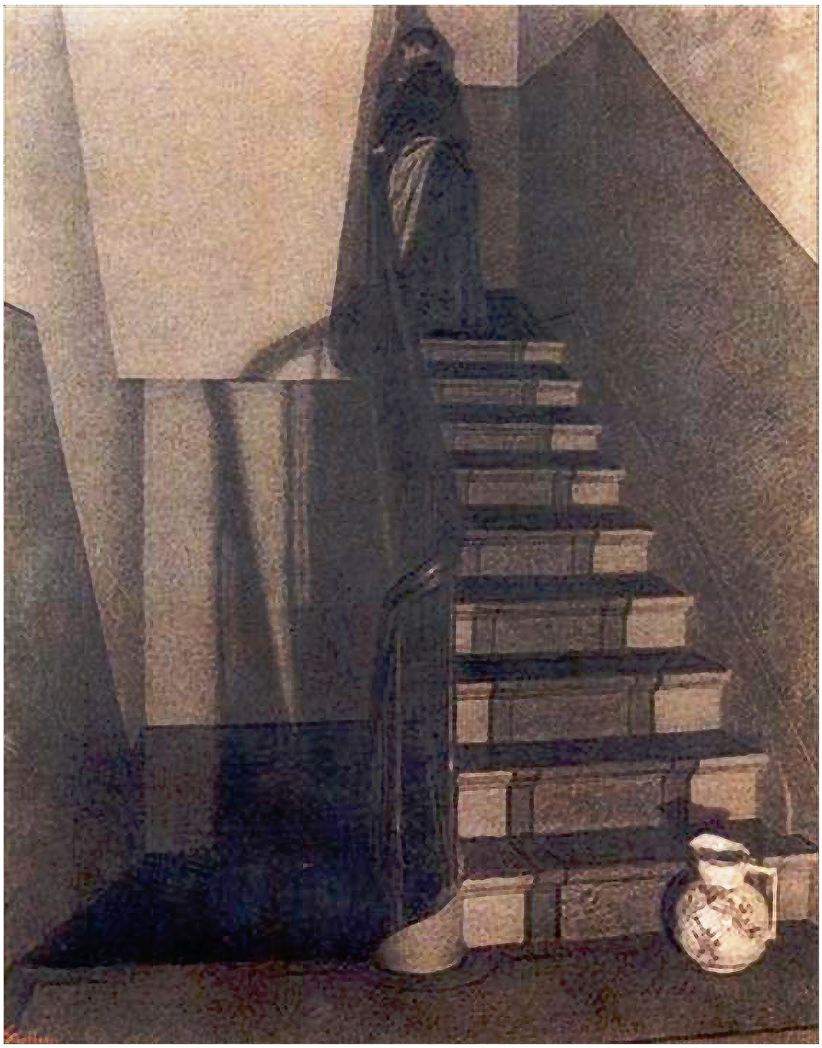
[72] Stewart, *On Longing*, 54.

[73] Cited in Sharon L. Hirsh, *Symbolism and Modern Urban Society* (Cambridge, 2004), 235.

[74] As quoted in Deborah Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France: Politics, Psychology, and Style* (Berkeley CA, 1989), 331. This second instalment of Proust's *À la recherche de temps perdu* was ready for printing in 1914, but its publication (as *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*) was delayed until 1919.

[75] Hirsh, *Symbolism*, 217. In her discussion, Hirsh notes the relevance of the notion of Einfühlung (pp. 234-5). Mellery's drawings were later entitled, *The Soul of Things*. Realizing this 'inner life' was a project most associated with various strands of Symbolism, and its accompanying discourse about revealing 'invisible essences'.



4. Xavier Mellery, *The Life of Things*, 1889
Charcoal and sanguine on paper, 57 x 45 cm
Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp

This contemplation entailed a sort of reverie – a gradual release of rationalistically constrained perceptual capacities – nurtured by the charged stillness of domestic space. Through it, adults sought to regain an experience of 'not being sharply divided from the world of things'. In a journal entry of 1894, the leading Nabis painter, Édouard Vuillard, recorded an absorbed contemplation of the objects in his bedroom. He noted that his mother's arrival, interrupting this absorption, 'was surprising, a living person'.[76] Her entrance revealed his immersion in a world in which the 'living person' was not a native resident. In a strand of aesthetic thought running from the Goncourt brothers to Proust, the domestic interior became a domain of 'self-projection', to use Deborah Silverman's term. Ensouling domestic objects produced the sensation, as Proust put it, that 'the things in my room [...] were merely extensions of myself'.[77] Around the turn of the century, according to Katherine Kuenzli, Bonnard and Vuillard sought to depict and embody in painting a form of domestic reverie that enabled a 'temporary loss of self'.[78] Both these observations recall Bergson's thought experiment, which imagines a dissolution of the boundaries of the self.

Of course, the solemnly dream-like Symbolist interiors of Mellery, permeated with an intimated subjectivity, have a character quite foreign to that of *La Boîte*, in particular. Moreover, the toy occupies a different position from the mere object on the continuum between thinghood and personhood. But these are, nevertheless, both manifestations of 'animistic' dispositions spread widely through other strands of contemporaneous artistic thought, which, at least in that respect, constitute an important context for the musical interest in toy worlds, and the condition of the toy-like, in early twentieth-century French culture. These dispositions might be considered as arising in

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[76] Édouard Vuillard, 'Unpublished Notebooks', Vol.1. No.2, 51-52, cited in Katherine M. Kuenzli, *The Nabis and Intimate Modernism: Painting and the Decorative at the Fin-de-Siècle* (Farnham, 2010), 194.

[77] Proust, *Within a Budding Grove*, 178, cited in Silverman, *Art Nouveau,* 331.

[78] Kuenzli, *The Nabis*, 194. For other critics, such as Susan Sidlauskas, there is something more disquieting in these depictions of the ebbing of a body's subjectivity into the inanimate surroundings of the interior. Susan Sidlauskas, *Body, Place and Self in Nineteenth-Century Painting* (Cambridge, 2000).

response to the same broad cultural circumstances in which some of the Symbolists were drawn into projecting their sense of selfhood onto the inanimate matter of domestic space. These preoccupations seem to have been especially significant in the period roughly between 1890 and 1914, as identified by some art historians. During this 'extended moment', as Francesca Berry puts it, 'a range of cultural practices [...] shared the common pursuit of "interiority" as a distinctly modern psychological, conceptual, and representational space'.[79]

No painting embodies the sense of oneness with the environment of domestic interiors more fully or with more conviction than that of Vuillard. He made many highly elaborated images of private life set in the salons of the Parisian *haute bourgeoisie,* often those of friends and patrons who moved in artistic, literary and musical circles. These paintings often include a small group gathered at the piano, as in *Figures in an Interior: Music*, of 1896 (Plate 5). In this, as in other paintings, the figures are not so much placed in the setting as woven into it. The rich patterning of table coverings, wallpaper and flowers realizes the depicted interior through space-implying movements across varying but unbroken textures which flow through that interior. Binding its contents together, these movements and textures are not subordinated to the self-containment or completeness of individual objects or figures. The individual figures are registered as incidents, sometimes minor incidents, in that movement, or as adjustments in the continuity of patterning. In this example, the woman in the foreground is so completely bound into the texture of the image, that she

[79] Francesca Berry, 'Inside the Psychologised Interior', *Oxford Art Journal* 25/2 (2002), 156-161 (p. 157). 'Interiority' as Nicholas Watkins observes, '[i]n one sense suggested a transition from the masculine and public to the feminine and domestic, and, in another, it meant introspection, the myth that knowledge involves "looking inward" rather than outward.' Nicholas Watkins, 'The Genesis of a Decorative Aesthetic', in *Beyond the Easel: Decorative Painting by Bonnard, Vuillard, Denis, and Roussel,1890-1930*, edited by Gloria Groom (Chicago, 2001), 1-28 (p. 16). A transition to the 'feminine and domestic' is a transition to the sphere of the family and children — and of children's toys. Unlike its German equivalent (*Innerlichkeit*), this notion remains considerably under-examined in cultural histories of French music from this period. Exceptions include Emma Adlard, 'Interior Time: Debussy, *Fêtes galantes*, and the Salon of Marguerite de Saint-Marceaux', *The Musical Quarterly* 96 (2) (2013), 178-218.

5. Édouard Vuillard, *Figures in an Interior: Music*, 1896
Distemper on canvas, 212.5 x 154 cm
Musée du Petit Palais, Paris

could almost be overlooked on first viewing. The intimacy, not only of the scene itself, but of its presentation to the painting's viewer, lies in how it invites us to feel our way across the textured surfaces and through a space in which we are thereby immersed. The viewer is not invited to seek the highly resolved perceptions of 'objective' vision, in which we focus on individual things, and are required to view them from (or as if from) an external viewpoint – a position where we are separated from what, as object, is distinct from ourselves. The painting embodies the experience of perceptual indeterminacy, as in peripheral vision: not the interrogative stance of looking *at* things, but the visual experience of being with and *among* things.

A slightly later painting by Vuillard makes the connection between the bourgeois interior, as adapted to the cultivation of a harmonious private world, and the potential within that world to provide space for the child's imagination. This painting is *Claude Bernheim de Villers*, begun in 1905 and reworked in 1908 (Plate 6). The upholstered couch on which Claude is sitting seems to envelop him, rather than merely support his body. He and it completely fill the picture, except for the barely realized figure of his mother on the extreme left. The couch appears entirely to constitute the space inhabited by Claude, and the rich Aubusson tapestry of its covering is decorated by a design of figures and vegetation, vaguely delineated but just definite enough to prompt imaginative projection by the viewer of the painting and therefore by the child. The couch is both furniture within an actual room, and the self-created world of the child's imagination. We can, perhaps, consider it and its figures, along with toys and puppets, as another kind of ambassadorial object. The figure of Claude's mother, on the extreme left, resolves itself as such for the viewer only gradually, and remains indeterminate and even inscrutable. This is partly because she is not painted as clearly in front of the couch. The outline made by her right shoulder, arm and hip is initially 'read' as following the swelling upholstery of the couch, rather than of her body. Nor do we necessarily notice immediately her hand resting on the back of the couch, just above Claude's head. She is not so much a 'framing device' as part of the frame itself,

6. Édouard Vuillard, *Claude Bernheim de Villers*, 1905-6, reworked 1908
Oil on paper, mounted on plywood, 68 x 96 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

and, as such, constitutive of the transition between actual space and the fictive space of the painting – another ambassadorial object or, in this case, figure. The child's imaginative life does not detach itself from the actual world of the salon interior, but occupies a protected space within it, continuous with that world. That world also harbours the imaginative life of the adults, notably in the form of music making.

This pursuit of interiority is frequently understood by art historians as a response to the psychological conditions of urban modernity, produced by the city dweller's constant subjection to a barrage of sensory stimuli – sonic, visual, and interpersonal – by the commotion of the street.[80] This could certainly correspond to the 'sting' of the world which, for Benjamin, the toy world provides a way of overcoming.[81] Throughout the late 1880s and early 1890s, medical discourse in France postulated the city's provocation of 'the overexertion of the nervous system' in the modern citizen.[82] This was a perceived problem of everyday existence that pervaded French culture.[83] Émile Zola called it the 'nervous erethism' racking contemporaneous society.[84] As Silverman puts it, the domestic interior 'took on a new role as a soothing anaesthetizer of the citizen's overwrought nerves'.[85] The strategies of psychological defence for enervated urban subjects included, according to Georg Simmel's contemporaneous sociological analysis, building a 'shell around themselves', both psychological and

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[80] See, for example, Hirsh, *Symbolism,*1; Silverman, *Art Nouveau*, 88-91.

[81] Benjamin, 'Toy Exhibition', 100.

[82] For examples, see *ibid.* 81.

[83] Silverman notes that some women's magazines, such as *La Grande Dame*, suggested that readers wear clothes of the colours that are 'least corrosive to the nervous tissue of the spectator'. *Ibid.*, 81.

[84] Zola as quoted in 'Souvenirs des Goncourts', *La Revue encyclopédique* 153 (8 August 1896), 546. Cited in Silverman, *Art Nouveau*, 80. Zola had used the term 'erethism' in *Nana*, published in 1880, and it subsequently became widely used. Such ideas about psychological crisis brought on by modern urban life were advanced most famously by Max Nordau, a German physician who lived in Paris in the 1880s. His *Degeneration* was first published in 1892 and widely discussed in France. (See, for example, Silverman, *Art Nouveau,* 81-82.)

[85] *Ibid.,* 79. This dual withdrawal into the interior was also, of course, part of a longer history of the retreat into the private sphere that helped to constitute the idea of the modern subject.

physical.[86] These strategies reinforced the sense of equivalence between spatial interiority and psychological interiority (the *chambre* and the *chambre mentale*).

Figure 4.4. Hellé, *La Boîte à joujoux*, Scene 1, 'Le Magasin des jouets', the officer's appearance at the window

For Stewart, it is the function of the miniature generally 'to create a tension or dialectic between inside and outside' and 'between the space of the subject and the space of the social'. She suggests that 'once we attend to the miniature world, the outside world stops and is lost to us'.[87] At the ending of 'Le Grillon', of course, the transition back from the miniature world is so articulated as to display the outside

[86] Hirsh, *Symbolism*, 49, citing Georg Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', reprinted in *Classic Essays on the Culture of Cities*, edited by Richard Sennett (New York, 1969. 1st published in German, 1903), 47-60. Hirsh makes extensive use of Simmel's writing on the modern city and urban life, much of which is reprinted in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, translated and edited by Kurt H. Wolff (Glencoe, IL, 1950).

[87] Stewart, *On Longing*, 67.

world as reshaped on being restored. Performing Hellé's toy world creates a tension between inside and outside within the space of performance, and also within the toy world itself. The first tableau's illustrations all show a window of the toy shop, at which an officer appears towards the end of the scene (Figure 4.4).[88] This brings the idea of the exterior world – the social, the public – directly into contact with the toy box's interior one. The representative of this exterior world is, of course, himself toy-like: in the universe animated by the toy, thinghood is a property of all its inhabitants. The toy world acquires its own internal 'dialectic of inside and outside'. It thereby achieves a kind of self-sufficiency by reproducing within itself a distinction between being inside or outside its own fictionality, the very distinction that is presupposed by its own creation. This moment illustrates, and completes, the effacement of the actual exterior within the 'shell' of the toy world.

La Boîte musically embodies an imagined transition to interiority. Silverman describes the organic swerves of art nouveau decoration as patterns of 'serpentine involution', invoking a metaphorical equivalence between the decorated *chambre* and the *chambre mentale*.[89] Involution – a turning inwards – aptly describes the nature of the soft, circling gestures of the Prélude, through which the music invites the listener to 'feel into' the toys' inanimateness. This is also a way of hearing the spiralling ostinato introducing the toy world in Ravel's 'Noël des jouets', and drawing the listener into the toys' mode of being. In this hearing, then, the movement towards thinghood is an induction into an interior realm. In 'Le Grillon', the analogous transition has a different character: the oscillation of the ostinato figure signifying the cricket's mechanical world embodies a different kind of motion from its equivalents in 'Noël des jouets' and *La Boîte*. With its emphasis on 'miniature thinking', the spatial transformation wrought by feeling into the toy-like cricket's mode of thinghood is less a drawing-in than a drawing-down, traced by the account of its descent into its home.

[88] For another discussion of the constable, see Morrison, 'Debussy's Toy Stories', 429.
[89] Silverman, *Art Nouveau*, 75.

The tension between 'inside and outside' established by this miniature is, like *La Boîte*, one between private and public. The 'inside' of the miniature world is unquestionably a domestic space: Renard's poem is a gentle parody of the rituals of protection and ownership that characterize human use of this space.

The appeal of things

The art historians interested in interiors are less clear about how animistic thinking – the endowing of objects with an imagined life – helped to make the domestic interior a 'soothing anaesthetizer' for the urban subject. Hirsh provides a hint in her observation that domestic objects became 'not only the signs of the self, but the means by which the self might be reengaged'.[90] Accounts of the function of animistic thinking in childhood may provide some insight into the use by adults of toys, or objects analogous to toys, as instruments of connection between personhood and thinghood.

In a well-known essay on dolls, published in 1914, Rilke provided some poetic observations about this aspect of developmental psychology. He described how the doll helps the infant to mark out the distinction of self from world, and self from other. 'With people who *were* something', he observes, 'the most we could do [as young children] was merge into them, lose ourselves in them'.[91] But with the doll, Rilke continues, the relation was different: 'if we surrendered to it there was nobody there'. He then describes the doll's function:

> we got into the habit of doing things for it, splitting our own slowly expanding nature into opposing parts and to some extent using the doll to establish distance between ourselves and the amorphous world pouring into us.

Similar thoughts were formulated later in the century, by Donald Winnicott with his concept of the 'transitional object'. This object, in Winnicott's words, is the child's

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[90] Hirsh, *Symbolism*, 254.

[91] Rainer Maria Rilke, 'Dolls, On the Wax Dolls of Lotte Prizel', translated by Idris Parry, in *On Dolls*, edited by Kenneth Gross, (London 2012), 51-62 (p. 54). The observation makes sense, perhaps, of how, in *Pelléas and Mélisande*, Yniold seems to become absorbed into his father's anxiety, doing no more than reflecting it back.

'first "not-me" possession', and may often be a doll or doll-like thing.[92] In Barbara Johnson's words, the transitional object is 'that through which the baby gains experience of a state between the illusion of the mother's total adaptation to [his or her] needs and reality's total indifference to them'.[93] This object 'cannot be understood in terms of a dichotomy between subject and object, since it helps bring that dichotomy into being'. In this view, the transitional object is central to the establishment of selfhood. In Winnicott's words, the transitional object facilitates the child's development into a 'unit with a limiting membrane and an outside and an inside'.[94]

A transitional object must have two basic characteristics. First, it 'must never change, unless changed by the infant': it needs to 'survive instinctual loving, and also hating'.[95] Second, it must at the same time do something 'to show [the child] that it has vitality'.[96] These qualities go a long way, of course, to defining the toy. Indeed, they make sense of the echo of *Petrushka* at the end of the Epilogue of *La Boîte*, when the soldier once more pokes his head out of the toy-box. Restored to youth, and accompanied by the music that first introduced him, he illustrates what Winnicott would call the toy's capacity of survival. He has been in no way developed by his last experience of leaving the toy box. Equally, the other characteristic of the transitional object – its 'vitality' – corresponds to the quality that all versions of animism bestow upon mere things. In perceiving the toy to be person-like, but also experiencing its unalterability, the child can learn the possibility of self-distinction from other subjects. In Johnson's terminology, the toy allows the child to come to terms with the thinghood of persons – the necessary first stage of recognizing their full distinctness from him- or herself. For Winnicott, many things can be transitional objects, such as words and

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[92] Donald W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London, 2005. 1st published 1971), 2.
[93] Johnson, *Persons and Things*, 98
[94] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 3.
[95] *Ibid*., 7.
[96] *Ibid*., 7.

songs. He acknowledges that his subject-matter extends into aspects of adult 'play', from aesthetic creativity to fetishism.[97]

For adults, clearly, toys no longer serve the purpose of learning self-distinction. But such objects may regain a 'transitional' function in a situation where that self-distinction seems to be threatened. This was the situation implicitly described by late nineteenth-century diagnoses of the condition of the modern urban subject, which sometimes presented that condition as a crisis of subjectivity.[98] The street's sensory bombardment threatened the possibility of drifting back into the perceptual fog noted by Rilke in his novel of 1910, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, when describing the deleterious effects of living alone in Paris.[99] The clamour of sensations overwhelmed the ability of the perceiving subject to organize them, and therefore threatened that subject with the danger of simply *being* those sensations, as opposed to *having* them. This experience was perhaps better conveyed in artistic thought than by the writing of commentators such as Simmel.[100] It corresponded to the self-loss that the flâneur had the luxury of embracing – an intoxicating abandonment to sensory stimulation which Baudelaire, as the Introduction noted, explicitly conceived in terms of regaining childhood perception. This self-loss had an essential interpersonal dimension, as Baudelaire's work also reveals.[101] Sociological commentators on city life regularly noted the strange exhaustion of being constantly thrown into fleeting empathy with the expressions of passing strangers. This could induce a reversion to the 'surrender' described by Rilke, in which one's selfhood was fragmented and dispersed by these myriad instants of absorption. The result was a feeling of being distracted out of oneself, living entirely from glance to glance in the looks of others.

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[97] *Ibid*., 18. This perhaps sheds light on Baudelaire's insistence that the toy is the child's 'earliest initiation to art'.

[98] See for example, Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, MA, 1999).

[99] Rilke, *Notebooks*, 157. The novel was informed by Rilke's experiences of living in the city.

[100] See Hirsh, *Symbolism*, e.g. 48-52.

[101] Most famously, in his poem, 'A une passante', first published in 1855. See Ross Chambers, 'Baudelaire's Paris', in *The Cambridge Companion to Baudelaire*, edited by Rosemary Lloyd (Cambridge, 2005), 101-116.

I am not aware of studies of the fin-de-siècle preoccupation with *intériorité* that consider the possibility that the contents of the domestic interior functioned, to the recuperating adult, as a kind of transitional object. In a paper entitled 'Feeling Things', Steven Connor begins to consider how exactly domestic objects are used, as Hirsh puts it, to 'reengage the self'. Since we are often attached to things, Connor observes, we instinctively 'try to assimilate them to ourselves'.[102] This is impossible: if we could do this successfully, we would destroy 'the tension between them and us that keeps us in being'. Things, then, are 'indispensible' because

> only things can give us the faculty of reaching out, of extending into the world. Only by not giving themselves to me can things help give me to myself, by embodying [...] the saving possibility that I may not be everything.

Endowing a domestic object with an imagined 'soul', as Mellery and Proust did, is an extreme version of the effort at assimilation that Connor describes. This 'ensouling' approaches a domestic object as if approaching another self, trying to establish between it and oneself the flux of intersubjectivity.

This attempted assimilation involves both opening out one's selfhood and preserving its demarcation from the world: reaching out, but not being reached for. Things, as Connor might put it, cannot incorporate us into themselves. They therefore cannot pull us adrift on the wash of intersubjectivity that we spread over them. As Connor suggests, communing with things therefore helps to enforce the demarcation of self from world, maintaining the space across which our consciousness stretches itself. Connor explicitly describes the act of 'feeling things' as a restoration of one's sense of selfhood: 'things help give me to myself'. In his discussion of transitional objects, Winnicott puts this explicitly in terms of interiority. An assertion of the existence of an 'outside' – or a 'not-me' – is simultaneously an assertion of the existence of an 'inside'. Mellery's images presuppose, and thereby invoke and confirm, the 'faculty of reaching out' that Connor describes.

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[102] Steven Connor, 'Feeling Things'. Paper presented at Wellcome Institute Conference on *Objects of Emotion*, 2012. stevenconnor.com/lectures.html. Last accessed 29 August 2017.

This also explains, in part, the adult appeal of playing once more with toys, as things expressly designed to invite that communion while remaining impervious to it. Toys' ambassadorial duties, to borrow Gross's phrase, are not one-sided: they extend the realm of the human into the world of things, as well as vice versa. They may give us representation, or even a vicarious existence, within a universe that, according to this fantastical mode of thinking, exists just beyond our bluntly human sensory capacities. As Susan Stewart puts it, 'the toy ensures the continuation, in miniature, of the world of life "on the other side"'.[103] Imagining what it is to be toy-like, as *La Boîte* does, is to imagine shifting the position that we occupy within the continuum spanning thinghood and personhood towards the toy's position. Discussing a contemporary example of the desire to become doll-like, Steven Connor notes the appeal of 'a thing's power of declining to be subjected to subjecthood'.[104] One particular motif in turn-of-the-century art helps to explain the appeal of this power to the contemporaneous urban subject.

This was the motif of the mask, into which the citizen's face becomes transformed.[105] Early in *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, Rilke's speaker, Brigge, recalls (in highly figurative terms) the effect of unintentionally surprising someone in the street with his presence: she 'started out of herself too rapidly [...], so that her face was left in her hands. I could see it lying in them, the hollow mould of it. [...] I was appalled to see the inside of the facial mask'.[106] Simmel described one of the 'shells' constructed by the city dweller as a 'uniform code of routine but distant behaviour'.[107] In doing so, he points towards another possible shell, both physical and psychological. This is the bodily exterior – not the walls of the home, but the walls of the self. Adopting a 'facial mask' rids its wearer of the burden of spontaneous

[103] Her distinction between a living world and a dead one is not quite appropriate.
[104] Steven Connor, 'Guys and Dolls', *Women: A Cultural Review* 26 (2015), 129-141.
[105] John Jervis, *Exploring the Modern: Patterns of Western Culture and Civilization* (Oxford, 1998), 78.
[106] Rilke, *Notebooks*, 4.
[107] Simmel, 'Metropolis and Mental Life'. Cited in Hirsh, *Symbolism*, 49.

expressiveness, which threatens to absorb her into the street's ruinous flux of endlessly inchoate or abortive intersubjectivity. It blocks her subjecthood from starting 'out of herself', and confers some of the inscrutability of thinghood.

Indeed, James Ensor's *Intrigue* (Plate 7) – a sort of sinister parody of the physiognomy of the urban crowd – makes the link between the conditions of being masked and of being doll-like, through its representation of the mother and child figures. As Connor suggests, the power of thinghood is its imperviousness to the importunity of the world's demands on our responsiveness. To achieve a toy-like condition would be to find a form of life that is not open to the deleterious effects of sensory bombardment. The reciprocity of demands between subjects, which is intrinsic to subjecthood, is the foundation of the intersubjective engagement that invites another selfhood to join one's own, and exposes one's own to recruitment by another. The toy is not governed by these demands, which make the individual vulnerable to self-loss in the commotion of the street. The attempt to evade that vulnerability may explain why 'towns are perhaps only toy boxes in which people live like toys'. *La Boîte* can be considered as an extended parody of that life – and also as a humorous indulgence of the appeal of such a mode of existence.

In this chapter, I have considered how we can understand three musical evocations of 'toy worlds' as relating to wider preoccupations of the surrounding culture of contemporaneous Paris, preoccupations which were also manifested by activity in other media of art. Toy worlds acquired significance not just for children, but also for adults – in the case of *La Boîte* as a metaphorical image of city life. Unease about public aspects of city life engendered or augmented the impulse to withdraw into a highly cultivated sphere of privacy, a spiritual and spatial interior, where bourgeois citizens could feel at one with their surroundings. This desire for oneness with one's surroundings is closely related to the desire to recover the childhood 'experience of not being sharply divided from the world of things', a separation which, Zamir suggested, 'is constitutive of adulthood'. The musical re-imagining of children's play, I have

7. James Ensor, *The Intrigue*, 1890
Oil on canvas, 90 x 149 cm
Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp

suggested, could be a vehicle for overcoming this division. In its significant affinity with contemporaneous work in other media, the music considered in this chapter can be understood to confirm and, in a sense, elucidate Walter Benjamin's observation about the toy-box – as harbouring a sensibility central to 'modern' artistic thought.[108]

[108] Benjamin, 'Toys and Play', translated by Livingstone, 120.

CONCLUSION | Bourgeois Interiority

As I noted in the Introduction, passing references to the idea of childhood appear frequently in scholarly discussions of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century French music. This prompts a simple question: what exactly was the nature of the musical interest in childhood in the decades around 1900? The discussions of the preceding chapters have made it clear that this interest was multi-dimensional, and had a level of complexity which is not fully explained by the fact that the idea of childhood lends itself to a great variety of artistic uses. The multifaceted, contested status of the 'childlike' was a feature of French culture around 1900, and the art of that culture manifests a particular uncertainty and ambivalence about the nature of childhood. In each chapter, my aim has been not merely to consider how music embodied contemporaneous understandings of childhood, but also to suggest that the relations between the practice of music and the idea of childhood were especially important to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century French culture generally. This is why, throughout the thesis, I have often expanded the scope of discussion in order to examine the role played by the idea of childhood within broader patterns of thought, avoiding a narrow or literalistic conception of that idea. This Conclusion summarizes what is perhaps the project's principal contribution to our understanding of early Third Republic culture: the development of a richer and more distinct sense of the association between childhood and interiority.

One general image of childhood, idealized to varying degrees, has formed a central point of reference in this thesis. This was an image set implicitly or explicitly in an urban, bourgeois, domestic interior. By 1900, as I suggested in Chapter 3, that image had become the most prominent site of conflict between contrasting beliefs about the nature of childhood. That conflict was itself a sort of proxy, or focal point, for ways of thinking about domesticity generally – about the function and character of the domestic interior. Over the course of the thesis, I have suggested that two distinct

understandings of interiority seemed to come together in French culture in the decades around 1900. One is the notion of interiority discussed principally in Chapter 4, which art historians consider to be a defining feature of *fin-de-siècle* culture. Roughly speaking, this was the conception of domestic space as a domain of self-projection, in which the physical interior became an explicit metaphor for its psychological equivalent. The other understanding relates to a broader argument about European thought generally, promoted most notably by Carolyn Steedman, and discussed principally in Chapter 1. This is the argument that, towards the end of the late nineteenth century, the perception of selfhood as something to be discovered within – as a 'visceral sense of insideness' – acquired the shape of childhood.[1]

The thesis, then, has begun to suggest how that relation between childhood and selfhood was secured, elaborated and played out in another set of discourses: those concerning bourgeois domesticity, in which the child and the piano were essential motifs. Childhood became a kind of index of the self in the interior, and therefore – in a way quite distinct from that described by Steedman – an index of the interior self. Throughout the nineteenth century, the piano had been considered a 'cipher of subjectivity', as well as an idealized form of children's play.[2] Because of these associations, children's piano music – a sonic realization of the image of the child at the piano – acquired a unique status or capacity: it became an essential means of expressing the form of 'interior subjectivity' that childhood was taken to represent. This suggests a much more developed way of thinking about the repertoire at the heart of this thesis (piano music that embodied a particular 'childlike' character). If it was childhood that gave shape to a sensation of 'insideness', which surfaced within the

[1] Steedman, *Strange Dislocations*, 12. In her chapter on John Singer Sargent's *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit*, Sidlauskas brings together a version of these understandings, but does not consider in detail how these understandings might have informed each other. Her subject-matter, in this chapter, is not French culture specifically. Sidlauskas, *Body, Place, and Self*, 61-90.

[2] Daub, *Four-handed Monsters*, 9.

protected realm of domestic space, then it was at the piano that this sensation could materialize most fully.

These arguments necessarily take the form of a hypothesis. To pursue them in detail is a task that extends far beyond the scope and objectives of the thesis. Drawing together selected aspects of each chapter, this final section sets out the grounds for making such a hypothesis, and considers how it leads to a particular formulation of a post-Romantic ideal of childhood.

Domesticity

Musical scholarship, as I observed in the Introduction, has established a small canon of piano pieces that purportedly encapsulates a particular musical interest in childhood in turn-of-the-century French culture. These pieces are always considered – though often only implicitly – as a sort of accompaniment to the image of childhood that I have just outlined. In his essay on Ravel, which focuses on the subject of childhood, Adorno stated that '[f]or all its charm, Debussy's *Children's Corner* has the affectionate bonhomie of secure bourgeois existence'.[3] The images of childhood that Ravel's music evoked for Adorno were slightly different, and more specific: the 'children of *Ma mère l'Oye* and the Sonatine' are 'sad [...] *plein air* children; dabbed with sunlight in the colourful avenue but looked after by English governesses'.[4] Later, he envisages an alternative scene: 'The table is set for tea, the children are called, [...] they hear it and play one last round before joining the circle on the veranda'.[5] We do not have to find Adorno's observations illuminating to acknowledge that the ideas which critics customarily associate with these children's pieces (mostly derived from titles and

[3] Adorno, 'Ravel', in *Night Music*, 98-99.

[4] *Ibid*., 99

[5] *Ibid*., 103. Adorno considered Ravel's music generally to be 'that of a grand-bourgeois, aristocratic upper class that realized its own nature'. *Ibid*., 95. I am not endorsing either Adorno's understanding of 'bourgeois' art, or his interpretation of music's capacity to embody social and political attitudes.

biographical information) belong to a particular 'world of childhood' – the kind which Adorno imagined in striking detail.

In the interpretations of this repertoire offered by both today's critics and contemporaneous ones, its 'world of childhood' is filled with the accoutrements of the relatively affluent circles in which these composers mixed as adults: Chouchou's toys, Dolly's birthday gifts, Ravel's delicate mechanical objects. This perhaps holds less true, today, of the imagery that scholars attach to Satie's childhood-related music, but the 1916 collection of his three sets of children's piano pieces featured, on the cover, caricatures of exactly the type of bourgeois children playing in summer finery that regularly adorned publications of children's music.[6] One of Adorno's flights of fancy evoked a shaded, elegant outdoor setting. This is relatively unusual for the various imaginative descriptions that these pieces have prompted in critics. It is interesting that Reynaldo Hahn, in the description of Fauré's *Dolly* with which I opened Chapter 3, was so adamant that the Suite conjured an *interior* realm, despite the title of its third piece, 'Jardin de Dolly'. This repertoire is, after all, to be played at the piano, and as I proposed in Chapter 2, the piano did not simply reside in the domestic interior: it was a kind of icon of that interior, instrumental in its rituals.

Indeed, the discussion in Chapter 2 considered a specific manifestation of the image around which this thesis in many ways revolves: Renoir's *Jeunes filles au piano*. Given the historical and cultural context, almost all the piano music written around the turn of the century for children (or 'as if' for children) can to some extent be considered variations on, or reactions against, the idea of childhood instantiated in Renoir's painting. Although scholarly discussions of this repertoire often evoke an image of the child ensconced in bourgeois domesticity, the nature, significance and implications of that image have never been examined in detail by musicologists.[7] My underlying aim,

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[6] Another significant example is the cover of the first edition of Bizet's *Jeux d'enfants*.

[7] The people who measured themselves against the ideals embodied in Renoir's painting, or who were perceived to conform to those ideals, would have ranged from aspirational parents of artisanal occupations living in provincial towns ('petit bourgeois'), to the residents of the far

in Chapters 2-4, was to describe a range of ideals and practices, relating to the domestic interior, which informed this repertoire. The art historian Susan Sidlauskas observes that, '[a]cross nineteenth-century urban culture', 'the domestic interior would seem to have become a transparent, even inevitable, metaphor for bourgeois identity, a metaphor ratified through the sheer multiplicity and diversity of its expression'.[8] The child and the piano were of central importance to what we might call a late nineteenth-century mythology of domesticity. How the images of child and piano came together in this mythology has hitherto received very little consideration.[9] That coming together, in turn-of-the-century French culture, inflected and heightened the significance of the domestic interior as, in Sidlauskas's words, 'a metaphor for bourgeois identity'.

As I suggested in Chapters 2 and 3, by the late nineteenth century the child had acceded to the position of protagonist in that mythology of domesticity. Throughout nineteenth-century Europe, the middle-class home acquired the identity of a 'nest', to borrow Priscilla Robertson's term.[10] Within that nest, following the absorption of Rousseauvian tenets, childhood's distinct ways of feeling were to be cherished and directed rather than overcome. The world of work moved increasingly outside the home, excluding women from that world and accentuating the domestic interior's 'nest'-like status.[11] That status had also been promoted by the celebrations of a sacrosanct bond between mother and child in mid-century Romantic literature (most

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more spacious and richly decorated Parisian interiors discussed in Chapter 4 ('haut bourgeois'). My understanding of 'bourgeois' has been defined, like all such ideas, principally by central examples, rather than by trying to fix the term's inevitably hazy outer limits. The central examples would have been the parents of those children 'in the big cities' to whom Madame Anne Fabre referred in her *Cours complet d'enseignement musical* of 1878.

[8] Sidlauskas, *Body, Place, and Self*, 1. As Sidlauskas points out, this metaphor was in reality far from transparent.

[9] In the exceptions to these tendencies that I cite in Chapter 2, no scholar devotes sustained attention to both the piano and childhood in the context of French culture.

[10] Priscilla Robertson, 'Home as a Nest: Middle Class Childhood in Nineteenth-Century Europe', in *The History of Childhood*, edited by Lloyd deMause (London, 1976), 407-428.

[11] The classic account of this development in France is Bonnie G. Smith, *Ladies of the Leisure Class*.

notably in the poetry of Marceline Desbordes-Vallmores), which were informed by various social concerns – in particular, a revulsion at the widespread practice of wet-nursing. Although by 1870 that custom had become essentially limited to artisans, there was something of a revival at the end of the century, at least in major cities.[12] Together with the *fin-de-siècle* panic about depopulation, and the related anxiety about women's growing independence, this revival sustained an appetite for the cult of 'sa majesté l'enfant' that developed in the final decades of the nineteenth century, and which I discussed in Chapter 3. The sentimental propaganda that constituted much of that cult was marked by its promotion of affectionate fatherhood as well as motherhood.[13] This was a legacy of revolutionary thought, and developed naturally from the intense Republican vision of the harmonious family as a microcosm of the strong state. A variety of social, cultural and political imperatives, then, encouraged the perception of the child (the future citizen) as the central focus of family life.[14] The small family sizes that distinguished the French middle classes only heightened the impression parodied in the phrase of 'sa majesté l'enfant' – that parents were the subjects of their own children. Droz's stories illustrate that, if the child was a monarch, then the domestic interior was its kingdom.

Just as the child was metonymic of the ideal family, so the piano continued to function as an emblem of the harmony uniting that family within domestic space. Scholars customarily acknowledge several ways, besides this one, in which the piano contributed to identity formation within the domestic sphere: it was a 'cipher of subjectivity', a vehicle for reverie and reflection, and a means of displaying desirable femininity. Renoir's *Jeunes filles au piano*, as I noted in Chapter 2, draws together the

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[12] Robertson, 'Home as a Nest', 410. Eugène Brieux's 1901 play, *Les Remplaçants*, satirized the leisurely lives led by affluent Parisian mothers while their children were given to young women from the provinces to wet-nurse, and the children of these provincial women were left to feed artificially.

[13] Lindberg's study of *Children's Corner* examines Debussy's composition in the context of developing attitudes towards the ideal of fatherhood and the expressions of that ideal, 'Through the Looking Glass', 60-104.

[14] On the question of whether this was stronger in France, see Robertson, 'Home as a Nest', 425-6.

significations of both domestic harmony and decorous feminine display. In late nineteenth-century France, aesthetic taste became an increasingly important signifier of social standing, and musical performance, as I illustrated in Chapter 2, was one means of advertising one's taste.[15] In Chapters 2 and 4, I emphasized two additional roles played by the piano in discourse about domesticity. I suggested firstly that we can think of music as an extension of the practices of interior decoration that obsessed the *fin-de-siècle* bourgeois imagination. Secondly, I noted how the piano was represented, specifically, as weaving subjects into domestic space, inviting an analogy between musical rhythms and the rhythms (that is, the rituals and practices) of domesticity, through which family life was played out.

Bringing together the connotations of both these images, the image of the child at the piano, then, usually denoted 'domestic harmony' in particularly strong terms. The widespread custom of children performing to guests, in the 'public' room where the piano stood, was an essential means of displaying the family's social and cultural standing. At these moments, the child clearly took centre stage in domestic space. They were moments when children were envisaged as future citizens. The practice also gave a kind of formal recognition to the idea of children as a focus of domesticity. Indeed, it was a practice through which the child took charge of the character of domestic space, investing that space with a childlike quality. The image of the child at the piano was an image of the child at play. But this was a particularly edifying form of play, one which, in practice, delighted adults rather more than children. In Chapter 2, I sought to show how most of the children's piano music produced for the contemporaneous sheet-music market was bound up with the ideals of bourgeois domesticity that seemed to hold sway in turn-of-the-century French culture. Some of this music, for example, explicitly presented itself as cultivating a cheerful, loving bond between siblings or between mothers and children.

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[15] Tiersten, *Marianne in the Market*.

Art historians such as Katherine Kuenzli and Deborah Silverman have noted the existence of an official discourse in late nineteenth-century France, which encouraged the cultivation of certain aesthetic sensibilities within the home. According to this discourse, the interior should be a refuge of elegance, grace, [and] comfort', realizing a 'republican insistence on rationality and logic'.[16] Much of the music discussed in Chapter 2 could almost be considered an informal branch of that discourse. The image of childhood embodied in Renoir's *Jeunes filles* represented the sight and sound of children absorbed in play at the piano as coming together to enact their proper roles in an ordered, graciously decorative domestic space. Kuenzli caricatures the extreme positions taken by art historians concerning the character of Vuillard's interior paintings: from one position, they depict 'havens of bourgeois domesticity'; from the other, they are a 'nightmarish parody' of that domesticity. The scope of this thesis's central topic – how music embodied and perpetuated debates about the nature of the 'childlike' – extends itself to embrace questions about the nature of domestic space, because these 'childlike' musical characters were considered, in their performance contexts, to summarize and determine the dynamics of that space. Indeed, Adorno's interpretation of *Children's Corner* (as celebrating 'the affectionate bonhomie of secure bourgeois existence') invites us to develop, in relation to that piece, a version of the art historical debate summarized by Kuenzli.

The importance of 'secureness' as an ideal dynamic of domesticity is indicated in Robertson's description of the home as a 'nest'. This description coincides with general values associated with the notion of 'home': warmth, safety and enclosure. The subject-matter of Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel* is evidently not bourgeois domesticity, but it is significant, as I noted in Chapter 1, that critics were obsessed with the opera's origin as songs composed for the entertainment of Wette's children in the

[16] Kuenzli, *The Nabis*, 14.

privacy of the home.[17] We might ask why the opera was so readily and so directly interpreted as an act of domestic intimacy writ large. The answer, I would suggest, does not reside principally in Wette's judicious alterations to the plot, but in the underlying urge embodied in the opera: to secure childhood as a safe, protected realm. As I argued in Chapter 1, *Hänsel und Gretel* is really about the desire to find the child 'a home', in a relatively abstract sense that drew from stock nineteenth-century tropes of lost children and guardian angels, and which had its roots in the social and political imperatives underpinning Romantic attitudes towards childhood. More than anything else, it is Humperdinck's music which both expresses and seeks to assuage this urge, through what I called its quality of 'enchanted homeliness'. Indeed, this quality might also be described as nest-like. *Hänsel und Gretel* clearly reveals how the securing of childhood as a protected domain – endowing the child with an inviolable aura of protectedness – served the interest of adults at least as much as children. Adults themselves took some kind of refuge in this domain, using the image of childhood to construct a psychological asylum of their own. The more metaphorical desire to find childhood 'a home' was projected onto, and derived from, the identity of the home itself.

In Chapter 3, I examined one member of the 'canon' of children's pieces, Fauré's *Dolly Suite*, examining a contemporaneous critical anxiety about the possibility that it embodied exactly the ideals outlined in Chapter 2. The discussion focused on the prescription of the 'childlike' embodied in the conventional *pièce enfantine*: corporeal ideals of grace and decorum, and an insistence on the child's jovial sweetness. The chapter interpreted the staging of Fauré's *Dolly* as manifesting a contemporaneous reaction against those ideals. I argued that the ballet's chaotic, absurdist storyline also parodied something more general: the cloying scenes of domestic intimacy and affection promoted by the cult of 'sa majesté l'enfant', and potentially embodied in

[17] If they can be thought of as representatives of real children, Hänsel and Gretel signify poor rural childhood.

what Hahn called the Suite's 'nursery atmosphere'. In Chapter 4, I examined a strand of thought which reacted against those ideals in a rather less obvious way. This chapter considered more directly the question of domestic space, and how that space might be experienced. In nineteenth-century art and literature, the idea of the child's imagination stood for a variety of spatial experiences associated with the category of the miniature. They included the invention of insides within insides, and an imagined transfiguration of the relative dimensions of self and surroundings. These spatial experiences were associated primarily with acts of play, and especially with play with toys. The understanding of the playing child as signifying an idealized domestic space was one that adopted the viewpoint of a distant, observing adult. In the most general terms, the music examined in the final chapter – as opposed to that examined in Chapters 2 and 3 – sought an alternative viewpoint, one which recreated the very transfigurations wrought on domestic space by the child's imagination.

A substantial part of this chapter considered preoccupations with the domestic interior associated, in particular, with Symbolism. This involved various modes of thought which embraced and accentuated the significance of domestic space as the site of reverie. As art historians have discussed in detail, this reverie fulfilled a general function assigned to the urban interior: the unfurling of the self within the calm privacy of domestic space, protected from the street's enervating barrage of sensory stimuli. Proust's contemplations of domestic objects, and the suggestive interior paintings by some of the Nabis, take as their subject-matter the same kind of space on which were focused the ideals of bourgeois domesticity outlined in Chapter 2. But the character of that space became very different from the mere ordered decorativeness, designed to confirm to the public gaze the graceful but mundane harmony of private life, emphasized in images such as Renoir's *Jeunes filles*. Instead, that space became a place of enchantment, where the self-containment of the ego was surrendered in a diffusion of subjectivity, and the familiar space transfigured into something strangely

animate. As I noted in Chapter 4, artists themselves presented the piano as an important means of initiating these practices of absorption.

Such developments are very familiar to art historians, if largely unfamiliar to musicologists. In Chapter 4, however, I proposed an idea that art historians seem not to have discussed in detail: these transfigurations of domestic space through reverie, or self-transfigurations within domestic space through reverie, relate closely to the capacities of the childhood imagination emphasized by nineteenth-century thought. This is most evident in art that either found an animate quality latent within domestic objects (as Xavier Mellery's did), or evoked the merging of the animate and inanimate constituents of domestic space (as Edouard Vuillard's did). This art, I argued, deployed the contents of domestic space as 'transitional objects' – toy-like things that attain an aura of personhood, through which one may gain an altered understanding of oneself as both subject and object. As nineteenth-century art and literature intimated, children's play with toys involves a transfigured relation with the domestic interior that goes beyond the spatial, and entails something like an exchange of animateness with the domestic space furnishing the landscape of the toy world. I elaborated this idea through discussion of music by Debussy and Ravel that refers to images of toys, arguing that this exchange is embodied in that music's mechanistic qualities, which seem somehow poised between the conditions of the animate and inanimate. The central example of Chapter 4, *La Boîte à joujoux*, is *about* the transformation of interior space through play, and the dissolution of the boundary between subject and object reached through that play. In the art discussed in Chapter 4, then, the image of the child embodied in Renoir's *Jeunes filles* – as unifying a rational, harmonious domestic space through absorption in musical play – is transformed. We can think of this art as recreating that very absorption, evoking an alternative assimilation of space that sometimes tested the limits of rationality.

Interiority

Because of its status as a focal point of ideals of domesticity, childhood was readily available as a metaphor for a state of being brought forth by domestic reverie. Childhood was also uniquely suitable as that metaphor, because of the broader patterns of thought about interiority that I discussed in the Introduction and in Chapter 1. In European thought more generally, the development of the idea of childhood in the decades around 1900 was characterized by the emergence of the notion of adulthood's 'inner child'. How this development influenced conceptions of the function of the bourgeois interior, and the significance of childhood within that interior, is a question which scholars have not examined in detail. Just as discourse about the domestic interior provided a way of thinking about tensions between insides and outsides, so childhood provided a focus for thinking about the relation between the physiognomic exterior, exposed to the public gaze, and an interior realm hidden behind that exterior, imperfectly expressed by it. The sequence of discussions in this thesis sought to establish a connection between these two patterns of thought. Underlying the arguments of Chapter 4 was the following suggestion: that notions of psychological interiority and spatial interiority became most convincingly fused, not in the idea of domestic space generally, but in the figure of the child playing within that space.

The childhood that remained 'inside' the adult corresponded partly to the sensation of a psychological centre-point, hidden behind a more concretized self constantly rehearsed and performed in social spaces. Both artists and scientists conceived that half-sensed psychic core, not yet hardened through contact with the social world, in the image of childhood. In his discussion of Impressionist portraits of children, the art historian Greg Thomas attributes to those portraits the role of accentuating 'a distinctly modern awareness of a fundamental disjunction between one's private, interior consciousness and one's public, exterior image'.[18] The childhood painted by the Impressionists exhibited that disjunction in a number of ways. One of these related to

[18] Thomas, *Impressionist Children*, x.

the increasingly intense perception of children as political capital – future citizens requiring careful formation. As I noted in Chapter 2, this perception informed important Republican policy in the late nineteenth century. During that time, childhood became the site of a struggle fought more openly between competing forces of socialization. That struggle was played out in what children wore, what toys they played with, what books they read and, to some extent, what music they performed. These developments could only accentuate an impression of childhood as a state of being that evaded, or resisted, those forces of socialization. Bourgeois children carefully dressed by aspirational parents had been lent the visual trappings of a social identity that they were incapable of fully understanding.

It is exactly the 'disjunction' outlined by Thomas that Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* addresses (in a very different way from Impressionist portraiture). In Chapter 1, I suggested that the opera pursues two different perceptions of what it is to be 'childlike'. According to both of them, childhood is a state in which the sense of 'one's public exterior image' has not yet grown into a condition of perceived separation from a private, interior mental realm. The first of those perceptions relates to an idea much entertained by Symbolist thought: the existence of a mysterious, irrational and radically private mental realm, darker and more fanciful than our conventional understanding of the unconscious. In a well-known interview, Maeterlinck declared his obsession with such a realm, shut away by what he called the 'walls of artifice'.[19] The building of these 'walls' implicitly takes place through the everyday performance of the self, supervised by the 'pretensions of rationality'. For Maeterlinck, this realm left traces of itself in, among other things, the irrational anxieties of childhood. Not having fully absorbed the conventions and expectations of the adult social world, the child has not consolidated its 'walls of artifice', which have therefore not closed up around this 'primitive being' and sealed it off from consciousness. I sought to show how almost all the characters in *Pelléas* exhibit the traces that Maeterlinck identifies.

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[19] Maeterlinck, *Confessions*, 81.

The second perception relates to the apparent illegibility of characters' faces and voices. The opera's characters are plagued by an inability to read each others' thoughts and intentions, as well as their own. This is particularly true of Golaud's attempts to communicate with the two characters most clearly marked out as 'childlike' (Yniold and Mélisande). Golaud searches with increasing desperation for something concealed beneath their simple, clear expressions. It is this very clarity which, to Golaud's mind, carries an air of secrecy. As I noted in Chapter 1, developing remarks by Jankélévitch, Debussy's music gives us the experience of trying to 'read' this expression of 'limpid mystery'. The 'childlike' served here both as a paradigm of human illegibility generally, and as framing a question concerning the apparent mysteriousness of the child's gaze. In the reading of Debussy's music offered by Jankélévitch, this gaze hides nothing because it has nothing to express beyond itself. The apparent 'mystery' arises from our inability to accept the absence of a distinction between a physiognomic exterior and a coherent realm of interior feeling 'behind' it. What baffles Golaud, as he confronts Mélisande's gaze, is really the possibility that the 'walls of artifice' remain un-built. In combining these two perceptions, the opera plays upon the possibility that, if there is a mysterious interior realm behind the 'walls of artifice', remaining exposed in childhood experience, then that realm evades the means of expression supplied by everyday reality.

The overall impression, in *Pelléas*, is that its characters are cast adrift on what Maeterlinck called 'the interior sea' ('la mer intérieure').[20] They are beset by the sensation of having thoughts and feelings for which they cannot find expression, and their inability to read their own thoughts renders their expressions all the more illegible to others. Significantly, the opera seemed to bestow this same feeling – the feeling of being buried within oneself – upon its more sensitive listeners. Like the operas' characters, those listeners seemed to have their exteriority stripped away from them, and some indefinable, vulnerable 'interiority' laid bare. As I argued in Chapter 1,

[20] *Ibid*.

critics related this peculiar condition to the 'childlike' qualities of musical diction, which themselves flesh out the 'childlike' nature – an unknowing vulnerability permeating adulthood – that is ascribed in the libretto to all the opera's characters except Arkel. In short, *Pelléas* realizes musically an understanding of childhood as interiority, and of interiority as childlike. There is a strong case to be made, given the intensity of responses to *Pelléas*, that the opera manifested this understanding more successfully and more richly than did Maeterlinck's play. Musicologists continue to contribute to the debate about the significance of *Pelléas* for the history of opera (specifically, for the disintegration of nineteenth-century ideals of the operatic voice), a debate launched even before the opera's official première in April 1902. My discussion of *Pelléas* did not question the importance of that debate, but implied nonetheless that our continuation of it may have obscured our awareness of the opera's contribution to other histories.

The emergence of the idea of adulthood's 'inner child' in European thought – the process through which human interiority acquired the shape of childhood – has received one sustained historical account. The end-point of Steedman's version of this story, which focuses on interests in 'growth' and 'development' fostered by Darwinian thought, lies in Freud's theory of the unconscious. By examining aspects of French culture specifically, this thesis has suggested the possibility of alternative versions of that story. The fact that Freud's theories had little impact in France before the First World War is a commonplace in historical and literary scholarship, as is the fact that an array of understandings of the unconscious were already operative in French culture in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. These facts seem to be much less well known to musicologists. In the thesis, I have discussed several alternative ways in which art and science in late nineteenth-century France linked childhood with the realm of the unconscious, and shown for the first time how music made use of that connection. (I would suggest, in general, that the corporeal understandings of the unconscious emphasized by nineteenth-century science – understandings to which

Freud was in some sense reacting – provide more illuminating contexts for musicological studies than do psychoanalytic perspectives, with their irreducibly narrative character.)

The uses of the physical interior described in Chapter 4, and the character of the physical interior that developed from those uses, were clearly related to the character of the 'interiority' represented by childhood. As I noted in Chapter 4, *fin-de-siècle* commentators became obsessed by the idea that modern urban citizens composed for themselves an exterior 'shell' to conceal and preserve the coherence of their interior consciousness. To take refuge in the physical interior was to cast off that shell, and be unburdened of the demands of maintaining an 'exterior image'. The figure of the child could represent exactly that unburdening, as a figure not yet bound (or not fully bound) by a social demand to produce and sustain a 'public exterior image'. Within domestic space, the tension or opposition between interior and exterior was undone and released; childhood, again, was a natural symbol for that undoing, as a state in which the awareness of a psychological 'disjunction' between interior and exterior had not been clearly established. In the domestic interior, the strange anxieties lying behind the 'walls of artifice', which found no expression in everyday behaviour, could be released and examined. Discussing Symbolist understandings of the domestic interior, Kuenzli describes the home as a 'site for uncovering unconscious mental forces'.[21] As I proposed in my interpretation of *Pelléas*, childhood – or the form of post-Romantic childhood realized in Maeterlinck's characters – embodied a state in which those 'unconscious mental forces' had not yet been covered over. In short, these patterns of thought transformed the status of the child as the protagonist of a domestic mythology. Childhood became a kind of ideal of the self in the interior, and, in being so, an ideal of the interior self.

These claims engage most directly with scholarly debates in the field of art history. The subject of childhood introduces another dimension to the pursuit of interiority,

[21] Kuenzli, *The Nabis*, 82-3.

between roughly 1890 and 1914, 'as a distinctly modern psychological, conceptual, and representational space'.[22] Despite the amount of existing scholarship on that subject, much more might be made by art historians of this additional dimension. Thomas's study of Impressionist representations of childhood examines a slightly earlier period, and moreover, his arguments best illuminates paintings of children in settings that hover between the public and the private. Existing scholarship has generally considered the late nineteenth-century domestic interior within the perspective of women's experiences and attitudes towards femininity. When art historians acknowledge that these interiors were also the child's domain, and that the image of the child was central to visual meditations on those interiors, they tend to focus on questions of motherhood.[23] The underlying argument of Chapter 4, which suggested that Symbolist explorations of domestic reverie conceived the interior as a kind of 'transitional space', might help not only to illuminate *fin-de-siècle* representations of children in the domestic interior, but also to develop an essential biographical motif in scholarship on Bonnard and Vuillard. The supposed identity of these artists as 'childlike' makes for an interesting, and potentially productive, parallel with some of their musical contemporaries.

These arguments strongly suggest that the notion of 'interiority', as identified by Berry, requires far greater examination by musicologists. An important starting-point for a more detailed exegesis of the ideas outlined in this Conclusion would be Claude Terrasse's *Petites scènes familières*, a collection of piano pieces published in 1895, which may or may not be for children.[24] The score is richly illustrated with specially created lithographs by Bonnard, and the connections that I have been making between domesticity, childhood, music and subjectivity materialize in the relation between these illustrations and Terrasse's strange music. Music's role in the development of the idea

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[22] Berry, 'Inside the Psychologised Interior', 157.

[23] For example: Berry, Francesca. '"Maman is my Muse": The Maternal as Motif and Metaphor in Édouard Vuillard's Intimisme'. *Oxford Art Journal* 34/1 (2011), 55-77.

[24] Claude Terrasse*, Petites Scènes familières* (Paris, 1895).

of bourgeois interiority extends far beyond the subject of childhood. As I suggested in Chapters 2 and 4, musical culture played an essential part in establishing the nature of domestic 'reverie', thereby facilitating the experience of interiority as a 'modern psychological [...] space'.[25] My discussion of the striking moments of stillness in *La Boîte* suggested an unfamiliar angle from which to consider the qualities of stasis, simplicity and distance that characterize much art-music written for the piano between 1890 and 1914. How might we consider this music – in multiple senses, and especially in the sense recognised by Symbolist thought – as both an art of the interior and an art of interiority?[26]

The child, the doll and the mask

As a closing point, I wish to develop briefly my suggestion that childhood became a kind of ideal of the interior self, by summarizing the nature of the connections between three images or icons that are essential to the patterns of thought examined across the chapters of this thesis. The topic of interiority connects the images of the child, the doll and the mask, since all of them have been taken to represent a particular relation between a supposedly inward mental realm and the 'exterior' expression of that realm. The image of the masked figure is an extreme realization of the disjunction between 'private, interior consciousness' (what is beneath the mask) and 'public exterior image' (the expression of the mask itself) that so plagued modernist thought. This is why, as I noted briefly in Chapter 4, it became both a parody and grotesque ideal of the modern urban subject. The nightmarish moment described by Rilke's narrator, in which a 'mask' slips from the face of a woman in the street, is a moment in which an interior

[25] This question belongs to a broader debate initiated very recently within musicology, relating to the significance of listening in the history of forms of attention and absorption, and their representation. The beginning of this debate was formalized in the panel session 'Music and Forms of Attention in the Long Nineteenth Century' at the Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society, 2017.

[26] As I noted in Chapter 4, Adlard begins to consider a version of this question in '"Time-full" Interiors'.

consciousness lies bared. It is nightmarish *because* this interiority has been denuded. As I suggested in Chapter 4, the doll's expression, like that of the mask, is impervious to the demands of intersubjectivity. But unlike the masked figure, the doll – or at least the kind of doll that is the subject of *La Boîte à joujoux* – is not haunted by the 'disjunction' identified by Thomas. It cannot acknowledge the possibility of a distinction between exteriority and interiority, and may therefore become a happier ideal of the modern urban citizen (the subject who lives like a toy, in a town like a toy box). We might naturally suggest that the doll cannot register this distinction because it simply lacks an 'interior consciousness'. But with Hellé's dolls (as well as Baudelaire's and some of Rilke's), the existence of their 'souls' is so important. A slightly more complex description is therefore needed: dolls are subjects that cannot harbour any feeling that is inconsistent with what their physiognomies suggest.

As the preceding discussions have suggested, the significance of the images of the doll and the child often intersect. In Maeterlinck's thought in particular, the two seem to represent parallel conditions. To different degrees, both child and doll stand for a general vulnerability and lack of agency. Their most obvious role is to allegorize humanity's subjection to the vagaries of fate. But the doll-like is also, as the childlike is in *Pelléas*, a paradigm of human illegibility – if in a very different way. In *Pelléas*, the doll is not an important image, but in Maeterlinck's *Intérieur* (one of his 'plays for marionettes', premièred in 1895), the doll's impassivity becomes a central analogy for the limits of bodily and facial expression – for the inflexible 'woodenness' of that expression, which may seem incapable of registering or revealing true subtleties of feeling. The lifeless doll is an end-case in physiognomic inertness, a metaphor for the emptiness or blankness of the everyday exterior, which may suggest, as the doll's does, the absence of interior feeling, but in fact conceals a dark 'interior sea'. This is a slightly different interpretation of the figure of the doll from that discussed in Chapter 4, which embraced dolls and toys as expressive figures, far from 'lifeless', at least when observed by those who understand them. Held by what I called the 'animating

gaze', the doll may certainly be mysterious or illegible, but not because, as Maeterlinck sometimes suggests, it simply has no expression. That illegibility arises from more complex causes, and this perhaps begins to shed light on what Debussy meant in the remark that I quoted at the beginning of Chapter 4: the 'soul of the doll is more mysterious than even Maeterlinck imagines'.[27]

The doll may seem an unfathomable figure for the reason noted above: it symbolizes the absence of a distinction between an 'inside' and an 'outside'. The source of the doll's apparent illegibility, then, is ultimately the same as that of the child's. Just as the childlike, to Golaud, is an illegible condition because it does not admit of the 'walls of artifice', so the doll-like may seem unfathomable because it cannot admit to harbouring an inner realm of feeling. This is the most important thing shared by the figure of the child and the doll – the commonality between Maeterlinck's understanding of the child, as discussed in Chapter 1, and the understanding of the doll discussed in Chapter 4. Jankélévitch describes Mélisande, with her 'limpid mystery' that becomes an equivalent of Debussy's music, as a figure 'without interiority'.[28] As I pointed out, the inverse is technically more accurate: she is 'without exteriority'. One might almost suggest that this quibble captures the relation between the images of doll and child: if the first is 'without interiority', the second is 'without exteriority'. Both conditions amount to the same thing, in that neither the child nor the doll is capable of *disguising* interior feeling. Neither can *hide* an 'interior consciousness'. Consequently, the child and the doll become strange, enigmatic figures. Both also become, as I have argued in different ways throughout the thesis, representations of an ideal state of consciousness.

The relation between the images of child and mask is also, then, one of deep opposition. In the Introduction, I emphasized the significance of an understanding of childhood running through nineteenth-century literary and philosophical thought, and extending well into the twentieth century. According to this understanding, childhood

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[27] Debussy, *Lettres*, 117.
[28] Jankélévitch, *La Vie et la mort*, 100.

is a condition in which the distinction between subject and object, which characterizes adult analytical knowledge, has not yet clearly emerged. The figure of the child represented the possibility of a self not yet opposed to the world. In French culture between 1880 and 1914, the post-Romantic temperament, haunted by the subject-object distinction that it had so deeply internalized, produced a particular version of this ideal: childhood is a state of being with neither the capacity nor the motive to become masked. We might, if we wish, call this a 'modernist' understanding of childhood. It could be troubling to come into contact with such a state of being, as well as to inhabit that state. The inability to become masked was almost tantamount to an inability to suppress the unconscious. This childhood no longer invited joyous recollection, melancholic nostalgia, or intimations of the divine. But it still embodied, in a characteristically literal way, a form of innocence – unknowingness.

APPENDIX 1

Scenario for *Dolly* printed in the production's programme

DOLLY

Musique de M. G Fauré :: Instrumentation de M. H. Rabaud
Ballet de M. Louis Laloy :: Réglé par M. Leo Staats
Décors et costumes de Mlle Lloyd

I - Berceuse

Le Lapin marchand de jouets passe au fond du jardin. Survient Dolly accompagnée de la Nourrice. C'est une enfant gâtée qui jette sa poupée à terre et manque de respect à la Nourrice. Cette maisonette, au détour de l'allée, l'intrigue et elle décide de rester là, profitant de ce fauteuil sous l'arbre. Résignée, la Nourrice la borde et la berce. L'attente de Dolly n'est pas déçue: la porte de la maisonnette s'ouvre, deux Clowns se glissent dehors et jouent des tours à la Nourrice qui part à leur poursuite.

II - Mi-a-ou

Les deux Clowns amusent Dolly par leurs danses et leurs gambades. Elles consent non sans crainte à danser avec eux. Mais alors un autre personnage paraît au seuil de la maisonnette. C'est le Bohémien qui observe la scène et tout à coup, farouche, abat un des Clowns à terre où il reste inanimé. L'autre emporte en pleurant le corps de son frère. Au bruit, le Danseur est sorti. On arrête le criminel et on l'enferme dans la maisonnette.

III - Le jardin de Dolly

Le Danseur déploie pour Dolly toutes ses grâces; il appelle le Musicien et le prie de jouer en son nom une sérénade. Dolly l'admire et le trouve préférable aux poupées. Il lui offre la plus belle fleur du jardin, cependant que le Musicien, indifférent d'abord, s'anime peu à peu, piqué de jalousie.

IV - Kitty-valse

Dolly a accepté l'invitation du Danseur, mais parfois lui échappe pour écouter le Musicien qui rôde lamentablement alentour. Le Danseur insiste. Dolly les quitte tous deux.

V - Tendresse

Le Musicien et le Danseur rivalisent auprès de la boudeuse. Ils font valoir leurs talents, ils la supplient; indifférente, elle les provoque et les fuit.

VI - Pas espagnol

Tout à coup le Bohémien enfonce la porte de sa prison, s'empare sans discussion de Dolly et l'entraîne en une danse si fougueuse que le Danseur gagné malgré lui vient s'y joindre, suivi bientôt par les deux Clowns que le rythme ressuscite. La Nourrice s'en mêle aussi, le Musicien accompagne. Cependant le Bohémien gronde si on approche de sa conquête qu'il finit par enlever, laissant les autres stupéfaits. Le Lapin marchand de jouets passe.

APPENDIX 2

Text of ‘Le Grillon’

C’est l’heure où, las d’errer, l’insecte nègre revient de promenade et répare avec soin le désordre de son domaine.
D’abord il ratisse ses étroites allées de sable.
Il fait du bran de scie qu’il écarte au seuil de sa retraite.
Il lime la racine de cette grande herbe propre à le harceler.
Il se repose.
Puis il remonte sa minuscule montre.
A-t-il fini? Est-elle cassée? Il se repose encore un peu.
Il rentre chez lui et ferme sa porte.
Longtemps il tourne sa clef dans la serrure délicate.
Et il écoute:
Point d’alarme dehors.
Mais il ne se trouve pas en sûreté.
Et comme par une chaînette dont la poulie grince, il descend jusqu’au fond de la terre.
On n’entend plus rien.
Dans la campagne muette, les peupliers se dressent comme des doigts en l’air et désignent la lune.

APPENDIX 3

Text of ‘Noël des jouets’

Le troupeau verni des moutons
Roule en tumulte vers la crêche.
Les lapins tambours, brefs et rêches,
Couvrent leurs aigres mirlitons.

Vierge Marie, en crinoline,
Ses yeux d’émail sans cesse ouverts,
En attendant Bonhomme hiver
Veille Jésus qui se dodine.

Car, près de là, sous un sapin,
Furtif, emmitoufflé dans l’ombre
Du bois, Belzébuth, le chien sombre
Guette l’Enfant de sucre peint.

Mais les beaux anges incassables
Suspendus par des fils d’archal
Du haut de l’arbuste hiémal
Assurent la paix des étables.

Et leur vol de clinquant vermeil
Qui cliquette en bruits symétriques
S’accorde au bétail mécanique
Dont la voix grêle bêle:
‘Noël! Noël! Noël!’

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