

**THE ECCENTRIC HUMOR  
IN ERIK SATIE'S PIANO MUSIC**

By

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## Abstract

In early 20<sup>th</sup> century France, Eric Satie was regarded among the leading figures of humor in high-art music. Many of Satie's compositions contain different types of humor, such as parody, irony, and satire, and the eccentricity of these works left audiences baffled yet amused. Satie's compositions with eccentric humor were influenced by his experience working as an arranger and accompanist in cabarets for over twenty years. In the *Chat Noir* cabaret, Satie, along with other artists, challenged the traditional aesthetic and bourgeois conventions. They composed absurdist songs and plays, providing texts full of eccentric humor in the cabaret's own journal. These works prefigured the spirit of Dadaism.

The purpose of this study is to examine the eccentric humor in Eric Satie's piano music. First, I will select one piano duet from the period when he studied counterpoint in the *Schola Cantorum* from 1905 to 1912. I will discuss how he expressed eccentric humor in this contrapuntal work. Second, I will examine some short pieces from his humoristic piano suites written around the years of 1912-1915. Almost all of these pieces parodied music from existing compositions, and Satie liberally sprinkled eccentric annotations throughout the scores of these pieces. Third, I will examine a piano duet inspired by the comic, bizarre, and satiric literature of Francois Rabelais, who was a master satirist and writer in the French renaissance.

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## Introduction

In general, when people think about Eric Satie (1866-1925), a French composer and pianist, the first repertoire that comes to their mind might be the *Gymnopédies*, which, with their subtle and haunting tunes gave people a melancholy feeling. However, Satie also wrote many compositions with eccentric humor during his life time. In early 20<sup>th</sup> century France, Satie was regarded among the leading figures of humor in high-art music. Many of Satie's compositions contain different types of humor, such as parody, irony, and satire, and the eccentricity of these works left audiences baffled yet amused. Satie's compositions with eccentric humor were influenced by his experience working as an arranger and accompanist in cabarets for over twenty years. Steven Moore Whiting explains how the *cabaret artistique* influenced Satie:

The *cabaret artistique* provided the pseudo-medieval stage for collaboration among painters, poets, and musicians that were to be a crucial wellspring of modernism in the early twentieth century. It institutionalized irreverence for established values of every sort and cultivated the mock-serious pose as the quintessential expression of such irreverence. It nurtured the heterodox outlook of Erik Satie and, moreover, supplied him with the idioms and techniques that inform his still outrageous and challenging art.<sup>1</sup>

Starting in 1887, Satie often visited the *Chat Noir* cabaret, where its atmosphere of taunting wit and mockery appealed to him. In *Chat Noir*, Satie, along with other artists, challenged the traditional aesthetic and bourgeois conventions. They composed absurdist songs and plays, providing texts full of eccentric humor in the cabaret's own journal. These works prefigured the spirit of Dadaism.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, in this paper I will explore the eccentric humor in Eric Satie's piano music. First, I will select one piano duet, *En habit de cheval*, during the period when he studied counterpoint

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<sup>1</sup>Whiting, Steven Moore. *Satie the Bohemian: From Cabaret to Concert Hall*. Oxford Monographs on Music. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, 58.

<sup>2</sup>Perloff, Nancy. *Art and the Everyday: Popular Entertainment and the Circle of Erik Satie*. Oxford: New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1991, 66.

in the *Schola Cantorum* from 1905 to 1912. I will discuss how he expressed eccentric humor in this contrapuntal work. Second, I will examine some short pieces from his humoristic piano suites written around the years of 1912-1915: *Croquis et Agaceries d'un Gros Bonhomme en Bois*, *Chapitres tournés en tous sens*, and *Embryons desséchés*. Almost all of these pieces parodied music from existing compositions, and Satie liberally sprinkled eccentric annotations throughout the scores of these pieces. Third, I will examine a piano duet, *Trois petites pièces montées*, inspired by a comic, bizarre, and satiric literature of Francois Rabelais, who was a master satirist and writer in the French renaissance.

## Chapter I

### Schola Cantorum

Satie gradually noticed that his music writing could not progress without improving his contrapuntal technique. Therefore, in 1905, when Satie was forty years old, he enrolled at *Schola Cantorum* and received some financial support from Vincent d'Indy, the founder of this school. Compared to the conservatory where the students studying only technical skill and virtuosity of that time, d'Indy considered music an art, encouraging his students to be equipped with a comprehensive knowledge of music and its history. Satie attended the counterpoint classes taught primarily by Albert Roussel from 1905-1908 and took Vincent d'Indy's seven-year composition course (probably as an auditor). Satie persisted in his study and graduated with first-class honors in 1908, he was also awarded a Diploma in Counterpoint signed by d'Indy and Roussel.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Davis, Mary E. *Erik Satie*. Critical Lives (London, England). London: Reaktion Books, 2007,75-76



## ***En habit de cheval (In Riding Gear)***

*En Habit de cheval* was composed in 1911 during the end of Satie's study at the *Schola Cantorum*. It was first composed for piano duet, and later arranged for orchestra. The composition consists of two short chorales and two fugues in alternation: 1. *Choral* (Chorale), 2. *Fugue litanque* (Litany fugue), 3. *Autre choral* (Another chorale), and 4. *Fugue de papier* (Paper fugue). In these four pieces, Satie combined what he learned from the *Schola Cantorum* with his eccentric humor.

### **1 & 3. *Choral* and *Autre choral***

One of the famous composers related to the genre of chorale is Johan Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), who wrote hundreds of chorales that are known as *Chorale harmonizations*. These chorales are often in four-part harmony for SATB vocalists in homophonic texture, following traditional functional harmony of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries, and the soprano part is often assigned a pre-existing hymn tune. However, Satie creates ironic humor in the two chorales, *Choral* and *Autre choral*, by avoiding these traditional expectations. The melodies, rather than being fluid and song-like, are more vertical, not purely lyrical, with much more dissonance than would be found in a traditional chorale. Harmonically, the pieces do not fit into traditional functional harmony, but rather use a chromatic harmony more typical of the early twentieth century (see Example 1 and 2). Even more striking, in *Another chorale*, Satie even wrote the whole part of the second piano in octaves instead of triadic chords (see second piano of Example 2).

Example 1 En habit de cheval, "Choral"

Chorale

Grave  
SECONDONDO  
f pesante très précieux p  
A  
Grossir ralentir  
Chorale  
PRIMO  
Grave  
f pesante très précieux p  
A  
chanter lourd Grossir ralentir

Example 2 En habit de cheval, "Autre choral"

Non lent chanter p Another chorale  
A  
pp chanter ralentir  
Non lent Another chorale A  
pp chanter ralentir

## 2. *Fugue Litannique*

During his final years in the *Schola Cantorum*, Satie's main interests were the orchestra and the fugue. While studying fugues, he analyzed the seventh fugue from J.S. Bach's *Art of fugue*.<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, Satie's *Fugue Litannique* was not written in major and minor keys that were normally used in Bach's fugues, instead, the piece was written in Dorian mode. We can see this piece starts with a subject in the Dorian mode from the second piano, then the first piano answers in its dominant (see Example 3). The droning sound of repeated D notes in this subject is reminiscent of medieval plainchant.

Example 3 *En habit de cheval*, "Fugue Litannique," second piano mm.1-3 and first piano mm.1-6

## 4. *Fugue de papier*

When Satie composed the *En Habit de cheval*, he wrote to his friend Alexis Roland-Manuel (1891-1966) that his counterpoint teacher Russel was amused by the score:

I played him what you know of *En habit de cheval* and the exposition of the other fugue, the *Fugue de papier*. He found it all amusing; and thought I was right in

<sup>4</sup> Orledge, Robert. *Satie the Composer*. Music in the Twentieth Century. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990,95.

my new way of making a fugue: especially the expositions.<sup>5</sup>

Satie created a subtle joke in the exposition of this fugue. In contrast to Bach's normal tonic-dominant progression in his fugue's openings, the subject of Satie's fugue begins in the F Lydian mode, which is the subdominant of the fugue, and its answer begins in the C Lydian mode, which is the tonic of the fugue. Alan M. Gillmor describes this composition as "standing the scholastic fugal exposition on its head, a kind of reversal of the traditional tonic-dominant axis admittedly more apparent to the eye than to the ear."<sup>6</sup>

Example 4 *En habit de cheval*, "Fugue de papier," first piano mm.1-4 and second piano mm.1-8

The image displays a musical score for Erik Satie's "Fugue de papier" from the piece "En habit de cheval". The score is written in 2/4 time and is divided into three systems. The first system, labeled "First Piano", shows the right-hand part of the first piano, starting with a piano (p) dynamic and a melodic line in the right hand. The second system, labeled "Second Piano", shows the right-hand part of the second piano, also starting with a piano (p) dynamic and a melodic line in the right hand. The third system shows the continuation of the second piano, with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

<sup>5</sup> Wilkins, Nigel. "Erik Satie's Letters." *Canadian University Music Review*, no. 2 (1981), 215.

<sup>6</sup> Gillmor, Alan M. *Erik Satie*. Twayne's Music Series. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988, 142.

## Chapter II

### Humoristic Piano Suites

Satie's compositions in 1912 to 1915 were primarily short piano pieces and most of them were grouped in sets of three, written without barlines, and without key signatures. They are commonly called "humoristic piano suites"<sup>7</sup> by scholars. Most of these piano pieces parody already existing musical compositions, and Satie often liberally sprinkled eccentric and often nonsensical annotations throughout the scores. In this chapter, I will briefly talk about Satie's writing style and his use of musical parody. Then, I will examine his three humoristic piano suites, *Croquis et Agaceries d'un Gros Bonhomme en Bois*, *Chapitres tournés en tous sens*, and *Embryons desséchés*. All of which were written in 1913.

### Satie's writing style

In 1912, Satie not only composed a series of humoristic piano suites but also began publishing literary writings. His literary writings and musical score annotations with eccentric humor were probably influenced by Alphonse Allais (1854-1905), a poet and humorist. In 1887, Satie began frequenting the *Chat Noir*, a cabaret in the *bohemian Montmartre* district of Paris. It was thought to be the first modern cabaret, opened in 1881-1897. In *Chat Noir*, Satie befriended Allais. In 1880, after Allais finished his studies in pharmacology, he immersed himself in the Parisian literary world, primarily indulging himself in *Chat Noir's* own journal, which was also named *Chat Noir*. Allais's writings in the *Chat Noir* journal were diverse, including parodies of Parisian newspaper reviews, vignettes about Parisian life, and personal narratives. All of these

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<sup>7</sup> Hare, Belva Jean. *The Uses and Aesthetics of Musical Borrowing in Erik Satie's Humoristic Piano Suites, 1913-1917*. Degree of Doctor of Philosophy. University of Texas Austin, 29,1.

works later offered an important model for Satie's literary writings.

By comparing self-portraits written by Allais and Satie, Nancy Perloff comments on the resemblances of their writing styles:

Both men delighted in absurd self-portraits which lavished excessive praise or mockery on one's personal situation and achievements, in parodies of pedantry and academicism, and in the adoption of poses as a means of caricaturing certain human types.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, Perloff also states Satie was influenced by Allais' deadpan humor. For example, their self-portraits were written as parodies of the newspapers by referencing themselves in the third person.<sup>9</sup> James Harding thinks Satie's writing style with eccentric humor was also influenced by Allais' fantastic inventions, such as "ventilated shoes," "a luminous hat," or "lay sheets of cork over all seas and lakes."<sup>10</sup> These bizarre descriptions inspired Satie and he even left sketches of his own fantastic inventions (see Figure 1: Satie's inventions on flying machines).

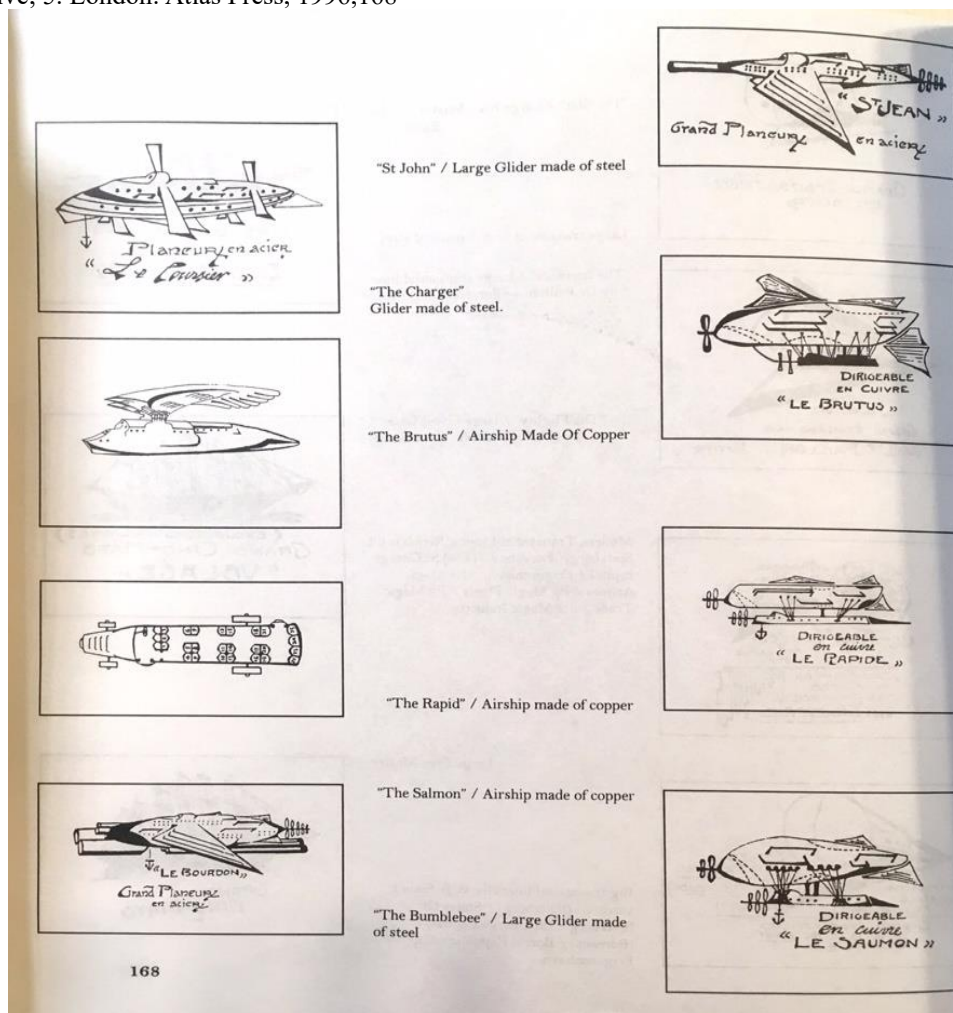
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<sup>8</sup>Perloff, Nancy. *Art and the Everyday: Popular Entertainment and the Circle of Erik Satie*. Oxford: New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1991,81.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*,81.

<sup>10</sup>Harding, James. *Erik Satie*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1975,34.

Figure 1 Satie, Erik, Volta, Ornella, and Melville, Antony. *A Mammal's Notebook: Collected Writings of Erik Satie*. Atlas Arkhive; 5. London: Atlas Press, 1996,168



In his *Memoirs of an Amnesic - What I am*, Satie jokingly described himself as a “phonometrographer” instead of a musician, and he had weighed music of Beethoven and Verdi by his phonometer. Satie also stated, by using his phonoscope, a normal F sharp could weigh ninety-three kilograms, and he swore he never saw anything as revolting as a middling-size B flat.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup>Satie, Erik, Volta, Ornella, and Melville, Antony. *A Mammal's Notebook: Collected Writings of Erik Satie*. Atlas Arkhive; 5. London: Atlas Press, 1996, 101

## **Satie's parody in music**

Satie's use of parody in his humorous piano suites may trace back to the time he was working as a pianist in cabarets, where the song performances often employed the form of parody, rewording the text of a familiar song to make humorous comments on some issues or subjects. Satie's parody technique might have been learned mostly from Vincent Hypsa (1865-1938), for whom he worked as an accompanist in cabarets. Hypsa, as a cabaret chansonnier, was best known for his parody of familiar songs, and his songs for parody were various: from children's songs, military songs, well-known sections from operas, and so on.<sup>12</sup> Hypsa's songs with parody of well-known music sections allowed his audiences to hear both the original and reworded texts simultaneously, creating an effect that can be called "intertextual dialogue."<sup>13</sup> Inspired by Hypsa, Satie transferred the parody techniques in his humorous piano suites. Most sources for his musical parodies fall into two categories: familiar instrumental pieces which allow audiences to relate original and arranged versions, and well-known songs for audiences to associate pre-existing texts in both original and newly composed melodies.<sup>14</sup>

### ***Croquis et agaceries d'un gros bonhomme en bois* (Sketches and Flirtation of a Fat Wooden Man)**

The suite's title, with its incongruous humor, may have been inspired by Alias' humor and probably refers to Satie himself. "*Bonhomme en bois*" refers to a street of Satie's hometown, Honfleur, which is called *rue de l'Homme-de-bois* (Man-of-wood street).<sup>15</sup> Besides, in the journal

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<sup>12</sup> Whiting, Steven Moore. *Satie the Bohemian: From Cabaret to Concert Hall*. Oxford Monographs on Music. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999,354.

<sup>13</sup>Hare, Belva Jean. *The Uses and Aesthetics of Musical Borrowing in Erik Satie's Humorous Piano Suites, 1913-1917*. Degree of Doctor of Philosophy. University of Texas Austin, 29

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 30

<sup>15</sup>Whiting, Steven Moore. *Satie the Bohemian: From Cabaret to Concert Hall*. Oxford Monographs on Music. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999,378



of *Chat Noir* of February 1889, Satie had been described as a composer with a “head of wood” in the advertisement of his piano work, *Orgives*.<sup>16</sup> The suite contains three pieces, and none of have any programmatic connection with the others.

### 1. *Tyrolienne turque* (Turkish tyrol)

The first piece *Tyrolienne turque* is written in ternary form (ABA). The outer sections feature a singing style called yodeling, where the head-voice (high pitch) and chest-voice (low pitch) are rapidly alternated by singer, and Satie imitated the singing style by wide leaps between notes in melodies (see lines 3-4 of Example 5). After the annotation “*Dans le gosier*” (In the throat) (line 2), the later annotation “*Un peu chaud*” (A bit warm) (line 3) might describe the tone color of singing, which Satie later replaced the “*Un peu chaud*” (A bit warm) with “*Peu saignant*” (Slightly bloody) in the same melody (line 12) of second A section, making a comic contrast with the interpretation of tone colors (see Example 5 and 6).

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 92-93.

Example 5 *Croquis et agaceries d'un gros bonhomme en bois, "Tyrolienne turque,"* lines 1-4

Line 1 *p* Avec precaution et lent

Line 2 Dans le gosier (In the throat)

Line 3 Un peu chaud (A bit warm)

Line 4

Example 6 *Croquis et agaceries d'un gros bonhomme en bois, "Tyrolienne turque,"* line 12

Line 12

peu saignant (Slightly bloody)

In lines 5-6, there is an introduced phrase with the eccentric annotation “*Du bout des yeux et retenu d’avance*” (with the tip of eyes and held back in advance) before the music goes to the middle section, which seems like a preparation for the incoming surprise of middle section (see

Example 7). The middle section (lines 6-9) is the most humorous part of the suite. It is the parody of Mozart's third strain of *Rondo alla Turca* from keyboard sonata KV 331 (see Example 7 and 8). Though the beginning of this section is noted "*Très Turc*" (Very Turkish) (line 6), the melody of Mozart's *Rondo alla Turca* is ironically disguised so that it can only be recognized through its accents. First, the meter changes from the original duple meter to triple meter. Second, the original tempo of Mozart's is in *Allegretto*, but Satie's marking is "*Beaucoup d'expression et plus lent*" (very expressively and slower). Third, the melody's original tonal harmonies are replaced by dissonant chords.

Example 7 *Croquis et agaceries d'un gros bonhomme en bois*, "Tyrolienne turque," lines 5-9

Second half of Line 5

1 Du bout des yeux et retenu d'avance  
(From the end of the eyes and held back beforehand)

13 Beaucoup d'expression et plus lent  
(Very expressively and slower)

Line 6 Très turc  
(Very Turkish)

Line 7

Line 8

Line 9

Example 8 Mozart- *Rondo Alla Turca* from sonata KV 331, mm. 21-28

## 2. *Danse Maigre -- à la manière de ces messieurs* (Skinny Dance --in the style of these men)

The word “*Maigre*” (Skinny) in the title of this piece presents an ironic contradiction to the word “*gros*” (fat) in the suite’s title. Mutual parody is common in the cabaret poets that one single work might parody from mutual works<sup>17</sup>, and Satie might have used the ideal for this musical title. The title has been suggested as a pun of Cyril Scott’s (1878-1970) musical work *Danse nègre* and its subtitle may allude to the Ravel’s two pieces *À la manière de Borodine* and *À la manière de Chabrier*.<sup>18</sup>

Though Satie parodied the musical title, the music itself is one of the few humoristic pieces composed without obvious borrowing of sources. This piece is through-composed with many musical ideas being combined together, and only one is literally repeated; the melody with the annotation “*Sans rougir du doigt*” (without blushing) (line 4) is repeated in the final (line 13). According to Whiting, Satie might have written this piece by “his tried-and true method of motivic assemblage.”<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.,380.

<sup>18</sup>Gillmor, Alan M. *Erik Satie*. Twayne's Music Series. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988,164-165.

<sup>19</sup>Whiting, Steven Moore. *Satie the Bohemian: From Cabaret to Concert Hall*. Oxford Monographs on Music.

As usual with most of other humorous suites, eccentric annotations are sprinkled liberally throughout the piece. Probably, the most humorous part in this piece are these performance annotations. Some of them are exaggeratedly polite, such as the beginning “*Assez lent, si vous le voulez bien*” (Rather slow, if it’s all right with you ), “*En dehors, n’est-ce pas*” (Outside – all right) (line 6), “*Plein de subtilite, si vous m’en croyez*” (Full of subtlety, if you want to believe me) (line 9), and “*Sans bruit croyez-moi encore*” (No noise, believe me once more) (line 10). With Satie’s nickname “Velvet Gentleman,” the “*Sur du velours jauni*” (On yellowing velvet) (line 8) might be Satie’s self-deprecation about his velvet suits.

### 3. *Españaña*

This piece mainly parodies Emmanuel Chabrier’s (1841-1894) famous orchestral rhapsody *España* (Spain). Whiting assumes that the beginning annotation “*Sorte de Valse*” (A kind of Waltz) is influenced by Emile Waldteufel’s (1837-1915) Op. 236 *España Waltzes*, which was composed based on Chabrier’s *España*.<sup>20</sup> Satie quoted two themes from Chabrier’s *España*. First, in lines 9-10 of left hand, Satie quoted the trombone’s soli of mm. 218-221 (see Example 9). The meter changes from 3/8 to 3/4. He also added accents on the downbeats with the funny annotation “*N’est-ce pas l’Alcade*” (Isn’t it the Alcade), which Whiting describes as “a mock-naïve question.”<sup>21</sup>

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Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999,380.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.,381.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 382

Example 9 Chabriers's *España*, mm. 218-221 ; *Croquis et agaceries d'un gros bonhomme en bois*, "Españaña," lines 9-10

Second, Satie quoted twice of primary melodic figure of *España* and one of which can be found in the mm. 29-30 (see Example 10). The first time was quoted in line 11 with dissonant bitonal harmonization, where the annotation “*Plaza Clichy*” references the location of the fantastic *Montmartre* district. The second time was quoted in line 13 with Chabrier’s original harmonization, where the annotation “*Rue de Madrid*” refers to the former address of the Paris Conservatory in 1911. Gillmor states that the original harmonization used by Satie might present his respect on Paris Conservatory.<sup>22</sup> However, Satie dropped out from Paris Conservatory. Therefore, Whiting assumes Satie satirically praised this institution by using harmonic banality.<sup>23</sup> Besides, the primary rhythmic motive ♩ ♩ of Chabrier’s *España* is frequently shown as ♩ ♩ throughout Satie’s *Españaña*.

<sup>22</sup>Gillmor, Alan M. *Erik Satie*. Twayne's Music Series. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988,165.

<sup>23</sup>Whiting, Steven Moore. *Satie the Bohemian: From Cabaret to Concert Hall*. Oxford Monographs on Music. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999,382.

Example 10 Chabrier's *España*, mm. 29-30 ; *Croquis et agaceries d'un gros bonhomme en bois*, "Españaña," line 11 and line 13

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Bassoon Solo, Viola, and Cello. The Bassoon part is in the upper staff, marked *mf* and *leggiero con gusto*. The Viola part is in the middle staff, marked *mf* and *marcato*. The Cello part is in the lower staff, marked *pizz.*. Below the score are two examples of Satie's annotations: "Plaza Clichy" and "Rue de Madrid". The first example is labeled "Satie, line 11" and the second is labeled "Satie, line 13".

Humorously, not only are the quoted melodies borrowed from Chabrier's *España* (Spain), but some of Satie's annotations also make reference to Spanish culture. The "Comme à Séville" (As in Seville) (line 3), "La belle Carmen et le peluquero" (Beautiful Carmen and the hairdresser) (line 4), and "les cigarieres" (The women in the cigar factory) (line 14) refer to the Bizet's famous opera *Carmen*, whose story is set in *Seville*, Spain. Satie also used Spanish in his annotations such as "Puerta Maillot" (Porte Maillot) (line 6) and "à la disposition de Usted" (As you like) (line 16).

### ***Chapitres tournés en tous sens (Chapters turned every which way)***

This suite contains three movements, and like the suite *Croquis et agaceries d'un gros bonhomme en bois*, the title of each movement does not have any programmatical connection

with the other movement titles.

### 1. *Celle qui parle trop* (The women who talks to much)

This piece describes a dialogue between a woman and her husband. The loquacious woman is represented by rapidly repeating tonal triplets (see Example 11), where the triplet motif is continuously played through the whole piece from the beginning to the last line before the final coda.

Example 11 *Chapitres tournés en tous sens*, “*Celle qui parle trop*,” line 1  
*Marques d’impatience du pauvre mari.*  
 (Signs of impatience from the wretched husband)

Vif

*p lié* Laissez moi parler  
 (Let me speak)

As expected with Satie’s eccentric humor, some contents from the women’s chatting are trivial but peculiar, such as “*j’ai envie d’un chapeau en acajou massif*” (I want a hat in solid mahogany) (line 3) and “*Madame Chose à un parapluie en os*” (Mrs. Thing has an umbrella in bone) (line 5). However, her husband shows his impatience by sporadic dissonant interjections throughout the whole piece (see Example 11). He also reacts to his wife with a tonal melody quoted from the first act of Aime’s Maillart’s (1817-1871) comic opera *Les Dragons de villars* (see Example 12). Satie quoted this well-known melody because its original text from the opera is “*Ne parle pas, Rose, je t’en supplie*” (Do not speak, Rose, I beg you), an association his Parisian audiences probably recognized immediately. Ironically, the original text in the opera is presented as a dramatic romance, but Satie arranged this melody as a “complaining” tonal



melody from a husband to his wife in ordinary life.<sup>24</sup>

Example 12 Maillart's "Ne parle pas, Rose, je t'en supplie" from *Les Dragons de Villars* (1586), act 1, mm. 1-3; *Chapitres tournés en tous sens*, "Celle qui parle trop," lines 3-4

Maillart

Très lié, avec beaucoup d'expression et de mystère.  
And.<sup>no</sup> sans lenteur.

Ne par-le pas, Rose, je t'en sup=plie - e!

The image shows a single staff of music in a treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The tempo and performance instructions are 'And.<sup>no</sup> sans lenteur.' and 'Très lié, avec beaucoup d'expression et de mystère.' The melody consists of a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, with a final note tied to the next line. The lyrics are 'Ne par-le pas, Rose, je t'en sup=plie - e!'.

Le pauvre mari (*son thème*)  
(The poor husband [*his theme*])  
8<sup>va</sup> pour la main droite seulement .....  
in G<sup>1</sup>

Satie Line 3-4

J'ai envie d'un chapeau en acajou massif  
(I want a hat in solid mahogany)

The image shows two staves of music. The top staff is in a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. It features a melodic line with various rhythmic values and a dynamic marking of 'f'. The lyrics are 'J'ai envie d'un chapeau en acajou massif'. The bottom staff is a grand staff with a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). It contains a bass line that mirrors the melody of the top staff. The lyrics '(I want a hat in solid mahogany)' are written below the bass staff.

This husband's melody is quoted four times in the piece. The second time in lines 6-7 is the most dramatic one, which is presented in octaves in the left hand with the dynamic marking *f*. However, his wife seems to ignore her husband's complaining and even strengthens her chatting momentarily by changing her triplet motif from tonal to whole tone scale in line 9 (see Example 13).

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 383-385.

Example 13 *Chapitres tournés en tous sens*, “*Celle qui parle trop*,” lines 6-7 and 9

Line 6

Line 7

Line 9  
whole tone

The last time is in the piece’s final cadence, marked *pp*, where the fast triplet motif finally stops. However, regarding the poor husband, Satie marked “*le mari se meurt d’épuisement*” (the husband dies from exhaustion) (see Example 14).

Example 14 *Chapitres tournés en tous sens*, “*Celle qui parle trop*,” lines 14

Le mari se meurt d’épuisement  
(The husband dies from exhaustion)

Arrêt

Line 14

*Lent (très)*

*pp* en un pauvre souffle  
(in a meager puff)

## 2. *Le porteur de grosses pierres* (The man who carries large stone)

The slow piece portrays a strong man pretending to carry an enormous heavy-looking rock (a pumice stone nevertheless) to amuse his audience. Satie provided a scene-setting text on the music score:

*Il les porte sur le dos. Son air est narquois et rempli de certitude. Sa force étonne les petits enfants. Nous le voyons alors qu'il transporte une pierre énorme, cent fois plus grosse que lui. (C'est une pierre ponce)*

[He carries them on his back. He is sly and self-confident. His strength astonishes little children. We see him carrying an enormous rock, a hundred times his size] (*It is a pumice stone.*)]<sup>25</sup>

Satie borrowed the musical source from the Robert Planquette's (1848-1903) operetta *Rip*, which was a well-known operetta at that time in France. The quoted melody is from the act 1 of the choral refrain to Rip's aria in praise of sloth.<sup>26</sup> Satie quoted the melody three times: line 1 in B flat major, line 4 to first notes of line 5 in F major, and lines 8-9 in G major, with its individual annotations "*Avec beaucoup de mal*" (Very painfully), "*En traînant les jambes*" (Dragging his legs), and "*Il sent que la pierre lui échappe: elle va tomber*" (He feels the rock slipping: it is going to fall). However, the original text of this melody from the operetta implies the real weight of the pumice stone: "*C'est un rien un souffle, un rien, Une boucle d'or sous le vent légère*" (It's nothing, a puff of air, nothing at all, a lock of golden hair in a light breeze) (see Example 15).

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<sup>25</sup>Satie, Erik. *Piano Music of Erik Satie*. Paris, New York: Éditions M. Eschig; Sole Selling Agent: Associated Music Publishers, 1971,34

<sup>26</sup>Whiting, Steven Moore. *Satie the Bohemian: From Cabaret to Concert Hall*. Oxford Monographs on Music. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999,385.

Example 15 Planquette's "C'est un rien, un souffle, un rien" from *Rip ; Chapitres tournés en tous sens*, "Le porteur de grosses pierres," lines 1, 4-5, and 8-9

Planquette *Piu mosso.* *stent.*

C'est un rien un souffle, un rien u-ne boucle d'or sous le vent —lé-gè-re

Satie *Très lent*

Line 1 *Avec beaucoup de mal*  
*pp* (Very pain(ull)ly)

Line 4 - first notes of Line 5

*En trainant les jambes*  
(Dragging his legs)

Line 8-9

*Il sent que la pierre lui échappe: elle va tomber*  
*pp* (He feels the rock slipping: it's going to fall)

Outside of the quoted main melodies, there are long threads of semiquavers with irregularly placed fermatas to portrait the annotation of the strongman's pretended walking "Péniblement et par à coups" (Painfully and haltingly) (see Example 16).

Example 16 *Chapitres tournés en tous sens*, “Le porteur de grosses pierres,” lines 2-3

Line  
2-3

*Péniblement et par à coups*  
*pp* (Painfully and haltingly)

Probably, the most dramatic part in the music is its ending, where the rock finally falls. It is a dissonant chord, superimposed augmented triads on D and E, with the dynamic marking *ff* and an accent, and with the annotation *Ça y est: elle tombe* (There it goes: it falls) (see Example 17).

Example 17 *Chapitres tournés en tous sens*, “Le porteur de grosses pierres,” line 9

*Ça y est: elle tombe*  
*ff* > (There it goes: it falls)

### 3. *Regrets des Enfermés (Jonas et Latude) (Lament of Confined) [Jonas and Latude]*

The music title refers to Jonas and Latude, two men eager to be free from prison. In Old Testament, Jonas is a prophet who is trapped in a whale's stomach for whole three days because of his offense to God. Jean Henri Latude (1725-1805), was a French writer who was incarcerated for around thirty-five years for displeasing Louis XV's mistress, known as Madame de Pompadour, and was repeatedly failed to escape from prisons.<sup>27</sup> The annotations in this piece refer to the similar situation of the two men such as "*Ils sont assis dans l'ombre*" (They are seated in the shade) (line 2) and "*Ils ne pensent qu'a sortir*" (They can only think of getting out)(line 16).

Satie mocked innocence through the parody of a French Children's song "*Nous n'irons plus au bois*" (we will not go to the wood) in this bitter piece associated imprisoned men. This piece begins with a repeated four-notes motif in C major in left hand, which is given a bitter sound by being accompanied by augmented fourths in the right hand. This motif is from the song's beginning four notes and its original text was "*Nous n'irons plus*" (We will not go) (see Example 18).

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<sup>27</sup>Gillmor, Alan M. *Erik Satie*. Twayne's Music Series. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988,168.

Example 18 “*Nous n’irons plus au bois*”; *Chapitres tournés en tous sens*, “*Regrets des Enfermés* (Jonas et Latude),” line 1

**Allegretto.**

Nous n'irons plus au bois, Les lauriers sont coupés. La belle  
que voi-là, La lairons nous dan-ser? En-trez dans la dan-se,  
Vo-yez comm'on dan-se, Sau-tez, dan-sez, Embrassez qui vous voudrez.

**Soyez modéré**  
(Be moderate)

Line 1

The main melody is first presented in lines 3-4, which parodies the song’s beginning phrase “*Nous n’irons plus au bois, | Les lauriers sont coupés*” (We will not go to the wood anymore, | The laurels are cut) (see Example 18 and 19). This melody’s bitonal setting evokes a sense of depression; the melody itself is in A minor, but the harmony moves from C major to F sharp minor.



Example 19 *Chapitres tournés en tous sens*, “*Regrets des Enfermés* (Jonas et Latude),” line 3-4

Line 3-4

In the rest of the piece, the repeated four notes motif appear three times (lines 4-5, 7 with motif in inversion, 11-12) with different intervallic accompaniments, and the quoted melody is presented bitonally four times (lines 6, 8, 9, 16-17). In lines 12-13, the melody and the repeated four-notes motif are presented together contrapuntally. There is an interesting point in the line 15. It is a hopeful ascending melody in G major, marked crescendo and *f*, with the annotation “*Il leur semble qu'ils voient le bon vieux soleil*” (It seems to them that they see the good old sun). However, this beautiful hope is immediately cancelled by a chromatic descent marked *pp* (see Example 20).

Example 20 *Chapitres tournés en tous sens*, “*Regrets des Enfermés* (Jonas et Latude),” line 15

Il leur semble qu'ils voient le bon vieux soleil  
(It seems to them that they see the good old sun)



## *Embryons desséchés* (Dry embryos)

About the *Embryons desséchés*, Satie described “This work is absolutely incomprehensible, even to me. Its singular profundity still astonishes me.”<sup>28</sup> The composition contains three movements, in which, Satie embraced the mock-formal spirit of the *Chat Noir*. He gave each title a formal name of invertebrate sea-creature and its definition.

### 1. d’ Holothurie (Of the Holothurian)

Whiting provided the definition of Holothurian from *Oxford English Dictionary*. It is amusing while comparing Satie’s version.

*OED*: An animal belonging to the division of Echinoderms, of which Holothuria is the typical genus; they have an elongated form, a tough, leathery integument, and a ring of tentacles around the mouth; a sea-slug, sea-cucumber, or trepang.

Satie: Ignorant people call it the ‘Sea-cucumber’. The Holothuria creeps upon stones or masses of rock. Like the cat, this marine animal purrs; moreover, it spins a dripping thread. They play of light seems to make him uncomfortable. I observed an Holothuria in the bay of Saint-Malo.<sup>29</sup>

From Satie’s definition, Satie might imply the sea cucumber represents himself because Satie hates the Sun. The “bay of Saint-Malo” refers to the piece’s only borrowing source, *Mon rocher de Saint-Malo* (My rock of Saint-Malo), which was a popular song from the 19<sup>th</sup> century by French composer, Loïsa Puget (1810-1889), with text by her husband, Gustave Lemoine (1802–1885). The original text from the song describes a young man who rejects a captain’s invitation to a sea-faring life because he wants to stay in his beloved home, built on a rocky

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<sup>28</sup>Whiting, Steven Moore. *Satie the Bohemian: From Cabaret to Concert Hall*. Oxford Monographs on Music. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999,368.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 368.

promontory on the Breton coast. In the piece, the lines 4-6 and lines 17-18 may be the most often mentioned parts due to its annotations, where, Satie parodied Puget's two phrases "*À tout je préfère le toit de ma mère*" (More than anything else I prefer my mother's home) and "*le toit de ma mère mon rocher de Saint Malo*" (I prefer my mother's home, my rock of Saint-Malo) twice with the annotations "*Quel joli rocher*" (What a nice rock) and "*C'était un bien joli rocher! Bien gluant!*" (It was a fine rock! Nice and sticky) (see Example 21).

Example 21 *Mon Rocher de Saint Malo*, mm.1-15 *Embryons desséchés*, "d'*Holothurie*," lines 4-6, 17-18

Puget (vocal melody)

A tout je pré - fê - re le toit de ma mè - re, mon ro - cher de  
 Saint Ma - lo, que l'on voit sur l'eau; à tout je pré - fê - re le toit de ma  
 mè - re mon ro - cher de Saint Ma - lo, que l'on voit sur

Quel joli rocher!  
 (What a beautiful rock!)

Line 4-6

C'était un bien joli rocher! bien gluant!  
 (It was a fine rock! Nice and sticky!)

Line 17-18

Most annotations and melodies on this piece present the sea cucumber’s purring (happy mood) on praising of the rainy day and the nice rock. Only the middle section of lines 10-12 present the negative yet comic side that Satie marked “*Comme un rossignol qui aurait mal aux dents*” (Like a nightingale with a toothache). The grandiose coda section might be part of Satie’s joke to mock the majestic and “endless” closing coda sections that appeared commonly in many works of the romantic period (see Example 22).

Example 22 “*d’Holothurie*,” *Embryons desséchés*, coda

The image shows a musical score for the coda of "d'Holothurie" from Satie's "Embryons desséchés". It consists of two systems of music on a grand staff. The first system is labeled "Coda" and "Grandiose" and features a melody with a "7" above it. The second system is labeled "De votre mieux" and "(Do your best)" and also features a melody with a "7" above it. The date "30 Juin 1913" is printed at the bottom right of the score.

The musical form of this piece is interesting. Belva Jean Hare provides the table of the form of *d’Holothurie* and states the piece was written in “pseudo-sonata” form by Satie.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup>Hare, Belva Jean. *The Uses and Aesthetics of Musical Borrowing in Erik Satie's Humorous Piano Suites, 1913-1917*. Degree of Doctor of Philosophy. University of Texas Austin, 50.

Table 1 form of *d' Holothurie*

<b>Formal Section (&amp; Line numbers)</b>	<b>Key</b>
Exposition FT (1-3)	C
ST (4-7)	G
“Development” (7-10)	A
Retransition (10-12)	C,G
Recapitulation FT (13-16)	C
ST (17-19)	
KT (20-22)	G & c
Coda	G

## 2. *d' Edriophthalma* (Of the *Edriophthalma*)

The *Edriophthalma*, known as *Arthrostraca*, are defined by Satie

Crustaceans with fixed eyes, that is to say, without stalks and immobile. Very sad by nature, these crustaceans live, withdrawn from the world, in holes dug out of the cliff.<sup>31</sup>

About the definition, the “Very sad by nature” hints on the borrowed source - Chopin’s Funeral March from Sonata No.2 Op. 35. This piece, *d' Edriophthalma*, with its somber character is in ternary form. The B section (lines 4-6) is a famous melodic parody of the middle section from Chopin’s Funeral March. But here, Satie provided an unabashed misattribution. Instead of mentioning Chopin directly, he marked “*Citation de la célèbre mazurka de Schubert*” (Quote from Schubert’s famous mazurka). Ironically, Schubert never composed mazurkas, while Chopin is the famous composer for the mazurka genre. Hence, Satie might have hoped pianists

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<sup>31</sup> Satie, Erik. *Piano Music of Erik Satie*. Paris, New York: Éditions M. Eschig; Sole Selling Agent: Associated Music Publishers, 1971,53.

would understand his joke (see Example 23). Also, the dotted rhythm from both A sections is based on the rhythmic motive on Chopin's march section.

Example 23 *Embryons desséchés*, “d’Edriophthalma (Of the Edriophthalma),” lines 4-6; Chopin’s Funeral March, mm.31-38

The image displays two musical excerpts. The top excerpt is from Satie's *Embryons desséchés*, lines 4-6. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line includes the lyrics: "Ils se mettent tous à pleurer" (They all begin to cry), with a note that it is a citation of Schubert's mazurek. The piano part includes the lyrics: "Pauvres bêtes!" (Poor creatures!). A *Ralenti* marking is present in the piano part. The bottom excerpt is from Chopin's Funeral March, measures 31-38, showing a piano accompaniment with a prominent dotted rhythm.

Satie Line 4-6

*p* Ils se mettent tous à pleurer  
(They all begin to cry)  
(Citation de la célèbre mazurka de SCHUBERT)

Pauvres bêtes!  
(Poor creatures!)

*Ralenti*

Chopin mm.31-38

Most annotations in this piece describe the crustaceans' mourning, such as “*Que c'est triste*” (How sad it is) (line 1), “*Ils se mettent tous à pleurer*” (They all begin to cry) (line 4), and “*Grand gémissement*” (Big moan) (line 7).

### 3. *de Podophthalm (Of the Podophthalma)*”

The Podophthlma, a type of stalk-eyed crustaceans including crabs and lobsters, Satie defined as:

Crustaceans with eyes on movable stalks. They are skillful, tireless hunters. They are found in every seas. The meat of the Podophthalma is a delicacy.<sup>32</sup>

The music is probably based in ternary form with a majestic coda like *d'Holothurie*'s. The melodies of outer sections are more energetic to represent the crustaceans' hunting, and the middle section from lines 7-9 is more lyrical to charm the hunters' victory. The annotations of the pieces describe the crustaceans' hunting such as “*A la chasse*” (at the hunt) (line 1), and “*Poursuite*” (In pursuit) (line 3). The crustaceans' hunting seems to meet some trouble at lines 5-6, line 10, and line 13, where Satie marked “*Un conseiller*” (An advisor). The melodies of “*Un conseiller*” sections quote from “The Orangtan Song” from act 3 of Edmond Audran's (1840-1901) popular operetta, *La Mascotte*. Its original text is “*E n' tremblez donc pas comm'ca. On le rattappera*” (Hey, don't treble so; we'll catch it) (see Example 24).

Example 24 Audran: “*Chanson de l'Orang-Outang*” from *La Mascotte* (1880), act 3, refrain; “*de Podophthalm,*” *Embryons desséchés*, line 5-6, 10, and 13

Ténors *f* >

1-2 En n' tremblez donc pas comm'ça On le rattrap-pe, on le rattrappe  
3 Et la bell'di - sait tout bas; On n'm'y rattrappe, on n'm'y rattrappe

Basses *f* >

En n' tremblez donc pas comm'ça On le rat trap-pe-ra. —  
Et la bell'di - sait tout bas; On n'm'y rattrapp'ra pas. —

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 55.



Line 5-6 *Un conseiller* (An advisor)

*Il a raison!* (He's right!)

Line 10 *Le conseiller* (The advisor)

Line 13 *Le conseiller*  
(The advisor)

The musical score consists of three systems. The first system (lines 5-6) features a vocal line with lyrics 'Un conseiller (An advisor)' and a piano accompaniment. The second system (lines 7-9) features a vocal line with lyrics 'Il a raison! (He's right!)' and a piano accompaniment. The third system (lines 10-12) features a vocal line with lyrics 'Le conseiller (The advisor)' and a piano accompaniment. The fourth system (lines 13-14) features a vocal line with lyrics 'Le conseiller (The advisor)' and a piano accompaniment. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *p* and *mp*.

The charming B section may be inspired by a French hunting horn-calls used to celebrate the hunter's victory, where Satie marked "*Pour charmer le gibier*" (To charm the victim) (see Example 25).

Example 25 “de Podophthalam,” *Embryons desséchés*, line 7-9

Satie, Line 7-9

èt

*Plus lent*

*p* Pour charmer le gibier

(To charm the victim)

*Ralentir*

The grandiose coda section parodies the final cadence of Beethoven’s eighth symphony. It is the most comic part, because its musical style is extremely incongruous with the rest of the piece. Comparing the style and the subject of the whole piece, the coda section is presented with no justification, and it is musically unnecessary. However, Satie still added the coda in the piece and marked it “*Cadence Obligée*” (Compulsory Cadence) (see Example 26).



Example 26 “de Podophthalm,” *Embryons desséchés*, Coda; Piano condensed score of last movement of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 8 Op 93, mm.479-503

Cadence obligée (*de l'Auteur*)  
(Compulsory cadence [*the Author's*])

*ff*

4 Juillet 1913

## Chapter III

### *Trois petites pièces montées* (Three tiny layer cakes)

This work was composed by Satie in 1919. It is a diminutive suite including three short movements for piano duo, and Satie later arranged it for small orchestra. This musical work is based on chapters from the novel series *Gargantua and Pantagruel* by Francois Rabelais, a French master satirist and writer in the Renaissance. The story talks about the adventure of the giant Gargantua and his giant son Pantagruel. The text by the Rabelais is extravagant, satirical, funny, and with scatological humor. The original second movement, *Marche de Cocagne* (Cockaigne March), was a short fanfare-like march for two trumpets composed for a commission by Bertrand Guégan (1892-1943), who was a cookery historian. He asked Satie to set a poem to music for his annual publication, *L'Almanach de Cocagne pour 1920 - Dédie aux vrais Gourmands et aux Francs Buveurs* (Cockaigne Almanac 1920 - dedicated to true gourmets and serious drinkers), a book which combines recipes and writings on food and drink with works of art and music. Satie thought the deadline was too short for him, so he only composed this tiny fanfare-like march for two trumpets in November 1919. Its title, *Marche de Cocagne*, was inspired by the story of *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. This short march was later used as outer sections of the second movement of the *Trois petites pièces montées*. Satie later arranged this piano version for small orchestra for Jean Cocteau's (1889-1963) "Spectacle -Concert"<sup>33</sup> in 1920, which imitated a music-hall concert.<sup>34</sup> Other musicians in the same program included members of *Les Six*<sup>35</sup>, Darius Milhaud (1892-1974), Francis Poulenc (1899-1963), and Georges Auric

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<sup>33</sup> Gillmor, Alan M. *Erik Satie*. Twayne's Music Series. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988. 230.

<sup>34</sup>*OED*: "A form of variety entertainment popular in Britain from c.1850, consisting of singing, dancing, comedy, acrobatics, and novelty acts. Its popularity declined after the First World War with the rise of the cinema."

<sup>35</sup>Oxford reference: "The name given in 1920 by the critic Henri Collet (by analogy with the Russian Five) to Georges Auric, Louis Durey, Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud, Francis Poulenc, and Germaine Tailleferre."

(1899-1983).

Regarding the title *Trois petites pièces montées*, in French, the *pièces montées* is an edible center piece in banquet. It is a decorated dessert that could be a tiered cake, or *croquembouche*, which consists of round and custard-filled pastries piled up in the shape of cone bound together by caramelized sugar. This suite may express Satie's obsession with food. The suite is based on chapters from the novel that mainly revolve around food and drink. As a poor musician, Satie often experienced poverty and hunger. In the letter of 1899 May to his brother, Conrad, Satie mentioned "All this is no fun: for my part I'm getting completely fed up with it: an empty stomach, a parched throat, give me no pleasure whatsoever."<sup>36</sup> However, satisfying Satie's prodigious appetite was never easy. According to his brother, Satie could eat 150 oysters or a big omelette made of 30 eggs in one sitting.<sup>37</sup>

### **1. *De l'enfance de Pantagruel – Rêverie* (The Infancy of Pantagruel - Musing)**

The title, *De l'enfance de Pantagruel*, is from the Book 2, Chapter IV. It describes the childhood of the giant Baby, Pantagruel, who required the milk of 4600 cows at each meal and nearly devoured these cows until his attendants prevented this tragedy. One day, the Baby Pantagruel was chained to his cradle, and he was trying to escape from the cradle to join the royal banquet for a meal because everyone was busy for the banquet and forgot to take care of him. He tried to destroy the chain, but the chain was too strong for him. Finally, he carried the cradle on his back, and walked to the banquet, which Rabelais describes as "like a tortoise that

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<sup>36</sup>Satie, Erik, and Volta, Ornella. *Satie Seen through His Letters*. London; New York: M. Boyars, 1988,78.

<sup>37</sup>Orledge, Robert. *Satie the Composer*. Music in the Twentieth Century. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990,15.

crawls up against a wall.”<sup>38</sup> When his father, Gargantua, saw his son, he freed him and thought he was mature enough to sit with adults.

In this piece, it begins with an ostinato section from left hand in the first piano with the dynamic marking *pp* and the notation of “*très it is chanté*” (very sung), which contrasts with the main theme of mm.5-8 with the dynamic marking *mf* played by the second piano (see Example 27). This main theme, which the pianist Olof Höjer (1937) describes as “a heavy-footed, bloated quality in its movement pattern.”<sup>39</sup> It represents the wired yet comic scene of the baby giant Pantagruel’s walking “like a tortoise that crawls up against a wall,” giving us a heavy-footed feeling through the use of strong dynamics, lower register, and especially the use of tenuto staccato for the quarter notes (see second piano of Example 27).

Example 27 *Trois petites pièces montées*, “*De l’enfance de Pantagruel – Rêverie*,” first piano and second piano mm 1-8

The image displays a musical score for the first eight measures of 'De l'enfance de Pantagruel – Rêverie' from 'Trois petites pièces montées'. The score is written for two pianos, labeled 'PRIMO' and 'SECONDO'. The tempo is marked 'Modéré' and the time signature is 3/4. The first piano part (PRIMO) begins with a dynamic marking of *pp* and the instruction '*très chanté*'. The second piano part (SECONDO) features a main theme of quarter notes in the lower register, characterized by a heavy-footed quality. The score is presented in three systems, with the first system showing the PRIMO part and the second and third systems showing the SECONDO part.

<sup>38</sup><https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/r/rabelais/francois/r11g/index.html>. Rabelais, François, Thomas Urquhart, Peter Anthony Motteux, and Louis Chalon. *Five books of the lives, heroic deeds and sayings of Gargantua and his son Pantagruel*. From Book II, Chapter IV. Published by eBooks@Adelaide. Last updated, Dec. 17, 2014.

<sup>39</sup>Olof Höjer, notes to "Erik Satie: The Complete Piano Music, Vol. 6", Swedish Society Discofil, 1996.

Modéré

SECONDINO

4

mf

main there

A

The articulation of tenuto staccato is used through the piece to evoke a ponderous feeling. I was impressed by the mm. 20-23 of second piano; it is the right-hand melody in legato, which is syncopated by the repeated D notes marked tenuto staccato in left hand. Though the four measures were played in soft dynamic, the repeated D notes are like the cradle, dragging the baby Pantagruel's walking speed (see Example 28).

Example 28 *Trois petites pièces montées*, "De l'enfance de Pantagruel – Rêverie," second piano mm 20-23

p

24

## 2. *Marche de Cocagne* (Cockaigne March)

The genre of the march fanfare had been used as a call to dinner for luxurious banquets since the European Middle Ages. In contrast to the harshness of the medieval and renaissance peasant life, Cockaigne is an imaginary land of extreme luxury and idleness in medieval and renaissance literature. Gillmor described Cockaigne as:

the fabulous country of medieval French legend where the gutters run with wine and roast pigs prance through the street ready for the carver's knife alluded to by Rabelais in his depiction of a utopian country with mountains of better, river of milk, and hot pies shooting out of rich soil like mushrooms.<sup>40</sup>

Rabelais does not mention Cockaigne directly, but the land was hinted at in various points in this novel.

This piece is written in ternary form. The outer sections are Fanfare march, which contrasts to the soft middle section. In the orchestra, the opening is led by an energetic trumpet duet, while the middle section begins with strings marked "*très chanté*" (very song-like). Then the final section returns to the triumphant trumpet theme, but now played by most of the ensemble. Interestingly, the outer sections of this piece might be Satie's practice on Neoclassical style. It was written in Fanfare march with a modern sensibility where the music is fully chromatic with no key signature. Take example from the first A section of the second piano (see Example 29)

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<sup>40</sup>Gillmor, Alan M. *Erik Satie*. Twayne's Music Series. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988. 230

Example 29 *Trois petites pièces montées*, “*Marche de Cognac*,” Second piano mm1-8

The image shows the musical score for the second piano part of 'Marche de Cognac'. It is divided into three systems. The first system is labeled 'Temps de Marche' and starts with a forte 'f' dynamic. The second system continues the rhythmic pattern. The third system is labeled 'Retenir un peu' and concludes with a fermata. The notation includes treble and bass clefs, a common time signature, and various note values and accidentals.

### 3. *Jeux de Gargantua - Coin de Polka* (Gargantua's Games - Coin of Polka)

The title, *Jeux de Gargantua*, is from the Book 1, Chapter 23. The majority of this chapter lists 215 mostly nonsensical board games and card games, such as “Shit-in-his beard”, “Fat-arse”, and “At even or odd,”<sup>41</sup> played by the young Gargantua after meals, and playing these games made him sleepy and thirsty. Satie seemed to hide a jest in the suite, which irritated Cocteau. Milhaud might know Satie’s intentions of this suite. When Satie composed this suite, he wrote to Milhaud in the letter of 10 January

Come tomorrow, and... “Don't give anything away.” Not a word to ANYBODY, above all: “Don't give anything away.” SERIOUS.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup> <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/r/rabelais/francois/r11g/index.html>. Rabelais, François, Thomas Urquhart, Peter Anthony Motteux, and Louis Chalon. *Five books of the lives, heroic deeds and sayings of Gargantua and his son Pantagruel*. From Book I, Chapter 23. Published by eBooks@Adelaide. Last updated, Dec. 17, 2014

<sup>42</sup>Wilkins, Nigel. "ERIK SATIE'S LETTERS TO MILHAUD AND OTHERS." *The Musical Quarterly* 66, no. 3

Probably, the suite is the subject of this letter. Cocteau might have noticed Satie's jest because he later rejected to participate Satie's next musical project (Furniture music) on March of the same year, even though he had been interested in the project before Satie's invitation. Whiting suspects Satie's jest might hide in this concluding piece. He assumes this piece is "a caricature of Cocteau's whole enterprise"<sup>43</sup> of Cocteau's spectacle-concert given the use of heavy-handed instrumentation in the orchestra version (such as bassoon, trombone, and percussion), the musical title that immediately brings to listeners' minds the scatological games enjoyed by Gargantua, and the blatant use of popular *clichés*.

The lively melody of this polka is like the music we often hear in the circus or carnival that is very suitable to illustrate this chapter, *Gagantua's games*. The most comic and mysterious part in the piece might start from the section No.10, where Satie noted "*niaisement*" (foolishly). Whiting describes this musical section as "a ludicrous game of cat- and mouse between the clarinet and bassoon."<sup>44</sup> In the orchestra, there is the conversational melody between the clarinet and bassoon marked *p*. The beginning of the melody on the bassoon mimics the clarinet's melodic figure ♪ ♫, then at the No.11, the bassoon stops the imitation, playing his own melody. Later, this conversational melody is abruptly interrupted by trombones' playing four quarter notes marked "blow without attack" and *ff*. Then, the whole orchestra returns to the tempo I, giving this piece a brilliant ending. (see Example 30).

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(1980): 418-419.

<sup>43</sup>Whiting, Steven Moore. *Satie the Bohemian: From Cabaret to Concert Hall*. Oxford Monographs on Music. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, 499.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.



Example 30 *Trois petites pièces montées*, “*Jeux de Gargantua - Coin de Polka*”, No 10- end

The image shows a musical score for three pieces. The first piece, numbered 10, is titled "Même mouvement" and features a Clarinet (Cl.) and Bassoon (B♭on) part. Both parts are marked *p* *riaisement*. The second piece, numbered 11, also features Cl. and B♭on parts, with the Cl. part marked *p* and the instruction "Ralentir" above the staff. The third piece, numbered 12, is marked "Ralentir" and includes a full orchestral ensemble: Flute (Fl.), Horn (Htb.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (B♭on), Cor (Cor), Trumpet (Trp.), Trombone (Trb.), and Percussion (Ta. and G.C. et Cymb.). The Fl., Cl., B♭on, Cor, and Trp. parts are marked *ff*. The Trb. part is marked *f* and includes the instruction "soufflez sans attaque". The Percussion parts are marked *dr* and *sec*. The G.C. et Cymb. part is marked *ff*. The instruction "Au temps" is placed above the percussion parts.

In the piano version, this conversational melody, from mm.42, is exchanged by the piano duo, and Satie also marks “Plus lent” to slow down this section (see Example 31).

Example 31 *Trois petites pièces montées*, “Jeux de Gargantua - Coin de Polka”, piano duo, mm. 42-63

*Plus lent  
naisement*

First piano

Second Piano

*And libitum  
mais tres volenti*

*Au Temps*

## Conclusion

By learning these pieces, I gained further insights on how to perform them. When pianists perform the duet *En habit de cheval*, I suggest tasteful use of the pedals to create various tone colors and contrasting dynamics. Also, while playing, both pianists might feel crowded on the keyboard; when pianists play some phrases, the right hand of second piano and the left hand of first piano often touch each other, disturbing each other's playing. So, both pianists should coordinate carefully about key positions; one pianist might play with a higher hand position on the keys, so the other pianist can have space to play on the middle to lower positions of keys (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 Photo of hands intersecting with my duet partner, 12/2019



By examining Satie's humorous suites, I find these pieces are not technically difficult, but pianists need to be able to create various tone colors and be equipped with enough imagination to express each piece's annotations or its inspired story to make the music engaging. Because these pieces were written without barlines, use of tempo rubato is important in order to execute Satie's annotations. For example, there is a musical phrase with the annotation "*Continuez*" (Go on) in

line 8 of *Danse Maigre -- à la manière de ces messieurs*. I interpret this phrase by playing with an *accelerando* to fit the annotation. Also, while playing Satie's parodic works, pianists should know the original melodies and texts that are quoted to be clear about what sound they want to make to express Satie's annotations.

When playing the duet *Trois petites pièces montées*, both pianists also need to coordinate well on the key positions. Also, in addition to knowing the duet's inspired story, pianists listening to the orchestra version can help themselves to discover a greater variety of tone colors.

The piano music of Erik Satie is exciting and interesting for both pianists and audiences. I hope that this research helps to encourage a deeper understanding and appreciation for his work.

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