**Redefining the Kodak Moment: Photomontage and Dada in the European Musical Avant-Garde**

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**Abstract**

In 1917 Jean Cocteau premiered the ballet *Parade* resulting in a new Avant-Garde musical aesthetic derived from everyday, banal imagery. Taking cues from Dadaist photomontage, Cocteau and Francis Poulenc continued this photographic inclination, developing their own movement within the Avant-Garde parallel to the more well-known Schoenberg-led narrative. Changing the way that music means rather than the way it sounds, Cocteau's introduction of the "anti-Wagner aesthetics of banality" undermines semantic meaning through the excision, juxtaposition, and re/decontextualization of musical signs. In this thesis, I use photomontage as a lens to examine three works: *Parade* (1917), *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel* (1921), and *Le Bal Masqué* (1932). In doing so, I center these artists previously relegated to the fringes of musicological discourse, and reveal the significance of their work as foundational contributors to the 20th century musical Avant-Garde at the crossroads of both music and visual arts.

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## Introduction: The Eastman-Kodak School of Avant-Garde Music

In 1888, Eastman Kodak Co. introduced photography to the global mass market with the development of roll film and the Kodak No.1 box camera. The immediate adoption of photography by the general public as both a new hobby and a way to document their lives created the genre of snapshot photos, also known as a "Kodak Moment." Characterized by the informal composition of untrained amateurs, the snapshot is defined by the spontaneous capturing of common scenes with little or no prearrangement. In contrast to formal portraiture which required extended exposures and still subjects, snapshots were perceived as having a greater level of authenticity which contributed to photography's already established reputation as an objective recreation of reality. In actuality, of course, snapshot photography is just as subjective as any other artistic medium and just as predisposed to the same manipulations.

As I explore in what follows, photography was useful to the Avant-Garde for the way that it could manipulate reality and distort sign-signifier relations. Primarily associated with the Dadaist movement, artists utilized photography for its effectiveness in carrying out social, political, and artistic critique through the juxtaposition of photography with advertisement, print, and political imagery; this form of collage came to be known as Photomontage. By cutting and pasting images out of their original contexts and juxtaposing them, the signs contained within the images are no longer contextualized thus forcefully removing their meaning-making capabilities.

With particular significance for what follows, the artists utilizing these popular elements continually described their work as "banal." Rather than being used as a pejorative term the artists and musicians transformed the adjective "banal" into a purposeful aesthetic choice to critique the frivolous excess, hypocrisy, and ideology of high art. Choosing to instead focus on the unrefined, by utilizing commonplace items, and  scenes, the subjects of banal works centered

around the everyday happening with materials as unremarkable as the casual snapshot style of photography that inspired it.

The rise of the unrefined artist in photography at the turn of the century corresponds with similar developments during and after the war with musicians. Young composers and musicians either had to cut their training short or lacked the ability to receive training all together. This caused a disconnect between the older musical establishment and the new artists who were set up for failure. Rightfully embittered by the vulnerable position in which they were put, young composers turned away from the high arts and instead to a comparable engagement with the same banal materials contemporaneously adopted by Dada.

Central to my argument is the introduction of banality in photomontage and similar visual techniques to the Parisian musical sphere by Jean Cocteau which were utilized in pieces he created in collaboration with contemporary musicians and artists. Cocteau began his experimentation with musical photomontage in *Parade* (1917), a ballet created in collaboration with Erik Satie and Pablo Picasso. Cocteau collaborated again with *Les Six* (minus Louis Durey) in 1921 for the genre-defying production *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel* utilizing a wide array of nonsensical visuals to accompany the equally nonsensical plot, including a large prop camera that summoned forth a myriad of random characters, animals, and props on to the stage. Despite ultimately disliking *Les Mariés,* former member of *Les Six*, Francis Poulenc, would go on to produce several photomontage-informed works. The secular oratorio *Le Bal Masqué* (1932) in particular was deeply influenced by his earlier work with Cocteau citing inspiration from photographs, albums, and "the color prints of crimes in the *Petit Parisien.*"[1]

Within the framework of the following examination of these works, photomontage is

[1] Francis Poulenc, *Diary of my Songs,* trans. Winifred Radford. (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1985) 61.

used as a metaphor for a critical re-evaluation of the popular model of musical modernism. The current notion of modernism maintains Arnold Schoenberg as the figurehead with atonal, serial, and non-triadic syntax being the primary mode of composition; The narrative of Cocteau-led musical Avant-Garde has been little recognized. Yet, even when it is, it is reduced to a passing Surrealist preoccupation specific to Cocteau and Poulenc rather than a larger, foundational Avant-Garde manifestation of a crisis of arts and experience. Redefining what music means rather than how it sounds, the semantic subversion within these works allowed them to exist and still yet remain at the margins of musical output. As such, I seek to center Cocteau and Poulenc within the definition of the Avant-Garde as equally foundational contributors to the 20th century musical Avant-Garde rather than extraneous contemporaries.

## Chapter 1: Say Cheese

Eastman Kodak redefined the photographic process in 1888 by making photography, once an expensive process only for professionals and those with the means to hire them, into an affordable product for the general public by releasing the first successful roll film and the Kodak No.1 box camera. When George Eastman coined the original Kodak tagline "You press the button, we do the rest" in 1888, he meant that quite literally as Kodak provided internationally available development, printing, and film reloading services. This one of a kind service was available for the cost of about $10, a significant reduction from the typical price of about $5 per photo with earlier wet plate processes. Though at the time $10 was a significant amount of money, the equivalent to approximately $300 in 2024, the successful development of roll film by Eastman allowed these early cameras to capture 100 photos before the film needed to be replaced, slashing the cost of individual photos to a fraction of their previous price almost overnight.[2] The following years leading into the 20th century saw an even further reduction of Kodak film and camera costs with the introduction of the Brownie line of cameras in 1900 (Figure 1) selling for $1 each and as little as ten cents per roll of six frame film.[3] By removing the monetary and technical barriers to entry, Kodak significantly and permanently democratizing the photographic process.

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[2] Eastman Kodak Co."History: Photography: Bringing Photography to the Masses." *Kodak.com.* https://www.kodak.com/en/company/page/photography-history/. [Accessed 11/4/2024]; Eastman Kodak Co. "Kodak History: Building the Foundation." *Kodak.com*, March 2009 via Internet Archive WayBack Machine. http://www.kodak.com/US/en/corp/kodakHistory/buildingTheFoundation.shtml. [Accessed 11/4/2024].

[3] Eastman Kodak Co. Brownie Camera Ad in *Recreation* v.13. (6 July-Dec. 1900, p. xxiv. Harvard University's Ernst Mayr Library via Digital Public Library of America. Accessed 11/04/2024).

*Figure 1.* An Eastman Kodak Co. Brownie Camera Ad in Recreation v.13, 6 July-Dec. 1900, page xxiv. Via The Digital Public Library of America.

Because of the new found accessibility amateur photography was immediately integrated into important life events like weddings, graduations, and vacations. Family photo albums were constructed around narrative timelines enhanced by collages of snapshots, captions, and relevant magazine clippings. Readily adopted by the middle and working class, photography exploded in popularity with amateaur "Kodakers" starting their own clubs and hobby publications.[4] The concept of the snapshot photograph emerged from the nascent hobby culture of Kodak enthusiasts, with the term implying a quick, informal, and unrefined photo taken with little to no prearrangement. Snapshot culture stood in stark contrast to the public's previous conception of photography as a formal, expensive service reserved for the upper class.[5]

The nature of photography as an artistic medium was unique insofar as it was seen as authentic representations of reality. In 1903 semiotician Charles Sanders Peirce stated that "[p]hotographs, especially instantaneous photographs, are very instructive, because we know that they are in certain respects exactly like the objects they represent."[6] Photography as a medium was seen as a tool to objectively and authentically reproduce the photographic subject in its natural state. The photograph was a representation of the truth of the world now accessible to the layperson, rather than an interpreted reproduction created by the biased eye of the inaccurate artist. The snapshot image as reproduction of an unmanipulated, natural capturing of the banality of daily life plays into the perceived truthfulness of the photographic medium further by representing life as it supposedly is, not as it is staged to be when photography solely inhabited formal studio spaces.

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[4] Mia Fineman, "Kodak and the Rise of Amateaur Photography," *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History: The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, October 2004. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/kodk/hd_kodk.htm.
[5] Brian Coe, Paul Gates. *The Snapshot Photograph: The Rise of Popular Photography, 1888-1939.* (London: Ash & Grant, 1977. https://archive.org/details/snapshotphotogra0000coeb/page/n1/mode/2up) 9-10.
[6] Qtd in Brandon Pelcher, *Dada's Subject and Structure: Performing Ideology Poorly.* (Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2023) 107.

In addition to photography's ability to reproduce the world as captured by the eye, the nature of the photographic film negative allows photos to be reproduced again and again through print so long as the original negative still exists. In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" Walter Benjamin scrutinizes the nature of the "aura" or authenticity of a one-of-a-kind work of art. Defining a work's aura as "the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be [from the viewer]"[7] Benjamin argues that the unique essence of a work diminishes the more it is reproduced, this reproduction caused by "the desire of contemporary masses to bring things 'closer' spatially and humanly."[8] It is interesting to note that Benjamin asserts art is never separate from ritual function; first the rituals being religious in nature and then in service of aesthetics. Still, a ritual staging around photography persisted into the Kodak age. The continuation of previously necessary props turned redundant ornamentation became part of the photographic technique as Benjamin describes: "The accessories used in these portraits, the pedestals and balustrades and little oval tables, are still reminiscent of the period when, because of long exposure time, subjects had to be given supports so that they wouldn't move" the reasoning for inclusion being that they "were to be seen in famous paintings."[9]

Despite stating that photography "can endow any soup can with cosmic significance but cannot grasp a single one of the human connections in which it exists"[10] and vestiges of ritualized art persistently clinging on, Benjamin thought reproducible art such as photography was "the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual"[11] thus bringing works of art within reach to the layperson who otherwise would be barred from seeing it.

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[7] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." Trans. Harry Zohn. Ed. Hannah Arendt, (Schocken, Random House: 1998, Feb. 2005) 5.
[8] Benjamin, 5.
[9] Qtd. in Pelcher, 2023, 110.
[10] Qtd. in Pelcher, 2023, 111.
[11] Benjamin, 6.

Realizing photography's potential for exploitation, artists in the Avant-Garde milieu created new forms of collage to take advantage of this new medium. The photomontage technique of collage, initially created in the 1890's for design and advertising, is most closely associated with the Dadaist movement as a cornerstone technique in the new stage of photography's artistic evolution. In *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*, Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, and David Joselit described the Dadaists stance against Expressionism's universalizing of the human experience, politics, and spirituality as "a model of antiaesthetics; [...] Dada emphasized extreme forms of political secularization of artistic practice."[12] Artists like John Heartfield (b.Helmut Herzfeld) and George Grosz especially leaned into the political left with targets ranging from the covert with mild critique of anti-bourgeois high art aesthetics to the overt, taking aim at explicitly political imagery like propaganda (Figure 2).

[12] Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, David Joselit, *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism,* 3rd ed. (London: Thames & Hudson, 2016) 186.


*Figure 2: The Meaning of the Hitler Salute: Little Man Asks for Big Gifts,* one of many political photomontages Heartfield created for Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung.

The enmeshed nature of the wartime zeitgeist with commodity capitalism was one of the primary inspirations for photomontage. In a 1966 interview John Heartfield described the first photomontages he encountered as "postcards, that not only I but also and above all other soldiers often made to get their messages to relatives back home, covertly, so to speak."[13] In order to circumvent censorship during the First World War German soldiers and correspondents created collage postcards to communicate their intended messages to recipients at home. Wieland Herzfeld, brother to John Heartfield, recounts the absurd packages George Grosz would send to

[13] Qtd in Brigid Doherty, "Berlin" in *Dada: Zurich Berlin, Hannover, Cologne, New York, Paris.* Edited by Leah Dickerman:. (Washington, D.C.:National Gallery of Art, 2005) 94.

the frontlines with one in particular standing out due to the absurd message its contents communicated:

> [Grosz] had specialized in sending care-packages to annoy soldiers at the front[...] In late 1916, while I was stationed on the western front for the second time, I received one of his packages. [...] It contained two starched shirt fronts, one white and one with a floral pattern; a pair of black sleeve protectors; a dainty shoe horn; a set of assorted samples of tea, whose individual handwritten labels claimed that the teas would inspire "Patience," "Sweet Dreams," "Respect for Authority," and "Loyalty to the Royal Family." Haphazardly glued to a cardboard were advertisements for hernia belts, fraternal song books, and fortified dog food, labels from schnapps and wine bottles, photos from illustrated papers - all clipped at will and assembled absurdly.[14]

This particular package Grosz sent, containing items that were not only useless but absurd to send to the frontlines, created an intensely ironic juxtaposition of consumerism, nationalism, and war-time savagery. In *Dada: Zurich Berlin, Hannover, Cologne, New York, Paris* Brigid Doughtery explains these useless products and advertisements sent along side as "items that at the time were regularly sent from Berlin and other German cities to provide comfort and pleasure to soldiers at the front, a product manufactured, packaged, and advertised for canine consumption becomes an emblem of barbarism. [...] Human beings, after all, were hungry in large numbers."[15]

Honing in on the "photo" aspect of photomontage, artists Hannah Höch and Raul Hausmann developed their style of photomontage by referring directly to "the populist models for combining and transforming images."[16] Similarly to Grosz and Heartfield, Höch and Hausmann imitated the postcards from the Great War (Figure 3). Due to the way that photomontage had already been established as a souvenir of war, many Germans already had them displayed in their homes; Despite the outrage photomontage would generate with the

[14] Qtd in Dougherty, 94.
[15] Dougherty, 94-95.
[16] Foster, Krauss, Bois, Buchloh, Joselit, 188.

public, it was already well incorporated into the everyday scenery. Höch explains the moment of inspiration that struck during a summer trip with Hausmann:

> [Photomontage] began with our seeing an amusing oleograph on the wall of our guest room in a fisherman's cottage on the Baltic Sea. It depicted - fitted in among the pompous emblems of the Empire - five standing soldiers in five different uniforms - yet photographed only once - upon whom the head of the fisherman's son had five times been glued. This naively kitschy oleograph hug in many German rooms as mementos of the son's service as a soldier. It provided the occasion for Hausmann to expand upon the idea of working with photographs. Immediately after our return we began to do pictorial photomontage.[17]

Höch perceived photomontage as one facet of popular photography, acting as an expansion of the snapshot and mass media images catalyzed by Kodak decades earlier. Rather than a simple collage technique, Höch saw photomontage as an opportunity to interrogate production and authorship as it relates to the relatively new medium of photography. However, Hausmann, whom Höch bestows the primary credit of conception onto, thought of it as a unique "Dada" medium unto itself.[18] Hausmann speaks on his own perspective of the crucial encounter with the soldier portraits:

> In nearly every house there was to be found hanging on the wall a color lithograph depicting an infantryman in front of military barracks. In order to render this memento of the military service of a male member of the family more personal, a portrait photograph of the owner of the martial image had been glued in place of the head in the lithograph. It was like a thunderbolt: one could - I saw it instantaneously - make pictures, assembled entirely from cut-up photographs. Back in Berlin that September, I began to realize this new vision, and I made use of photographs from the press and then cinema.[19]

[17] Qtd in Doherty, 90.
[18] Doherty, 93.
[19] Qtd. in Doherty, 90.

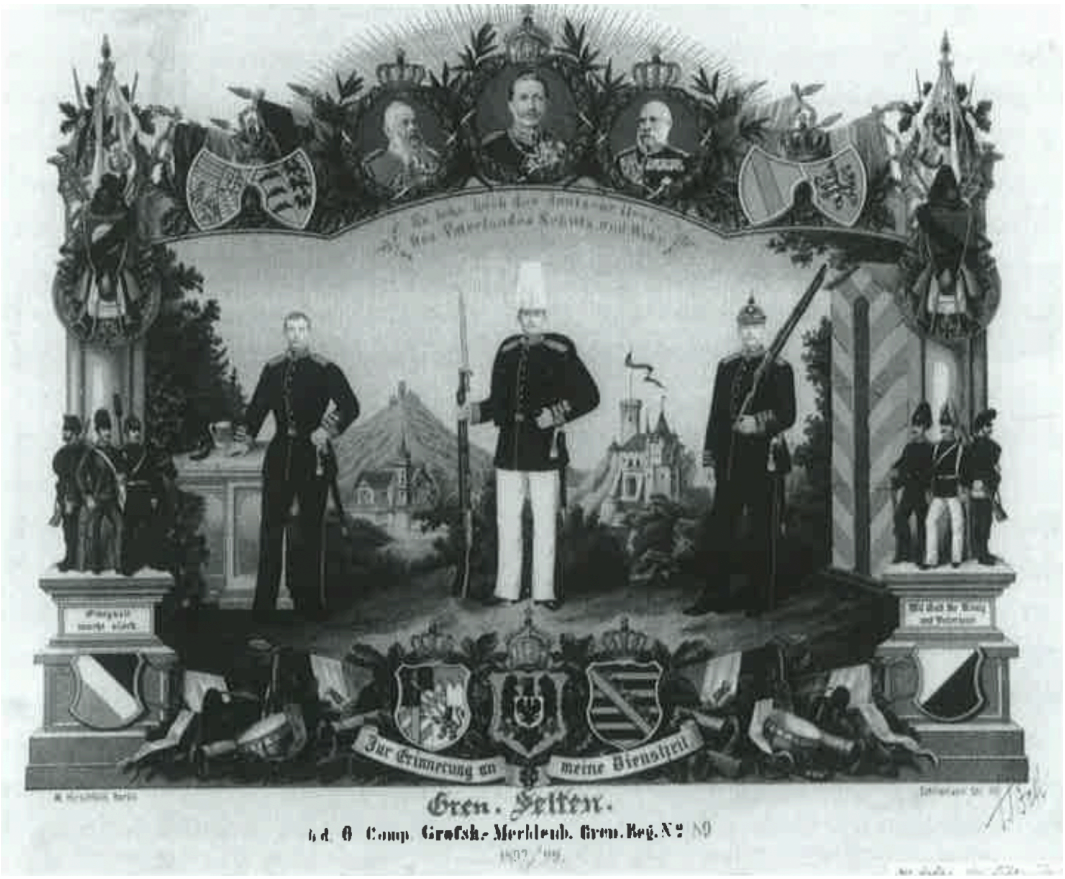


*Figure 3. German Military Memento C. 1897-1899.* Inscribed by Hannah Höch: "The Beginning of Photomontage", Hannah Höch Archive, Berlinische Galerie, Landesmuseum für Moderne Kunst, Photographie und Architektur.[20]

Benjamin addresses the nature of art within the everyday environment, explaining the way that people interact with pieces comes from collectively formed habits. Individuals who go about their day, distracted by the demands of existence, don't notice, think, or even care about the environment around them. Benjamin explains using buildings as an example:

> Distraction and concentration form polar opposites which may be stated as follows: A man who concentrates before a work of art is absorbed by it. He enters into this work of art [...] In contrast, the distracted mass absorbs the work of art. This is most obvious with regard to buildings. Architecture has always represented the prototype of a work of art the reception of which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction [...] habit determines to a large extent

[20] Doherty, 91.

> even optical reception. The latter, too, occurs much less through rapt attention than by noticing the object in incidental fashion.[21]

As Benjamin states, when an individual truly views a piece of art, notices it and consciously contemplates its features, the viewer is then absorbed by the piece of art. On the contrary, much like a building in the static backdrop of existence, or a lamp in your living room or the furniture music by Erik Satie, one never notices the pieces of art in their lives, interacting with it or existing parallel to it without a second thought based on pre-dictated affordances thus making the work absorbed unnoticed into the individual.

The disjunct, morbid nature of the souvenir collages that require soldiers' family members to cut off the photographic heads of their veteran sons to paste on to nameless, unidentified, uniformed bodies making their homes on the walls of the German public, created with photos taken by the cameras like the Kodak Brownie that afforded new documentary capabilities to families. Taken in the context of André Bazin's description of family photo albums in "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," the inherently gruesome process of creating the soldier portraits is revealed:

> The photographic image is the object itself[...]No matter how fuzzy, distorted, or discolored, no matter how lacking in documentary value the image may be, it shares by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is the reproduction; it *is* the model. Hence the charm of family albums. Those grey or sepia shadows, phantomlike and almost undecipherable, are no longer traditional family portraits but rather the disturbing presence of lives halted at a set moment in their duration, freed from their destiny; not, however, by the prestige of art but by the power of an impassive mechanical process: for photography does not create eternity, as art does, it embalms time, rescuing it simply for its proper corruption.[22]

If photos are to be taken literally as the person pictured in it like Bazin suggests, the process of creating these collages is a disturbing parallel to the violence experienced by soldiers

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[21] Benjamin, 16-17.
[22] André Bazin and Hugh Gray, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image", In *Film Quarterly,* Vol. 13 No.4, (1960): 4–9. https://doi.org/10.2307/1210183 8.

during the war perpetrated by their own family members. The combination of the newly destroyed individual snapshot photograph of deceased or injured soldiers with mass printed headless bodies created a strange new image with a disturbingly grotesque essence which was not lost on Höch and Hausmann. The act of cutting and pasting an image from its original context into a new one is inherently violent, a transgression of semantic meaning that generated a great deal of outrage towards Dadaist photomontage. What then is the difference between photomontage created by the Avant-Garde and those already hanging in Weimar-era living rooms? What is it about the use of photos from "press and then cinema" as Hasumann said, that generated outrage in a way that, ironically, the war mementos should have?

By appropriating the collage techniques used to make the war memorials but applied to commonplace, disposable images, it is exposing the commodification of the German people from unique individuals into disposable utilitarian commodities. Through subversion of ideological reproduction through commodity, photomontage became a vehicle for the ideological discourse of reproduction and commodity aesthetics.[23] The message for both threads of photomontage suggest indifference to the events at the front: the bourgeois is more concerned with maintaining the status quo indifferent to the sorry masses at the front. Nothing is more exemplary than the commodity marketplace which used slogans like *Sieg und Heil* to promote substitutes for non-essential consumer goods like honey.[24] The enmeshment of politics with consumerism implies a level of upper class patriotism inherent to the act of purchasing these goods: if bourgeois had to commit the patriotic sacrifice of using honey substitutes, so too would the lower classes have to sacrifice their lives for the war effort. In the words of artist Richard Hulsenbeck: "The highest art will be that whose mental content represents the thousandfold problems of the

[23] Pelcher 2023, 117.
[24] Dougherty, 95; Pelcher 2023, 116.

day, which has manifestly allowed itself to be torn apart by the explosions of last week, and which is forever trying to gather up its limbs after the impact of yesterday."[25]

The metaphorical gathering of yesterday's war-torn entrails turned into the materials for the art of today forced the viewing public to face the gruesome realities of the war in a way that confronted the grotesque remnants of turn-of-the century decadence while destroying any sense of semantic meaning.[26] The violence of the cut mirrors the physical violence towards humans, particularly that of military personnel, in addition to the more insidious violence enacted within the social and cultural spheres,[27] which takes Benjamin's ideas that "through gas warfare the aura is abolished in a new way"[28] to its limits. By cutting and pasting an image out of its original context and juxtaposing it with other excised images, the signs contained within these images thereby have their meaning-making capabilities forcefully amputated. As in, the disjunct signs contained within the collage images point to no signified, removing their usefulness in a savage transgression of photographic verisimilitude. J. Brandon Pelcher explains in *Dada's Subject and Structure: Performing Ideology Poorly*:

> Dadaist photomontage played on the radically iconic nature of photographic images and, in their juxtaposition [with other images], their ability to function as symbols. In other words, they began to de-emphasize the indexicality of the photographic image, often violently. The mass reproduced photographic images of Berlin's growing image-based culture during and after the war were implicitly products of the capitalist and nationalist violence that helped to develop and subsequently deploy them. Dadaist photomonteurs were pointedly violent against that burgeoning society of the spectacle, the univocal narratives that the spectacle was able to create, and indeed against the very images themselves—a violence of excision against the violence of the spectacle[...]The violence of excision and juxtaposition, free from an overarching framework of aesthetics or politics within

[25] Qtd in Brandon Pelcher, "Höch's Weimar and Wilhelm: Rundschau's Avant-Garde Reframing" in *Performing Arousal: Precarious Bodies and Frames of Representation,* ed. Julia Listengarten and Yana Merrzon.( New York: Bloomsbury, 2021) 89.
[26] Benjamin, 15-16; Pelcher 2023, 117.
[27] Pelcher 2023, 122-123.
[28] Benjamin, 18.

> which those fragments would have been placed, destroys the normativity of indexicality.[29]

The negative space between objects within a photomontage became a tool for the creation of indexical tension. Rather than the page in which the collage was created being simply the canvas for creation, the negative space between objects becomes the fluid matrix in which the images collide with each other.[30] In the same way, the negative space supports relations between objects only insofar as the images are within each other's proximity. Separately a carrot is seemingly unrelated to chicken but if cooked in the same broth the fluid matrix supports their transformation into a cohesive dish: chicken soup. The metaphorical ingredients used in the soup created by the Dada chefs consisted of contemporary imagery as well as pictorial body parts belonging to politicians, cultural figures, and other Dadaists cut into bite size pieces with the kitchen knife of artistic subversion. Take for example works like *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* (1919) by Höch (Figure 4) and *Jedermann Sein Eigner Fussball (Everyone his own Football)* by Heartfield (Figure 5). These pieces utilize commonplace images from the press, cinema, and other found objects and images including the newest addition to the everyday German scenery: body parts. Both prominently feature limbs as extracted from their original pictorial sources, pasted into a new context removed from their original owner.

[29] Pelcher 2023, 118-119.
[30] Rosalind Krauss, "The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism" in *October,* Winter, 1981, Vo.19, MIT Press, (1981): 22-23.


*Figure 4. Cut with the Kitchen Knife* a 1919 photomontage by Hannah Höch that features portraits of contemporary politicians, public figures, and Dada artists juxtaposed with industrial equipment, consumer goods, and text circling around the central subject of the photomontage: a dancer juggling their own head. Via Grove Art Online.


*Figure 5.* Heartfield's cover of "Jedermann sein Eigner Fussball" a 1919 satirical tabloid by several Dada artists. The cover features a man with a basketball for a body alongside portraits of nine Weimar era political figures on a decorative fan. One of which, Gustav Norske, was infamous for calling on military forces to quell the Spartacists Uprising resulting in the death of two people. Production of this periodical was short lived as it was immediately outlawed. Via The John Heartfield Exhibition.

As the end of The First World War drew near, artists in the French Avant-Garde grew tired of German ideological body parts in their soup. Indeed, German ideology was a major point of contention in the French Avant-Garde milieu who rejected this questionable source of protein with Surrealist Max Ernst described Dada photomontage as "Very German. German intellectuals can't take a shit or piss without ideology."[31] Still, Surrealism, Dada's younger French cousin, had much to thank their German predecessors for as collage and other forms of photographic manipulation became the medium of choice for many artists. However, unlike the Dadaists, Surrealist photomontage hid the negative space between reality and the artistic subject, projecting rather than highlighting it, taking advantage of photographic techniques like double exposure to create collages using reality as their canvas. Bazin explains: "The surrealist does not consider his aesthetic purpose and the mechanical effect of the image on our imaginations as things apart. For him, the logical distinction between what is imaginary and what is real tends to disappear.[...] Hence, photography ranks high in the order of surrealist creativity because it produces an image that is a reality of nature, namely, [a] hallucination that is also a fact."[32]

Taking advantage of the technique of double exposure, early Surrealist photographers like Man Ray and Hans Bellmer created images that instead intended to blur the lines of reproduced image and reality. The ability of photography in particular as an artistic reproductive method is especially amenable to Surrealism because "not only does it 'mirror' its object but, technically it's prints exist as multiples [which allows for] double exposures, sandwich printing, juxtaposition of negative and positive prints of the same image and montaged doubles to produce this sense of the world."[33] The way Surrealists tried to hide the edges of reality lends an

[31] "C'est vraiment allemand. Les intellectuels allemands ne peuvent pas faire ni caca ni pipi sans des idéologies." Qtd. in Krauss, 21.
[32] Bazin and Gray, 8-9.
[33] Foster, Krauss, Bois, Buchloh, Joselit, 219.

additional suspension of disbelief to the image which Rosaline Karuss argues is a form of photomontage,[34] an ouroboros of photographic layering.

Poet Guillame Apollinaire, the first to coin the term *sur-réalisme,* was also one of the first to notice this artistic trend spreading throughout the arts creating a "'new alliance' of media."[35] Conducting his own experiments with reality in his writing, Apollinaire saw France's entrance into the Avant-Garde as an opportunity to steal the spotlight from Germany.[36] Another young poet, a little less dogmatic about the boundaries of poetry, seized this same opportunity. Trading the exclusively written word for physical reality itself, Jean Cocteau took up the position of leading his young artistic compatriots into battle even if his war horse was just two dancers in a cardboard costume.

[34] Krauss, 19.
[35] Richard Taruskin, "The Cult of the Commonplace: Satie, the French 'Six', and Surrealism" in *Oxford History of Western Music:Vol.4 Music in the Early 20th Century.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) 566.
[36] Taruskin, 564-565.

## Chapter 2: No More Horsing Around

> The *Titanic* — "Nearer My God to Thee" — elevators… steamship gear —- *The New York Herald* — dynamos — airplanes… palatial movie houses — the sheriff's daughter — Walt Whitman…cowboys with leather and goat-skin chaps — the telegraph operator from Los Angeles who marries the detective in the end…phonographs… the Brooklyn Bridge — huge automobiles of enamel and nickel…Nick Carter…the Carolinas — my room on the seventeenth floor… posters.[37] Riding a horse, catching a train, cranking up and driving a Model T Ford, pedaling a bicycle, swimming, driving away a robber at gunpoint, playing cowboys and indians, snapping the shutter of her new Kodak, doing a "Charlie Chaplin," getting sea-sick aboard a transatlantic luxury liner, almost drowning, and finally relaxing at the seashore.[38]

"Snapping the shutter of her new Kodak" indeed, this isn't the description of a photo album from a trip to America, but Jean Cocteau's conceptual tableaux for The Little American Girl in his ballet *Parade* (1917). A mixture of dancing and pantomime typically and significantly seen in the popular genre of variety theater, The Little American Girl was the face of Le Nouveau Théâtre Contemporain and, to Cocteau, the golden child of *Parade* as the embodiment of all things *now*. Irreverent, audacious, and full of spunk, she is a humanoid found object assemblage of Jean Cocteau's conception of America. Based on the roles usually played by his favorite actress Mary Pickford, The Little American Girl is the antithesis of the typical conservative French theater-goer, the messiah heralding the revolution of French theater, guillotines optional.[39]

As the self-appointed impresario of the new French aesthetic, Cocteau's preference for Americanisms comes from a desire to move as far from Impressionist and Wagnerian influence as possible. Captivated by silent films featuring Charlie Chaplin, Pearl White, and of course Mary Pickford, one of the few escapes Cocteau and the larger French public had from the flung

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[37] Qtd in Taruskin, 563.
[38] Qtd in Richard Axom,.*"Parade": Cubism as Theater,* (New York & London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1979) 46.
[39] Axom, 41, 43-44; Taruskin 563.

limbs of German artillery came in the form of Kodak-produced celluloid film imported directly from early Hollywood studios. The idea that Cocteau had of the American lifestyle came directly from these early films; the America featured in *Parade* is a manifestation of popular notions of contemporary American culture in the mind of the French public.[40] To Cocteau, The Little American Girl is unconcerned with traditional notions of beauty as "a girl more interested in her health than in her beauty. She swims, boxes, dances, leaps onto moving trains - all without knowing that she is beautiful."[41] Cocteau urges the French musical scene to take her as the representative ideal of youthful vitality in the arts, to prioritize national artistic health over conventional aesthetics. Yet The Little American Girl is still beautiful, her beauty coming from authentic expression rather than traditional feminine poise.

Spending his formative artistic years mingling with the larger European Avant-Garde, Cocteau picked up influences from then flourishing *-isms* then utilizing much of this gathered material in his manifesto *Le Coq et L'Arlequin: Notes Autour de la Musique*. Designing his manifesto to "shock, gain publicity and press attention,"[42] Cocteau was deeply influenced by the writings of Italian poet, playwright, provocateur, car enthusiast, fascist, and father of the Futurist movement F.T. Marinetti. As a major player in the larger European Avant-Garde, if Cocteau wanted to shock and upset Marinetti is the perfect model to manifest scandal; indeed his manifestation came to pass as very few people outside of Cocteau's immediate circle agreed with him.[43] Nonetheless Marinetti's 1913 manifesto *The Variety Theater* not only offered a model for

[40] Taruskin 562-563; Axom 42-43.
[41] Qtd in Axom, 43.
[42] Barbara L. Kelly, *Music and Ultra-Modernism in France: A Fragile Consensus, 1913-1939.* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2013) 163.
[43] Kelly 2013, 205.

Cocteau's own inflammatory manifesto but the framework to begin his own youthful, speedy, instinct-driven movement, trading Fiat for Ford.[44]

For Cocteau, America became the spiritual paragon for the new French aesthetic because, according to his impressions from cinema, it is removed from the historical baggage burdening Europe free to express the spry, industrialized vigor inherent to a new, childlike, and progressive nation. *The Variety Theater* could have been the source of Cocteau's interest in Parisian Americanisms as Marinetti gives similar descriptions of the "eccentric American" that possessing "pants as deep as a ship's hold out of which, with a thousand other things, will come the great Futurist hilarity that should make the world's face young again"[45] and that "the Variety Theater offers to every country [...] a brilliant résumé of Paris considered as the one magnetic center of luxury and ultra-refined pleasure."[46] Despite his active engagement with them, Cocteau retroactively separated himself from contemporary artistic movements, especially the German-centered Dada. Cocteau writes in a 1920 issue of the anti-German theatrical journal *Comoedia*:

> When we presented *Parade*, dadaism was unknown. We had never heard it spoken of. Now, there's no doubt that the public recognizes DADA in our well-meaning horse.[47] Well I like my friends Picabia and Tzara. If they were in need, I would lend assistance. BUT I AM NOT A DADAIST. Without a doubt that is still the best way to be. No, *Parade* is neither dadaist, nor cubist, nor futurist, nor of any school. *PARADE IS PARADE,* that is to say a big play-thing.[48]

Though he insists on being separate from Dada, as Nancy Perloff points out, his description of the ballet "as a big toy flies somewhat in the face of Cocteau's insistence that

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[44] Nancy Perloff, *Art and the Everyday: Popular Entertainment and the Circle of Erik Satie,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) 7-9.
[45] F.T. Marinetti, "The Variety Theater (1913)" in *Marinetti: Selected Writings.* Trans. and ed. R.W. Flint and Arthur A. Coppotelli. (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1972) 121.
[46] Marinetti, 120.
[47] In reference to the horse character in *Parade*, a two-man costume known for his awkward unaccompanied dance.
[48] Qtd in Perloff, 151.

*Parade* had no ties with the anti-academic, life-celebrating strains of Dada."[49] It appears that, rather than being a true denouncement of Dada, Cocteau aims to tease his Avant-Garde counterparts. Jeremy Cox describes a postcard Cocteau sent Francis Picabia that appears to reference the origin story of photomontage: "he wrote to Picabia in the format of a postcard-style photomontage. The main image featured him, in officer's uniform, positioned so as to appear perched on the back of Picasso's infamous horse from *Parade*, and carried the rather smug inscription: 'I'm not a Dadaist, but I can be found parading about in your books.'"[50] Regardless, Cocteau is certainly aware of his standing in the Avant-Garde and attempts to control his image to serve current projects.

Perhaps Cocteau's insistence on separating from Dada comes from the recognition of influence from a German school of thought in his own work, something which he and his young collaborators detested in the older artistic generations. Around the turn of the century Wagnerian composition was in vogue during what could be considered one of the more productive periods of French musical output. This period resulted in a style of German-influenced music that had become associated with "the bourgeois 'who also like to say that they have "seen that."'[51] The newer generation of French creatives who emerged around The First World War harbored feelings of resentment towards the established Germanocentric musical culture who pointedly refused to follow the new rules of engagement the younger generation introduced.

Presenting the performance equivalent of Hausmann's images from press and cinema, the juxtaposition of ordinary, banal imagery within the elitist context was jarring. Not knowing how

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[49] Perloff, 151.
[50] Jeremy Cox,"'La Plus Grande Audace à Notre Époque: Être Simple.':Simplicity, Subversion, and Intimations of the Surreal in Francis Poulenc's Early Collaborations with Jean Cocteau" in *Gli Spazi della Musica* 7, (2018): 46-47.
[51] Roger Nichols, *The Harlequin Years: Music in Paris 1917-1929.* (Berkeley Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002) 19.

to react, many critics "were unwilling to look for innovation beyond the musical work itself."[52] The judgement of a work solely on its traditional aesthetic merit with no consideration for a works' context might have been sufficient for previous generations, however, was no longer applicable: due to the war, young artists had their formal training cut short or lacked the means to receive traditional education all together. Left to fend for themselves, the careers of these young artists were vulnerable to aesthetic disconnect with the more powerful, older establishments.[53] Émile Vuillermoz, though attempting to resist the youthful current, admitted that young artists had the right to be bitter about their lack of resources and support:

> War has deprived them of the normal period of success, which they were right to expect. The generation that understood them and defended them has disappeared. Today the page has turned. A brutal youth has presented us with another ideal and has employed all the means to be successful. A savage struggle is taking place just now around Akela's rock of council. We can't say anything about it because it is the law of the jungle.[54]

Creating their own rule book for similar reasons to the Dada photomonteurs, Cocteau and his constituents felt the same pressures from the war and the bourgeois hierarchy as their German contemporaries and resisted through aggressive yet inscrutably mischievous subversion of conventions. Despite his insistence on being separate from Dada, Cocteau's well-meaning horse (Figure 6) pulled his cardboard coach directly to the same materials: photos, print media, and popular culture. Taking artistic dumpster diving one step further than Dada, Cocteau treats real-time events as scraps to be used in his temporal anti-Wagner collage.

[52] Kelly 2013, 189.
[53] Kelly 2013, 179-181.
[54] Qtd in Kelly 2013, 180.

*Figure 6.* Cocteau's well-meaning horse.

A common sight on the grand boulevards of Paris in the winter, traveling acts lined the streets to attract potential audiences to their performances. Creating the scenario of *Parade* around the *théâtre forain* genre *théâtre de magie-variété-music-hall*, this genre of entertainment, as the name implies, often featured a variety of music hall, magician, and theatrical productions in conjunction with circus acts like acrobats, clowns, and animal-tamers. As such, the characters consisted of common performers within this setting: two acrobats, a Chinese conjurer, the "American Girl" pantomime. With costumes designed by Pablo Picasso, the two human theater managers, one French and one American, are dressed in referential cardboard assemblages (Figure 7), three dimensional collages of contemporary visual signifiers associated with their national identities. The third manager is represented by the horse,[55] a strikingly unadorned costume in comparison to the other managers, the horse is performed by two dancers who trot

[55] Perloff, 112.

around the stage unaccompanied by music. The horse, being unremarkably horse-like in its actions and appearance, might be understood as functioning as a smaller piece in the larger circus-themed photomontage of *Parade*.

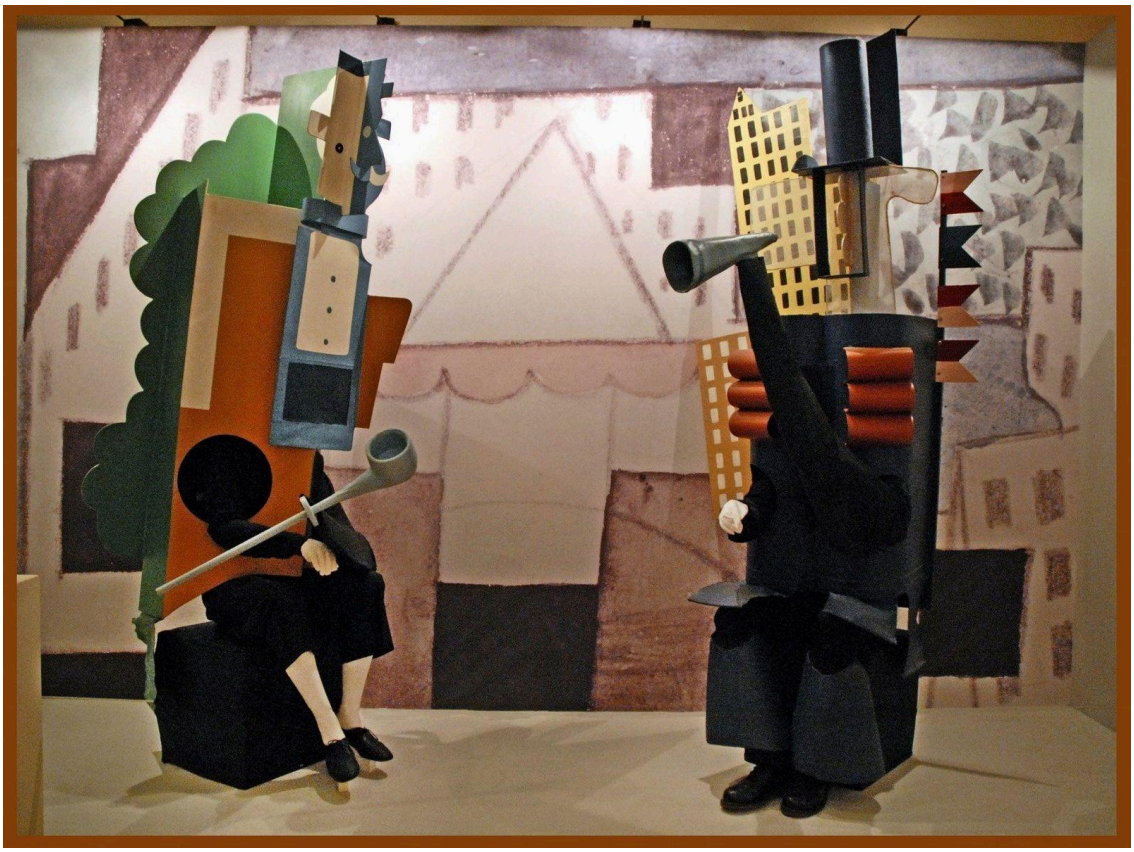

*Figure 7. Picasso's cardboard manager costumes: The French Manager (left) and The American Manager (right). Via WikiMedia Commons.*

Indifferent to drama in more ways than one, the score for *Parade* contains what Cocteau described as "suggestive noise." In *Le Coq et L'Arlequin*, Cocteau writes: "The score for *Parade* was to serve as a background music of suggestive noises such as, sirens, typewriters, airplanes, dynamos, placed there as what Georges Braque[56] aptly calls 'facts.'"[57] These "facts of Georges

[56] Georges Braque (1882-1963), French painter, sculptor, printmaker, and collagist associated with Fauvism and Cubism. Contemporary and colleague of Pablo Picasso.

[57] "La partition de *Parade* devait servir de fond musical à des bruits suggestifs, tels que sirènes, machines à écrire, aéroplanes, dynamos, mis là comme ce que Georges Braque appelle si justement des faits."
Qtd. in Jochen Heymann, "'Un Petit Oiseau va Sortir': Le Théâtre de Jean Cocteau et l'Esthétique du Ready-Made." *Oeuvres & Critiques* 22 (1997): 80.

Braque" are, according to Jochen Heymann "banal objects, integrated into the collage [of *Parade*]." He goes on to explain:

> It is important to emphasize that Cocteau attributed daily noise, [though] immaterial, the same value as object [...] By calling these noises 'facts' signifies that their value as objects resides in the fact that they did not arise from the act of creation, from the handling of any materials, [but] their integration into a work produced by a creative act gives them a symbolic value [as objects.][58]

Similar to photomontage, the objective value of Braque-ian factual noise comes from the creation of the collage through excision and contextual relocation, reaffirming their function as physical objects despite being immaterial auditory concepts. These concepts as well were excised from their place on the Parisian streets, the figurative theater organ that improvises the accompaniment to the visuals of daily life.

Cocteau was not the first artist to center a work around *le théâtre forain*, as depictions of the winter traveling circus acts can be seen through the 19th century. The difference with *Parade,* however, is that rather than depicting these acts on the stage performing they were placed in the streets trying to attract an audience thus removing them from the dramatized fantasy previous artists attached to the circus.[59] As Richard Taruskin describes it: "*Parade* notably lacked melodrama insofar as the characters simply went about their everyday business: the conjurer conjured, the acrobats did acrobatics, a 'little American girl' pantomimed a silent movie. Whatever latent drama there was went undramatized."[60]

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[58] "Les <<faits>> de Georges Braque sont les objets banals, intégrés dans des collages. Il faut souligner que Cocteau attribue aux bruits quotidiens, immatériels, une valeur d'objet. [...] L'appellation <<faits>> pour des bruits signifie que les prémisses pour la constitution de leur valeur objectuelle réside dans le fait qu'ils n'ont pas surgi d'un processus de création, du maniement d'un matériel quelconque, bien que leur intégration dans un œuvre, produit d'une action créatrice, leur donne une valeur symbolique."
Heymann, 80.
[59] Axom, 37-38.
[60] Taruskin, 561.

There was, however, one major aspect of the contemporary zeitgeist that *Parade* refused to engage with: The Great War. Leaving a gaping chasm in its non-existent narrative, the pointed refusal to engage with this singular era-defining event in the way that Dada did makes *Parade* even more shocking through its indifference, a blasé attitude that Richard Taruskin calls "a display of emotional scar tissue."[61] Any acknowledgement of the war despite its certain domination of the French zeitgeist and despite Cocteau serving as an ambulance driver on the front lines,[62] is curiously absent; The Great War is perhaps too extraordinary a circumstance to be deemed boring enough to make its way into *Parade* and subsequent works by Cocteau. Though war is nothing to be glamorized, it has certainly been the subject of many a romanticized storyline throughout human history which conflicts with Cocteau' decidedly anti-romantic stance. He writes:

> The poet[63] ought to bring objects and emotions out of their veiling mists, to display them suddenly, so naked and so quickly that they are hardly recognizable. It is then that they amaze us with their youthfulness, as if they had never become official dotards. This is the case with commonplaces - old, powerful and universally esteemed as masterpieces are, but whose originality no longer surprises us because of over-use. [...] I rejuvenate the commonplace. My concern is to present it from angels which will rejuvenate its teens. A generation devoted to obscurity, to faded reality, does not give way before a shrug of the shoulders. I know that my text may seem too simple, too *readably written,* like schoolroom alphabets. But, tell me, aren't we really in school? Aren't we still deciphering the elementary symbols?[64]

Deciphering the elementary symbols indeed, the deceptively simple libretti of Cocteau stage productions takes on the unassuming, banal imagery of photomontage. Though basing his works around well known sights, sounds, sensations, and various other nouns, it seems that war

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[61] Taruskin, 562.
[62] Axom, 41.
[63] Despite being a multi-disciplinarian, Cocteau insisted on referring to himself as a poet and all of his works as poetry no matter what medium he was creating through.
[64] Jean Cocteau, "The Wedding on the Eiffel Tower" in *Modern French Theatre: The Avant-Garde, Dada, and Surrealism,* ed. and trans. Michael Benedikt and George E. Wellwarth. (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. Inc., 1966) 95.

has been deemed on the level of "dotard" within the context of *Parade*. However, within the outside-imposed context of war, Cocteau' choices of imagery and non-narrative-as-narrative for *Parade* certainly displays the commonplace so naked, so suddenly so as to be undoubtedly jarring: *Parade's* shock value comes in part from its accompaniment by the ever-present stench of death emanating from the trenches just outside the performance hall. Cocteau's transgressive shrug of the shoulders continued on after the war, with *Parade* being the very beginning of a long line of non-passive and very aggressive stage productions. After learning the alphabet with *Parade*, the newly-literate Cocteau tries his hand at reading telegrams: five of them to be exact.

**Chapter 3: Is It a bird? Is It A Plane? No, It's A Comedy-Vaudeville-Ballet-Sotie-Anecdote-Parade**

"Ballet? No. Piece? No. Review? No. Tragedy? No."[65] Or maybe it's a "poem that expresses itself theatrically" or a "musical tradi-comedy?"[66] Whatever it is, *Les Mariés de la tour Eiffel* (1921) sits at the cross-roads of every art form while refusing to be defined by any of them. Directed and scripted by professional multi-disciplinarian Jean Cocteau, *Les Mariés* places all of Cocteau's collected mediums on an equal playing field; Le Groupe des Six (or in this case, Le Groupe des Cinq since Louis Durey refused to participate) provided the music, according to the genre that Cocteau would assign them.[67]

Premiering at the Théâtre des Champs Élysées in June 1921 on the coattails of *Parade* and the publication of *Le Coq et L'Arlequin,* Cocteau declared in the preface that *Les Mariés* "crystalize[s] a formula I had been experimenting with in *Parade.*"[68] Manifesting around a collage of visual and musical signifiers, the production relies heavily on machines of visual and auditory reproduction, a camera and two phonographs, for exposition; a feature that Annette Shandler Levitt refers to as "tricks which partake of modern technology."[69] The camera as the primary set piece is the point through which characters and props enter and depart the stage with two actors dressed as phonographs providing commentary as the classical chorus and as literal speakers by speaking lines on behalf of the characters;[70] Due to the core integration of these two technologies, Daniel Albright refers to *Les Mariés* as "George Eastman's and Thomas Edison's dream play."[71] The scenario of *Les Mariés* harkens back to photomontage's juxtaposition of

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[65] Qtd in Haine, 112.
[66] Qtd in Haine, 112.
[67] Haine, 106, 110-111, 113.
[68] Cocteau 1966, 100.
[69] Annette Shandler Levitt,. "Jean Cocteau's Theatre: Idea and Enactment." *Theatre Journal* 45, no. 3 (1993): 369. https://doi.org/10.2307/3208360.
[70] Cocteau 1966, 101.
[71] Daniel Abright, *Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and Other Arts.* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000) 280.

seemingly unrelated images. The connection to collage is apparent from the very beginning of the script with the cast appearing to resemble more a list of magazine cut-outs in a Höch photomontage than characters in a theatrical production:

> First Phonograph, Second Phonograph, An Ostrich, The Hunter, The Manager of the Eiffel Tower, The Bride, The Groom, The Mother-In-Law, The Father-In-Law, The General, The Bridesmaids, The Ushers, The Cyclist, The Child, The Trouville Bathing Beauty, The Lion, The Art Collector, The Art Dealer, Five Telegrams.[72]

A frequently revisited element in Cocteau's stageplays that is also shared with the photo-centric work of Dada and Surrealism is the illusion of realism through either enhancing or exposing the illusion. In *Les Mariés* one could call it literal exposure as The Photographer (named The Artist in the script) and the absurdly large prop camera ultimately determine how long the illusory film of verisimilitude will be exposed for. The actions of The Photographer are ultimately the thing that hides and exposes reality to the audience, at once restoring order through his instruction to the wedding party to "watch the birdie,"[73] but again disrupting it with "the birdie" (Figure 8) itself being a salient conflict until she is captured:

> First Phonograph [speaking for The Photographer]: Well, believe it or not, my camera is out of order. Usually when I say, 'Now don't move, watch the birdie,' a little bird is what they see. This morning I say to a lady: 'Watch the birdie,' and an ostrich steps out. I'm trying to find the ostrich to get it to go back into the camera.[74]

[72] Cocteau 1966, 101.
[73] Cocteau 1966, 109.
[74] Cocteau 1966, 102.

*Figure 8.* The Ostrich and The Hunter. Via Jean Cocteau Unique et Multiple, Le Fonds Cocteau de Montpellier.

In the preface to *Les Mariés,* Cocteau quotes The Photographer as his "epigraph: 'Since these mysteries are beyond me, let's pretend we're organizing them.'"[75] Occupying a position between the in-story universe and the viewing public, The Photographer appears to be the only character with consistent insight into the absurdity of the action unfolding around him. By questioning events, worrying about future consequences of his camera's malfunction, and making proactive choices to prevent further complications, The Photographer displays a uniquely dynamic role by attempting to assert control over the action while being flexible enough to go along with it when need be, reacting to the events as though they're out of place but also as if it's

[75] Cocteau 1966, 94.

an unusually difficult day at work. Remarking as though no longer phased but wanting to finish his work for the day, he remarks that it's "Three O'Clock! and that ostrich hasn't come back yet."[76]

The Photographer's behavior appears to be a way for Cocteau to say to the audience "your life is just as strange, you just never noticed before" as evidenced by the preface. In addition to using a quote by The Photographer as the epigraph, Cocteau described the desired effect of *Les Mariés* as "paint[ing] *more truly than the truth,*"[77] originating from the desire to "illuminate everything [...]the miraculous poetry of daily life [...] instead of attempting to keep this side of the absurdity of life, to lessen it, to organize and arrange it as we organize and arrange the story of an incident in which we played an unfavorable part, I accentuate it, I emphasize it."[78] Daily life is quite literally *sur-real*, the banal events that make up contemporary life are, to Cocteau, absurd when properly exposed and much of this is derived from the performative orderliness of the bourgeois as represented by the wedding party (Figure 9).

[76] Cocteau 1966, 110.
[77] Cocteau 1966, 95.
[78] Cocteau 1966, 94 - 95.

*Figure 9.* Left: The Bride and the Groom. Right: The Mother-in-Law and The Father-In-Law. Via Jean Cocteau Unique et Multiple, Le Fonds Cocteau de Montpellier.

Referring to it explicitly as "an exposé of bourgeois life,"[79] Annette Shandler Levitt points out that all elements within *Les Mariés* exist to disrupt the status quo of the wedding within the production.[80] The premise of *Les Mariés*, being an explicitly performative ceremony, contains several expected aspects of such an event but disrupted by intrusions of non-ceremonial elements. The contents of the work, from the narrative, to the musical, and the visual, are clichéd and platitudinous yet new and unexpected. The clichés exist as both inherent elements to the ceremony and yet serve as interruptions thus creating tension with their traditional function as elements of ceremony and the way they disrupt it; in this instance, the ceremony can't go on with it, and yet can't continue as normal without. Notable examples of this are contained within the music by Francis Poulenc, Darius Milhaud, and Georges Auric as summarized by Nancy Perloff:

[79] Levitt, 367.
[80] Levitt, 369.

> [The] 'Overture' by Auric sets the mood. Thuds in the tuba, timpani, and double bass punctuate a heaving march which blatantly debunks the grace we expect of a wedding procession [...] Milhaud's 'Marche nuptiale' also features a brass fanfare and juxtaposes different tonalities [which] accompanies the entrance of the wedding party [...] Caricatures of pomp are also the subject of Poulenc's 'Discourse du Général.' [...] he mocks the general's pretensions to dignity by employing polka rhythms and a lively polka tempo in place of the march style appropriate for a General [...] After hearing such banal music, the phonographs announce that 'everyone is deeply moved' - a cliché which sarcastically accentuates the speech's platitudes.[81]

The music functions to reinforce the image the wedding party is trying to convey while also undermining it through absurdity, excess, and caricature; the reality of the situation is obvious to everyone involved. This subversion of convention appears in the staging and dialogue as well: "Illusion in *Wedding* is obvious: the camera is huge, its malfunction generates blatant, easily visible and comprehensible complications [...] The false reality of the stage comes across quickly, however, with such self-reflective lines as the instructions to the wedding guests to sit 'only on one side of the table, so the audience can see you.'"[82]

As Nancy Perloff points out, with new significance in the context of my argument, "'cliché' in French also means 'snapshot,'"[83] We can now see the broader context of her description: the end to this string of clichés comes only when the photographer manages to take a picture of the wedding party. The whole narrative foundation of *Les Mariés* is built upon a circular rhetoric of clichés in their common non-literal sense and their literal linguistic interpretation by Cocteau. The tension between their literalness and the common understanding is only resolved when Cocteau confronts the word "cliché" itself through integrating its two meanings after which an art dealer sells the wedding party as a framed photo. Through this string of events, it appears that Cocteau is suggesting that the faux image of the bourgeois is easy to see

[81] Perloff, 188-190.
[82] Levitt, 370.
[83] Perloff, 187 in footnote 45.

through: the wedding party creates a facade of orderliness, propriety, poise when their photo is being taken which is counter to the events actually taking place. The staging of an "authentic" reality in snapshot photography was quite literally caused by Kodak's introduction of the affordance of portability and ease of use so for The Photographer to be the one to expose the reality for what it is not insignificant.

Beyond the obvious pun, The Photographer as the character who "exposes" reality allows him to demarcate the boundaries between objects, creating or reducing the negative space between them; The Photographer creates a living photomontage by isolating images from reality and pasting them into a new one. In an attempt to make sense of his surroundings, The Photographer shows a similar motive and technique as the Dada photomonteurs: cutting and pasting an image out of its original context and juxtaposing it with other excised images, thus removing or modifying their meaning-making capabilities. Even the materials The Photographer uses are taken from the photomontage playbook; the others characters in *Les Mariés* refer to to The Trouville Bathing Beauty as "a pretty postcard," as her character and introduction is borrowed from the *tableaux vivant*, or living postcards, device from music-hall performances.[84] Since this is the case and in consideration that many of the other characters represent genres of materials and images regularly found in photomontage: from daily life (The Cyclist), photo albums (the wedding party), and even found objects (The Telegrams), the other characters could also be read as acting as though cut out from print media. Through dialogue and stage directions, Cocteau is suggesting that the characters emerging from The Photographer's camera only exist on the film within the camera, as in, are real cutouts. The General says so himself when he attempts to calm the frightened wedding party when a lion pops out of the camera: "Don't be

[84] Perloff, 187.

afraid. There can be no lion on the Eiffel Tower. Therefore, it is a mirage, a simple mirage. Mirages are, so to speak, the white lies of the desert. This lion is actually in Africa, just as the cyclist was on the road to Chatou. This lion sees me, I see him and yet we each recognize that we are simply reflections."[85] Though, as The General says, the images are not real, he is then eaten by the lion, however, just because the images are not "real" in the physical sense doesn't mean that they aren't capable of tangible violence.

Just in the way that George Grosz's care pages underscore the disjunctions of Bourgeois consumerism and the realities of the battlefield during the First World War, the images from The Photographer's camera function the same way. By juxtaposing the inexplicable violence of the surroundings the photomontage creates an allegorical backdrop to the Wedding reminiscent of the inexplicable violence of war. Through this, Cocteau seems to be questioning the priorities of the bourgeois during the first world war by creating his own Grosz-ian carepackage on stage, in recognition that the bourgeois-centric consumer culture during and following the war is contrived, platitudinous, and illusory and yet still violent.

A young boy emerges from the camera who is indicated to be the future son of The Bride and Groom. When he appears he is referred to as the spitting image of his family, but most notably, "another of the perils of photography [...] A [future] captain. Architect. Boxer. Poet. President of the Republic. A beautiful little victim of the next war."[86] After his introduction, the boy pulls out a gun to massacre the wedding party who questions "Haven't you and pity for your grandparents? Haven't you any respect for rank?"[87] Jochen Heymann refers to this scenario and the description of the boy's physical features as "a possible conflict of generations during

[85] Cocteau 1966, 109.
[86] Cocteau 1966, 106-107.
[87] Cocteau 1966, 107.

puberty."[88] Though, I would suggest the "puberty" Heymann refers to is a figurative one: Cocteau seems to be referring to the generational conflict created by the war's interference and an acknowledgement that without opposition will become a continued cycle of generation violence catalyzed by the elite. The Photographer chases after the boy in an attempt to get him back into the camera, to which he protests with "I want to live my own life!"[89] The primary frustration the boy presents is a lack of autonomy. The boy's frustrations run parallel not only with the experience of young artists during the First World War, but younger generations as a whole who were sent to the front lines to die or returned home permanently disabled thus rendered incapable of living a life of their own choosing  during a time when most of them would be reaching many of the typical adult milestones.

The crux of the pushback Cocteau manifests in *Les Mariés* is referring specifically to his generation of artists who want to forge their own aesthetic direction removed from the influence of "that little headless and heartless group whom the newspapers call 'the élite.'"[90] As he says in a footnote in the preface: "It is a matter of taking the silliness out of silliness, even that of the heart. The sublime will have its day. And then you will hear us, perhaps, rehabilitate Wagner."[91] Some of Cocteau's constituents in *Les Six-Moins-Une* would go on to compose in a new, more refined direction while others took Cocteau's inherited silliness quite seriously, or rather, not seriously at all. But either way, being silly is very serious business and should be treated as such, especially when your photo is being taken.

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[88] "un possible conflit de générations durant la puberté."
Heymann, 82.
[89] Cocteau 1966, 108.
[90] Cocteau 1966, 97.
[91] Cocteau 1966, 99.

## Chapter 4: *Le Bal Masqué*: *Pierrot Lunaire* If He Didn't Fail Clown School

Francis Jean Marcel Poulenc, known to most of us simply as Francis Poulenc –or the "Manager de Génie"[92] if you are Jean Cocteau– was considered "the member of *Les Six* whose aesthetic was closest to the aphorisms in Cocteau's brilliant pamphlet [*Le Coq et L'Arlequin.*]"[93] Indeed, the young Poulenc was enamored with Cocteau's work recalling "how in 1917 he was 'conquered by *Parade*' and willing to disown Debussy [...] for the 'new spirit Satie and Picasso were bringing us.'"[94] From the first time the eighteen-year-old Poulenc came in contact with Cocteau's work he has maintained aesthetic alignment with the banal enmeshing it with his already developed proclivity for the visual arts from childhood: "I'm a visual person… the opposite of abstraction [...] The three things I like best are: music, painting and poetry. From the age of ten, I was always in the Bernheim gallery! I could tell the difference between a Cézanne and a Renoir."[95]

Poulenc's proclivity for the visual coupled with his enthusiasm for *Parade* made him the perfect accomplice for Cocteau's musical endeavors. After 1922 Poulenc's style changed but maintained the foundational influence from his earlier work with Cocteau. 1922 in particular was a crucial year in the development of Poulenc's style turning away from Arnold Schoenberg and Darius Milhaud influenced "atonal and polytonal experiments"[96] to a decidedly diatonic approach catalyzed by the premiere of Igor Stravnsky's opera buffa *Mavra* that "gave him the confidence to believe the perfect triad was still viable and encouraged him to put an end to a period of stylistic uncertainty."[97] Poulenc's post-*Mavra* aesthetic trajectory was based on the

[92] Haine, 114.
[93] Francis Poulenc and Nicolas Southon. *Francis Poulenc: Articles and Interviews: Notes from the Heart,* Trans. Roger Nichols, (Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate, 2014) 5.
[94] Perloff, 14.
[95] Poulenc and Southon, 150.
[96] Poulenc and Southon, 6.
[97] Poulenc and Southon, 6.

belief that "innovation in music does not reside in language" but that "every creative artist has to work out his stylistic individuality."[98] Hence his life-long criticism of "followers," a word ever present in his vocabulary, borrowed from other members of *Les Six*, Cocteau, and Picasso.

When asked about his love for Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* in a 1961 interview with Martine Cadieu, Poulenc reflects on criticisms directed at his triadic syntax: "you know, it amuses me when I'm reproached in the press for not using new musical materials. I could have used them a long time ago! If I haven't done so, that's because I consider they didn't suit my nature, my temperament - I'm not a calculator, a technician. I like music that's human, humour, laughter, or prayer."[99] Though Poulenc and Schoenberg aren't typically associated as on the surface they seem diametrically opposed, they are indeed two sides of the same coin, as Daniel Albright observes:

> It is a mistake to think of Schoenberg as a more modern or venturesome sort of composer than Poulenc, because *Poulenc attacked musical conventions as fiercely as Schoenberg, not on the level of harmonic syntax, but on the level of semantics* [...] Poulenc was original not in the way that his music sounds, but in the way that his music means. [...] Schoenberg worked to emancipate harmonic dissonance, Poulenc worked to emancipate semantic dissonance, to draw power from the inconsequentiality of musical events.[100]

Poulenc's contribution to musical modernism comes not from overt attacks on musical convention but rather "an intelligible context of familiar sounds in order to develop a system of musical meaning that can assault or discredit other systems of meaning."[101] After all, you can't challenge indexical meaning without using signs that have established meaning in the first place; a job perfectly suited to the banal.

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[98] Poulenc and Southon, 6.
[99] Poulenc and Southon, 164.
[100] Albright, 288, 305.
[101] Albright, 290.

When Poulenc wrote his October 1935 *Présence* article "In Praise of Banality" as a preface to an upcoming performance of his "most spontaneous tribute to banality,"[102] *Le Bal Masqué* (1932), he clarified his conceptions of banality and where it fits into his music. Poulenc describes two camps of composers: the first being composers who have created their own syntax like Wagner, Debussy, Ravel, Stravinsky, and Schoenberg and the second being composers who "have arranged known materials in a new order, that's all."[103] Interestingly, Poulenc also makes this distinction for painters, saying that artists that joined the Cubist trend which is "suited only to the genius of Piacasso" have abandoned it for a return to "the visual reality of the object, transformed by their sensibility."[104] Poulenc draws this line of distinction in order to position himself squarely in the "arrangers" camp, reusing materials inspired by composers he admires. The recycling of materials in an idiomatic way is a manifestation of banality as an intentional aesthetic choice rather than the pejorative sense of the word, using it to be understood rather than pedantically intellectual, putting "the unusual harmony and the common-or-garden cadence into the same pot."[105] Though this article came more than a decade after Poulenc's shift into a more conservative triadic idiom, the idea that real artistry comes from copying other artists was a foundational notion presented by Cocteau in *Le Coq et L'Arlequin.*

The notion of copying in order to be original, however, creates tension with Poulenc and Cocteau's shared dislike of artistic followers. Poulenc cites Stravinsky specifically as the catalyst for his stylistic evolution and maintains that influence throughout his career. This tension is not to be discredited as hypocritical but a cornerstone to the subversion of musical meaning. Daniel Albright assigns Poulenc the label of "Surrealist" composer with the distinction between Dada

[102] Poulenc and Southon, 28.
[103] Poulenc and Southon, 27.
[104] Poulenc and Southon, 28.
[105] Poulenc and Southon, 28.

and Surrealism being that "Dada is a phenomenon of semantic destruction; but surrealism is a phenomenon of semantic dislocation and fissure."[106] Albright isn't the only scholar to assign this label to Poulenc but I don't completely agree with this distinction nor do I think Albright's definitions to be mutually exclusive to either movement. I find this especially true since explicitly "Dada" musical output is scarce, along with the fact of how deeply interconnected these movements are, indeed, the complicated history between Dada and Surrealism doesn't lend itself to clear lines of demarcation.

Instead I would propose to remove labels from the equation and rather simply regard the techniques employed which, as we both agree, is sign/signifier manipulation. To be specific, allusion and quotation within Poulenc's compositional lexicon is the primary tool of semantic subversion through *mis*-quotations that change the context, function, and overall appearance of musical clichés. The meaning (or lack thereof) of these cliché signifiers changes depending on their space and proximity to other signifiers; just as in photomontage, if a sign is removed from its original context the only thing to contextualize it are the excised signs around it. In this way, Poulenc's tonal syntax functions on the level of snapshot cut-outs in photomontage: treating triad as snapshot by taking pre-established musical iconography and changing their context or removing it entirely just as the Dada photomonteaurs did with visual iconography.

*Le Bal Masqué*, as his most banal piece, contains many of these musical cutouts in order to create portraits in a purely auditory collage. He goes on to explain the distinction between the banal and the intellectual and how that manifest in the exceptional normalcy of *Le Bal Masqué*:

> In a friendly atmosphere set in the Paris suburbs, Max Jacob and I have set in motion a kind of carnival during which Mlle Malvina, a pretentious woman whose love is rejected, gives her hand to a monstrous blind woman in a plush dress who is getting tipsy with her brother-in-law. We have tried to transpose all

[106] Albright, 289.

> of these characters, spied through the window of a 'charming chalet' on the banks of the Marne, on to a more universal plane by exaggerating their frightfulness. [...] A violent, stupid old man 'a repairer of ancient cars', concludes this gallery of odd portraits, separated by instrumental interludes. Max Jacob and I have aimed, above all, at the belly laugh, the laugh born of surprise, of amazement even, and not that ironic, tight-lipped, logical smile known as 'superior', dear to those who espouse extreme aestheticism.[107]

Guided by the Jacob maxims "Authors who make themselves obscure in order to provoke esteem get what they want and nothing more" and "There is a purity of the guts to which is rare and excellent,"[108] Poulenc composed several musical Kodak moments to create, as he said, a gallery of odd, frightful portraits through the setting of poem's from Jacob's collection *Le Laboratoire Central*. Indeed the connection to photography was not accidental, as Poulenc recalls, when first reading these poems that he "had the definite impression of having found again an old country photo album."[109] Seeing as photo albums and snapshot photography go hand-in-hand, it's not a surprise that Poulenc wanted to capture the essence of his own daily imagery, to find a way to get his "carnival over to the listener."[110] A Paris native Poulenc finds the characters depicted in these poems to be familiar to him, to contain the essence of "the color prints of crimes in the *Petit Parisien* of the Sundays of my childhood."[111]

Just like the typical physical photo album of the early 20th century, the auditory photo album of *Le Bal Masqué* contains both snapshots of people Poulenc knew and cut outs from print media. The three characters, Mlle Malvina, La Dame Aveugle, and the automobile mechanic,[112] are based on people that Poulenc has seen, personally knows, or the personification of personality archetypes:

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[107] Poulenc and Southon, 29.
[108] Poulenc and Southon, 28.
[109] Poulenc 1985, 61.
[110] Poulenc 1985, 61.
[111] Poulenc 1985, 61.
[112] The final movement, simply titled *Finale*, does not give a definitive name. Similarly, this character is not named in *Le Laboratoire Central.* As such, Poulenc refers to him by several unofficial names.

> 'Malvina' and 'La dame aveugle' [...] are painted from life. The first [Malvina] plays the Duchess, her little finger raised, goes to the ball in blue stockings - which is fatal for her: they talk to her about Nietzsche when all she wants is to be taken by storm. Who among us have not known pretentious creatures like this, victims of their own imaginings. While writing 'La dame aveugle' I often recalled an astonishingly stout lady of apparently independent means who, around 1912, frequented the Île de Beauté at Nogent-sur-Marne. She lived in a chalet, half Swiss, half Norman, and passed her days playing patience, sitting on her front door steps attired in a dress of black silk. On a cane armchair a few steps away from her sat a man who looked like Landru,[113] with pince-nez and a cyclist's cap, reading his newspaper [... The *finale*] is an exact portrait of Max Jacob by himself, just as I knew him when he lived in the rue Gabrielle in Montmartre in 1920.[114]

Poulenc constructs the portraits of these characters from fragments of musical styles, cutting and pasting them together with the text to create the semblance of a human face reminiscent of Hannah Höch collage portraits (Figure 10). Jacob's text, which contains "words full of unforeseen ricochets,"[115] is either reinforced or contradicted by Poulenc's musical content in a way that fragments the musical, emotional, and textural congruity.

[113] Henri Désiré Landru (1869-1922) was a French serial killer who allegedly murdered eleven people and was sentenced to execution by guillotine. Poulenc remarks that he imagines La Dame Aveugle might have suffered a similar fate to Landru's victims as depicted in the crime prints in *Petit Parisien.*
[114] Poulenc 1985, 61, 63.
[115] Poulenc 1985, 61.

*Figure 10. Modenschau* by Hannah Höch. Via ArtNet.

For the primary musical example of Poulenc's photomontage technique I will be using the third movement, Mlle Malvina, though of course incongruity is foundational to *Le Bal Masqué* throughout. In consideration of the title *Le Bal Masqué,* or, *The Masked Ball,* the way the text and music interact serves to cover or uncover the masks of the primary attendees. Keeping in mind Pouenc's description of Malvina as: "a pretentious woman whose love is rejected"[116] and "A Duchess, [that] goes to the ball in blue stockings - which is fatal for her [...] all she wants is to be taken by storm, [a] pretentious creature [a] victim of [her] own imaginings,"[117] he acts as the figurative undertaker for Malvina's musical open casket, to make her fragmented, disfigured face suitable for viewing.

Beginning the movement with the lines "Voilà qui j'espère que vous effraie"[118] [Here is something that I hope frightens you,] Poulenc sets the movement up as a moral lesson which resonates with the critical function of photomontage I have been tracing throughout. Positioning Malvina as the embodiment of bourgeois luxury, consumerism, and excess, Poulenc offers a window through which to see an otherwise young, beautiful woman as grotesque. Malvina's death-by-hedonism is present throughout the movement through the lyrics and musical content as demonstrated by a funeral march (Figure 11) accompanied by the lyrics: "Elle se tire bouchon comme une valse tzigane, elle vient mourir d'amour à ta porte"[119] [She corkscrews like a Gypsy waltz, she comes to die from love at your door] which is then interrupted by a sudden, incongruent outburst (Figure 12.) The pattern of lyrical, *almost* genuine content being interrupted with sudden outbursts makes up the core of the movement's musical content. The movement ends with a sudden insertion of a romantic aria-style ode to Malvina: "Malvina oh Fantôme, que

[116] Poulenc and Southon, 29.
[117] Poulenc 1985, 61.
[118] Francis Poulenc, *Le Bal Masqué: Cantate Profane pour Baryton et Orchestre de Chambre sur des Poèmes de Max Jacob,* (Paris: Editions Salabert, 1932) 30.
[119] Poulenc 1932, 32.

Dieu te garde!"[120] [Malvina, oh spirit, may God keep you!] (Figure 13.) This section is sentimental and lush especially in comparison to the rest of the movement as the death-throes of Malvina's aristocratic facade; its disingenuous nature is exposed through its sudden appearance and in its interruption before the end.

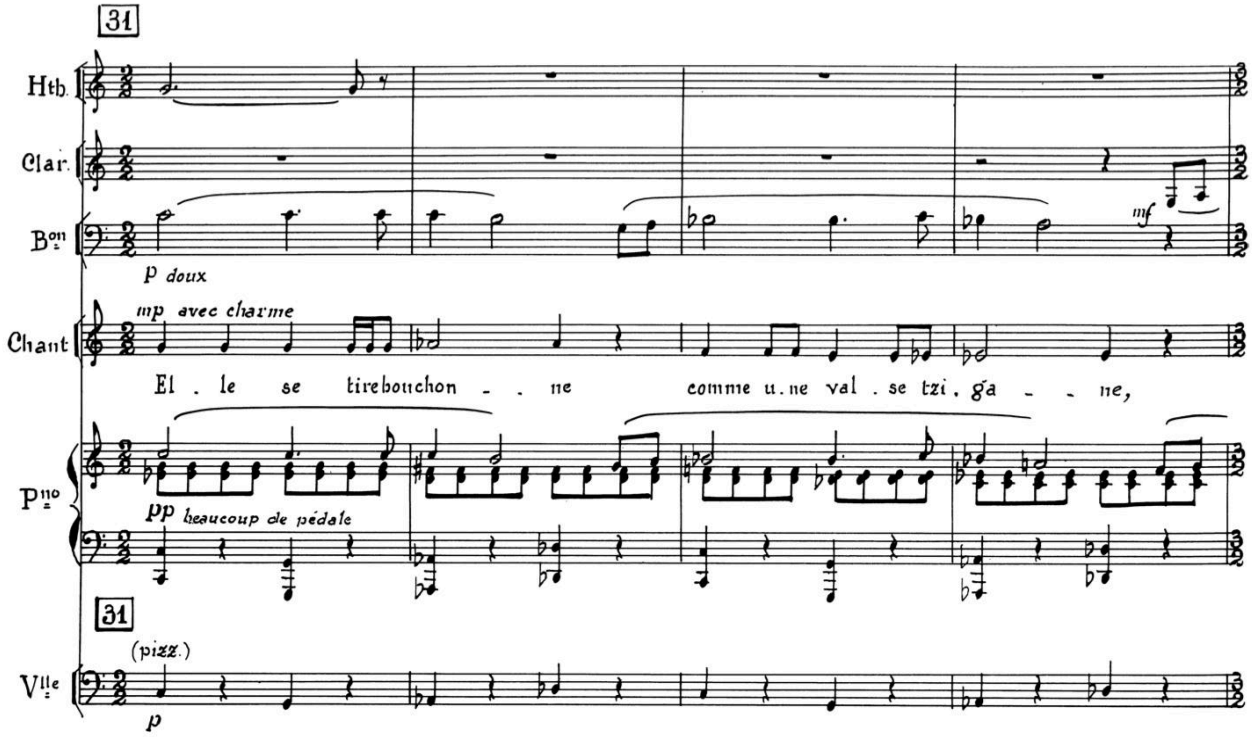


*Figure 11. Le Bal Masqué III: Malvina* M. 21-24 funeral march motive.

[120] Poulenc 1932, 36.

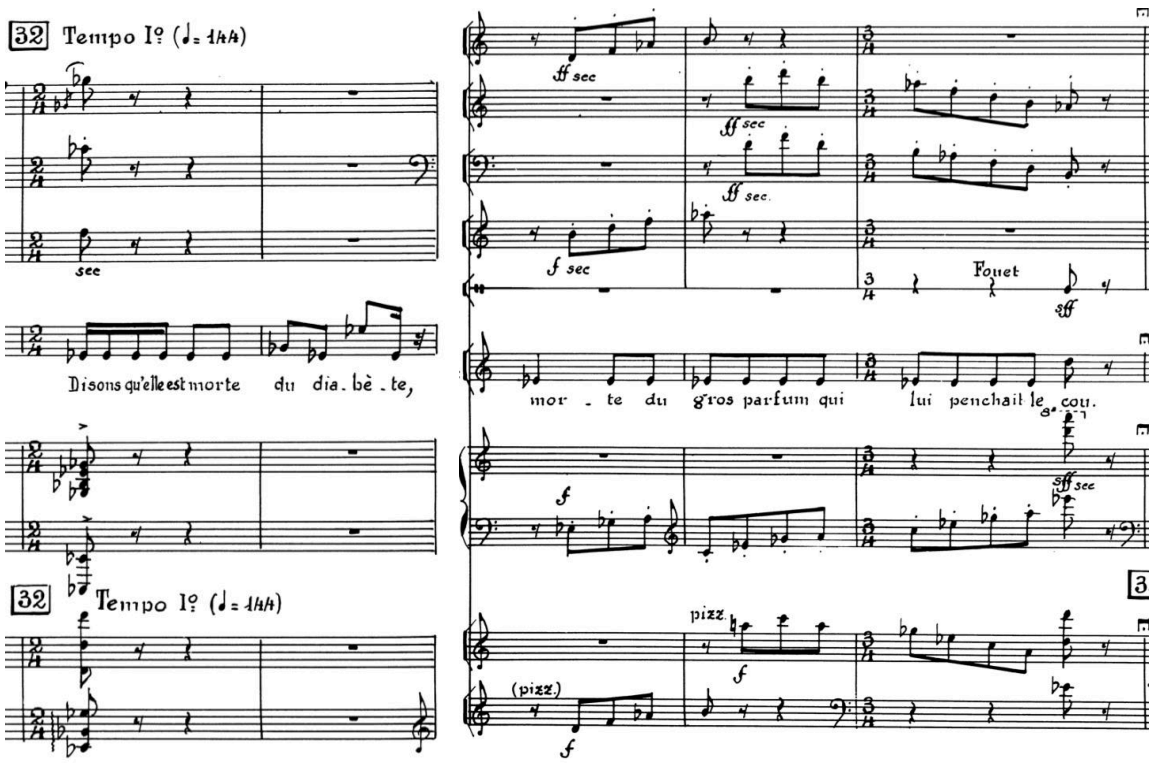


*Figure 12. Le Bal Masqué III: Malvina* M. 30-34 the funeral march interruption.

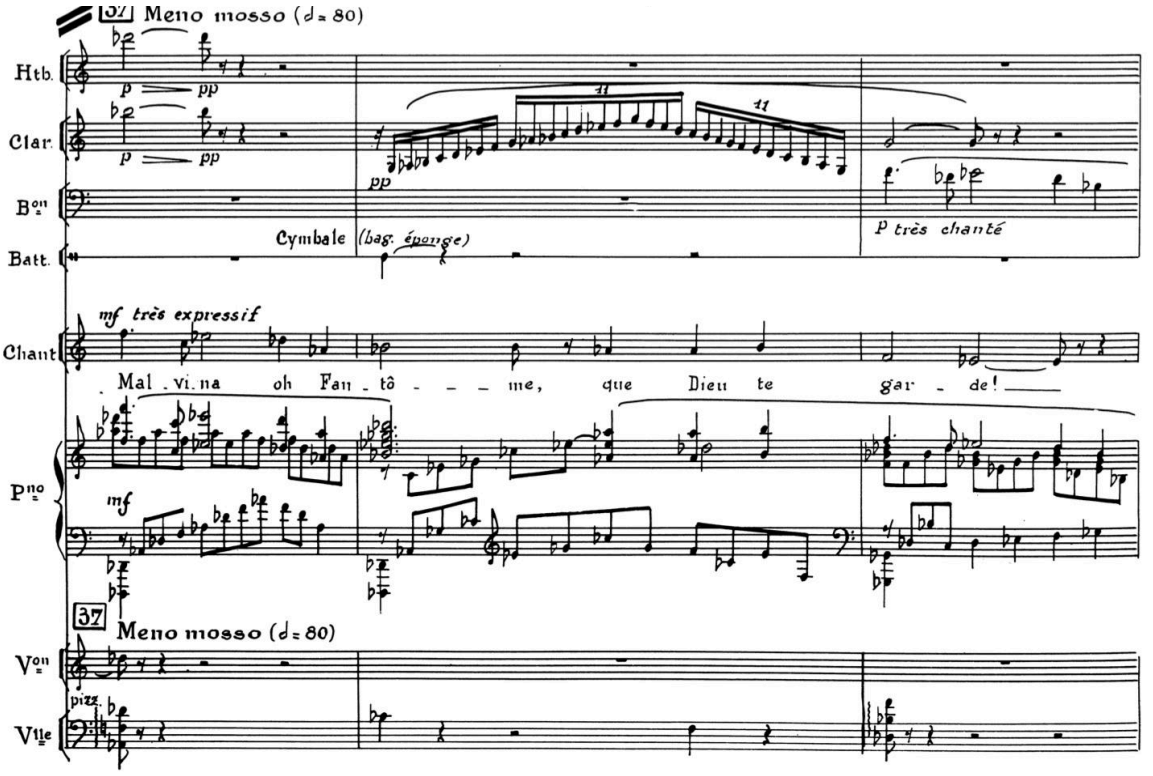


*Figure 13. Le Bal Masqué III: Malvina* M. 55-57 romantic aria.

Through the extraction of snapshots of musical genres and signifiers in conjunction with Jacob's text, Poulenc constructs a photomontage portrait of Malvina at the masked ball successfully through purely auditory means. The contents of Malvina's movement serve to build a picture of her as a woman of excess, that "morte du gros perfume qui lui penchait le cou" [died from the heavy perfume that hangs on her neck.] It seems as well that Malvina has a duplicitous nature, one that is at once charming and docile and yet prone to aggressive outbursts as demonstrated by the repeated juxtaposition of lyrical, melodic sections interrupted by more forceful outbursts. In addition, her aristocratic facade is undermined by her preferences for cheap romantic clichés showing a lack of sophistication in her preferences: her clothing is gaudy, her perfume is overpowering, and she wants nothing more than to live out a clichéed romantic fantasy. Poulenc hints that perhaps her death was caused in part by the people around her, indicating in his biography that she is "an unfortunate but very common victim of snobbery;"[121] She is as much a victim of the bourgeois around her as she is the culpable in her own demise. The nature of Malvina's death appears to be literal on the surface. However, due to her primary description being that of a superficial, young wannabe socialite it seems to be that Poulenc is pointing to a figurative spiritual death rather than a literal one: Malvina's life lacks substance beyond vanity and superficial status. The message being that the bourgeois aspirations Malvina exhibits are nothing to aspire to but instead to be afraid of as it is the cause of her death. Indeed, as Malvina learns, putting on false airs to mingle with bourgeois can be a fatal pursuit; a similar critique that Dada phomonteurs leveled in their own works.

The irony in *Le Bal Masqué* consisting of bourgeois caricatures is in the fact that it was commissioned by the Noailles family for a private concert for their close friends. The Viscomte and Viscomtesse Noailles commissioned many pieces from Poulenc before and after *Le Bal*

[121] Qtd. in Henri Hell, *Francis Poulenc*, Trans. Edward Lockspeiser (New York: Grove Press, 1959) 41.

*Masqué* and as such he was familiar with the family and their inner circle.[122] Poulenc himself was a member of the upper class with his family opening a successful pharmaceutical and photographic chemicals business which eventually became the contemporary French pharmaceuticals manufacturer Rhône-Poulenc S.A. As Poulenc said, he wanted to construct the portraits of these characters from life, from what was familiar to him. Considering his well-to-do upbringing and involvement with aristocrats, he had no shortage of subjects for his auditory photo album. In taking these photos, Poulenc aimed for humor for "the belly laugh, the laugh born of surprise, of amazement even, and not that ironic tight-lipped, logical smile known as 'superior,' dear to those who espouse extreme aestheticism."[123] Poulenc aimed to entertain his bourgeois audience by making them the butt of the joke.

Despite being more akin to his patrons in social and financial standing, Poulenc had a reputation for being "as much at ease with the man in the street as with high society."[124] Poulenc didn't shy away from people in lower socio-economic spheres, in fact he welcomed it and it's his willingness to traverse the social hierarchy without pretensions that makes *Le Bal Masqué* an effective photomontage-as-critique. Poulenc's initial photos are innocent, funny, humorous, but the critique he creates by cutting them up for collage materials is anything but lighthearted; Indeed, the criticisms he levies at his bourgeois audience are quite damning. When pasted back together in the same manner of Dada photomontage, the incongruity between the musical-photo-fragments exposes the farcical nature of bourgeois culture; power is consolidated to class of people who, despite appearing to be important, are just as banal as the people deemed beneath them.

[122] Poulenc 1985, 59, 120.
[123] Poulenc and Southon, 29.
[124] Poulenc and Southon, 8.

Poulenc as both an insider and an outsider in the higher class circles allowed him to get away with this critique in the first place. Poulenc's dual status allowed *Le Bal Masqué* to be a photo album of snapshots, not the refined, posed portraits the bourgeois are used to being depicted in. As contrasted with *Les Mariés de la tour Eiffel,* the bourgeois characters in *Le Bal Masqué* couldn't pose themselves for the camera but instead had no choice but to appear as they really are. In this way, Poulenc, a member of the upper class, was allowed to take more "authentic" photos of them because he was a member of their circle who sees through farcical appearances of wealth and power. Seeing this, Poulenc takes their photos and then cuts them up, rearranging their parts to suit the way he sees them: one big carnival act.[125]

[125] Hell, 42.

## Conclusion: One Man's Trash is Another Man's Subversive Critique

Largely confined to the fringes of musical discourse, the visuality inherent to the musical works of Jean Cocteau and Francis Poulenc has been largely ignored by previous literature. Indeed, their relegation to the inconsequential edges of Avant-Garde discourse or exclusion from it all together is in part due to their intrinsically multidisciplinary nature which doesn't lend itself to easy penetration. However, failure to properly grapple with the interconnected musical and visual elements resulted in their truly subversive nature being overlooked; their status as a foundational movement within modernism going unrecognized. Arnold Schoenberg as the figurehead of a primarily syntactical revolution leaves little room for the Cocteau-led musical Avant-Garde.

Within my examination of these works, photomontage is used as a metaphor for a critical re-evaluation of the popular model of musical Avant-Garde to understand not only the way the music operates but to account for the visual elements. Redefining what music means rather than how it sounds, the combination of the visual and the musical subverts semantic convention in much the same way that photomontage does: redefining, recontextualizing or decontextualizing signs altogether through excision and juxtaposition. By centering both Jean Cocteau and Francis Poulenc, the comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach I take within this paper fills the distinctly Couctea/Poulenc shaped gap in the Avant-Garde

When Eastman Kodak Co. released the first portable box camera in 1888, they released photography from its captivity in professional studios and into the hands of the middle and working class. The camera's newfound freedom led to the subjectification of the everyday through the development of a new, unrefined style of photography known as snapshots. Inherently tied to Kodak, the snapshot style of photography became synonymous with the idea of

"Kodak Moments," a sentimental yet banal life event deemed worthy of capturing. As such, the average person became the subject of art rather than only people who could afford it which in turn put photography at the forefront of contemporary middle and working class aesthetics that permeated print and popular media. The subjectivity of daily life led to an unprecedented centering of the "authentic" every day experience and thus the snapshot photograph was considered to be the photographic depiction most representational of reality.

The banality of the snapshot photo was appealing to both the visual and musical Avant-Garde as a critique of the high-art establishment through the manipulation of photographic verisimilitude in the photomontage technique of collage. Though the ramifications of popular photography, banality, and the aestheticization of the every day has been discussed in the context of purely visual Avant-Garde, the true impact on the musical arts has not been recognized or discussed. Similarly, though the use of collage in musical composition is well-documented, the ways in which it was introduced through the medium of photomontage has not been well established in the literature. As such, the intersection of popular photography, visual, and musical arts I have presented here requires much deeper investigation and opens up endless new avenues for exploration. In my future research I plan to further explore the possible impact of the "Kodak moment" on the reaction against Wagnerian aesthetics in both Dada and the Cocteau-led musical Avant-Garde. To build upon the foundations I established here, I plan to further investigate *Les Mariés de la tour Eiffel* and *Le Bal Masqué* in addition to other works by members of *Les Six* and Cocteau such as *Le Boeuf sur le Toit* and *Le Gendarme Incompris.* Sound poetry, considered to be the closest thing to explicitly musical Dada works, similarly incorporated collage and what I am defining as an "anti-Wagner aesthetics of banality" which will be the object of future investigation. In addition, though his work is briefly mentioned within this paper, the writings of

Walter Benjamin's theories of crisis of experience and of the arts would provide additional support to the contextual discussion of these pieces.

When Kodak advertised their product as "the camera that takes the world!" (Figure 14,) they likely didn't realize that they were predicting the true magnitude of influence they would have on the world of the arts as a whole. Though not necessarily obvious, the effects of Kodak's advancements and democratization of imaging technology defined the aesthetic of the post-WWI Avant-Garde musical landscape, opening up the possibilities to question not only reality, meaning, and truth, but the possibilities of musical composition as we previously understood it. To commemorate the conclusion of this musicological Kodak moment I'm going to take your picture; hold still and watch the birdy.

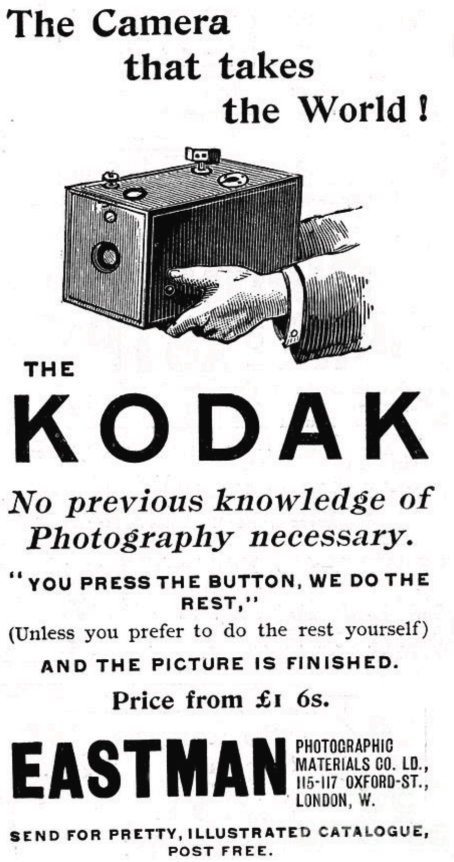


*Figure 14.* Advertisement for Kodak cameras in the London News, September 16, 1893. Via Oxford Science Archive/Getty Images.

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