

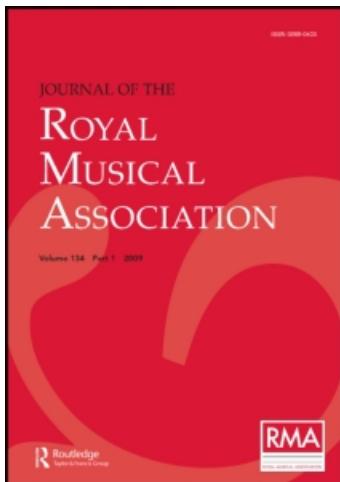
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À la recherche du vrai *Socrate*

PIETRO DOSSENA

Introduction

Pococuranté, en attendant le dîner, se fit donner un concerto. Candide trouva la musique délicieuse. ‘Ce bruit’, dit Pococuranté, ‘peut amuser une demi-heure; mais s’il dure plus longtemps, il fatigue tout le monde, quoique personne n’ose l’avouer. La musique aujourd’hui n’est plus que l’art d’exécuter des choses difficiles, et ce qui n’est que difficile ne plaît point à la longue.’

Voltaire, *Candide* (1759), chapter XXV¹

THE last sentence uttered by the Venetian nobleman Pococuranté, according to Voltaire, would not have seemed odd coming from Erik Satie, especially at the beginning of 1917, when he started work on *Socrate*. This piece had been commissioned by the Princesse Edmond de Polignac (1865–1943) at the end of 1916, and occupied him until the end of 1918.² The first private performances date from 1918, but Satie had to wait until 1920 for the two public premières – on 14 February with piano accompaniment, and on 7 June in the orchestral version.

Five of Satie’s letters help us to get closer to his ideas about and enthusiasm for this composition:

I am afraid of ‘mucking up’ this work; I would like it to be as white and pure as Antiquity.
(6 January 1917)³

I’m working on the *Life of Socrates*. I have found a beautiful translation: one by Victor Cousin. Plato is a perfect collaborator, very gentle and never importunate. What a dream!

The author wishes to thank the editors, readers and many others who provided feedback on earlier versions of this article for their invaluable help and many suggestions.

¹ Voltaire, *Candide*, ed. Sylviane Léoni (Paris, 1995), 144. ‘While waiting for dinner, Pococurante had a concerto performed. Candide found the music enchanting. “This noise”, said Pococurante, “can give half an hour’s amusement; but if it lasts any longer it bores everyone, though no one dares to admit it. Music today is nothing more than the art of performing difficult pieces, and what is merely difficult gives no lasting pleasure” (Voltaire, *Candide: Or Optimism*, trans. John Butt, London, 1947, 119).

² The earliest of Satie’s letters to mention *Socrate* specifically (‘Je m’occupe de la “Vie de Socrate”’) dates from 6 January 1917; the last, in which he writes ‘Je remets l’orchestre au net’, is dated 10 October 1918. See Erik Satie, *Correspondance presque complète*, ed. Ornella Volta (Paris, c.2000), 273, 341.

³ ‘J’ai une frousse de “rater” cette oeuvre que je voudrais blanche & pure comme l’Antique’ (*ibid.*, 273).

[...] I am swimming in happiness. At last! I am free, free as the air, as the water, as the wild sheep. Long live Plato! Long live Victor Cousin! I am free! completely free! What happiness! (18 January 1917)⁴

It is a return towards classical simplicity with a modern sensibility. I owe this – very useful – return to my ‘Cubist’ friends. Bless them! (3 April 1918)⁵

I’m very happy with my work. (24 June 1918)⁶

[...] my most important work. (1 December 1918)⁷

In another text, he presents his finished work to the princess as:

Socrate – Symphonic drama with 4 voices,⁸ ... written on Plato’s Dialogues ...
 ... The translation is by Victor Cousin. This work is composed of 3 parts: ...
 ... The first presents a portrait of Socrates by Alcibiades, a portrait drawn from the *Symposium*; ...
 ... in the second part, we join Socrates and Phaedrus for a walk along the banks of the river Ilissus. This part is drawn from *Phaedrus*; ...
 ... the third part reconstructs the death of Socrates, drawn from *Phaedo* and narrated by the latter ...
 ... In writing this piece, ... I have not sought to add anything to the beauty of Plato’s Dialogues: ... it is simply an act of piety, an artist’s reverie, ... a humble tribute ...

 ... The aesthetic of this work is devoted to clarity; ... simplicity accompanies and guides it ... That’s all: ... I never wanted anything else ...⁹

⁴ ‘Je travaille à la “*Vie de Socrate*”. J’ai trouvé une belle traduction: celle de Victor Cousin. Platon est un collaborateur parfait, très doux & jamais importun. Un rêve, quoi! [...] Je nage dans la félicité. Enfin! je suis libre, libre comme l’air, comme l’eau, comme la brebis sauvage. Vive Platon! Vive Victor Cousin! Je suis libre! très libre! Quel bonheur! (*ibid.*, 277–8).

⁵ ‘C’est un retour vers la simplicité classique, avec sensibilité moderne. Je dois ce retour – aux bons usages – à mes amis “cubistes”. Qu’ils soient bénis!’ (*ibid.*, 325; English translation from Ornella Volta, *Satie Seen through his Letters*, trans. Michael Bullock, London and New York, 1989, 152).

⁶ ‘Je suis très content de mon travail’ (Satie, *Correspondance*, ed. Volta, 329).

⁷ ‘[...] mon oeuvre maîtresse’ (*ibid.*, 347).

⁸ In the frontispiece of the first edition, the piece is generically defined as a ‘drame symphonique avec voix’. The French substantive ‘voix’ is indeclinable, so remains ambiguous about the required number of singers: one or more? The characters are four, but they never speak at the same time, so a single singer can perform the whole piece. Satie allowed performances with only one voice, but preferred the four sopranos, where each character corresponds to a different singer. On 16 April 1919 he explains: “‘*Socrate*’ est écrit pour sopranis. Je désire qu’en “*public*” il soit donné comme je l’ai écrit ... “avec 4 sopranis”” (*‘Socrate’ is written for sopranos. I wish it to be performed in *public* as I wrote it ... with 4 sopranos*; Satie, *Correspondance*, ed. Volta, 361).

⁹ “‘*Socrate*’ – Drame symphonique avec 4 voix, ... écrit sur les Dialogues de Platon ...
 ... La traduction est de Victor Cousin. Cet ouvrage comporte 3 parties: ...
 ... La première nous donne un portrait de Socrate par Alcibiade, portrait tiré du *Banquet*; ...
 ... dans la deuxième partie, nous assistons à une promenade de Socrate & de Phèdre le long des bords de l’Ilissus. Cette partie est tirée de *Phèdre*; ...

Socrate, first published in late January 1920 by Éditions de La Sirène (Paris), consists of three parts: ‘Portrait de Socrate’, ‘Bords de l’Ilissus’ and ‘Mort de Socrate’.¹⁰ It exists in two versions: one for voices (four sopranos – two high, two mezzo)¹¹ and piano, the other for the same combination of voices and small orchestra (fl., ob., cor ang., cl., bn, hn, tpt, hp, timp., str.). The odd subtitle, *Drame symphonique*, deserves further explanation: *Socrate* is by no means symphonic in a traditional sense, as there is no conventional development of material, and the size of the orchestra is small. Neither is it properly dramatic, as there is no represented action. In the first episode, the start of Alcibiades’ melody is marked ‘Récit (en lisant)’, which means that the author intended the whole text to be ‘read’, rather than simply ‘sung’. Moreover, the absence of scenery and of any obvious identification between the male characters and the female singers contributes to the overall effect of estrangement: there are no exterior, visible actions, only interior, audible nuances. In other words, it is as if the drama were concealed in the music, so that the real actions happen in the mind of the listener, who thus becomes a participant in the drama. His mind is perhaps the only factor to undergo a true change during this ‘symphonic drama’.

Socrate provoked strong reactions among the public and critics, oscillating between excessive praise (a well-known *boutade* by Robert Caby claims that ‘a single work like *Socrate* proves to be as rich in musical ideas, if not richer, than a monument like the *Tetralogy*’),¹² more balanced remarks, and total disapproval (including ridicule). Sometimes the aesthetic judgment precedes the commentary on the work, as if the declaration of love (or hate) provides preliminary coordinates necessary to the observation. The disparity of opinion aside, *Socrate* seems to possess something peculiar – many critics underline its uniqueness, both in Satie’s *oeuvre* and in the history of music – and it is certainly a problematic piece, atypical, and impossible to pigeonhole.

... la troisième partie nous reconstitue la mort de Socrate, tirée de *Phédon*, & racontée par celui-ci...

... En écrivant cette oeuvre, ... je n'ai nullement voulu ajouter à la beauté des Dialogues de Platon: ... ce n'est, ici, qu'un acte de piété, qu'une rêverie d'artiste, ... qu'un humble hommage...

.....

.....

... L'esthétique de cet ouvrage se voue à la clarté; ... la simplicité l'accompagne, la dirige ... C'est tout: ... je n'ai pas désiré autre chose...’ Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (fonds Jane Bathori), unsigned and undated autograph manuscript, reproduced in Ornella Volta, *Erik Satie* (Paris, 1997), 139. See also Erik Satie, *Quaderni di un mammifero*, ed. Ornella Volta (Milan, 1980), 230.

¹⁰ Here, in the interests of brevity and convenience, I shall use the French title of the Platonic dialogue each one is taken from: *Le banquet*, *Phèdre* and *Phédon*.

¹¹ In the letter of 1 December 1918 cited above, he also states that the four sopranos are to be ‘deux aigus, deux mezzo’ (Satie, *Correspondance*, ed. Volta, 347).

¹² ‘[...] une seule oeuvre comme le *Socrate* se révèle à l'analyse aussi riche, sinon plus riche, en idées musicales qu'un monument comme la *Tétralogie*’. Robert Caby, ‘Erik Satie à sa vraie place’, *La revue musicale*, 214 (June 1952), 29.

The circumstances in which it was composed were unusually favourable. Although it was a commission, Satie was at liberty to work independently, with Plato as an ideal and silent collaborator. So it is a very personal work, in which the role of the Princesse de Polignac soon recedes into the background. In *Socrate* Satie appears more 'naked' than he had ever allowed himself to be before. We get the impression that this is his most important creation to date, an impression confirmed in the letters cited above; but only a few scholars have succeeded in explaining it in a truly convincing way. Close examination reveals that underlying *Socrate* are manifold references – both cultural and biographical – that can be shaped into as many interpretative perspectives, some of which overlap. The most important are cubism; *esprit nouveau*, the 'cult of restraint' and Guillaume Apollinaire; identification between Satie and Socrates; an exercise in Atticism; neoclassicism and 'rappel à l'ordre'; *musique d'ameublement*; and so on. Thus, there are many keys at our disposal, but only a single door to open. For critics this has led to disorientation coupled with fascination. Even today *Socrate* remains impenetrable and enigmatic, as if it were a private matter between Satie, Plato and Socrates: a match between Satie and Socrates – two rounds and the decider¹³ – with Plato as referee.

In search of a way out of this cul-de-sac, going back to the primary musical sources (Satie's sketchbooks) seems salutary, for there are some aspects of *Socrate* that only the manuscripts can clarify. The approach adopted in this article is 'genetic', that is to say that it concentrates on the compositional process. As a forensic detective dispatched from a scientific unit collects all the traces from the crime scene, so the musical geneticist, once he has collected all the relevant data, goes to his laboratory to analyse them. Both start by formulating hypotheses about the chronological sequence of events, though in the semiotic textual genesis nobody, fortunately, is killed, and the 'culprit' is already known. And instead of blood stains, there are pencil or ink marks to be observed, which are much more hygienic, but often just as indecipherable.

Analysis of Satie's sketches and drafts tries to show how everything happened. In this way, it adds a diachronic dimension – the 'thickness' of the story – to the synchronic dimension of the final version. But it does not stop at the surface of the visible signs: it also strives to interpret what these reveal, to shed light on the meaning behind the work. The geneticist has to make conjectures about the mental processes beneath the visible data. Comparison between the genetic variants allows him/her to follow the author's choices and afterthoughts, his hesitations and discoveries. Obviously, the sensation of divining the workings of another's mind is illusory, but this does not render the genetic approach pointless. On the contrary, it represents a privileged instrument with which to enter a world

¹³ 'Sulla marcata preferenza di Satie per i trittici [...] sono state formulate diverse ipotesi. [...] Georges-Jean Aubry, 1916, riporta che Satie voleva fare con questi suoi trittici "le due manches e la bella" ("Various hypotheses concerning Satie's marked preference for triptychs [...] have been formulated. [...] Georges-Jean Aubry, 1916, reports that Satie wanted his triptychs to be like "two rounds and the decider"). Satie, *Quaderni di un mammifero*, ed. Volta, 193.

leading to the analysis of the final text as a separate entity: the world of writing in its stage of becoming.

All the existing preparatory materials – here called the *avant-texte* – for *Socrate* are contained in seven oblong notebooks kept at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris (hereafter BNF), at shelfmarks 9623(1–6) and 9611. The numbering of the sketchbooks does not reflect their chronological sequence, which is particularly hard to define because Satie frequently returned to earlier sketches and used more than one notebook at the same time. In the sketchbooks we find a wide variety of signs: musical notes above all, but also parts of Plato's text in Cousin's translation. There are verbal signs of various kinds, drawings, numbers, sketches for letters and articles, and other texts (including Satie's famous contemporary 'aesthetic statement' headed 'La matière (Idée) & la main d'œuvre (écriture)'). An exhaustive study of the musical contents shows continual alternation between two different compositional attitudes – long continuity drafts and what I will call 'key passages'. The term 'continuity draft' refers to the uninterrupted draft of a quite extended section of the work. The main feature of those in *Socrate* is the almost total absence of significant corrections. This means that they are 'opaque' within the genetic interpretation, for genetic criticism can operate only where there are variants showing differences between the subsequent stages of the compositional process. In *Socrate* these stages are few and very similar to each other, so it is impossible to infer meaningful considerations of a genetic kind from them.¹⁴

On the other hand, a 'key passage' can be defined as an important event within the final version – here called the *texte* – of *Socrate*: a few bars of which many versions occur in the *avant-texte*. Every version is called a 'genetic variant' or simply 'variant'. These characteristics – essentially generic – are common to all the key passages, but it should be emphasized that mine is a conceptual abstraction applied to heterogeneous materials, so it cannot fully accord with their great variability: each key passage stands as a unique case. The identification of the key passages themselves is not always easy; but there can be no real doubt that the main ones include the following five:

- the start of *Le banquet* (bars 1–28)
- bars 46–59 of *Le banquet*
- bar 164 to the end of *Le banquet*¹⁵
- the start of *Phèdre* (bars 1–12)
- the start of *Phédon* (bars 1–20).

¹⁴ 'La critique génétique reste muette devant des œuvres sans manuscrits comme devant des manuscrits sans réécriture' ('Genetic criticism remains mute before works without manuscripts, as it does before manuscripts without any rewriting'). Almuth Grésillon, *Éléments de critique génétique: Lire les manuscrits modernes* ([Paris], 1994), 30.

¹⁵ These bars correspond to the sentence pronounced by Socrates which closes *Le banquet*.

This article will focus on the analysis of one of these key passages in detail, namely bars 46–59 of *Le banquet*, a decision made not only for reasons of concision: as will become apparent, an understanding of the genesis of this passage is important for the interpretation both of the passage itself (which usually goes unnoticed) and of *Socrate* as a whole.

Genesis of *Le banquet*, bars 46–59

The compositional process here is by definition a continuous one, but it has to be divided into distinct and chronologically consecutive units in order to be described and analysed; so Example 1 (see Appendix) gives all the genetic variants of this key passage as separate stages (though what is offered is just one possible reading of the material). In the notebooks, signs (pencil markings, erasures made with a rubber, marks in brown or red ink, deletions in pencil or ink) often relate to two or more superimposed layers, so when attempting to decipher them we face serious problems that can lead to interpretative doubts: how many separate strata should we divide a page full of such signs into?

The transcription of the variants – though made with the greatest possible accuracy – does not qualify as a diplomatic transcription or any sort of critical edition. Each variant has been extracted and presented on its own, with a verbal indication of its position on the manuscript page, and is identified by a letter of the alphabet. The variants are presented in the most likely chronological order. The ordering is not self-evident, but a detailed explanation would involve long descriptions of the nature of each variant (the typology of writing instruments used by the author, and the possible presence of subsequent layers), which lie beyond the scope of the present article.¹⁶ The main interpretative conclusions of this research should not be invalidated, however, even if some of my hypotheses and choices in reconstructing the compositional events here remain speculative.

In the following pages I endeavour to show how Satie travelled from variant **a** to the final version (**f.v.**). Figure 1 shows the overall scheme of the 29 stages involved, which are further elucidated in Tables 1–2 (see Appendix), while Example 1 shows the variants themselves. Before starting our chronological journey, we should note that Satie does not always write all the accidentals in a coherent way (especially in the earliest variants). Sometimes he repeats accidentals that are already present, as if they refer only to the note before which they are placed; at other times he seems to presuppose their validity for the whole musical fragment. This lack of precision occurs because (as we shall see) these variants are harmonizations of a cantus firmus, lacking a definite metre and barlines. In the transcriptions I have preserved the harmonic ‘spelling’ of the manuscript, although I have added some accidentals in square brackets for clarification.

¹⁶ For detailed discussion of these points, see the extended study of which this article represents a summary: Pietro Dossena, ‘Labirinti compositivi tra *avant-texte* e *texte*: Sulla genesi del *Socrate* di Erik Satie’ (dissertation, University of Milan, 2005).

Note: Tables 1 and 2 (see Appendix) give a more detailed explanation of the connections across the scheme

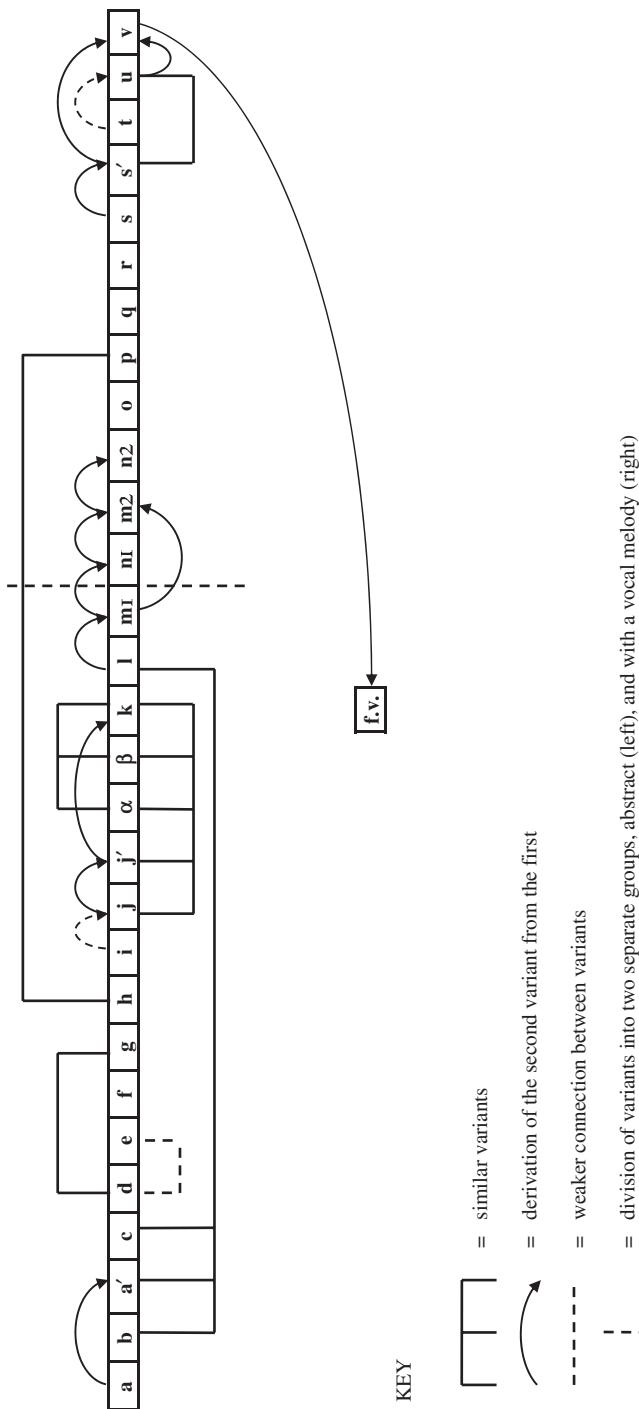


Figure 1. Synoptical-interpretative scheme within bars 46–59 of *Le banquet*.

The first variants (**a–c**) are simple chord sequences as Satie tries out various harmonizations on the first page of BNF 9623(4). The upper voice in **a** leaps up and down, but in the following stages (**b–c**) the melodic movements are more uniform and all the parts mirror the same melody at different pitches. The pompous title, ‘System of perfect fourths or fifths’ (see Example 1, note a) reflects Satie’s genuine interest in formalization and his passion for compositional systems. Variant **b** is actually composed in quasi-oriental perfect fifths, while both **a'** and **c** use perfect fourths in the upper stave.

The next attempts, **d–i**, are written on page 4 of the same notebook. Only the upper melody of the previous variants is retained, and this becomes the constant leading voice, as in the *chants donnés* Satie had to harmonize during his years at the Schola Cantorum (1905–12). The cantus firmus $b', d', b', d'', e', c', b'$ is a melody normally belonging to the fourth mode – *deuterus plagalis* (also known as the Hypophrygian mode) – whose final is E, here transposed up a perfect fifth, and which is characterized by the semitone between the final and the note immediately above it (E–F; so, in our case, B–C). Nevertheless, a search through the plainchants of the fourth mode produces nothing similar; though some antiphons of the fourth mode start identically, they continue differently.¹⁷ Overall, no plainchant has the right notes in exactly the right order, using either the actual pitches or a transposition of them.¹⁸ There is, however, more convincing similarity to the well-known Easter sequence *Victimae paschali laudes*: Satie may well have taken the start of this first-mode piece (D, C, D, F, G, F, E, D)¹⁹ and transposed it up a major sixth. Admittedly there is a significant omission – the second F – but perhaps this was to disguise the exact quotation and avoid the perfect symmetry of the two balancing arches D, C, D and F, G, F. (We will return to the significance of this choice later.)

In Satie’s hands, this melody becomes a creative spark that ignites a wide harmonic exploration. In **d** and **g** he writes two variations of the same contrapuntal idea; **e** is smoother, thanks to the insertion of (Bachian?) quavers and the use of more conventional chords (even if they are connected in rather unconventional cadences); **f** is an experiment in diminished chords, while in **h** the melody (whose penultimate note is probably sharpened) is concealed in the inner parts and marked with upward stems. But the heterogeneous harmonies and elaborate part-writing of **i** are a sign that the solution is still far away. The last chord of **i** – a slash chord²⁰ – is highlighted by an ‘X’, and Satie draws on this in **j** and **j'**, which are formed entirely from such chords.

¹⁷ *Postquam surrexit Dominus* and *Si ego Dominus* start with E, D, E, G, (G), A, but continue with A, G, A, G, G, A, B, C. These melodies are in the *Graduale triplex*, 164, 166, and in the *Liber usualis*, 660, 662. The second also exists in a transposition to the first mode: *Graduale triplex*, 885.

¹⁸ I am grateful to Pieter Mannaerts for this information.

¹⁹ This melody is in the *Graduale triplex*, 198, and in the *Liber usualis*, 780.

²⁰ This term is especially used in jazz (or, more precisely, jazz-rock): ‘The simplest definition of a slash chord is “a triad over a bass note”’ (Mark Levine, *The Jazz Theory Book*, Petaluma, CA, 1995, 104). A slash chord is written as follows: D/C is a D major triad superimposed on a C functioning as bass (but I also permit the perfect fifth C–G). The last chord of **i** is thus Em/D. This kind of

The fragments from **j** to **k** belong to a single flow of connected compositional thoughts, and so form a coherent block: they all use different key signatures on each stave; in **α**, **β** and **k** only two types of chord are used. Furthermore, not only is **j'** derived from its underlying layer, **j**, but **k** also derives from **j'**, as their upper staves are identical. Variant **k** spreads over three staves, which implies that Satie probably intended to add a vocal melody above the piano part.

Instead of starting on a new path, however, he reverts to the logic of his first attempts, where all the voices mirror the cantus firmus. In **l** this is transposed an octave down, perhaps to leave space for a vocal melody that, once again, is absent. Satie derives **m1** from **l**, and, from this point onward, he starts moving back and forth between pages 7 and 14–15 of BNF 9623(4), where he is also writing the long continuity draft of bars 1–72 of *Le banquet* (pp. 12–17). He tries to adapt **m1** to bars 46–54 of the draft, and the outcome is **n1**, whose vocal melody is clearly derived from the cantus firmus, but with a melodic insertion for the words ‘les deux pièces’. Then Satie decides to prolong the music of **n1** to fit in the last part of the sentence (bars 54–9), so he goes back to page 7, extends the chords of **m1** by analogy and superimposes upon them a vocal melody similar to that of **n1**, characterized by rows of repeated notes. The resulting variant, **m2**, is then copied down as **n2** into the continuity draft, with the small but significant change of the first note of the voice – which completes the definitive melody (see the final version) and confirms the plausibility of the chosen chronological order.

Variant **o** is written (and then erased) in the same place as **n1** and **n2**, as an alternative accompaniment to the vocal melody that has just been finalized. The elementary chord sequence of the preceding variants probably seemed too static to Satie, in comparison with the almost unbroken flow of quavers of the surrounding continuity draft.

The last variants are written in another notebook, BNF 9623(1): **p** picks up the idea of **h** and inserts it into the new vocal context – in fact, here the ‘hidden’ melody is an evolution of the cantus firmus that closely follows the vocal part – but Satie’s exhaustive exploration is not over yet. In **q** he appears to realize that he has tried a lot of harmonic solutions, but overlooked the simplest – major and minor triads. Variant **r** could be seen as a return to the initial ‘system of perfect fourths or fifths’: it was immediately crossed out, however, and left incomplete.

The bell for the final round is about to ring: Satie writes **s** with renewed fantasy and freedom, then modifies it as **s'**, whose second part is retained as bars 53–9 of the final version. Satie still has to find a satisfactory solution to the first part of the key passage, which is attained in just two more attempts. In the first, **t**, the simple harmonic model of crotchets moving in parallel sixths is broken at the beginning of the third bar, where the unexpected semitone inserts a slight emotional accent into the overall contrapuntal transparency. But the deciding variant, **u**, has no

symbolic notation is simple and is able to represent the harmony of the variants we are currently examining.

connections with **t**, apart from a possible borrowing of its first chord. It is instead a four-part texture, recalling the flow of quaver chords superimposed on a pivot note in the second half of **s'**. The final version is now defined: Satie has merely to join **u** and the second part of **s'** together to form **v**, which is written in ink on the continuity draft, directly over the layers of **n1**, **n2** and **o** in BNF 9623(4).

Commentary

The compositional process represented in Figure 1 can be likened to the movements of the author in a 'compositional labyrinth' of his own construction, with the reader invited to play a game of following in the composer's footsteps. Each non-directional grouping is like a set of similarly shaped paths, somehow alternative and interchangeable; each directional link shows the author pursuing a path which seems promising, but could equally end in a cul-de-sac. The solution to the compositional problem that is the centre of the labyrinth thus seems to be reached through some sort of intricate process of trial and error: the number of dead ends suggests that Satie is constantly revising his goals, as if he wants to retain a certain immediacy or creative innocence. Nevertheless, the presence of recurring elements (indicated by the groupings), and of points of intersection between different trajectories, shows that nothing is left to chance. On the contrary, a strong determination to try out many possibilities (whether linked or not) is evident, each of which – even if not drawn on afterwards – might have an important function in the composition of the key passage. Most of all, the directional connections show Satie working retrospectively too, aiming to draw conclusions (or simply seeking to progress) from what he has already written.

The scheme in Figure 1 shows a far from naive way of composing, which – like a dowser – lets itself be guided by the flow of events. Indeed, Satie proceeds with an empirical attitude: the exploration of divergent paths seems a deliberate choice, the derivative connections between variants representing a directionality of his compositional thought which, even if not teleologically unique, is none the less present. The final version is certainly not an idea already formed and hidden in the composer's mind, needing to be brought to light through soul-searching. Instead, it is a musical object moulded by the author's hands, as if in a series of chemical reactions, only some of which produce reusable and refinable results. The Erik Satie that emerges here is somewhere between a medieval alchemist and a modern scientist: of the former he retains the delight in experimentation, the ascetic obstinacy to the verge of obsession; and with the latter he shares the objective and systematic organization of his work, the relentless self-criticism and, last but not least, the economy of the means employed. Even elements which at first can seem insignificant are often drawn on and modified later.

The astonishing number of different harmonizations of the same melody (the *cantus firmus*) has to be considered in relation to Satie's 'aesthetic statement', headed 'La matière (Idée) & la main d'œuvre (écriture)', written on the recto

of the back cover of the notebook BNF 9611. Here is the most pertinent part of that text:

Subject matter (Idea) and Craftsmanship (writing). ‘Craftsmanship’ is often superior to subject matter.

To have a feeling for harmony is to have a feeling for tonality.

The serious examination of a melody will always make an excellent *harmonic* exercise for the student.

A melody does not imply its *harmony*, any more than a landscape implies its *colour*. The harmonic *potential* of a melody is infinite, for a melody is only an expression within the overall Expression. Do not forget that the melody is the Idea, the outline; as much as it is the form and the subject matter of a work. The harmony is an illumination, an exhibition of the object, its reflection.²¹

What we have seen of the construction of this piece, and particularly of the variants of this key passage, illustrates precisely the final sentence of Satie’s credo, in so far as many diverse illuminations of the same musical object are displayed. In this sense, Satie’s role here is analogous to that of a modern lighting designer.

But why does Satie use a cantus firmus? The words pronounced by Alcibiades offer us some clues:

First, I say that he [Socrates] indeed resembles the sileni exposed in sculptors’ studios, represented by artists as holding a flute or pipes in their hands [the text of bars 29–45], and in whose interior – when they are opened by separating the two parts of which they are composed – statues of gods are found [bars 46–59].²²

Here, Alcibiades compares Socrates to the sileni – apothecary’s boxes, usually containing perfumes and spices, which are ornamented with grotesque pictures of Silenus (a demi-god, the foster-father and attendant of the god Dionysus). Like a silenus, Socrates holds in himself a sacred dimension, not visible to those who exist only on the surface of life. The description of the opening of the sileni is detailed, even pedantic in its slowness. Inside the sileni there are statues of gods;

²¹ ‘La matière (Idée) & la main d’œuvre (écriture). La “main d’œuvre” est souvent supérieure à la matière.

Avoir le sentiment harmonique c’est avoir le sentiment tonal.

L’examen sérieux d’une mélodie constituera toujours, pour l’élève, un excellent exercice harmonique.

Une mélodie n’a pas *son harmonie*, pas plus qu’un paysage n’a *sa couleur*. La *situation harmonique* d’une mélodie est infinie, car une mélodie est une expression dans l’Expression. N’oubliez pas que la mélodie est l’Idée, le contour; ainsi qu’elle est la forme & la matière d’une œuvre. L’harmonie, elle, est un éclairage, une exposition de l’objet, son reflet’ (trans. Robert Orledge, *Satie the Composer*, Cambridge, 1990, 68).

²² ‘Je dis d’abord qu’il [Socrate] ressemble tout à fait à ces Silènes qu’on voit exposés dans les ateliers des sculpteurs et que les artistes représentent avec une flûte ou des pipeaux à la main [the text of bars 29–45], et dans l’intérieur desquels quand on les ouvre, en séparant les deux pièces dont ils se composent, on trouve renfermées des statues de divinités [bars 46–59].’

but what an effort it is to see them! Is Satie pulling our leg? Why does he treat this non-seductive description as a key passage? Perhaps the point is that it is only through thorough exploration that can we reach the sacred and ‘serious’ dimension of Socrates and, in a wider sense, of *Socrate* itself. In these bars of *Le banquet*, Plato’s text – facing the concept of divinity – requires appropriate music, and what better way to suggest a sacred context than by drawing on a Gregorian melody, shaped by the sacred text?

Satie’s lifelong interest in plainchant has already been investigated by various scholars, so does not require detailed discussion here. Among other things, we know that Satie owned a plainchant gradual, perhaps bought in Solesmes on 5 August 1893, when he may have gone there with Debussy.²³ And he must have known *Victimae paschali laudes*, which is a mainstay of liturgical music, since, for example, Léon Guichard claims the derivation of the melody of the first of the *Trois poèmes d’amour* (1914) from the famous Easter sequence.²⁴ Assuming that, as we suspect, Satie did indeed use *Victimae paschali laudes*, why would he have chosen to model his cantus firmus on this particular sequence? The scrupulousness with which he harmonized it, without ever modifying it, suggests that he cared about the integrity of this melody, perhaps because it had a profound meaning for him.

As we have seen, the original sequence is connected to the Easter period: Christ is the sacrificial victim, immolating himself for all mankind. This creates an association with Socrates, for Socrates too, forced to drink a cup of hemlock, is a victim. But this is not the end of the story. Satie took the tragic fate of the Greek philosopher to heart; in fact he wrote ‘Justice sommaire’ on the cover of the notebook BNF 9623(1) and confided to Darius Milhaud: ‘I’ve always wished to dedicate myself to Socrates. It is such an unjust story!’²⁵ Furthermore, Socrates’ vicissitudes became dangerously like his own, when Satie was brought to a trial he considered equally unjust. This involved the critic Jean Poueigh, who in May 1917 rejected *Parade*, deeming it ‘an offence to French taste’.²⁶ Satie answered with some abusive open postcards, which caused him to be summonsed. The subsequent trial, on 12 July, at first condemned him to eight days in prison and a fine of 1000 francs,²⁷ but the sentence was eventually suspended in March 1918.²⁸ During these months of painful waiting, Satie was working on *Socrate*. In a letter of 31 July 1917 he called himself ‘un vieux condamné’,²⁹ while on 5 August 1917

²³ See Dom Clément Jacob, ‘Erik Satie et le chant grégorien’, *La revue musicale*, 214 (June 1952), 87–8.

²⁴ Léon Guichard, ‘Erik Satie et la musique grégorienne’, *La revue musicale*, 169 (November 1936), 334–5.

²⁵ Reported in Satie, *Quaderni di un mammifero*, ed. Volta, 231.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 262–3.

²⁷ Satie, *Correspondance*, ed. Volta, 270, 719.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 317.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 294.

he wrote to ‘mes chers amis’,³⁰ using the exact words of Alcibiades’ exordium in *Le banquet*. The boundary between *Socrate* and the circumstances of Satie’s personal life thus grows ever closer.

Easter, Christ, sacrifice, victim, hemlock, Socrates, trial, Satie . . . the circle is closed. Thanks to the use of that cantus firmus in this key passage, the figures of Christ, Socrates and Satie seem to permeate each other. But it is only through genetic research that we have been able to recognize and appreciate these particulars, hidden beneath the surface of the *texte* . . . or inside a silenus.

Conclusions

How should we assess the progression from the first to the last variant of this key passage?³¹ The categories of simplicity and complexity seem hard to handle: first of all, it is difficult to establish parameters qualifying simplicity that can be shared universally. Is simplicity related to bareness? Or to internal uniformity? Is it a matter of contrapuntal transparency, of the clarity of the musical figures used? Does it consist of extreme desiccation, of decantation? Even if adopting a more intuitive idea of simplicity, its application to the concrete case of the variants of *Le banquet* (and of the whole of *Socrate*) would remain problematic. An attempt to defend and document this hypothesis – movement from relative complexity in the first variants to the simplicity of the final version – would soon turn into a microscopic analysis inviting interpretation at every instant. Moreover, some intermediate variants often seem simpler than the final one, as in this key passage where **n1** and **n2** are manifestly barer than **v**.

Even if it is easy to identify differences between the variants of a given key passage, Satie’s writing never veers too radically off course. In other words, all the variants of *Socrate* have a sort of common denominator, which could be defined – in a very generic way – as the search for restraint and essentiality: the ‘oscillation range’ within which the variants ‘move’ is prescribed within precise limits. This is due not only to Satie’s aesthetic convictions, but also to his own writing and imaginative habits. His musical thoughts (not only in his piano music) are typically linked to the image of two hands playing an abstract piano,³² as was often the case with his friend Stravinsky. Playability, therefore, is a first constraint, which has to be added to others of an aesthetic nature. Reverting to the metaphor of the labyrinth, the construction is such that each path resembles the others: the explorer has to keep his eyes peeled in order to notice minutely different details.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 296, in a letter to Charles-René, a composer and professor of harmony, teacher of the young Ravel.

³¹ The following reflections can also be applied to the other two key passages of *Socrate* that I have analysed elsewhere (see note 16): the start of *Phédre* and the start of *Phédon*.

³² This statement refers to quite general considerations; with regard to *Socrate*, it concerns especially the variants of the instrumental accompaniment, rather than those of the vocal melody. ‘Abstract piano’ is used here with acknowledgement of the fact that Satie did not actually compose at the keyboard.

So what category can be used to explain the dynamics of the compositional process – and, *si licet*, to provide an interpretation of the completed piece? Before we can answer this question, more precise information is necessary. The *texte* can be considered an immobile structure, the *avant-texte* a mobile structure. The former is like a jigsaw puzzle, where every piece concurs in the definition of the overall figure; the latter is a sort of protean multi-puzzle, where every fragment can assume different shapes. Extending and refining the comparison, a key passage could be seen as a piece of quintessential importance, which during composition assumes various forms, each of which is a variant. Now, as the puzzle is a structure, each element is connected – directly or indirectly – to each of the others and, as a consequence, to the whole. Since each variant – tautologically – varies diachronically, the system undergoes continual readjustment, causing the mutation of its features.

In the specific case of *Socrate*, the pursuit of a general homogeneity³³ (or evenness, mitigation of contrasts) between the three parts of the piece, and also within each piece, emerges clearly, both from the analysis of the music and from hearing it. It is thus possible to assume the existence of a sort of median level of musical discourse, in relation to which every protrusion (greater emphasis) and every depression (towards greater dryness: for example, at the end of *Phédon*)³⁴ has to be situated.

On page 39 of notebook BNF 9623(2), Satie writes in ink: ‘plat – pris dans le sens noble: la ~~aust[ère]~~ splendide platitude de [sic] plaines’.³⁵ The musical ‘surface’ of *Socrate* is indeed a flat plain, impenetrable to an analysis in search of high mountains or landmarks standing out against the horizon. Nevertheless, as a surface of perfectly smoothed steel – or indeed a sculpture by Satie’s friend Brancusi – shows tiny cracks when observed through the microscope, so the music of *Socrate* hides minute but significant ripples. Thus our main interest in compositional variants lies in considering how each of them stands in relationship to

³³ This is the interpretative category I prefer. Different typologies of homogeneity can exist, of course: for example, a homogeneity in excess, or a homogeneity in essentiality. In *Socrate* only the latter type is found.

³⁴ We could hazard a relationship between this median level and a median gradation of simplicity: this way, homogeneity and simplicity would simply present two faces of the same coin.

³⁵ Note the insistent alliteration here, which causes an amplifying effect. As Ornella Volta suggests (Erik Satie, *Écrits*, ed. Volta, [Paris], 1977, 296), this sentence about flatness may well have a contingent origin: ‘Cette réflexion prend place dans un carnet de notes pour *Socrate*, entre l’ébauche d’une lettre d’explications, adressée au critique Jean Poueigh, et un brouillon de l’*Éloge des critiques*, inspiré par le même monsieur. Il est donc possible d’imaginer qu’ES se soit inspiré du nom de son persécuteur pour cet éloge de la platitude, également. En effet, dans son ouvrage sur les musiciens français d’aujourd’hui, Jean Poueigh fait remonter l’origine de son nom au “vocabule *pouey* qui, dans certaines régions des Pyrénées, désigne toute montagne terminée par une plate-forme”’ (‘This reflection is found on a sketchbook for *Socrate*, between the sketch of a letter of explanation addressed to the critic Jean Poueigh and a draft of the *Éloge des critiques*, inspired by the same man. It is thus possible to imagine that ES took inspiration from the name of his persecutor for this eulogy of flatness too. In fact, in his book on contemporary French musicians, Jean Poueigh individuates the origin of his surname in the “word *pouey* that, in certain regions of the Pyrenees, designates any mountain ending in a platform”’).

the whole, characterized by a median level,³⁶ the possibilities lying somewhere between a condition of closeness to or remoteness from that level. Some variants are particularly smoothed out, that is, homogeneous with the complex of the other puzzle pieces; others, however, are like ripples on the surface.

We should also bear in mind that the whole structure of *Socrate* is variable in size, according to the instant of composition that we are considering. For example, the first variants of the start of *Le banquet* (not analysed in detail here) probably belong with the very first musical ideas for *Socrate*, so the overall structure with which each variant establishes relationships at the moment of composition is very small, or even absent.³⁷

The comparative judgments about homogeneity can be referred either to the structure 'photographed' at a precise instant of composition, or to the definitive structure. In the first case, it would be desirable to know the precise temporal sequence of all the compositional events, so as to define exactly the object to which the considered variant relates. In the second case, everything is still, but the sheer number of interrelationships can prove disorientating. In both cases there are considerable difficulties to face.

A conclusion which could be drawn from this research is that, in the absence of a teleological linearity of the compositional trajectories, Satie on the whole proceeds in the direction of homogeneity. This means that in each key passage, the initial and intermediate variants tend to be less homogeneous with the rest of the structure than the final variant.³⁸ This tendency, not to be interpreted as an absolute law, but arising from an attempt to abstract a general trend from particular cases, should then be verified every time. The category of homogeneity, placing itself in a dialectical relationship with something else (the overall structure, acting as a term of reference) and not in an absolute way, may be more productive than mere simplicity. For example, the case of variants **n1**, **n2** and **v** becomes explicable in these terms – **v** is, in fact, more homogeneous with the remainder of *Le banquet* (and of *Socrate*) than Satie's previous attempts.

Sometimes Satie retains some non-homogeneous elements in his final text. Among the key passages, the clearest example is probably the opening tetrachord of *Phédon*, drawing the listener's attention to its slow and immutable crotchet pace. It is indeed a rippling of the smooth surface of *Phédon*: the explanation of this authorial choice resides in the great importance held by this musical figure across the piece as a whole.³⁹ One has the impression that every decision to retain a ripple – without smoothing it down – is consciously calculated. Besides, the

³⁶ This assumes the existence of a median level not only in the *texte*, but also in the *avant-texte*. In the *avant-texte* such a median level is variable, still settling down; whereas in the *texte*, it is steady, fixed.

³⁷ This is a possible cause for the non-homogeneity of the first variants of *Le banquet* in comparison with the final immobile structure (the *texte*, or, metaphorically, the definitive puzzle).

³⁸ Expressing the same concept in terms of simplicity, we could state that Satie proceeds in the direction of a median simplicity.

³⁹ For further information about the use of tetrachords in *Phédon*, see Orledge, *Satie the Composer*, 133, 136–7, and the illuminating analysis by Oliver Vogel ('*Socrate* von Erik Satie: Eine

musical qualities of *Socrate* are to be found mostly in the carefully controlled balance between the different ‘alitmetric levels’: the general *platitude* allows the slightest roughnesses to appear, while, vice versa, the roughnesses allow the *platitude* to affirm itself as the median level of reference.⁴⁰

What are the ideas underlying an attitude which aims to attenuate the evident contrasts?⁴¹ Certainly Orledge hits the mark when he underlines the importance of the ‘horizontal fluidity’ of *Socrate* and cites the ‘cult of restraint’ as a profound reason for its composition.⁴² But it is perhaps possible to go further in the same direction: the process of smoothing is also a way of burying every outward gesture, to invite the listener not to stop at the superficial evenness and to explore instead those details, almost invisible to the naked eye, that make the musical texture so precious.

The figure of Satie has always been characterized by a sort of continual balancing of his deep originality with his fondness for mimetism. Each of these elements acquires meaning and propulsion from the presence of the other:⁴³ ‘The paradox is that, while pretending to model himself on the image of the majority and to deny himself any subjective expression, Erik Satie drew people’s eye towards his own singularity’.⁴⁴ Similarly, in the music of *Socrate*, the ripples are camouflaged, but not so that they cease to exist: in this respect, the key passage of *Le banquet*, bars 46–59, seems to me archetypal.⁴⁵ The discretion of the musical discourse thus becomes an exhortation to search for the little concealed treasures disseminated across the whole piece. In this sense, genetic criticism represents a privileged instrument for analysis, a kind of metal detector which helps guide the

Identifikation’, dissertation, University of Berlin, 1994, XIV–XV), showing the transformations and recurrences of the initial motif.

⁴⁰ Obviously, ripples can be individuated not only in some variants or in the *f.v.* of a key passage, but also in other passages – either of the *avant-texte* or of the *texte*.

⁴¹ In a letter to Paul Collaer of 16 May 1920, Satie writes: ‘En écrivant “*Socrate*”, je croyais composer une oeuvre simple, sans la moindre idée de combat’ (‘Writing *Socrate* I thought to compose a simple work, with no idea of struggle’). Satie, *Correspondance*, ed. Volta, 406.

⁴² Orledge, *Satie the Composer*, 133.

⁴³ In this regard, see Emilio Sala, ‘Dalla *Bohème* all’*avant-garde*: Ancora nel segno dei fumisti’, *Erik Satie e la Parigi del suo tempo*, ed. Gianmario Borio and Mauro Casadei Turroni Monti, Nuovi percorsi musicali, 4 (Lucca, 2001), 29–44. In this article he clarifies – among other things – the *fumiste* origin of what is called (after Jankélévitch) ‘conformisme ironique’.

⁴⁴ ‘Le paradoxe c’est que, tout en faisant mine de se modeler à l’image du plus grand nombre et de s’interdire toute expression subjective, Erik Satie n’a fait qu’attirer les regards sur sa propre singularité.’ Satie, *Correspondance*, ed. Volta, 10.

⁴⁵ An interesting perspective on the subject can be found in Vladimir Jankélévitch, *L’ironie ou la bonne conscience* (Paris, 1950), where the author speaks of Socratic irony in terms that can be applied to Satie and to the aesthetic of *Socrate*: the litotes (a figure of speech employed by the Greek philosopher) belittles, alludes, understands, but its aim is positive; as a matter of fact, it invites reflection and stimulates knowledge. The same concept is expressed by Marc Bredel, *Erik Satie* (Paris, 1982), 147–56.

researcher towards the places where he or she is most likely to find something rewarding.

An analogous idea of concealment with heuristic aims can also be noticed at the level of the choices preceding composition: the profound structure of *Socrate* proves to be a stratification of subsequent mediations which invites the listener to go back to their origin, passing through this series of mediations in retrograde. In a similar manner, we can know the historical Socrates only indirectly, mostly through the words of Plato. In the nineteenth century, the French academician Victor Cousin translated Plato's dialogues into French: the 'flatness' of his translation particularly appealed to Satie,⁴⁶ who took Cousin's version and modified it, employing modern methods such as *découpage* and reassembly. The last stages of the mediation consisted in setting the resulting text to music and, lastly, in having men's words sung by women. In the finished work, the figure of Socrates is hidden under all these layers: Satie issues an invitation – it is up to us to go from *Socrate* to Socrates.

ABSTRACT

Socrate, Erik Satie's self-acknowledged masterpiece, generated various interpretations but still remains problematic. This article adopts a genetic perspective and, through the analysis of the most interesting 'key passage' (bars 46–59 of *Le banquet*), adds to the understanding of the passage itself (the interpenetration between the figures of Satie, Socrates and Christ as sacrificial victims) and of the work as a whole. In this regard, the category of homogeneity is presented as the most relevant.

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APPENDIX

EXAMPLE I: THE COMPOSITIONAL PROCESS IN *LE BANQUET* (BARS 46–59)

BNF 9623(4), p. 1, staves 5–6, left^a

a



⁴⁶ Satie, *Quaderni di un mammifero*, ed. Volta, 298.

^a On p. 1, staves 3–4, right, an inscription from Satie: 'Système de quartes ou quintes justes'.

ibid., p. 1, staves 5–6, right

b



ibid., p. 1, staves 5–6, left^b

a'



ibid., p. 1, staves 6–7, right

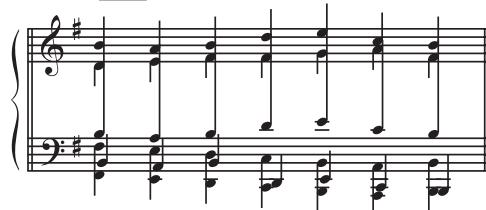
c



ibid., p. 4, staves 1–2, left

d

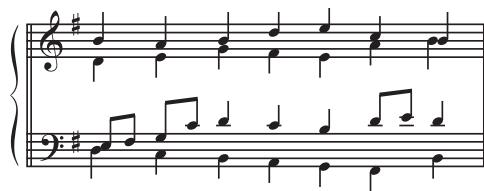
A-A



^b Second version of a.

ibid., p. 4, staves 5–6, left

e



ibid., p. 4, staves 4–5, centre

f



ibid., p. 4, staves 6–7, right

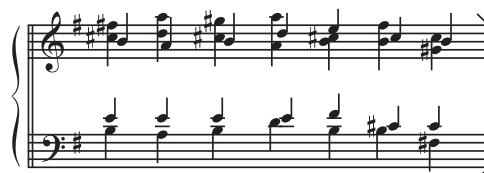
g

A-B



ibid., p. 4, staves 1–2, right

h



ibid., p. 4, staves 4–5, right

i

x

ibid., p. 6, staves 3 and 4, right^c

j

ibid., p. 6, staves 3 and 4, right^d

j'

^c The note in square brackets has been erased by Satie.

^d The parentheses to the different key signatures are Satie's.

ibid., p. 6, staves 1–2, right^e

α

ibid., p. 6, staves 6–7, centre^f

β

ibid., p. 6, staves 5–7, right^g

k

^e I indicate the following two fragments with letters of the Greek alphabet because they do not represent proper variants, but are related to other variants. The notes '1 ♯' and '3 ♯' in α are Satie's.

^f The most plausible reading of this is that the *g* in the second chord is natural and the letters 'M.' and 'm.' refer to the chords in the upper stave (respectively D major and D minor).

^g The notes 'Un ♯' and 'Trois ♯' are Satie's.

ibid., p. 7, staves 1–3, left^h

1



ibid., p. 7, staves 5–6, centre left

mi



ibid., pp. 14–15, staves 5–7ⁱ

ni

46

& dans l'in - té - rieur des - quels, quand on les ou - vre, en sé - pa-

M.G.

M.D.

M.G.

^h The *A* in the last chord is evidently a mistake; it should be a *B*.

ⁱ Satie often writes across double pages in his notebooks, so some variants (like this one) can cross from the left- to the right-hand page. The numbering of the bars is mine and refers to the bars of the published text (f.v.). Stave 6 here is indecipherable, but may well be similar to the upper stave of **mi**, at least in the initial bars.

51

rant les deux pièces, dont ils se com - po - sent,

on trou - ve ren - fer - mé - es des sta - tu - es de di - vi - ni - tés

ibid., p. 7, staves 3–4 and 6, right

m2

54

on trou - ve ren - fer - mé - es des sta - tu - es de di - vi - ni - tés

ibid., p. 15, staves 5–7, right

n2

54

on trou - ve ren - fer - mé - es des sta - tu - es de di - vi - ni - tés

ibid., pp. 14–15, staves 5–6 (and 7?)^j

o

46

& dans l'in - té - rieur des - quels, quand on les ou - vre, en sé - pa-

51

rant les deux piè - ces, dont ils se com - po - sent, on trou - ve

56

ren - fer - mé - es des sta - tu - es de di - vi - ni - tés

BNF 9623(1), p. 21, upper and lower systems^k

p

46

51

56

^j This variant is almost completely indecipherable. At bars 48 and 50 the notes with no head simply indicate the rhythm (legible or intuitable), leaving the pitches indeterminate; where possible, I have tried to give an approximate idea of the pitches.

^k In this notebook there are six staves per page, usually grouped as two or three systems.

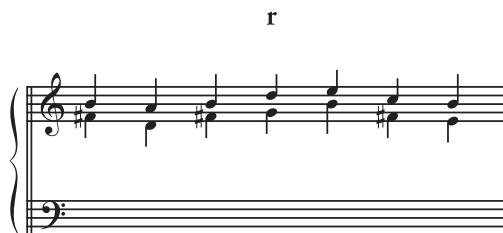


ibid., pp. 22–3, lower system¹

q

¹ The notes in square brackets are Satie's, deleted in ink and replaced by other notes. In this case, I have not distinguished two variants q and q', as the corrections are few and not particularly relevant.

ibid., p. 27, lower system



ibid., pp. 32 (whole page) and 33 (upper system, left)^m

s

^m The notes are very uncertain, especially at bars 51 and 53–9. This variant and the next are to be read with an implied F♯ in the key signature. The slur in square brackets at bar 58 has been erased by Satie.

ibid., pp. 32 (whole page) and 33 (upper system, left)ⁿ

s'

* B

ⁿ At bar 57, left hand, the \sharp to b in the tenor must be an oversight: the note is b , not $b\sharp$. At bar 58, right hand, the c' 's are to be read as $c\sharp'$'s. The mark “* B” is by Satie and is associated with “* A” in **u** (see below): the two parts A and B are linked together to form **v** and the final version.

ibid., p. 33, upper system, right

t



ibid., p. 33, lower system^o

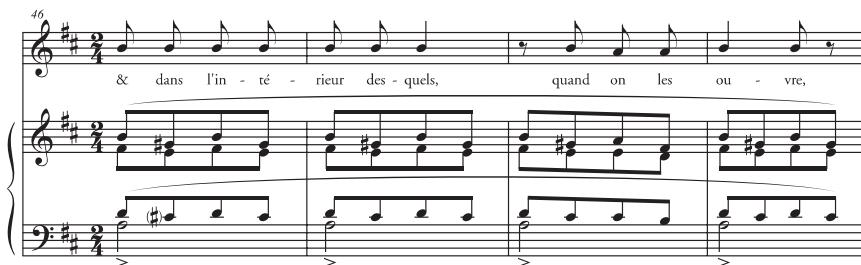
u

* A



BNF 9623(4), pp. 14–15, staves 5–7

v



^o The comparison of the right hand in **u** with the upper stave of **a'** reveals very interesting similarities: in correspondence to each change of note in the cantus firmus, the right hand in **u** plays fourths, analogous to those in **a'**. Are these resemblances sufficient to establish a connection between the two – which are distant in time, being respectively the third and the penultimate variant? In the synoptic scheme (see Figure 1) I have not underlined this similarity, but the reader should bear in mind that a more daring interpretation could establish a direct relationship.

f.v. (final version), bars 46–59^p

f.v.

^p I consider as the final version the autograph manuscript (in the archives of Prince Louis de Polignac, but also existing in a facsimile reproduction by Eschig), jointly with the first printed edition of the vocal score (Éditions de La Sirène, 1920). The problematic aspects related to the selection of a definitive text (or texts?) of *Socrate* do not significantly affect my study of bars 46–59 of *Le banquet*.

(f.v. continued)

50

en sé - pa - rant les deux piè - ces dont ils se com - po - sent, on

{

trou - ve ren - fer - mé - es des sta - tu - es de di - vi - ni - tés

{

55

TABLE I

COMMON ELEMENTS SHARED BY THE VARIOUS GROUPINGS

<i>grouping</i>	<i>common element</i>
b, a', c, l	cantus firmus in all parts ^q
d, e	contrapuntal idea that combines a largely descending scale (in the bass) with the cantus firmus
d, g	contrapuntal idea combining three melodic lines: cantus firmus, ascending scale, descending scale
h, p	cantus firmus hidden in internal parts
j, j', α, β, k	different key signatures on each stave
α, β, k	use of only two types of chord
s', u	use of a four-part texture, playable with ‘immobile’ hands, composed of a flow of quaver chords sometimes superimposed on a pivot note ^r

⁹I do not include **m1** in this group because it presents – in the upper stave – an alternative version of the left hand, diverging from the bare chordal sequence present in **b**, **a'**, **c**, **l**.

'In s' this texture appears only in bars 55-6 and 59.

TABLE 2

THE PROGRESSION FROM ONE VARIANT TO ANOTHER

<i>progression</i>	<i>element used</i>	<i>type of modification</i>
a–a'	(1) 'soprano' part; (2) thirds in the left hand	pitch substitution on the even beats; changes to some accidentals
i–j	the last chord marked 'X' (the slash chord Em/D) of i	extension of the use of slash chords to the whole second variant (j)
j–j'	the first, second, fourth, sixth and seventh chords are identical	insertion into a new musical context, because the other chords are different
j'–k	right hand	insertion into a new musical context, because the left hand in k is different from that in j' extended to the whole of mr ;
l–mr	(1) doublings in the low register, left hand (chords 1 and 2); (2) diversification of the durations in the various chords	substitution of the fermatas in l with minims in mr
mr–ni	chords on the lower (and upper?) stave	repeated and inserted into a new musical context, with an added vocal melody
mr–m2	chords on the lower stave	extension by analogy
ni–m2	vocal melody	extension by analogy
m2–n2	(1) piano chords; (2) vocal melody	rhythmic repetitions; pitch substitution of the last quaver at bar 54
s–s'	(1) bars 46–52 of the accompaniment; (2) bar 53 of the accompaniment; (3) right hand of the accompaniment, bars 57–8	substitution of some pitches (especially in bars 50 and 51); contrapuntal enrichment; contrapuntal enrichment and harmonic recontextualization
s'–v	bars 53–9	insertion into a new musical context, because the new bars 46–52 have been introduced (taken from u)
t–u	the first chord of t	harmonic enrichment
u–v	the whole of u , which becomes bars 46–52 of v	insertion into a new musical context, because bars 53–9 have been added (taken from s')