A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF LOUIS DUREY AND FRANCIS POULENC’S SETTINGS OF SELECTIONS FROM *LE BESTIAIRE* BY GUILLAUME APOLLINIARE

An Honors Thesis submitted by

Allison K. Hill

5828 Criner Rd.

Huntsville, Alabama 35802

(256) 417-2552

akhill@cn.edu

In partial fulfillment of the degree

Bachelor of Music in Music Education with Honors

April 27, 2011

Project Advisor:  Dr. Thomas Milligan

© 2011 Allison K. Hill
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF LOUIS DUREY AND FRANCIS POULENC’S SETTINGS OF SELECTIONS FROM LE BESTIAIRE BY GUILLAUME APOLLINIARE

Faculty Advisor

Chair, Music Department

Director, Honors Program
Special Thanks

To Dr. Thomas Milligan for his advice and encouragement throughout the process of preparing this paper.

To Professor Ann Jones for nurturing my love for the study of voice and for her constant guidance and encouragement.

To my parents for supporting me wholeheartedly in all my endeavors.
# Table of Contents

List of Figures  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Purpose of Study</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Les Six</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>Analytical Techniques</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>Biographical Background</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Guillaume Apollinaire</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Louis Durey</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Francis Poulenc</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Raoul Dufy</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>Le Bestiaire—The Union of the Poem and the Woodcut</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Le chèvre du Thibet</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Le dromadaire</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. La sauterelle</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Le dauphin</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e. L’écrevisse</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f. La carpe</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>Le Bestiaire—Song by Song Commentary and Analysis</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Le chèvre du Thibet</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Le dromadaire</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. La sauterelle</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Le dauphin</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e. L’écrevisse</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f. La carpe</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI.</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bibliography 58
List of Figures

Fig. 1 “Le chèvre du Thibet,” mm. 1-4.................................................................32
Fig. 2 “Le chèvre du Thibet,” mm. 4-5.................................................................34
Fig. 3 “Le dromadaire,” mm. 3-5.................................................................36
Fig. 4 “Le dromadaire,” mm. 13-15.................................................................37
Fig. 5 “Le dromadaire,” mm. 40-43.................................................................39
Fig. 6 “La sauterelle,” mm. 1-5.................................................................40
Fig. 7 “La sauterelle,” mm. 1-2.................................................................42
Fig. 8 “Le dauphin,” mm. 1-2.................................................................44
Fig. 9 “Le dauphin,” mm. 5-6.................................................................45
Fig. 10 “L’écrevisse,” mm. 1-2.................................................................47
Fig. 11 “L’écrevisse,” mm. 1-2.................................................................49
Fig. 12 “La carpe,” mm. 5-6.................................................................51
Fig. 13 “La carpe,” mm. 9-10.................................................................53
I. Introduction

a. Purpose of Study

*Le Bestiaire ou Cortège d’Orphée* (The Book of Beasts or Procession of Orpheus) is a collection of thirty poems by Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918), an influential figure in the French Symbolist movement. The poems describe Orpheus and the parade of animals following him. According to Greek mythology, Mercury gave Orpheus a lyre made from “a tortoise’s shell, bound with leather, strung with sheep gut, with branches and a bridge.” Orpheus played his lyre and sang as savage animals gathered around and followed him.

Each *Bestiaire* poem is accompanied by an illustration, a woodcut by Raoul Dufy (1877-1953), on the opposite page. Apollinaire and Dufy worked closely together to ensure that each poem and woodcut would interact with the other. This extent of poet-illustrator collaboration is unusual, because often the author exerts little control over the illustrations that appear with his work. In fact, Dufy’s woodcuts serve an important role in interpreting each poem. As Willard Bohn remarks, “[the woodcuts] rejecting a purely passive role…complement the verbal text and interpret it in a variety of ways.”

Louis Durey (1888-1979) and Francis Poulenc (1899-1963), both members of the avant-garde group of French composers “Les Six,” set the Apollinaire poems to music. Durey set twenty-six of the poems to music, while Poulenc set six of them to music. Originally, Poulenc set twelve of the poems, but on the advice of his friend Georges Auric, another member of Les Six, he kept only six. Regardless, each was unaware of the

---

other composing to the same poem set. In fact, when Poulenc found out that Durey had composed *Le Bestiaire*, he was shocked and while on leave from the army, went to meet Durey. The composers both handled the situation well; Poulenc even dedicated his setting of *Le Bestiaire* to Durey. Jean Cocteau, a French literary figure, remarked on the differences between Durey and Poulenc’s *Le Bestiaire* settings: “Where Poulenc frolics on puppy paws, Durey treads with the step of a doe. Both are wholly natural. That is why one appreciates them with the same enjoyment.”³ Marc Wood asserts that Durey’s songs are “more lyrical and less humorous and quirky than Poulenc’s.”⁴ It is interesting to note that, while both song settings were reasonably well known in their time, Durey’s set has fallen into obscurity today, while Poulenc’s settings are often included in French art song anthologies and performed in song recitals.

Although it only contained six of the 26 poems, the Poulenc setting of *Le Bestiaire* is generally considered the more superior setting of Apollinaire’s poetry. In this project, I will perform a comparative analysis on the two song sets limiting it to the six songs in common. In doing so, I will examine the composer-composer relationship, the poet-composer relationships and the context in which the song sets and poems were written. I will consider the effectiveness of the two composers’ characterization of the animals in setting the poetry to music and comment on whether or not the Poulenc setting is, in fact, superior to Durey’s settings.

---

³ James Harding, *The Ox on the Roof* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1972), 62.
b. Context of Study: Paris, 1920s

The composers, the poet, and the visual artist all lived in Paris, France, while creating *Le Bestiaire*. Following World War I, Paris reestablished itself as an international art center, after years of biting at the heels of Austria and Germany—both of which were now struggling to regain economic security. Paris had a unique appeal to artists, and following the war, many artists moved to Paris in hopes of jumpstarting, or salvaging, their careers. In the late nineteenth century, at the end of the Franco-Prussian War, French artists—especially musicians—worked to achieve a style free of Russian influence. This nationalism continued post World War I as French musicians worked toward a French style free of German influence. The French poet Jean Cocteau published an essay entitled “Le Coq et L’Arlequin” (The Cock and Harlequin) which advised against “Wagnerian fog” and even against Debussian “mist” in musical compositions. He urged artists to avoid German Romanticism, French Impressionism, and Russian paganism in an attempt to achieve every-day music that was “simple in structure and modest in scope.” Louis Durey and Francis Poulenc were both, at one point, among the group of artists that heeded Cocteau’s advice (although they did not necessarily resonate with it personally).

Although the poet Guillaume Apollinaire died before hearing the musical settings of *Le Bestiaire*, the artists’ lives were intertwined. *Le Bestiaire* was Apollinaire’s first set of poetry. *Le Bestiaire* was Poulenc’s first collection of *mélodies*. Poulenc and Durey were colleagues—both were members of the avant-garde group of composers, “Les Six.” Durey, Poulenc, and Apollinaire all fought on France’s behalf during World War I. And

---

on the artistic level, Durey and Poulenc were among the composers inspired by the Symbolist artistic movement—a movement to which Apollinaire was a major contributor.

The Symbolist movement, which began in the late-nineteenth century, was one of the most significant artistic movements in this time period. Symbolists, in general, sought to “liberate the technique of versification” in such a way that would evoke feelings in the reader rather than simply describe objects. The Symbolists veered from the precision of conventional poetry and, instead, strove to obscure images. Guillaume Apollinaire was greatly influenced by Symbolists such as Paul Verlaine and Victor Hugo. He resonated with the “musicalization” of poetry that the Symbolist poets sought to accomplish. Apollinaire, along with the Symbolists, “sought to wed poetry and music.”

Apollinaire, in describing his writing process to a friend, said that he generally composed when “walking and singing two or three tunes that come to [him] quite naturally and that one of [his] friends has jotted down.”

Translator Pepe Karmel notes, “the poems of Bestiary mingle lyric imagery with a bawdy sense of humor, flashes of sincere religiosity, and the melodious rhythms of the folk song or nursery rhyme.” Although, on the surface, the Bestiaire poetry concerns a seemingly jovial procession of animals, it holds deeper implications despite the simplicity of the four-lined quatrain. The symbolism of the animals in the procession will be further discussed later in this study.

---

c. Les Six

Jean Cocteau cited Eric Satie as an example of a composer who embodied the “new spirit” he called for in Paris. Many young composers regarded Satie as a champion of French music and emulated his attempts to create a simplistic, yet distinct type of music. Francis Poulenc and Louis Durey were among the group of avant-garde French composers who strived for these ideals. Along with Poulenc and Durey, Georges Auric, Germaine Tallieferre, Darius Milhaud, and Arthur Honegger made up a group of young composers named the *Nouveaux Jeunes* whose music was seen, to some, as a reaction against Impressionist music. In fact, *Les Nouveaux Jeunes* are sometimes considered a neo-classic group of musicians. Following one of their first collaborative concerts in April of 1919, music critic Henri Collet likened the six composers to the Russian Five and thus dubbed them “les Six Français.” From that point on, the group was known as Les Six. With Cocteau as their spokesperson and Satie as their “spiritual godfather,” Les Six represented a fresh style of music in postwar France. They strove for a sound that could be heard outside the concert hall and, instead, in the café-cabaret, circus, and jazz halls. In other words, they composed music that they believed would appeal to the “common man.” In their pursuit of creating music absent of German romantic characteristics, Les Six often chose everyday, simple subjects for their music.

Les Six were united by friendship and circumstantial connections. Their musical tastes, however, varied greatly. According to James Harding, Honegger was greatly influenced by the German Romantics, while Milhaud leaned toward Mediterranean

---

12 Stolba, *The Development of Western Music*, 605.
13 The Russian Five, known for their Romantic Nationalist music, were Mily Balakirev, César Cui, Modest Mussorgsky, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov and Alexander Borodin. They were active during 156-1870.
lyricism. Auric and Poulenc strived for the liberation of French music—a somewhat Nationalistic approach to French music. While Durey was consumed with the music of Debussy and Ravel, much to Cocteau and Satie’s chagrin, Tailleferre—the only female in the group—was influenced by whatever was the prevailing trend. The group met weekly, on Saturdays, at Milhaud’s home. Occasionally gathering at cafés or salons, Les Six were often joined by other musicians, painters and writers.

Les Six were active as a group only a few years in the 1920s. They were too different individually to successfully collaborate because of their conflicting musical styles and opinions. Les Six collaborated on two works as a group (the *Album des Six* for piano, 1920, and *Les mariés de la tour Eiffel*, 1921) and eventually disbanded, pursuing their careers separately, but remaining close friends.

---

15 Harding, *The Ox on the Roof*, 69.
16 Harding, *Ox on the Roof*, 69.
17 Harding, *Ox on the Roof*, 69.
II. Analytical Techniques

In this study, I will examine the biographical background of Guillaume Apollinaire, Francis Poulenc, Louis Durey, and Raoul Dufy and, the interactions between the artists. Next, I will examine *Le Bestiaire* as poetry, providing my own interpretations of the poetry and woodcuts, as well as critics’ interpretations. As an introduction to the actual comparative analyses, I will provide background information regarding *Le Bestiaire* as music. I will include information concerning when each composer composed his setting, why Durey chose to set the whole set of poems to music, while Poulenc only set six, and other pertinent areas of discussion regarding the differences and similarities between the two settings of *Le Bestiaire*.

The main body of my project will encompass the actual analyses of the music. I will perform a song-by-song commentary presenting the Durey setting first, followed by the Poulenc setting of each poem. Then, after individually considering both settings, I will conclude with a section that compares the two settings of each poem. In analyzing the settings, I will observe the tonality, melodic line, rhythm, tempo, accompaniment, harmonies, and text painting. I will consider how the accompaniment colors the text, the intervals in the melodic line, and the motifs in the melody and accompaniment. When necessary, I will include musical figures to serve as examples of the particular aspects of my analysis.
III. Biographical Background

a. Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918)

Guillaume Apollinaire Kostrowitzky was born in Rome on August 26, 1880. He was the illegitimate child of Angelica de Kostrowitzky, a Polish woman. His father is not known for certain, although it is known that he was an Italian man.\(^\text{19}\) His mother moved around frequently with him and his brother Albert, and once the boys reached school age, their mother sent them to the French Riviera for Catholic schooling. During his school years, Apollinaire made friends with other aspiring poets and was exposed to the poetry of such greats as Racine, Verlaine, and Mallarmé. After completing school, Apollinaire found a job as a tutor for the daughter of a German noblewoman. The job was ideal in that Apollinaire was able to travel and read extensively.\(^\text{20}\)

Apollinaire settled in Paris with his mother in 1902. He worked in a bank and spent a significant amount of his free time with emerging artists such as Picasso, Marie Laurencin, and Max Jacob. At this time, he adopted the name Guillaume Apollinaire and contributed to a variety of literary outlets—erotic literature, children’s books, poetry, and newspaper articles. He founded a literary review, Le Festin d’Esope, and was significantly involved in the Parisian literary world.\(^\text{21}\)

Apollinaire’s first set of poetry, Le Bestiaire, appeared in a book, along with Raoul Dufy’s accompanying woodcuts, in 1911. He was quickly perceived as a talented young author with many unique qualities. To Apollinaire’s distress, however, he was accused of stealing the Mona Lisa from the Louvre in the same year. He was held in

---

\(^{19}\) Some accounts claim that Apollinaire was possibly fathered by a Cardinal or even a Pope. More recent biographies suggest Francesco Flugi d’Aspermont, a high ranked Italian officer, as Apollinaire’s father.


\(^{21}\) Shattuck, *Selected Writings of Guillaume Apollinaire*, 7.
prison for six days before being released. Even after his release, he was perturbed by the accusation and, in an effort to console him, his friends helped him start another literary review, *Les Soirées de Paris*.

When World War I broke out, Apollinaire became a French citizen in order to contribute to the war efforts for France. He became a lieutenant after two years of service. In 1916, he was injured by a shell fragment and had to undergo two operations on his skull. He recovered but was unable to continue serving, so he began to invest much of his time in writing. During this time, he worked on the innovative *Calligrammes*, in which he intertwined both words and images to form unique visual collages.

Apollinaire was deeply inspired by love throughout his writing career. He had many close friendships with other writers and had several love interests who kept him constantly inspired to write. He married one of them, Jacqueline Kolb, in May 1918, and the couple lived very happily for several months. Unfortunately, Apollinaire contracted the Spanish influenza and died in November of that year. His health was compromised due to his wound and the subsequent operations, making him more susceptible to the flu. Apollinaire was regarded one of the great symbolist poets of the early twentieth-century and served many roles in society. As Robert Shattuck remarks, Apollinaire was “successively a clown, a scholar, a drunkard, a gourmet, a lover, a criminal, a devout Catholic, a wandering Jew, a soldier [and] a good husband.”

---

23 Shattuck, *Selected Writings of Guillaume Apollinaire*, 5.
b. Louis Durey (1888-1979)

Louis Durey was born in Paris on May 27, 1888. He was the oldest of three brothers and was not musically inclined as a child. He decided against piano lessons, claiming that it was an activity suited for girls, and worked instead in his father’s printing business. However, as Durey grew up, he began to attend many operas. His decision to become a composer was greatly influenced by hearing a performance of Claude Debussy’s *Pelléas et Mélisande* in 1907. Debussy’s opera had such an influence on Durey that he did not miss a single performance of the work during its Paris revival for the next seven years! Durey was no longer satisfied with merely enjoying music—he wished to study and write it. He began studying music at the Schola Cantorum, a private music school in Paris, and started to compose on his own, his earliest known piece dating 1914.

The onset of World War I changed Durey’s plans drastically. He reluctantly served in the army for sixteen months—military life and the horror of war appalled him. During the next couple of years, Durey set several poems to music and began composing more often. In 1917, Erik Satie, whom Durey had met at the Schola Cantorum, became interested in Durey’s compositions and invited him to perform his piano duet, *Carillons*, in a collaborative concert presented by Satie’s friends, then called *Les Nouveaux Jeunes*. The group, including Durey, began meeting at Darius Milhaud’s apartment and were eventually dubbed “Les Six.” Although Durey felt close friendship with the other five composers, he differed from them in that he was greatly influenced by

---

25 James Harding, *The Ox on the Roof*, 55.
Debussy and other Impressionistic composers. This difference in opinion eventually led to Durey’s break from Les Six in 1921.

After his break with Les Six, Durey withdrew from the Parisian music scene to Saint Tropez, where his family had a villa. He continued to compose, inspired by the “warmth and sensuousness of Provence.” He married Anna Grangeon in 1929 and the couple had their only child, Arlette, in 1930, the year the family returned to Paris. After returning to Paris, Durey became quite involved in music organizations—Fédération Musicale Populaire and the Association Française des Musiciens Progressives—as well as joining the Communist Party in 1936. He was eventually appointed President of the Fédération Musicale Populaire.

Durey returned to Saint Tropez in 1959, due to the destruction of his Paris home, and stayed there until his death in 1979. Although Durey continued to compose late into his life, his public recognition faded away, especially after he left Les Six.

---

Francis Poulenc was born in Paris on January 7, 1899. His father Emile was a chemical manufacturer. His parents both had a love for the arts. His mother, Jenny, played the piano and his father was a music admirer. His parents never missed opening night at the opera house. Poulenc’s mother taught him how to play the piano when he was a child. He was considered a prodigy and eventually studied with Ricardo Viñes, a Spanish virtuoso pianist, who introduced him to Erik Satie and Georges Auric. Viñes had a profound musical impact on Poulenc and “contributed heavily to the formation of Poulenc’s taste as well as his piano technique.”

Poulenc began composing in 1917 when it was popular to set Negro texts to music. His first composition, *Rhapsodie Nègre*, brought him overnight success in the Parisian music scene. That same year, Poulenc was summoned to join the army and served in the antiaircraft unit until October 1921. He made several trips back and forth to Paris and composed several pieces while serving in the army. In 1919, Poulenc was introduced to the illustrated version of Guillaume Apollinaire’s *Le Bestiaire* poetry. Poulenc decided to set a number of the poems to music, inciting a deep admiration for Apollinaire’s poetry.

Around this time, Poulenc began to identify with Les Six. He benefited greatly from his friendship with the other composers in the group, although he differed from them artistically. After his ballet *Les Biches* received favorable review in 1924, he split from Les Six, due to personal conflict with Erik Satie. Over the next several years, Poulenc composed a variety of works for various instruments. He turned to Apollinaire

---

texts once again in 1931 and felt that composing to Apollinaire’s poetry yielded significantly more “inspired” art songs.29

Poulenc’s song output increased significantly when he met the French baritone Pierre Bernac in 1935. The two collaborated for many years, and Poulenc remarked that he “learned the art of song writing by accompanying Bernac.”30 Much of Poulenc’s song output came from this time—he wrote 86 of his 146 songs between 1935 and 1956. He then began to slow his composing. Poulenc wrote his opera Dialogues des Carmélites between 1953 and 1957, while he was experiencing severe depression. His depression was so profound that he was skeptical as to whether he would be able to finish the opera. He completed the opera, but his depression persisted throughout the rest of his life.


---

29 Vivian Wood, Poulenc’s songs: An Analysis of Style, 19.
30 Vivian Wood, Poulenc’s songs: An Analysis of Style, 19.
d. Raoul Dufy (1877-1953)

Raoul Dufy was born in Le Havre, France, on June 3, 1877. His was one of nine children in his family. His father owned a metal business and was an amateur musician. He had a great impact on his children’s love of music and the arts. Unfortunately, the Dufy family was poor, so Raoul could not attend concerts as often as his peers. He, however, did not miss the Sunday Colonne concerts, concerts featuring modern music of the time, and, in fact would often “go without supper for the luxury of those two hours of music.”

Dufy’s artistic talent was apparent at an early age, but he had to find a way to help support his family rather than taking art classes. He worked for a coffee-importing firm at the age of fourteen and at the age of fifteen was able to enroll at the Municipal School of Fine Arts taught by Charles Lhuillier. He took classes at night so that he could continue to work during the day. Dufy became quite skillful and, in fact, became determined to “change hands” and learn how to draw with his left hand. He became so skilled that he was noted to have been able to paint two different subjects simultaneously, one with each hand!

In 1900, Dufy was awarded a grant to study at the renowned Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. He studied there for four years, although he grew impatient with the teaching philosophy to “perfect the system” and produce art to please the whole. After completing his four years, Dufy began to attend exhibits of contemporary art. He found that he resonated with the likes of Monet, Pissarro, and Raffaëlli and began sketching

---

33 Lassaigne, *Dufy*, 16.
34 Lassaigne, *Dufy*, 17.
“everyday” subjects—not just models. His first one-man show opened in 1906 and Dufy began to gain favor with the public, selling several of his paintings. As he began to resonate with the cubist movement, he experienced a decline in public interest and decided to pursue different artistic techniques—the woodcut, specifically. He experienced great success in his collaborative efforts with Guillaume Apollinaire to produce woodcuts for the latter’s poetry set, *Le Bestiaire*. For the next several years, Dufy made a comfortable living researching and making woodcuts, as well as maintaining his own studio.\(^{35}\)

From the 1920s on, Dufy began to travel to and from Italy and also to the United States. He was asked to create a mural painting for the Electricity Pavilion in the Paris International Exhibition in 1937, which ended up being the largest in the world at the time.\(^{36}\) Around this time, he began to suffer from rheumatic pains and painted less frequently. Dufy had to take several weeks off at a time to recover, yet his work did not lack quality. As soon as he felt better, he resumed his work.

In 1952, after consulting with many doctors in Venice, Boston, and Arizona, he moved to Forcalquier, France, which suited his health needs because of its dry climate. In the same year, he won the International Prize for Painting, and the Musée d’Art et d’Histoire of Geneva assembled the largest public exhibition of his works. Dufy died shortly thereafter, on March 3, 1953, of a heart attack.

\(^{35}\) Lassaigne, *Dufy*, 17.
IV. *Le Bestiaire*—The Union of the Poem and the Woodcut

Apollinaire wrote most of *Le Bestiaire* in 1907 while living in Paris. He was an avid reader, particularly interested in magic, theosophy, and medieval history, and was fascinated by the “bestiaries of the middle ages with their elaborately illuminated manuscripts.” He decided to make a modern-day bestiary. It was published shortly thereafter and in 1911 the poems, paired with Dufy’s woodcuts, were published. The 30-poem set is composed of 26 animals divided into four sections (land dwellers, insects, sea dwellers, and winged creatures) and four Orpheus poems, each one introducing a section of animals. For the most part, the Bestiary poems are quatrains; four of the poems are cinquains. Nearly each line of poetry is octosyllabic (having eight syllables), but is not always in keeping with the tetrameter pattern typical of octosyllabic poetry.

On the surface, the Bestiary poems seem lighthearted and jovial—after all, they concern a procession of animals—but under the surface lie more profound implications. Apollinaire’s poems span many themes. Some of them are autobiographical, while others are amusing. A couple of the poems concern political themes, while several offer a glimpse into Apollinaire’s religious views. He comments on his faith and its impact on his art in his Bestiary notes:

> Those who essay the art of poetry search for and love that perfection which is God Himself. Would this divine goodness, this supreme perfection abandon those who devote their lives to revealing His glory? It seems impossible. To my mind, poets have the right to hope that when they die they will attain the enduring happiness that comes with a complete knowledge of God, that is, of sublime beauty.\(^{38}\)

---


Aside from the structure of the poems, it is also important to consider the crucial role of the woodcut in interpreting the poetry.

*Le Bestiaire* was conceived as a *livre d’artist* (artist’s book), a 20th century French genre in which the artist’s contribution is “not just illustration but can be regarded as a free interpretation or the way the artist has rendered the text in visual terms.”³⁹ Apollinaire had originally planned to collaborate with Pablo Picasso, his close friend. Picasso, however, was too busy to participate, so Apollinaire asked Dufy, a painter who had been referred to him by his friend André Derain.⁴⁰ Apollinaire and Dufy worked closely together to ensure the fluidity of the poem and the woodcut. This unique collaboration was extremely successful in that the poem and woodcut essentially function as one—one picks up where the other leaves off. Therefore, this following section will examine the poems in the order that they appear in Apollinaire’s set and, in doing so, consider the woodcuts and their important role in interpreting the poems.

---

a. Le chèvre du Thibet

For all this goat’s fine wool,
Or even Jason’s hardwon fleece,
I wouldn’t trade a single hair
From the head of my beloved.

The Tibetan goat is the fourth creature in Orpheus’ procession. In this poem of happy love, the poet expresses his adoration for his beloved by claiming that her locks are far more precious to him than the fine wool of the Tibetan goat “or even Jason’s hardwon fleece.” As Wilfrid Mellers remarks, the poem “counters Jason’s epic aspiration with the modest assertion that the locks of the poet’s girl far outshine those of both goat and legendary hero.” This simplistic, innocent portrayal of love is later contrasted with more distorted images of love in other Bestiaire poems—“Le serpent,” “La méduse” and “La puce”.

The Jason that Apollinaire refers to in this poem is one of Greek mythological origin. In order to become king of Iolcus, Jason had to retrieve golden fleece from King Aeetes of Colchis. The King was extremely possessive of the fleece—in fact, it was guarded by a serpent that never slept. After enduring many setbacks and encountering many dangers, Jason returned to Iolcus with the fleece and was crowned King. Through alluding to mythology, Apollinaire draws a comparison between his beloved and Jason’s beloved possession—the golden fleece.

In the woodcut appearing above the poem, a goat is in the foreground with an oriental-style building on top of a bridge in the background. As is common in many of
the Bestiary woodcuts, the images surrounding the creature indicate the location of the scene. The “Buddhist temple, the arched bridge, and the towering mountains in ‘Le chèvre du Thibet’” prove Willard Bohn’s assertion that “one scarcely needs to consult the title to identify the country in question.”

b. Le dromadaire

With his four dromedaries

Don Pedro d’Alfaroubeira

Traveled the world and marveled.

He did what I would do,

If I had four dromedaries.

The dromedary, the tenth creature in the procession, is an animal similar to a camel, but smaller and faster. The Greek word ‘dromos’ refers to swiftness. Richard Barber notes that a dromedary can cover “a hundred miles or more in one day”.44 “Le Dromadaire” differs from most of the other animal poems in that it is a cinquain; “Le Chat” is the only other animal poem that also has five lines.

The real focal point of this poem, however, is not the dromedary but its owner, Don Pedro, “with his dreams, his adventurousness, even his vulgar curiosity: qualities deflated by the fact that most people don’t possess one dromedary, let alone four.”45 According to Apollinaire’s notes, Don Pedro d’Alfaroubeira, Infante of Portugal, traveled all over the world. Don Pedro and his twelve companions “rode four dromedaries and, after passing through Spain, went to Norway and, from there, to Babylon and the Holy Land.”46 The caravan journeyed all over Europe and into portions of Africa and Asia. The voyage was lengthy—Don Pedro finally returned to Portugal after three years and four months of traveling. The poet admires Don Pedro for possessing four dromedaries and for his sense of adventure. He remarks that he, too, would travel if he had four

---

dromedaries. Similar to “Le chèvre du Thibet,” Apollinaire cites a historical figure in drawing an analogy between himself and that figure.

Similar to the “Le chèvre” woodcut, the dromedary’s surroundings indicate the location of the scene. The dromedary is standing on sand dunes. There are palm trees in the foreground and two pyramids in the background. These two clues, especially the pyramids, indicate that the scene is set in Egypt. Again, this woodcut serves as an important tool for the reader not only picturing the dromedary, but identifying its surroundings as well.
c. La sauterelle

See the fine grasshopper,
That nourished Saint John.
May my verses be like him,
A feast for the best of men.

The last of the insects, the grasshopper is the seventeenth creature in the procession. Historically, grasshoppers (or locusts) have been considered both a blessing and a curse to man. They are a source of nourishment but can also devastate crops. In the Old Testament—Exodus, specifically—the locust infestation was the eighth plague sent by God to punish Egypt (Pharaoh) for holding the Israelites in captivity. “La sauterelle,” however, regards grasshoppers in high esteem—as nourishment for men.

In “La sauterelle,” the speaker shares his aspiration for his poetry to sustain intellectuals—the “best of men”. The poet wishes for his verses to be as nourishing to his readers as grasshoppers (or locusts) were to St. John. Apollinaire, in his notes, cites a verse from the book of Mark: “Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey.” The verse aids in painting a vivid picture of the poet’s analogy and also providing a religious context for the poem.

In the woodcut, the grasshopper is perched at the bottom of a hill surrounded by vegetation. There are houses on top of the hill and it appears to be sunny. The “sauterelle” woodcut is different from many of the woodcuts in that it appears more

---

47 Exod. 10:14-15
48 Mark 1:6 (English Standard Version)
delicate than most of the woodcuts portraying vertebrates. The grasshopper is outlined in black, rather than filled in with solid black like most of the other woodcuts.\footnote{Bohn, “Contemplating Apollinaire’s ‘Bestiaire,’” 47.}
d. Le dauphin

Dolphins, you play in the sea,
But the waves are always bitter.
Do I sometimes laugh with joy?
Life is still cruel.

The dolphin, the nineteenth creature in the procession, is the first of the sea dwellers. As the poem reinforces, the dolphin is a symbol of naivety and joy. Ernst Lehner notes that the dolphin “was considered a kindly sea monster in antiquity, servant of the gods and helper to man.” In Greek mythology, Apollo cherished the dolphin—he and other gods rode dolphins on the waves of the sea.

Specific to this poem, the dolphin plays in the sea despite its bitterness. The poet draws a parallel between the life of the dolphin and his own life. Although enduring a cruel existence, the poet still finds reasons to laugh with joy, as the dolphin plays in the sea despite its treacherous waves. Wilfred Mellers draws a comparison between the dolphin and Don Pedro (of “Le dromadaire”) in that they are both adventurers through “uncharted territories.” The poet, once again, admires the adventurous quality of the creature and, in a way, lives vicariously through the dolphin’s joyful frolicking through the bitter sea.

The dolphin woodcut portrays the dolphin in its natural element—the ocean. There is a steamship in the background, with smoke billowing out from its funnel. The “bitter waves” are portrayed in a choppy manner, surrounding the boat and the dolphin. The bow wave in front of the dolphin indicates that the dolphin is moving forward, which

---

50 Ernst and Johanna Lehner, A Fantastic Bestiary: Beasts and Monsters in Myth and Folklore (New York: Tudor, 1969), 137.
51 Mellers, Francis Poulenc, 4.
symbolizes the poet’s life moving forward despite setbacks. Bohn notes that the “waves in ‘Le Dauphin’…seem to have been influenced by Japanese block prints.” This indicates Dufy’s insight into the various woodcut techniques he was researching while working on the Bestiaire project.

---

e. L'écrevisse

Uncertainty,

O my joys,

Like crayfish we advance

Backwards, backwards.

The crayfish is the 22nd creature in Apollinaire’s procession. Scott Bates asserts that crayfish are a noted symbol of inconstancy.\textsuperscript{53} There are simple, yet profound implications in “L’Écrevisse.” As Roger Shattuck remarks, “The movement of a crayfish is familiar to most of us, and once the relationship has been pointed out to us between the tentative gestures of human uncertainty and the backward motion of a crayfish, we rejoice in the felicity of the association.”\textsuperscript{54} The poet in his hesitance hinders himself from progressing and, like the crayfish, finds himself backtracking. The “we” mentioned in the third line might suggest that the poet is either referring to himself and a lover, or humanity in general.

The crayfish woodcut is noticeably different from many of the others in that its background is predominately black, while the others are white. “La Carpe,” the following creature in the procession, shares the same reverse effect. This technique is effective in that it emphasizes the figure of the crayfish in the foreground. The viewer can easily see the crayfish’s intricate details: pincers, eight legs, eyes and tail. It is interesting to note that the crayfish is not in what would be considered its natural environment (the sea, sand, etc.). Rather, it is superimposed among branches and leaves. Bohn observes

\textsuperscript{54} Shattuck, \textit{Selected Writings of Guillaume Apollinaire}, 34.
that the crayfish woodcut resembles a “main course in a restaurant… surprisingly
elegant.”55

---

55 Bohn, “Contemplating Apollinaire’s ‘Bestiary,’” 47.
f. La carpe

Carp, how long you live
In your crowded pools!

Fish of melancholy,

Does death forget you?

The carp is the 23rd figure in the procession—the last of the sea dwellers. In this poem, it is portrayed as an immortal creature, one that patiently awaits death, to no avail. Mellers comments that “the carp, in their living death, are other than human in being beyond consciousness, and therefore ‘beyond good and evil.’”\(^{56}\) There are more complicated implications of this poem than what initially meets the eye, so the woodcut for “La carpe” is especially key to fully understanding the depth of this poem.

In interpreting the woodcut, one observes the large carp in a small pool, surrounded by leaves and flowers. The carp appears as if it has just jumped out of the water. In the background there is a palace, which Bohn reveals that, under “close scrutiny…the scene takes place in the gardens at Versailles, near the Orangerie.”\(^{57}\) The poet and visual artist both lived in Paris, so the usage of a familiar Parisian scene both pays homage to their city of residence and evokes a sense of nostalgia. Bohn remarks that like the lion, the carp calls to mind France’s rich history and “symbolizes a glorious ideal that has become obsolete…it [the carp] has witnessed the decline of royalty and the rise of modern democratic society.”\(^{58}\)

---

\(^{56}\) Mellers, Francis Poulenc, 5.

\(^{57}\) Bohn, “Contemplating Apollinaire’s ‘Bestiary,’” 50.

\(^{58}\) Bohn, “Contemplating Apollinaire’s ‘Bestiary,’” 51.
V. *Le Bestiaire*—Song-by-Song Commentary and Analysis

This comparative analysis of Durey and Poulenc’s settings of *Le Bestiaire* will include the six common pieces that the composers composed.

Both Durey and Poulenc eventually scored their “Bestiaires” in two versions, for piano and voice and for voice and instrumental ensemble. Durey wrote for baritone, two flutes, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, string quintet and doubling celesta. This version, however, was not completed until around 1958. Poulenc originally scored his instrumental Bestiary for baritone, flute, clarinet, bassoon, and string quartet—he later condensed it into a piano and voice arrangement.

An obvious difference between the two settings is that Durey aimed for the completeness of setting all 26 animal poems to music, while Poulenc chose twelve, and eventually only six, poems to set. It is possible that Durey’s “completeness” was to his detriment; Poulenc’s settings were better received and, in the long run, more popular.59

Poulenc and Durey were both surprised to discover that they composed to the same poem set. Interestingly, both Poulenc and Durey’s cycles were performed in Durey’s apartment sometime in 1919.60 The men maintained an amiable relationship; the two exchanged letters even through the late 1950s, fondly recalling memories together—particularly those involving “Le Bestiaire.”

Durey composed his Bestiary from March to July 1919. Although he did not set music to the four Orpheus poems, he dedicated his focus to the whole of the 26 animal poems: “It was not as easy as it looked at first glance, because, though some of them

---

60 Johnson, *Songs by Louis Durey*, 12.
called irresistibly for music, others, on the contrary, proved more daunting for me.”

He kept the poems in the same order that Apollinaire had included them in “Le Bestiaire.” Durey himself believed that his settings of “Le chèvre du Thibet” and “La carpe” could be paralleled with Poulenc’s settings of the same poems. His piano and voice version was written first and his chamber version was not written until 1958.

Poulenc met Apollinaire in 1917, at the première of Satie’s ballet, *Parade*. Poulenc developed a sincere affinity with Apollinaire’s poetry and “Le Bestiaire” prompted a lifetime of Poulenc setting it to music. Poulenc considered it extremely important for Apollinaire’s voice to be heard through his music. In Poulenc’s *Diary of My Songs*, he writes of treasuring a letter from renowned painter and Apollinaire’s colleague, Marie Laurencin, “saying that [his] songs had the ‘sound of Guillaume’s voice.’” Pierre Bernac, who collaborated musically with Poulenc, comments on the importance of the unity of the poem and the melody:

> I myself feel that the poetic melancholy in such songs is often tinged with humour to hide the depths of feeling behind it, as though the poet and the musician were smiling at their own sensibility. However this may be, the drollery and irony must never be heightened and stressed, but always the tenderness, the lyricism, the poetry.

Poulenc composed his Bestiary between February and May 1919 while serving in the military. Graham Johnson asserts that Poulenc’s setting is simply two-bar phrases stitched together. His first version for an instrumental ensemble and voice was nearly replaced in the public eye by his version for piano and voice. He remarks in his *Diary of My Songs*:

---

61 Louis Durey, Catalogue Commenté, translated by Isabelle Battioni.
My Songs that it is a shame his settings “are so often heard with piano that the original has been forgotten.”

In considering the six poems included in this study, there are some notable differences between the settings. First of all, Poulenc’s set does not follow the same order as Durey’s (or Apollinaire’s, for that matter). He begins with “Le Dromadaire” instead of “Le Chèvre du Thibet” and then continues the set in the correct order. There are also notable differences in tempo indications, which, in turn affect the characterization of the animal. Durey’s “Le Dauphin” is *traquille* (tranquil) while Poulenc’s is *anime* (animated). Graham Johnson, in his notes, remarks “the friendly grace of [Durey’s] dolphin is perhaps better caught than in Poulenc’s jollier setting.” Also, Durey’s “L’Excrevisse” is *timide* (timid), while Poulenc’s is *assez vif* (rather fast). These differences affect how the text is portrayed through song. The character of both the animal and the poet is sometimes interpreted differently by each of the composers.

Another distinction is that Durey’s “Le Dromadaire” is light, while Poulenc’s seems to tread slowly along, with slow movement associated with camels.

The following analyses will further examine the intricacies of each setting as well as the similarities and differences between the two composers’ settings.

---

Le Chèvre du Thibet—Durey

In this tender setting of Apollinaire’s love poem, Durey places both hands in the treble clef, for the most part, except for in measures 11 and 12. The treble sound aptly expresses the tenderness of the text and the poet’s sincere admiration for his lover and her locks of hair.

At first glance, it is difficult to determine the key of this piece. Upon closer examination, however, the piece seems to be grounded in C minor—the C minor chord is repeated throughout. The motif introduced in the first four measures appears in several places throughout “Le Chèvre du Thibet.” It is repeated an octave lower in measures 5-8, a fifth lower at measure 11, and an octave lower in measure 15. The final bars of the piece, akin to the first several bars, ascend until the motif is played an octave higher than the original appearance. Starting in measure 17, the time signature shifts between 3/4 and 2/4, eventually settling into 3/4 for the last two measures.

Fig. 1 “Le Chèvre du Thibet,” mm. 1-4

The dynamic indications for both the vocalist and the accompanist are very subdued in “Le Chèvre du Thibet.” The piece begins at pianissimo and ends at pianissimo possibile (ppp). The dynamic increases gradually as the vocal line enters and decreases when the voice exits at measure 17. Beginning at measure 12, the voice crescendos,
along with the piano, to add extra emphasis to the tender last line of poetry: *Des cheveux dont je suis épris* (From the head of my beloved).

The vocal line is a fourth down from the right hand of the accompaniment at the vocal entrance in measures 4-6. The vocal line and accompaniment slow at measure ten and return to *a tempo* in measure 11 as the motif in the accompaniment returns to the premier figure, a fifth lower.
Le Chèvre du Thibet—Poulenc

Poulenc also opted for a minor tonality in his setting of “Le Chèvre du Thibet.” As the vocal line and accompaniment enter on the pick up note, the G minor tonality is immediately established. The accompaniment, carrying mainly eighth-note values, is to be played evenly, as is the vocal line. The bass line has a walking-bass sequence that plods along in measures 2, 3, 6, and 7.

For the most part the vocal line oscillates between two notes. The largest interval in “Le Chevre” is a major third. There are few dotted rhythms—predominantly, straight rhythms are sung. The accompaniment is simple, yet effective: measures 2, 3, 6 and 7 and identical, as are measures 4 and 5. The first two lines set up a comparison for the last two lines: the golden coat of the goat that Jason pursued is nothing compared to the hair of the poet’s lover.

Fig. 2 “Le Chèvre du Thibet,” mm. 4-5

The climatic part of this poem is introduced in the sforzando placed over the word “Jason” in measure four. It is interesting that “Jason” is emphasized in this way. It is puzzling to consider why Poulenc would make an allusion in the poem the loudest word in the song. Durey chose to emphasize the last line—about the poet’s lover—instead. As
the voice backs off of its *sforzando*, the piano, as Mellers puts it, “flowers in two bars embroidering a chord of the dominant thirteenth with grace-notes.”69 These two bars, 4 and 5, played with *les 2 pédales*, reflect drastic dynamic changes, as the accompaniment decrescendos from a *mezzo forte* to a *pianissimo* in each measure.

---

Le Dromadaire—Durey

Durey’s use of the Dorian scale gives this piece an Arabic feel, which, along with the text and the woodcut, further reveals the location of the Don Pedro and his dromedaries’ journey. The piece starts out at a lively pace in F Dorian and the middle-Eastern tonality is emphasized when the right hand plays the scale up a fifth and back down in measures 3-5. The scale is again played in measure 10-12, in octaves, before the interlude that introduces Eb tonality. In measure 13, the key seems to shift and the left hand begins playing E-flats in octaves for the duration of the piece—a pedal point, of sorts.

The vocalist acts as an enthusiastic storyteller in imparting information “with spirit” about Don Pedro and his caravan. The voice emulates the five-note F Dorian scale previously introduced in the accompaniment. To the same effect, the rhythm and melody of the vocal line in measures 6-13 complement the sense of grandiloquence conveyed in the text. Conversely, the change of character in measures 16-24 conveys a sense of humility. The accompaniment and voice are both given a piano dynamic and the vocal line becomes a bit more fluid; the note values are longer and less percussive. The accompaniment has a similar sound to the “A” section, however the chords in the right hand are played in a higher range. The change in character comes with the poet’s, and in
this case, the singer’s realization that he will never own four dromedaries or travel all
over the world, for that matter. This change reflects the change in the text. For the first
three lines, the poet is telling about Don Pedro. In the last two lines, starting at measure
16, he is telling about himself and his desire to also explore the world.

Fig. 4 “Le Dromadaire, “ mm. 13-15
Le Dromadaire--Poulenc

Poulenc’s “Le Dromadaire” differs from the rest of his collection in that it is his only *Bestiaire* setting not in the 4/4 time signature; it is set in 2/4, as is Durey’s setting. It is also the longest of Poulenc’s *Bestiaire* settings—by thirty measures—perhaps to establish Don Pedro’s lengthy voyage and the dromedaries’ weighted stride. Also, “Le Dromadaire” is the only Poulenc Bestiary piece with a substantial interlude of seven measures.

Throughout the majority of the piece, the left hand plays in 16th-note chromatics. The dromedary, trudging along, appears throughout the piece in what will be referred to as the “A” section: measures 1-14, 22-33, and 37-39. The “B”-like section appears at the mention of Don Pedro in measures 15-22 and the poet at measures 34-36. The vocal line also reflects the distinct sections in the piece. The melody is the same in measures 11-14 and 30-33. The melody of the “B” section is similar at both of its appearances in measures 15-22 and 34-37.

The first three lines of poetry are separated from the last two by an interlude. Durey opted for this as well. The first three lines of poetry are declarative—facts about Don Pedro and his dromedaries. The last two lines express the poet’s admiration for Don Pedro’s sense of adventure. The ascending vocal line in measures 15-17 is accompanied by an ascending progression of chords—E major, F major, G major, A minor, B diminished and C major—before descending. The straight rhythms in the vocal line throughout the piece adds to what Wilfrid Mellers calls the “cumbersome lollipop” of the
dromedary. The voice trods along with the accompaniment as if Don Pedro and his dromedary had tired of their long journey.

What is perhaps most interesting about “Le Dromadaire” is the quirky coda that concludes the piece in a bright E major tonality. At the coda, in measures 40-43, the tempo more than doubles in speed to an allegro. The drastic change in style suggests that a change has taken place with either Don Pedro and his dromedaries or the poet—perhaps both. Whereas the majority of the piece sounds weighted, the last four measures seem unburdened and free. Perhaps Don Pedro has reached the end of his long journey, or the composer’s mind escapes into an adventurous daydream. The dynamics do not come below mezzo forte. It is interesting that the dromedary’s pace seems so slow—especially since the animal is supposed to be swift.

Fig. 5 “Le Dromadaire,” mm. 40-43

It is interesting to consider the primary interpretive difference in the setting of “Le Dromadaire.” While Poulenc seems to have focused primarily on the “cumbersome lollipop” of the dromedary, Durey paid particular attention to the contrast between the pompous Don Pedro and the humble poet.

---

70 Mellers, Francis Poulenc, 3.
La Sauterelle—Durey

The tempo marking is *chantant*, in singing style, which is precisely what comes across when this piece is played and listened to. The key is firmly grounded in E minor from the time the piano opens the piece by playing the motive, the vocal melody an octave up, over a series of diminished ii and tonic chords. The voice enters at measure seven repeating the motive an octave lower. Two phrases are sung, and then, starting at measure 14, the accompaniment once again plays the motive an octave higher as an interlude between couplets of the text. Most of the left-hand is played in the treble clef, with the exception of measures 8-14 and measure 25. The left hand accompanies the melody in the right hand with the same chords, but this time plays them in an arpeggiated manner. At the vocal line’s next entrance at measure 21, the accompaniment harmonizes in thirds with the half note right-hand sequence. Once again, the motive reappears as the vocalist sings the last phrase, and then an octave higher, ending the piece on a solid E minor chord in second inversion.

Fig. 6 “La Sauterelle,” mm. 1-5

The predominant dynamic for much of this piece is *piano*. Three of the four lines of poetry are sung at this dynamic. Arguably the most important line, the final line, is to be sung at *forte*. This drastic change in dynamics, along with the higher tessitura of the vocal line, adds extra emphasis to the poet’s lofty aspiration to create poetry that will sustain the “best of men.”
Out of the six Durey pieces analyzed in this study, “La Sauterelle” has the largest vocal range, from E above middle C to G above the staff.
La Sauterelle—Poulenc

The shortest of Poulenc’s *Le Bestiaire* compositions, La Sauterelle is only four measures long. Another distinguishing factor is that the tessitura in “La Sauterelle” lies significantly higher than in the other Poulenc “Bestiaire” compositions. The accompaniment and vocal line begin and end together, with no prelude or postlude. Poulenc indicates that the piece is to be *Lent* (slow), but also *souple* (flexible). It is important for the singer and the accompanist to be playing in a complementary manner.

The accompaniment in Poulenc’s “La Sauterelle” is simple in that of the four measures, the accompaniment in measures one and three are the same, and measures two and four are the same (with the addition of the octave played in the right hand in measure four). In measures one and three, the bass moves up and down in alternating fourths and fifths. On each beat of measures one and three, both hands play in intervals of a minor seventh and a major third. Along with the vocal line, the “soprano and “alto” notes move down by half steps. The pedals serve a significant role in this piece. Poulenc indicates that “La Sauterelle” is to be played with *les deux pédales*, or with the damper and soft pedal, right and left respectively.

![Fig. 7 “La Sauterelle,” mm. 1-2](image-url)
The vocal line begins in a line descending by half-steps as if to gesture downward to the “fine” grasshopper itself. Although the accompaniment is consistent in that every other measure is uniform, there seem to be two distinct sections in the vocal line: the first two lines of poetry discuss the significance of the grasshopper and the last two lines express the poet’s desires to produce substantial/significant poetic output. Pierre Bernac suggests that the accompanist and singer take “an expressive breath after the second bar” in order to accommodate the contrast.71

“La Sauterelle” is a very quiet, almost muffled piece. The singer and accompanist begin at a piano dynamic in measures one and two. The accompaniment remains at piano in measures three and four while the singer decreases her dynamic to pianissimo. This effectively imparts a sense of hushed intimacy to convey the seriousness of the poet’s aspiration. In the same way, the whispered dynamic serves to convey the humility and privacy of the poet in divulging his “lofty aspirations.”

Le Dauphin—Durey

The accompaniment in “Le Dauphin,” with the right hand only, is thin, but effectively conveys the sparkling brilliance of the dolphin and its glimmering waters. Like Durey’s “Le Chèvre du Thibet” and “La Sauterelle,” the majority of the piece is played in the treble clef. The six-note arpeggiated figure throughout the piece has a smooth harp-like feel. It begins based upon the pentatonic scale, D E F# A and B, undergoes a series of tonality shifts, starting at measure four, and gradually descends an octave in measure 18, before slowing slightly and returning to the premier figure in measure 20.

![Fig. 8 “Le Dauphin,” mm. 1-2](image)

The tempo marking tranquille is especially suitable for the calm, ethereal feel of this piece. The sustaining pedal adds to the feeling of the smooth flow of the tide and aids in maintaining a seamless consistency in the accompaniment from measure to measure. There is an inconsistent number of measures between vocal phrases, which makes the piece sound conversational and spontaneous, to an extent.

At the mention of joy in measures 15-17, the vocal line crescendos and the line ascends to an E, the highest note in the piece. In the following line, the voice ascends to a D on the word cruelle (cruel), which perhaps indicates that although the poet’s (and dauphin’s) existence is cruel, the joy far outweighs the cruelty.
Le Dauphin—Poulenc

In contrast to Durey’s whimsical setting, Poulenc’s “Le Dauphin” is portrayed as an animated creature. Marked Animé, this piece emulates a lively creature of the seas, leaping in and out of the water. The introduction in the accompaniment progresses through a I, iii, IV, V chord progression in A major and at measure four plays what could be interpreted as the “bitterness” of the sea in seconds. It is in measure four, and again in measure 13, that the pedal is introduced. The other 11 bars of the piece, however, are clearly marked sans pédale.

Throughout the mélodie, the left hand of the accompaniment plays the vocal line in the treble clef while the right hand plays chromatic minor thirds. The interval of fourths is predominant in the vocal line—in measures 5-6, 8, and 9-10. The jumping of fourths, in measures 5-6 and 9-10, further adds to the “liveliness” that the composer indicates. To that end, Pierre Bernac suggests that the singer should make contrasts according to the meaning of the text “lines one and three [measures 5-6 and 9-10] mf and rhythmic; lines two and four [measures 7-8 and 11-12] p and legato, with an expressive stress on the syllable ‘cruelle.’”

Fig. 9 “Le Dauphin,” mm. 5-6

---

72 Bernac, Interpretation of French Song, 279.
“Le Dauphin” has a sing-song quality that convinces the listener that the creature is rather content, if not happy, playing in the waves. The only hint of dissonance or “bitterness” in the piece is conveyed in the major seconds played in measures 4 and 13. Other than that, the piece has an extremely joyful sound. Poulenc’s “Dauphin” seems to have managed looking past the “bitter waves” of the sea and enjoying its life.
L’Écrevisse—Durey

The *Timide* tempo marking aptly expresses the uncertainty and hesitant nature of the poet as evidenced in the text. The accompaniment prelude sets the precedence of a smooth, fluid line that is later emulated in the independent vocal line. The two-bar figure is interwoven throughout the piece; it is repeated in measures one and two and is repeated several times throughout the piece: down a seventh in measures 6 and 7, down a fourth in measures 13-14 and up a fifth in measures 15 and 16.

![Fig. 10 “L’Écrevisse,’ mm. 1-2](image)

Several elements in Durey’s “L’Écrevisse” express the backward motion of both the crayfish and the poet. The triplet in the aforementioned repeated figure is always descending, indicating backwards motion. The triplet figure also gives a feeling of “give and take.”

Similarly, the vocal line descends at its entrance to express retrogression. To further emphasize the repetitive backwardness the poet writes about, Durey sets the words *à reculons* on the same note, E, as the vocal dynamic continues its decrescendo to pp. This repetition of both the text and the same note, gives a feeling of stagnancy. Both the vocalist and the accompaniment must “back away” at the end of the piece, as the dynamic decreases to a hushed *pp.*
Durey emphasizes backwardness in “L’Écrevisse,” and in doing so, expresses movement. Durey sets the phrase *nous nous en allons* (you and I—we move) at measure 11 in a triplet, indicating movement. In the following measures, the listener discovers that the movement is not forward, but backward—like the crayfish.

Durey’s admiration for Debussy is apparent in this piece. The ascending chords in measures 9-12 are especially reminiscent of Debussy’s ethereal *La cathédrale engloutie* (The Sunken Cathedral). In measure 8, the ascending nine-note pattern is based on a five-note, or pentatonic, scale—another element indicative of Debussy’s work.
L’Écrevisse—Poulenc

Much like Durey, Poulenc emphasizes the elements of backwardness in his setting of “L’Écrevisse.” The approach and overall sound, however, is quite different. Durey’s “L’Écrevisse” does not crescendo at all—it only gets quieter as the piece continues—Poulenc’s setting provides more dynamic contrast. Also, unlike Durey’s timide tempo marking setting, Poulenc’s setting trots along at an assez vif (rather fast) tempo. This is interesting, since crabs are not generally considered fast moving creatures.

As the motive is introduced immediately in the accompaniment, one pictures a crab scurrying “to and fro.” The crab rushes forward and retreats backwards, rather quickly, along with the tide. The piece slows slightly and settles into a tempo at the vocal entrance at measure 3. The accompaniment in measures 3-8 mimics the vocal line, and the motive is reintroduced, an octave lower and backwards in measure nine, when the vocal line begins its slide backwards. The repetition, especially in measures 9-12, emphasizes the poet’s hesitant tendency. As the piece continues, the range of the accompaniment descends and both hands move into the bass clef at measure nine.

![Fig. 11 “L’Écrevisse,” mm. 1-2](image)

The tessitura of the vocal line lies around A-flat, as the piece is in A-flat minor. The vocal line moves in seconds and thirds until à reculons in bar nine, when the voice slides down a fifth, emphasizing backwardness. At measure six, Poulenc alters the time
signature to 2/4, for only a measure. This has an interesting effect on the text Vous et moi nous nous en allons; it makes that particular line seem to be a parenthetical phrase that ties in the metaphor relating the poet to the crab. Vivian Wood notes that “L’Écrevisse” has irregular phrase groupings: a two-bar introduction is followed by a two-bar phrase, a phrase of one-and-a-half bars is wedged in the middle of the piece, followed by another two-bar phrase and two two-bar repetitions of à reculons. The dynamics hover around mf for the most part, although Pierre Bernac suggests more of a contrast at the end of the piece, with the repeated à reculons on piano rather than mezzo forte.

---

73 Vivian Wood, Francis Poulenc: An Analysis of Style, 117.
74 Bernac, Interpretation of French Song, 279.
La Carpe—Durey

This ethereal glimpse into the life of a carp is effectively portrayed as \textit{triste} (sad) as the piece indicates. Durey’s setting of “La Carpe” seems to mourn the long life of a carp. The first three measures set the mood, the accompaniment giving a feel of disconsolateness at a \textit{p} dynamic. Already, the listener can envision the murky waters in which the carp dwells.

As the sixteenth notes in minor thirds are introduced in measure four, along with the vocal line, the carp begins its movement. The G minor chord gives a feeling of unsettledness. The first line of poetry crescendos to an early climax at the singer’s outcry of the word \textit{Carpes} in the fifth measure. The E-flat augmented chord in the accompaniment complements the exclamatory \textit{forte} in the vocal line. The singer marvels at the carp’s long life and ponders its lonely existence as the rest of the line descends and begins to decrescendo. As the vocal line softens, the accompaniment begins a sweeping sixteenth note figure in measure six giving way to the ascending staccato sequence at a \textit{pianissimo} dynamic in measures seven through ten.

Fig. 12 “La Carpe,” mm. 5-6

The piece adopts an especially tender tone as the singer poses the question \textit{Est-ce que la mort vous oublie?} (Has death forgotten you?) in measures 11-12. The accompaniment, at this point, is less busy, and plays ascending seventh-chords, starting
with A-flat major, in measure 11. The series of ascending seventh chords continues through measure 13 to accompany the triplets in the vocal line.

The piece seems to end in the fifteenth measure with the ethereal sprinkling of notes in the right hand, but the listener is surprised by the B-natural and G played in the bass clef in measure 16. This could, perhaps, indicate the carp’s long-awaited death.
La Carpe--Poulenc

“La Carpe” is argued to be Poulenc’s most profound *Bestiaire* composition. Despite its simplicity, the 11-measure song conveys the poem’s sense of hopelessness effectively. Appropriately indicated *très triste, très lent* (very sad, very slow), Poulenc’s “La Carpe” is simple in structure. In fact, every other measure in the accompaniment is the same, which gives a feeling of the banal existence of the carp. The repetitiveness in the accompaniment makes the vocal line especially important. And, at a hushed *pianissimo*, the voice creates the “drama” of the piece.

The vocal line is consistent, moving mostly in small intervals. The consistency provides for contrast when the vocal line has larger intervals. The vocal line starts out at a stifling whisper on E-flat to set the scene of the carp in its pool. The line creeps along varying only when the pitch dips down a major second to D-flat and back up to E-flat, which seems to be the “home base” for the voice. The consistency of the vocal line makes the minor sixth jump at the voice’s next entrance at measure five especially haunting; it adds drama to the line although it is still at a hushed *pianissimo*. Similarly, the octave jump in measure ten achieves a similar effect and evokes a tender quality of the voice to express the word *mélancolie*.

Fig. 13 “La Carpe,” mm. 9-10
The piece is grounded in the quite depressing key of A-flat minor and has an uneven number of measures—eleven, to be exact. The dynamics indicated do not come above pianissimo. Even though the piece is short, it gives the feeling of time passing very slowly. The thirty-second note sequence repeated on beats one and three of each measure, give a feeling of repetition. It is apparent that Poulenc paid careful attention to setting the text to music. The vocal line sounds in a natural rhythm—a rhythm that complements the flow of the text. Wilfrid Mellers said it well when he asserted that the piece “scarcely breathes.”

75 Mellers, Francis Poulenc, 5.
VI. Conclusion

One cannot conclude this study without comparing the individual composers’ differences in popularity, lifestyle and choices.

While it is generally agreed that Poulenc’s setting is superior to Durey’s, one cannot overlook Durey’s contribution of setting all 26 of the animal poems to music. Graham Johnson comments that while “the younger composer’s [Poulenc’s] inherent wit and tenderness are hard to beat…Durey’s wider selection of animal poems (elephant, fly, flea, and dove, among many others), supplements Poulenc’s much smaller menagerie.”76

It is intriguing to consider the differences in popularity of each cycle. Perhaps Poulenc’s sampling of six settings was to his advantage in a “quality over quantity”-like manner. Maybe the number of settings did not impact the success and it was merely that more people preferred Poulenc’s setting. It is also possible that since Poulenc was on the rise as a popular, young Parisian composer, people simply paid more attention to his setting. Durey’s settings of “Le chèvre, dromadaire, dauphin, sauterelle, écrevisse, and carpe,” however, stand their own ground when compared directly to Poulenc’s same six settings.

It is important in comparing these two cycles to observe the similarities and differences since the composers both stemmed from the same Parisian artistic climate. It is apparent that both Durey and Poulenc appreciated and were inspired by Apollinaire’s poetry. While it is difficult to tell whether or not the two drew inspiration from Dufy’s woodcuts, it is apparent that they considered Apollinaire’s surface implications, as well as deeper meanings conveyed through the text. Poulenc seems to have struck a chord with Apollinaire’s deeper implications and Graham Johnson goes as far as to say that

even if he had just composed “La Carpe,” it would stand on its own as a significant musical contribution:

If the composer had written only this latter page he would have been remembered; the rise and fall of the vocal line on “Poissons de la mélancolie” reveals a tenderness which is the wistful voice of Poulenc himself…as he signs off from his first masterpiece.\(^\text{77}\)

Francis Poulenc’s “Le Bestiaire” is published by several publishing companies and is included in several French song anthologies, while Durey’s setting is more difficult to find in print. Poulenc’s setting has been recorded by numerous singers, while the only professional recording of the entire Durey Bestiary is recorded by French baritone François Le Roux and pianist Graham Johnson. The Le Roux-Johnson recording is all encompassing in that, in addition to the 26 animal songs, it includes Le Roux reading the Orpheus poems in context.

Durey struggled for recognition, while Poulenc received it readily. Durey was never very popular—even while associated with Les Six. In contrast, however, Les Six, for Poulenc, served as a springboard for his popularity. This contrast in popularity, however, did not impact Durey’s admiration and affinity for Poulenc. For them, “Le Bestiaire” was a bonding experience, although neither of them planned for it to be.

Durey’s whimsical settings cannot be disregarded as significant output, even when compared directly to Poulenc’s settings. After all, Durey’s “Bestiaire” was complete and included the entire procession of animals. In some cases, as in “Le Dauphin,” Durey aimed for simplicity in order to have the text “speak” for itself. Perhaps it was that certain poems did not call for music in the way some of the others did. For the most part, Durey and Poulenc characterized the animals differently. Durey’s graceful

dolphin is contrasted with Poulenc’s animated, lively sea creature; Poulenc’s dromedary trudges along, while Durey’s has a hop in its step.

The musical settings of *Le Bestiaire* serve to supplement the poem and woodcuts. With the three aspects combined—music, poem, and woodcut—the audience can effectively picture Apollinaire’s procession of animals. I believe the composers’ unique compositional qualities and musical influences provided for creative settings of the poetry that reflect their individual interpretations of Apollinaire’s text. With that being said, I believe Durey’s six common settings are certainly on the same quality level as Poulenc’s and should also be regarded as a significant contribution to the French mélodie genre.
Bibliography


Durey, Louis, Catalogue Commenté, translated by Isabelle Battioni.


