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## How Queer!: Camp Expression in Francis Poulenc's Trio for Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano

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HOW QUEER!: CAMP AESTHETICS AND FRANCIS POULENC'S TRIO FOR OBOE, BASSOON, AND

PIANO

By

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of the requirements for the

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School of Music  
College of Fine Arts  
The Graduate College

University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
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Kevin Ryland Eberle

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How Queer!: Camp Aesthetics And Francis Poulenc's Trio For Oboe, Bassoon, And Piano

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## ABSTRACT

### **How Queer!: Camp Aesthetics and Francis Poulenc's Trio for Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano**

by

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The music of Francis Poulenc (1899–1963) contains a great deal of humor, irony, and drama. These elements have mostly been attributed to Poulenc's personal frivolity and associations with over-the-top figures such as Jean Cocteau. Poulenc's homosexuality, until recently, was marginalized by a discourse shaped by Claude Rostand's 1950 binary of "monk" (*moine*) and "bad boy" (*voyou*). In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, Richard Burton notes that this cliché focused the discourse of a sacred/profane binary instead of a heterosexual/homosexual binary. The sacred/profane binary is used by scholars such as H. Wendell Howard to explain the distinction between *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* and *Dialogues des Carmelites*, using Rostand's *moine/voyou* binary to support the theory that Poulenc's revived Catholicism was the cause of a shift in compositional aesthetic, not any internal struggle with sexuality.

To reframe Poulenc's work with his homosexuality as a contributing factor, scholars Christopher Moore, Ethan Allred, and Keith Clifton analyze Poulenc's early ballets and last operas as examples of the camp aesthetic and subversive, gay commentary. Using descriptions of camp by scholars such as Susan Sontag, Moe Meyer, Jack Babuscio, and Eve Sedgwick, virtually all of the scholarship about camp and Poulenc links sonic gestures and extramusical

devices in order to affirm the camp aesthetics of juxtaposition, artifice, humor, and theatricality.

This document, while acknowledging the elements of camp in Poulenc's stage works, examines camp elements in his Trio for oboe, bassoon, and piano (FP 43, 1926) in order to show Poulenc's camp aesthetic was an autobiographical commentary about his sexuality, not simply a reaction to a preconceived plot or a visual aesthetic. The Trio, arguably Poulenc's first critically successful piece of chamber music, was written between two of his camp ballets, *Les Biches* (FP 36, 1923) and *Aubade* (FP 51, 1929) and at a time when Poulenc first acknowledged his own same-sex attraction. Poulenc's turmoil over his homosexuality was present by the time *Aubade* is written and is a cornerstone of critical readings of his operas. Previous to this conflict, Poulenc's camp manifests in *Les Biches* as a subversive, ironic commentary of the heteronormative discourse. This document posits that this same kind of playful subversion and queer commentary is present in the Trio, implying that not only is camp applicable to absolute music as well as ballet and opera, but that camp is an aesthetic which is aligned with Poulenc's style as a composer, despite the compositional aesthetic he subscribes to at any given time.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Poulenc has always been, to me, a fascinating composer. When I arrived at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, I told my advisory committee chair and bassoon professor, Dr. Janis McKay, that I wanted to do something relating to Poulenc for my doctoral project. After having the premise of this document shot down by many other people before arriving at UNLV, I was relieved when Dr. McKay accepted my idea and agreed to work with me on this project which has become so near and dear to my heart. I am forever thankful to Dr. McKay and Dr. Johnathan Rhodes Lee for their constant stream of marginalia, commentary, red pen, and criticism. My thanks are also owed to the rest of my advisory committee, Prof. Thomas Leslie, Dr. Marina Sturm, Dr. Lynn Comella, and Dr. Paul Werth for their insight, professionalism, and dedication as this process evolved.

During my collective six years at the University of Redlands, there were three people who encouraged me and motivated me, without whom I would not have pursued this degree in the first place: Dr. Carolyn Beck, Dr. Katherine Hickey, and Dr. Eddie Smith. This project is as much influenced by the traits instilled in me by these three musicians as by my colleagues at UNLV and I am grateful for their dedication earlier in my academic career.

Finally, I am grateful for the support of my parents, Jana Eberle and Ray Rivera, as I undertook various performance and academic pursuits. I have never had bigger fans than my parents and I am not ashamed to admit that. All my tenure at UNLV evolved and grew, my parents have only ever encouraged more evolution and more growth. Many thanks also to Derek Noel for his constant admiration and love during the writing and editing processes.

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## CHAPTER 1: CAMP AESTHETICS AND MUSICAL DISCOURSE

At the turn of the twentieth century, camp culture was at once a matter of style and a matter of strategy helping gay men “make sense of, respond to, and undermine the social categories of gender and sexuality that served to marginalize them.”<sup>1</sup> Many gay artists created alibis within their works to avoid governmental or social persecution.<sup>2</sup> According to Matthew Tinkcom, these alibis took many forms within the folds of artistically “acceptable” and heteronormative discourses.<sup>3</sup> In the context of the gay narrative, this “closeting” usually manifested through masking and subversion of what was considered standard practice. When standard practice or convention was altered, this constituted the presence of an alibi. When these alibis were presented in a humorous, ironic, exaggerated, or theatrical way, these alibis today are read as camp. Francis Poulenc (1899–1963) engaged camp aesthetics as a defining characteristic of his music, with recent scholarship identifying these elements in his early ballets and late operas.<sup>4</sup> The contention of this document is that Poulenc’s camp is not relegated to his ballets and

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<sup>1</sup> George Chauncy, *Gay New York: Gender Urban Culture, and the Makings of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 290.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew Tinkcom, “Warhol’s Camp,” in *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject*, edited by Fabio Cleto (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 345.

<sup>3</sup> Tinkcom, “Warhol’s Camp,” 345.

<sup>4</sup> For *Les Biches* (1924) and *Aubade* (1929), see Christopher Moore, “Camp in Francis Poulenc’s Early Ballets,” *The Musical Quarterly* 95, no. 2-3 (Summer-Fall 2012), 299–342; for *La Mamelles de Tirésias* (1947), see Ethan Allred, “Disembodied Identity: Patriotism, Gender, and Homosexuality in Francis Poulenc’s *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*,” *Gli spazi della musica*, 2 no. 2 (2013), 44–61; for *La Voix humaine* (1959), see Keith Clifton, “Mots cachés: Autobiography in Cocteau and Poulenc’s *La Voix humaine*,” *Canadian University Music Review* 22, no. 1 (2001): 68–85.

operas, but is expressed in his early chamber music as well, through humorous and exaggerated alterations and variations of formal structures, through motivic relationships between instruments that serve allegorical functions, and through a marked theatricality. For the purposes of this document, the Trio for Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano (FP24, 1926) is justified as a choice due to its place between Poulenc's early ballets as well as the importance of the work in Poulenc's early output.

Camp as an expression of style has its roots in the British lexicon of the early twentieth century. In 1909, J. Redding Ware defined camp as "actions and gestures of exaggerated emphasis. Probably from the French. Used chiefly by persons of exceptional want of character. 'How very camp he is.'"<sup>5</sup> Eric Partridge's *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* from 1923 defines camp as a character trait of a "dramatically effeminate homosexual man."<sup>6</sup> Linguistically, there are clear definitions for an object *having* camp traits and for *being* a camp person. *The New Partridge Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* contains the first listings of Camp as a verb from the period of the mid 1920s: "to exhibit humorously exaggerated, dramatic, effeminate mannerisms (usually but not exclusively of a homosexual male). Variants are 'camp around,' 'camp about,' and 'camp it up.'"<sup>7</sup>

It was not until the sexual and cultural revolutions of the 1960s that camp became something more than a stereotype. Camp began to enter strains of artistic discourse beginning

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<sup>5</sup> J. Redding Ware, *Passing English of the Victorian Era, a Dictionary of Heterodox English, Slang, and Phrase* (London: Routledge & Sons, 1909), 61.

<sup>6</sup> As quoted in *The New Partridge Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English, Volume I: A-I, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, edited by Tom Dalzell and Terry Victor (London: Routledge, 2013), 381.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 382.

with Susan Sontag's landmark 1964 essay, "Notes on Camp," which was the first attempt to apply camp elements to art criticism. Sontag defines camp not simply as an aesthetic which favors the unnatural, artificial, and exaggerated, but as an artistic sensibility, a way of seeing and experiencing art.<sup>8</sup> Further, it is "a sensibility that, among other things, converts the serious into the frivolous."<sup>9</sup> However, by engaging camp as a sensibility rather than just an aesthetic, Sontag implies that camp is the response to artistic subjects that possess her defining characteristics: "All Camp objects, and persons, contain a large element of artifice. . . . Camp introduces a new standard: artifice as an ideal, theatricality."<sup>10</sup> By Sontag's standards, camp as a sensibility means that camp is a label of reception, not creation. In visual art, for example, art becomes aligned with camp because the reception and analysis surrounding the art identifies the art as exaggerated or dramatic.<sup>11</sup>

Sontag's argument, despite its importance to the definition and cultural perception of camp in contemporary thought, contains flaws that ignore historical underpinnings of the term. Primarily, Sontag overlooks camp's origins in the gay community.<sup>12</sup> This ownership is important because the vernacular definitions of camp have been so closely aligned with homosexuality

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<sup>8</sup> Susan Sontag, "Notes on Camp," in *The Susan Sontag Reader* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1982), 105.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 105–106.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>11</sup> See Linda Gertner Zatlin, *Aubrey Beardsley and Victorian Sexual Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) for an example, especially her analysis of *Black Coffee* (127–29).

<sup>12</sup> Moe Meyer, "Reclaiming the Discourse of Camp," in *An Archaeology of Posing: Essays on Camp, Drag, and Sexuality*, edited by Moe Meyer (LaVerge, TN: Macater Press, 2010), 37–38.

and the attitudes of society toward homosexuality that gay culture has come to embrace the term as a kind of self-expression.<sup>13</sup> Sontag, in dealing with camp as a “sensibility” that merely overlaps gay culture, appropriates something that other scholars, such as Moe Meyer, have argued is specifically gay to a heteronormative approach of analysis.<sup>14</sup>

Susan Sontag’s definitions of camp and the criticism that was influenced by her essay dominated the gay discourse in this area from the 1960s until the late 1980s when scholars began to reassess the meaning of camp. Moe Meyer presents a clear definition that addresses large topical ideas of ownership and appropriation in relationship to camp:

I suggest that camp is not simply a “style” or “sensibility” as is conventionally accepted. Rather, what emerges is a suppressed and denied oppositional critique embodied in the signifying practices that processually [sic] constitute gay identities. Central to this reappraisal is the understanding that: camp is political; camp is solely a gay discourse; and that camp embodies a specifically gay cultural critique. Additionally, because camp is defined as a solely gay discourse, all un-gay activities that have been previously accepted as “camp,” such as Pop culture expressions, have been redefined as examples of the *appropriation* of gay praxis and no longer qualify as Camp as it is defined here.<sup>15</sup>

Meyer thus asserts that camp is a complete body of performances that are used to “enact a queer identity, with enactment defined as the production of social visibility.”<sup>16</sup> Camp as a performance aesthetic comments on personhood, society, and process.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> This is particularly the case with gay subculture, notably drag culture where camp is embraced as a performance aesthetic. See Esther Newton, *Margaret Mead Made Me Gay: Personal Essays, Public Ideas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 11–63.

<sup>14</sup> See Meyer, “Reclaiming the Discourse of Camp,” 39.

<sup>15</sup> Meyer, “Reclaiming the Discourse of Camp,” 39.

<sup>16</sup> Moe Meyer, *The Politics and Poetics of Camp* (London: Routledge, 1994), 5.

<sup>17</sup> Gary McMahon, *Camp in Literature* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2006), 5

As there was no contemporary scholarship of camp until Sontag's essay, there was a complacent acceptance of the universal application of Sontag's reading of camp. While Sontag's aesthetic attributes of camp—artifice, theatricality, exaggeration—are valid and applicable to the reception of art, scholarship since her "Notes on Camp" has codified more contemporary views of this aesthetic in art as indicated above. In visual art, camp is seen inherently in the gay subtext of Aubrey Beardsley's *art nouveau* line drawings and paintings as Linda Gertner Zeitlin points out as well as in the pop art and films of Andy Warhol, as noted by scholars such as Douglas Crimp and Patrick Smith.<sup>18</sup> Gary McMahon explores camp episodes in works of writers such as Oscar Wilde and Edward D. Wood, noting that in both authors camp is used as a subversive tool to spin political ideology within a queered context.<sup>19</sup> Camp in the literary arts is also explored in the works of Walt Whitman and Marcel Proust, particularly the issue of gay authorship as an influential trait of the camp aesthetic in prose.<sup>20</sup>

Camp as a model for musical analysis was born out of the broader subfield of musicology known as "New Musicology," which focuses on cultural and aesthetic issues in music. Since the 1970s and '80s, scholars such as Susan McClary, Elizabeth Wood, Philip Brett,

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<sup>18</sup> Zeitlin, *Aubrey Beardsley*, 127–29. For Warhol's films, see Douglas Crimp, *Our Kind of Movie: The Films of Andy Warhol* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012) and Patrick Smith, *Andy Warhol's Art and Films* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1986).

<sup>19</sup> The second part of McMahon's *Camp in Literature* details the lives and camp aesthetics of several writers, Wilde and Wood among them.

<sup>20</sup> For Whitman, see Karl Keller, "Walt Whitman Camping," in *Camp Grounds: Style and Homosexuality*, edited by David Bergman (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 113–120; for Proust, see Gregory Woods, "High Culture and High Camp: The Case of Marcel Proust" in *Camp Grounds: Style and Homosexuality*, 121–133.

and many others have used sexuality to frame critical readings of musical episodes and gestures across a broad spectrum of Western art and popular music.<sup>21</sup> Brett's work on sexuality in the music of Britten parallels the sexual criticism of Poulenc's work, particularly because of the time period.<sup>22</sup> Camp as an aesthetic has been applied to the analysis and scholarship of music only recently. Much of the discourse surrounds popular music and the art of performance, whether in the queer personas of The Village People and The Pet Shop Boys or the use of hyper realized avatars as a camp performance trait in the music videos of Annie Lennox and Nicki Minaj.<sup>23</sup> In the Western art tradition, camp models have been mostly applied to opera, particularly around the campy, cult-like followings of gay men to female singers, though also to issues of musical style and aesthetic readings.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> A small sampling of this type of scholarship includes: Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991); Elizabeth Wood, "Lesbian Fugue: Ethel Smyth's Contrapuntal Arts" in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, edited by Ruth A. Solie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 164–183; and Philip Brett and Elizabeth Wood, "Lesbian and Gay Music" in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, edited by Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas, (New York: Routledge, 2006): 351–82.

<sup>22</sup> See Philip Brett, *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*, edited by George E. Haggerty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006). Brett's Britten scholarship aligns several gestures and plot devices with Britten's homosexuality and its criminalization in England, particularly in *Billy Budd* and *The Turning of the Screw*.

<sup>23</sup> For The Village People, see Richard Smith, "Back at the YCMA: Village People," in *Seduced and Abandoned: Essays on Gay Men and Popular Music*. (London: Cassell, 1995), 20–25; for Pet Shop Boys, Richard Smith, "Seriously: Pet Shop Boys" in *Seduced and Abandoned: Essays on Gay Men and Popular Music*, 200–211; for Annie Lennox, see Gillian Rodger, "Drag, Camp, and Gender Subversion in the Music and Videos of Annie Lennox," *Popular Music* 23 (2004): 17–29; For Nicki Minaj, see Uri McMillan, "Nicki-aesthetics: the camp performance of Nicki Minaj," *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 24, no. 1 (2014): 79–87.

<sup>24</sup> Wayne Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993) deals almost exclusively with the performance of opera both



Scholarship on camp in the works of Francis Poulenc consists of three major articles.

First, Keith Clifton's article from 2001 on gay autobiography in *La Voix humaine* draws upon the social camp tropes of the gay male elite, including composers, obsessed with the opera diva.<sup>25</sup>

Clifton also draws attention to camp elements of the score as well as Jean Cocteau's libretto (as will be discussed later).<sup>26</sup> In 2012, Christopher Moore focused on the earlier period of Poulenc's

output, specifically Poulenc's early ballets *Les Biches* (FP 36, 1924) and *Aubade* (FP 51, 1928).<sup>27</sup>

Moore's essay focuses on issues of sonic and visual unity as part of the camp aesthetic,

particularly dealing with issues of cross-dressing, gender ambiguity, camp autobiography, and

musical representation. Finally, Ethan Allred looks at issues of politics and homosexuality,

including camp aesthetics, in *La Mamelles de Tirésias* (FP 125, 1944, rev. 1962).<sup>28</sup> Through an

analysis of the main character Thérèse (who becomes Tirésias) and her associated musical

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on stage and as seen in the devotion to particular *prima donnas*. Poulenc certainly can be considered what Koestenbaum terms an "opera queen" for his devotion to Denise Duval who sang the lead roles in all of Poulenc's operas. Other camp readings include (among others) Anne Shreffler, "Phantoms of the Opera: *The Ghost of Versailles* by John Corigliano and William Hoffman," *Contemporary Music Review* 20, no. 4 (2001): 117–35; Gary le Tourneau, "Kitsch, Camp, and Opera: *Der Rosenkavalier*," *Canadian University Music Review* 14 (1994): 77–97; and Michael J. Puri, "Dandy, Interrupted: Sublimation, Repression, and Self-Portraiture in Maurice Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé* (1909–1912)," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 60, no. 2 (2007): 317–72.

<sup>25</sup> Clifton, "Mots cachés," 68–85. Clifton uses Koestenbaum's *The Queen's Throat* to establish a cult-like admiration to soprano Denise Duval by Poulenc, thus classifying him an "opera queen," which Clifton argues is a trait of a campy gay man.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 78–82.

<sup>27</sup> Moore, "Camp in Francis Poulenc's Early Ballets," 299–342.

<sup>28</sup> See Ethan Allred, "Disembodied Identity. Patriotism, Gender, and Homosexuality in Francis Poulenc's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*," *Gli spazi della musica*, vol. 2 no. 2 (2013): 44–61.

gestures, Allred presents camp in *La Mamelles de Tirésias* as a method through which Poulenc comments on the heterosexual nuclear family in France. These three articles serve as the main influences of this document and of how the discourse presented herein is shaped.

In the staged works analyzed by Clifton, Moore, and Allred, Poulenc engages with the camp aesthetic through a combination of exaggerated tropes and autobiography. His camp exaggeration typically deals with an exaggeration or juxtaposition of formal structures, styles, or melodic and harmonic construction. In his ballets, Poulenc exaggerates his musical elements in order to achieve a manipulation of gender expression. In *Les Biches* for example, Poulenc's use of camp is embodied in the duality of two different musical genres as representative of a mixed gender binary in the androgynous character Hostess.<sup>29</sup> The Hostess is supposed to confuse the audience by blurring the lines between elegant, biological woman and a man in drag attempting to pass as a woman. She is also a sexually charged character, constantly attempting to engage the dancers in sexually suggestive tableaux. The combination of a rag and a mazurka—two styles which emphasize a temporal displacement—is what places this character within the camp aesthetic. The Hostess, just like the rag and the mazurka, emphasizes an unconventional gender expression in an attempt to be comedic and subversive of conventional female ballet roles. Bronislava Nijinska responded to the conflict of gender and of genre with the masculine-style choreography she created.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Moore, "Camp in Francis Poulenc's Early Ballets," 306.

<sup>30</sup> See Moore, "Camp in Francis Poulenc's Early Ballets," 315. Additionally, Nijinska comments on this gender duality in Lynn Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes*, 131–35. Lawrence Kramer also discusses issues of cross-dressing and musical relationships in Schumann's *Carnaval* (see Lawrence Kramer, "Carnaval, Cross-Dressing, and the Woman in the Mirror" in *Musicology and Difference*, edited by Ruth A. Solie, 305–25).

The music informing the presentation of visual aspects also becomes a formulaic component of a camp ballet or a camp opera. In the “Adagietto” of *Les Biches*, the androgynous character of the “Woman in Blue” dances to a conjunct, tonal theme played by the woodwinds at the beginning of the scene (see Figure 1). This delicate air is interrupted by dry, harshly articulated, chromaticism in the brasses for only eight bars before returning to the principal theme (see Figure 2).

Figure 1. Poulenc, *Les Biches*, Adagietto: mm. 1–10.

Figure 2. Poulenc, *Les Biches*, Adagietto: mm. 48–54.

Poulenc uses this interjection to establish a representative gender binary sonically. Christopher Moore, borrowing a term from Michael Puri, classifies this moment of brass interjection as a *geste brusque*, one that could conceivably be read as a sign of the character's masculine aggression, motivated by jealousy, toward the *corps de ballet* attentively scrutinizing his seductive cross-dressing performance from the sidelines."<sup>31</sup> If the dry, *très sec* interjection is a masculine *geste brusque*, then the material it interjects can be read as feminine since the characteristic of that music are opposite to this masculine episode. This juxtaposition of feminine versus masculine manifests in several key compositional devices, chiefly articulation, dynamics, and instrumentation where femininity is represented by quiet, slurred passages in the woodwinds (taken over for a phrase by the trumpet) and masculinity is represented by loud, aggressive phrases led by the brass. The cross-dressing character seems here to be represented by the trumpet based on that instrument's presence in both the feminine and masculine themes. Poulenc engages in this kind of instrumental representation in the Trio as will be explained in subsequent chapters.

It is true that the feminine/masculine binary is more easily read when an icon is present to represent that binary—in this case the cross-dressing dancer—but the visual aspect is not always the sole element. Here, the visual and sonic elements work in tandem to create a camp

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<sup>31</sup> Moore, "Camp in Francis Poulenc's Early Ballets," 314. The *geste brusque* is borrowed from a reference by Michael Puri to rehearsal 29 of Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloe* where Daphnis violently separates Chloe from Dorcon. This male aggression is marked by a heavily accented, loud passage which uses a half-step dissonance as an interjection to a soft, consonant fermata. See Michael Puri, "Dandy, Interrupted," 321–322.

product. The dancer is dressed in the same manner as the males with a short leotard and military-style jacket, which is a stark contrast to the long, flowing dresses of the women in the *corps*. The coloring of her costume is an allusion to the role of the poet in *Les Sylphides* (1909), on whom Poulenc's character is based (Figure 3).<sup>32</sup> The homage is apparent in the costuming, but the gender binary is reversed and the androgynous nature of the Woman in Blue is pronounced by Poulenc's orchestration and mood shift.



Figure 3. Left, a production of *Les Sylphides* (c. 1936–1940) with original costumes featuring the poet and a female dancer; Right, the “Woman in Blue” and a male dancer from the 1924 production of *Les Biches*.<sup>33</sup>

The costuming of the dancer alludes to a gender bend, but only to those audience members who are familiar with *Les Sylphides*. Here, the musical juxtaposition confirms the suggested gender ambiguity, placing the camp of the character in Poulenc's score as well as the

<sup>32</sup> See Moore, “Camp in Francis Poulenc's Early Ballets,” 308.

<sup>33</sup> *Les Sylphides* photograph courtesy of Art Gallery of Southern Australia ([https://www.artgallery.sa.gov.au/agasa/home/Exhibitions/Past Exhibitions/2008/balletsrusses.html](https://www.artgallery.sa.gov.au/agasa/home/Exhibitions/Past%20Exhibitions/2008/balletsrusses.html)); *Les Biches* photograph courtesy of The Red List (<http://theredlist.com/wiki-2-20-881-1399-1161-235972-236669-view-1920-1930-1-profile-1924-bles-biches-b.html>).

*tableaux*. These two elements, visual and sonic, are not mutually exclusive. In this example, Poulenc's score provides the sonic subtext for Poulenc as a personal, social critique and Nijinska's choreography provides visual subtext as a general social critique.

*Aubade* is Poulenc's first piece with autobiographical elements in its genesis. Written for a private party, *Aubade* deals with the conflicting issues of sexual freedom and social chastity in the protagonist Diane (modeled after the Greek goddess Diana). This conflict mirrors that of Poulenc's experiences in the late 1920s, a period which Myriam Chémines refers to as Poulenc's "serious depressive crisis."<sup>34</sup> Diane is conflicted about her sexual expression abandons her community and subjects to follow a socially unacceptable romantic (read sexual) indulgence. Given that this scenario was written by Poulenc during a time when he was refused an offer of marriage by his female friend, Raymonde Lionissier, and began a romantic relationship with Richard Chanlaire, the autobiography is easily read. Richard Burton comments on this association, noting that because of the timeframe surrounding Poulenc's depression with his homosexuality as well as the circumstances by which the ballet was conceived, *Aubade* is "clearly expressive of some deep conflict within the composer himself who, as featured pianist, is identified very closely with the figure of Diana."<sup>35</sup>

This theme of conflict is seen not just by the scenario but on a broader level of genre. *Aubade* is a "choreographic concerto," which seems to place the work as both a traditional concerto and a work meant to be danced to. If it had not been dictated otherwise, *Aubade*

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<sup>34</sup> Myriam Chimènes, "Introduction," in Francis Poulenc, *Selected Correspondences 1910–1963*, edited by Myriam Chimènes (Paris: Fayard, 1994), 5.

<sup>35</sup> Burton, *Francis Poulenc*, 40.

would just be considered a ballet, as it fits all of the parameters for ballet at the time: a choreographed piece of dance-theatre accompanied by instrumental music following a through-line narrative. But by Poulenc identifying the work as a “choreographic concerto,” he aligns the piece in the realm of the concert hall, not the theatre, and exposes a dichotomy and conflict: solo dancer (Diane) versus solo instrumentalist (Poulenc). *Aubade* subverts the traditional narrative both of conventional ballet music as well as plot. In the opening introduction, Toccata, Poulenc emphasizes this conflict through semitonal relationship (Figure 4). The piano continues this conflict through variations and different semitonal combinations as the Toccata develops.

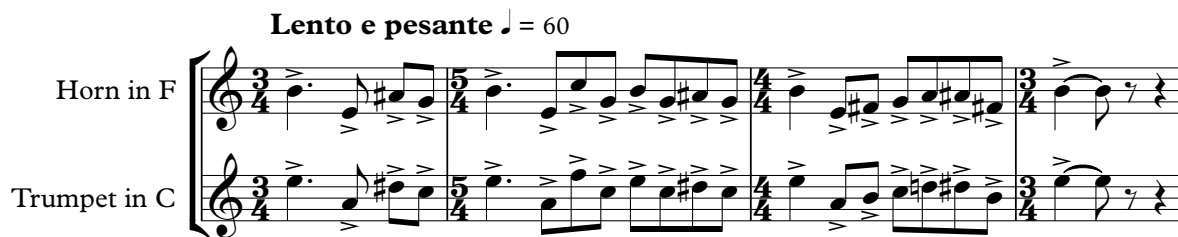


Figure 4: Poulenc, *Aubade*, Toccata: mm. 1–4.

Poulenc subverts the erotic (read here homosexual) subtext by having Diane’s musical representation adopt other themes, typically those representing her chaste (heteronormative) companions. Poulenc uses chromaticism to interrupt the tonal “chastity” of Diane, representing her turmoil by semitonal conflict. Even when Diane gets her own movement (Andante, *Variations du Diane*), the campy artificiality comes through. Diane had been associated with chromatic motion and semitonal conflict. Here, however, she is represented by the suggestion of a Mozartian melody (Figure 5), conforming Diane to the type of diatonic chastity her

companions have been associated with throughout the ballet.<sup>36</sup> If this movement were to be representative of the conflict of Diane's (and Poulenc's) emotional state, it should be constructed around semitones and chromaticism. The artificiality is the camp statement: Diane, even at her core, is not truly conflicted but adheres to the social convention even if it is secret. This type of "musical ventriloquism" blends the artificiality of the style and mood of the variations with the serious nature and turmoil already presented as representational of Diane, thus engaging the camp aesthetic musically.

ANDANTE\_\_Variation de Diane

**31** Andante con moto ♩ = 72

The musical score is for the Andante movement of Poulenc's *Aubade*, specifically the Variation de Diane, measures 314-317. The tempo is marked 'Andante con moto' with a quarter note equal to 72 beats per minute. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 4/4. The score is arranged for a woodwind quintet (Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon), Piano, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The Oboe part is marked 'SOLO' and 'mf doux'. The Clarinet part is marked 'mf'. The Bassoon part is marked 'mp doux'. The Piano part is marked 'p en accompagnant'. The Viola part is marked 'p pizz' and 'mf arco'. The Violoncello part is marked 'p pizz'. The Contrabass part is marked 'p'.

Figure 5: Poulenc, *Aubade*, Andante: Variations de Diane: mm. 314–317.

<sup>36</sup> Moore notes that Poulenc is alluding to Mozart's *Divertimento for Three Basses Horns*, K. 439b at the opening of the Andante. See "Camp in Francis Poulenc's Early Ballets," 235–36.



Poulenc's ballets were not the only pieces in his output to incorporate camp aesthetics. Poulenc's first opera, *Les Mamelles de Tiresias* (1947), employs a surrealist text by Guillaume Apollinaire. The plot, full of campy cross-dressing, transgenderism, and overtly sexual themes, centers around a woman, Thérèse, who emasculates her husband and passes as a man (through the removal of her breasts) to warn French citizens of the dangers of childbirth. Eventually, the heroine and her husband are reunited and the final chorus implores the citizenry to procreate. As in *Aubade*, Poulenc's setting of this text carries with it autobiographical overtones, masked through camp. These camp elements come chiefly in the form of juxtaposed styles which shift according to the shifting genders in the narrative on stage.

Poulenc uses that which carry associations with a specific gender, juxtaposing the visual and sonic elements in a more overt way than in *Les Biches*. For example, Thérèse sings a sweet, lyrical melody marked *très doux et tendre* when contemplating the removal of her breasts (and thus her femininity). However, when her breasts are finally relinquished, Poulenc sets her text as a brusque, Spanish-style dance.<sup>37</sup> This kind of juxtaposition happens frequently throughout the opera. Reading this kind of juxtaposition as camp shifts attention from the juxtaposition to the implications of the juxtaposition on the narrative. Femininity in Poulenc's vocal music is often associated with the lyrical, sweetly sung, *très doux* style. When that femininity is challenged, as it is with Thérèse at the moment she decides to "become" male, Poulenc utilizes masculine styles, subjecting the gender implication to an othered state. Here, the masculinity associated with the Spanish-style triple time song becomes emasculated while at the same time

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<sup>37</sup> For an analysis of this scene and Thérèse's development musically through her transfiguration, see Ethan Allred, "Disembodied Identity," 58—59

Thérèse becomes empowered as her transformation to Tirésais becomes solidified—and approved—by the musical underscore. This musical approval is at odds with the social convention of France at the time due to the subject matter, but nonetheless, the feminine character becomes masculine and so too does her music.<sup>38</sup> Ethan Allred points out that these juxtapositions are used for comedic effect, but also to “highlight the juxtaposition between the opera’s unique characters and between the shifting emotional states of individual characters.”<sup>39</sup> The use of pastiche later in the opera is a particularly campy moment as Poulenc uses exaggerated styles to comment on the shifting sexual and gender configurations of the characters on stage as well as on Poulenc’s own conflicted sexuality.<sup>40</sup>

Campy juxtaposition, humor, and theatricality are also present in Poulenc’s last opera. Keith Clifton points out that in *La Voix humaine* (1958), Poulenc uses the sole character of Elle—a nameless woman clinging to a love already lost—as a metaphor for himself and his struggles with intimate, male relationships.<sup>41</sup> This autobiographical bent is confirmed by Poulenc in a letter dated 1959, which calls the work “a musical confession.”<sup>42</sup> Just as in *Les Biches*, Poulenc utilizes manipulation of formal convention as a camp element in *La Voix humaine*. Musically,

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<sup>38</sup> For a more in-depth explanation of French sexual politics during the first half of the twentieth century, see Allred, “Disembodied Identity,” 44–48.

<sup>39</sup> Allred, “Disembodied Identity,” 60.

<sup>40</sup> Allred notes that homosexuality in France was often thought of as being a kind of “sexual anxiety”, an anxiety which critics note is present in Poulenc’s music, especially in moments of pastiche or juxtaposed styles. See Allred, “Disembodied Identity,” 60–61.

<sup>41</sup> For a more detailed analysis, see Keith Clifton, “*Mots cachés*,” 63–85.

<sup>42</sup> Sidney Buckland, *Francis Poulenc: Selected Correspondence*, 257.

Poulenc's treatment of the orchestra alters the conventional vocal/orchestra paradigm he employed in his earlier operas. In the preface to the score, Poulenc writes that the piece "must bathe in the most grand orchestral sensuality."<sup>43</sup> However, the orchestra is does not particularly bathe Elle in anything, but rather reaffirms her loneliness through dramatic silence, relegating the orchestra to fill the space created by Elle and her dramatically unfolding situation. The camp aesthetic here is read in the orchestra's artificial representation of Elle's lover on the other end of the phone, through the use of jazz motifs which themselves are juxtaposed with the classical, high-art form of opera.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, Poulenc rejects any sort of lyricism in the vocal writing, again making his composition an exaggerated juxtaposition to the conventional operatic standard. In doing so, Poulenc highlights the normal inflections of speech and proper rhythms of speech, blurring the lines between spoken and sung text.<sup>45</sup>

As a whole, Daniel argues, the reception of *La Voix humaine* presents itself a campy dichotomy: "If *La Voix humaine* succeeds as a drama, it is because of the vocal writing; but if it succeeds as a piece of music, as an opera, it is because of the orchestra."<sup>46</sup> This is uncomfortably humorous because the vocal line—the defining element of an opera—is

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<sup>43</sup> "L'œuvre entire doit baigner dans la plus grande sensualité orchestrale." Francis Poulenc, *La Voix humaine: Tragédie lyrique en un acte*. (Paris: Ricordi, 1959): vi.

<sup>44</sup> Michal Grover-Friedlander, "The Call of the Human Voice in Poulenc's 'La Voix Humaine,'" in *Music, Sensation, and Sensuality*, edited by Linda Phyllis Austern (New York: Routledge, 2002), 202. Grover-Friedlander suggests the jazzy orchestral accompaniment represents the lover's side of the conversation.

<sup>45</sup> See Daniel, *Francis Poulenc: His Artistic Development and Style*, (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press: 1982), 307.

<sup>46</sup> Daniel, *Francis Poulenc*, 312.

unimportant to the success of *La Voix humaine* as a piece of music. This might suggest then that *La Voix humaine* is, like Poulenc, a subject divided.<sup>47</sup> This line of thought supports Sontag's idea that a camp subject must be what it is not. In this case, *La Voix humaine* obscures the definitions between drama and opera with music serving as a confusing intermediary.

Though scholarship on camp has transformed since the 1980s, two distinct models emerge. The first model is Sontag's notion that camp is a reception aesthetic and the second aligns more closely with Meyer, where the aesthetic is read as a gay, political critique. While the model used in this document is most closely aligned with Meyer's reading of camp, it is augmented and codified in more certain terms borrowed from British historian Jack Babuscio. Babuscio points out four elements by which camp can be measured in art, particularly music: irony, aestheticism, theatricality, and humor.<sup>48</sup> Irony, Babuscio notes, is the subject matter of camp and is often read as a binary: masculine/feminine, sacred/profane, high/low, and youth/aged are all common to camp as a genre.<sup>49</sup> There is an unspoken binary related to camp which Sontag and her subscribers leave out: heterosexual/homosexual. Babuscio notes of this sexual binary construction that "at the core of this perception of incongruity is the idea of gayness as a moral deviation."<sup>50</sup> Gayness as a moral deviation in Poulenc can be read as his manipulation of formal conventions, including elemental relationships (as in the

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<sup>48</sup> Jack Babuscio, "Camp and the Gay Sensibility," in *Camp Grounds: Style and Homosexuality* edited by David Bergman (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 20.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 20–21.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 21.

vocal/orchestra relationship in *La Voix humaine*), musical juxtapositions (as with the masculine/feminine representations of Thérèse in *La Mamelles de Tirésias*), or a comical pastiche (as in the Rag-Mazurka which informs the duality in the Hostess in *Les Biches*).

The idea of gayness as a moral deviation is not relegated only to Poulenc's musical devices. Poulenc's homosexuality, until recently, was marginalized by a discourse shaped by Claude Rostand's binary of "monk" (*moine*) and "bad boy" (*voyou*), a binary which speaks only to Poulenc's documented erratic behavior and not to the deeper notion of Poulenc's sexual orientation.<sup>51</sup> Poulenc's antics were well documented in letters and diary entries of his friends and associated. Jean Cocteau noted one particular party that found "Poulenc completely naked. Valentine [Hugo] dying of fear that her maid would be scandalized. Poulenc as comfortable as if he were wearing a monk's cowl."<sup>52</sup> These antics, based on Claude Rostand's *moine/voyou* binary, would simply be written off as childish frivolity. However, Richard Burton notes that this cliché focused the discourse of a sacred/profane binary instead of a heterosexual/homosexual binary.<sup>53</sup> The sacred/profane binary is used by scholars such as H. Wendell Howard to explain the distinction between *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* and *Dialogues des Carmelites*, using Rostand's *moine/voyou* binary to support the theory that Poulenc's revived Catholicism was the cause of a

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<sup>51</sup> See Claude Rostand, "Première audition du *Concerto* de Francis Poulenc," *Paris-Presse*, 26 July 1950.

<sup>52</sup> Benjamin Ivry, *Francis Poulenc*, 43.

<sup>53</sup> See Richard Burton, *Francis Poulenc* (Bath: Absolute Press, 2002), 15. Burton notes Claude Rostand's obituary which acknowledges the permeation of the *moine et voyou* binary. See Claude Rostand, "Francis Poulenc: Hier et demain," *Le Figaro littéraire*, 7 February 1963.

shift in compositional aesthetic, not any internal struggle with sexuality, though contemporary thought would argue the two are not mutually exclusive.<sup>54</sup>

Babuscio's second camp element, aestheticism, shapes the irony in camp. Aestheticism is stylized camp performance meant to comment on oppressive morality that classifies gayness as moral deviation. For Babuscio, the aesthetic style of camp is a shift in incongruent emphasis: "The emphasis shifts from what a thing or a person *is* to what it *looks* like; from *what* is being done to *how* it is being done."<sup>55</sup> Rules of social convention—or heteronormative standards such as opposite-sex relationships—must be dissolved in the camp aesthetic. Babuscio points out that "Camp is aesthetic in three interrelated ways: as a view of art; as a view of life; and as a practical tendency in things or persons."<sup>56</sup> This idea of aestheticism in music lends itself to *how* music is constructed and performed. Certain musical gestures, individually and in tandem, can be seen as dissolution of conventional compositional practice, which parallels dissolution of a heteronormative oppression in society.

In *Les Biches*, for example, the sexually ambiguous character of the Hostess is represented by a mixture of rag style music and a mazurka.<sup>57</sup> Moore notes that by combining

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<sup>54</sup> H. Wendell Howard, "Francis Poulenc, Profane and Sacred," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 16, no. 1 (Winter 2013), 14–30. In this article, Poulenc's homosexuality is acknowledged (once) as manifesting in the opera, but only within the context of the profanity of *La Mamelles de Tirésias*.

<sup>55</sup> Babuscio, "Camp and the Gay Sensibility," 24.

<sup>56</sup> Babuscio, "Camp and the Gay Sensibility," 21.

<sup>57</sup> Moore, "Camp in Francis Poulenc's Early Ballets," 314. The Hostess, through her choreography, is less refined as the other female dancers evoking a sense of "a man trapped in a woman's body," according to Nijinska.

rag style music with a mazurka, the two genres are obscured to “create a hybrid musical entity that defies precise categorization,” blurred even further by allusions to “everything from Mozartian melodies. . .to Tchaikovskian bombast.”<sup>58</sup> Based on the imagery of the Hostess—dressed like a *demimondaine* wearing feathers and yards of pearls reminiscent of a flapper— as well as the party-like, free spirited atmosphere, the rag certainly makes aesthetic sense. Aestheticism as a camp element comes to play here as the dotted rhythms associated with both the rag style as well as mazurkas never fully mature in to a true depiction of either style. By confounding a precise musical genre and obscuring distinction, Poulenc encapsulates not only the suggested sexual ambiguity of the Hostess, but also the aesthetics of conventional dance forms. Thus, the camp in the Hostess and the music that represents her falls in to the category of aestheticism because the confounding nature of the Rag-Mazurka is due to the construction (or lack thereof) of each dance form. Aligning with Babuscio’s aestheticism, the musical representation of a character which is already “othered” visually transforms the meaning: it is not that the music is a hybrid of a rag and a Mazurka, but that the music is transforming conventional constructions, transcending traditional aesthetic associations to comment on the now altered narrative.

Babuscio’s third element, theatricality, speaks to the way in which objects interact with society. To be camp is to “perceive the notion of life-as-theater, being versus role-playing, reality and appearance.”<sup>59</sup> This theatricality questions societal norms and attempts to allow gay originators to “pass” as straight or to align with the straight discourse. The “passing” is what

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<sup>58</sup> Moore, “Camp in Francis Poulenc’s Early Ballets,” 316.

<sup>59</sup> Babuscio, “Camp and the Gay Sensibility,” 24.

makes something camp, as Sontag's ideas of masking and artifice would suggest. Theatrics mask the discursive point of the gay narrative, drawing attention away from the deviation from the heteronormative narrative. For Poulenc, theatricality takes several forms, mostly from genre and plot device. In ballet and opera, Poulenc has a built-in sort of theatricality in the librettos and plots, especially in opera where the collaborations with Cocteau (*La Voix humaine*) and Apollinaire (*La Mamelle de Tirésias*). Very dramatic events—attempted self-asphyxiation with a telephone cord or body mutilation—take place within the surrealist and modernist librettos of these operas. The idea of “being versus role-playing” Babuscio suggests is applicable to these operas and manifests through the sonic gestures associated with the staged action. For instance, Thérèse in *La Mamelle de Tirésias* removes her breasts in an effort to become a male figure. While this is certainly a dramatic turn, it is Poulenc's use of tropes associated with masculinity, such as the Spanish dances and heavily accented martial style percussion, to assert her new role. It is through this sonic representation that Poulenc moves Thérèse to Tirésias, from playing male to being male.<sup>60</sup>

The same is true in *Les Biches* with the character of the Woman in Blue. She is presented visually as a puzzling figure of androgyny through costuming and choreography. Her androgyny is confirmed through the embodiment of both feminine and masculine sonic ideas—the sonic element validating the visual as truth and not simply as someone “passing” for one thing or the other. While the androgyny of the Woman in Blue is meant to comment on the heterosexual narrative borrowed from *Les Sylphides*, the music legitimizes her as being inherently

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<sup>60</sup> See Allred, “Disembodied Identity,” 58 for a detailed analysis of the breast removal scene.



androgynous rather than simply a cross-dresser, thus blurring the lines between not only the traditional gender binary, but how the binary is also traditionally altered (e.g., through cross-dressing, transvestism, etc). Poulenc's use of musical gesture allows the characters on stage in his operas and ballets to be authenticated for the sake of the theatrical narrative. When the characters are authentic and still comment on a heteronormative discourse, then camp is present. There is no caricature of a group and there is no artificial drag performance. By presenting the Woman in Blue as an androgynous "them" rather than just as a woman wearing men's clothes, the commentary against male virility and strength as the standard can be more easily taken seriously. The sincerity of this kind of camp is a long standing underpinning of camp aesthetics with Susan Sontag even noting that "camp must be serious."<sup>61</sup>

Finally, humor is elemental to camp subjects. Humor, as Babuscio defines it, is a result of the "identification of a strong incongruity between an object, person, or situation and its context."<sup>62</sup> This humor manifests itself artistically in subject juxtaposition. Challenging the conventions of an art form allows gay creators to define this kind of expression as gay, a resistance to the assumption that heterosexuality is the norm.<sup>63</sup> Babuscio notes that camp runs the risk of being considered not serious because of the influence of humor and irony.<sup>64</sup> While humor is essential, it is how that humor is constructed and performed while maintaining an air

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<sup>61</sup> Sontag, "Notes on Camp," 105.

<sup>62</sup> Babuscio, "Camp and the Gay Sensibility," 26.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 28.

of sincerity. This is important because, as Babuscio notes, camp mocks cultural norms (particularly those of a heterosexual patriarchy), but it “never totally discards the seriousness of a thing or individual.”<sup>65</sup> As mentioned earlier, the shift from female to male in Thérèse in *La Mamelles de Tirésias* is a theatrical element, underscored musically with the shift to accented, militaristic, Spanish style masculinity after the removal of her breasts. This same moment is also humorous in that prior to the removal of Thérèse’s breasts, her contemplative melody is marked *très doux et tendre*. The dramatic shift to the Spanish, accented, militaristic music of Tirésias is prompted by the removal of Thérèse’s breasts, as represented by balloons. Such an exaggerated visual effect combined with Poulenc’s musical shift evokes a humorous element. The masculinity which ultimately overtakes Thérèse is not prompted by violence or aggression, but is instead harkened by the release of two balloons.

Through a synthesis of these ideas, I suggest that camp in Poulenc’s music possesses the following traits as inherent, compositional devices: a juxtaposed binary or binaries, theatricality, exaggeration, humor, and an element or elements of gay autobiography. Given that Poulenc was a homosexual composer, it is understood here that this requirement is met universally. These camp elements are generally conflicting with a heteronormative narrative, which itself manifests as traditional convention (e.g., form, structure, harmonic progressions) and/or plot elements (through libretto or text). The way in which the music is altered or juxtaposed must carry a subversive quality and be otherwise corrected in some instance. An example of this might be the way in which the rhythm of Thérèse’s *très doux et tendre* melody

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<sup>65</sup> Babuscio, “Camp and the Gay Sensibility,” 29.

in the breast cutting scene of Act I in *La Mamelles de Tirésias* is not altered in the Spanish dance, but is “corrected” to be masculine in nature. Finally, these elements are used by Poulenc in a serious manner without making a parody of any of the conventions he may be using. The Trio for Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano possesses similar camp elements found in the ballets and operas without the aid of visual elements or a guiding text. Indeed, the Trio may be the most subversive of the early camp work due to these facts alone.

## CHAPTER 2: MOVEMENT I: PRESTO

Poulenc's Trio for Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano (FP 43) was written in 1926 during Poulenc's first period (1917–1939). The Trio's placement in Poulenc's *oeuvre* marks a return to instrumental chamber music, having written *Les Biches* only two years prior and three small pieces between the ballet and the Trio. Keith Daniel points out that the chamber pieces from this period were not written for particularly virtuosic performers as were later works, suggesting a sense of naiveté and simplicity as a trait of Poulenc's early wind writing.<sup>66</sup> Poulenc was quite fond of his Trio, marking it as an important milestone in his compositional career and arguably the hallmark of his chamber music for winds.<sup>67</sup>

In the first movement, Poulenc demonstrates the camp aesthetic through his use of juxtaposed style and humor. Rostand points out that the Trio is typical of Poulenc's early style, particularly in its "brevity, conciseness, sharpness and humor."<sup>68</sup> According to Poulenc, the first movement follows the form of a Haydn allegro movement, as Ravel had suggested to him.<sup>69</sup> However, there is little similarity between a typical Haydn allegro and Poulenc's first movement, save for the basic fact that both are constructed in a ternary form. Poulenc's ternary, in deference to his neo-classical alignment, is augmented and expanded from the typical Haydnesque allegro form. Overall, the first movement is constructed in three parts:

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<sup>66</sup> Daniel, *Francis Poulenc*, 102–3.

<sup>67</sup> Francis Poulenc, *Francis Poulenc: Articles and Interviews: Notes from the Heart*, edited by Nicolas Southon, translated by Roger Nichols (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014), 241.

<sup>68</sup> Poulenc, *Notes from the Heart*, 239.

<sup>69</sup> Poulenc, *Notes from the Heart*, 241.

ABA'. However, each of these sections is embellished either by the use of operatic recitative, non-traditional harmonic exploration, a combination or fusion of styles, or unconventional construction. These aspects relate to the camp aesthetic in so much as these elements deviate from the conventional norms of the trio sonata. Using camp's heterosexual/homosexual binary of commentary, if the conventional Haydn-inspired allegro is the basis of this movement, then the traditional, Classical sonata-allegro form is the heteronormative narrative and anything that deviates from that narrative can be read as subversive, homosexual commentary. For Poulenc, this commentary is achieved through the above mentioned compositional devices—and camped up through humor and musical irony.

Poulenc's title for the first movement is Presto, but the tempo marking is "Lent ♩=76;" this metronome marking is arguably too fast for a "Lent," doubling the humorous cognitive dissonance.<sup>70</sup> Poulenc's introduction is not unusual in terms of the Haydn model; many of Haydn's symphonies and chamber works begin with free, recitative-like introductions. The campiness of the introduction is a matter of appearances: the *Lent* introduction is not what it seems. Poulenc uses a metronome marking more closely associated with an *Andante* than a *Lent*, pushing the boundary of a truly free recitative-like beginning by dictating a strict tempo. Furthermore, Poulenc's indications of *librement* for the bassoon and oboe solos are not truly applicable since the tempo is dictated by metronome marking. The juxtaposition of rigid temporality and free liberation from the tempo is both humorous and subversive. Does Poulenc mean that only the piano part, which is never marked *librement* in this opening, should adhere

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<sup>70</sup> Much in the same vein as this example, though exaggerated the opposite direction, the "Andante" movement of the Sonata for Two Clarinets (FP 7, 1918) is marked "Très lent ♩=66".

to the temporal mandate? If that is the case, then how should the piano interact with the liberty dictated in the wind parts? Poulenc's own recording of the work in 1928 with oboist Roland Lamorlette and bassoonist Gustave Dherin betrays the implied rigidity of the metronome marking.<sup>71</sup> The piano's initial statement is not close to the metronome marking of  $\text{♩}=76$ , but rather fluctuates between  $\text{♩}=60$  and  $\text{♩}=66$ . The bassoon and oboe solos are extremely *librement* with no strict adherence to time. This makes the metronome marking, not the *librement* indications, the subversive camp device. By using a specific metronome marking, albeit a questionable one, Poulenc allows the *librement* solos to comment on the narrative, here represented by temporal devices and deviations. If expressivity and freedom are paramount to this introduction, then the performance of the introduction, as Poulenc's recording and many subsequent recordings indicate, intentionally defies the compositional directions.<sup>72</sup>

Camp elements exist as well in the harmonic construction of the introduction. Tonally, Poulenc begins in a tonality centered around A. Here, we can read the piano part as the heteronormative discourse as it is the driving force harmonically throughout the work. The bassoon solo attempts to fit firmly within the framework of an A centered tonality, only to be "othered" by a polytonal, yet distinctly flat-oriented, chord in the piano (Figure 6). The piano, as

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<sup>71</sup> Francis Poulenc, *Trio for oboe, bassoon, and piano on The French Accent*. Francis Poulenc, Roland Lamorlette, and Gustave Dherin. Oboe Classics CC2025, 2012. CD.

<sup>72</sup> One recording which attempts to present the introduction with a stricter tempo is the recording by Ensemble Wien-Berlin from 1989, though the tempo is still not as fast as Poulenc's indication. See Francis Poulenc, *Trio for oboe, bassoon, and piano on Francis Poulenc: Chamber Music*. Hansjörg Schellenberger, Milan Turkovic, and James Levine. Deutsche Grammophon 427 639-2, 1989. CD.

the heteronormative discourse, moves away from A through the enharmonic subjugation of the bassoon's G-sharp, which becomes A-flat in the bassoon part as well.

Figure 6. Poulenc, Trio, Presto: mm. 1–6

Poulenc exaggerates the tonal conflict between the bassoon and the piano through the use of descending harmonies until a final cadence in B-flat major. However, the context of this chord is obscured. It is unclear from the harmonic progression what function the B-flat chord in measure 8 serves at first (Figure 7). The chord on beat three of measure seven demonstrates essentially a respelling of the dominant E chord in measure four. The respelling of the chord serves both a camp and a musical purpose. The respelling of the chord in measure seven is an engagement of the camp act of alibi—the chord is “dressed differently” and attempts to “pass” as a different chord altogether. Additionally, the chord in measure seven is conflicted with a new presence of semitonal dissonance (between C and C-flat) which “queers” the whole tone dissonance of F-sharp and E in measure four. Essentially, the chord not only attempts to “pass” as something else entirely, but there is a more exaggerated sonic conflict about doing so. Musically, the respelling changes the function of the chord from a dominant to a Neapolitan, thus tonicizing B-flat rather than ending the phrase on the dominant, as had happened in measure four. By camp standards, this could be read as a subversive maneuver in that the

modulation to a major key a half-step away from what is sonically understood as the tonic is an exaggerated gesture of differentiation.

The image shows a musical score for measures 6-9 of Poulenc's Trio, Presto. The top staff is for the Bassoon (Bsn.) and the bottom staff is for the Piano (Pno.). The Bassoon part starts with a melodic line in B-flat major, marked 'toujours' and 'ff'. The Piano part provides harmonic support with chords in B-flat major and minor.

Figure 7. Poulenc, Trio, Presto: mm. 6-9.

If this is subversive, as I claim, then the bassoon would be the autobiographical element, bringing the queer voice to the narrative structure. The oboe entrance confounds the tonal center even more, reasserting the minor mode by transforming the bassoon's B-flat major tonality in to B-flat minor through recontextualization of the bassoon's overlapping pedal tone (Figure 8). This suggests that the major mode of the bassoon solo is somehow "wrong" and that the oboe "corrects" the mood back to the minor mode established by the piano in the first four measures. Indeed, the introduction remains in minor until the bar before the Presto begins. The oboe's solo, which is more tonally centered around B-flat minor, reflects a more traditional approach to harmony whereas the bassoon solo is harmonized through a series of major chords serving different functions. This comparison serves to further "queer" the bassoon solo which is read here as commenting on the conventional (read heteronormative) discourse of harmony.



The musical score for Poulenc's Trio, Presto, measures 9-11, is presented in three staves: Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano. Measure 9 is marked with a box containing the number '1'. The Oboe part is marked 'librement solo' and 'f'. The Bassoon part is marked 'ff' and 'mf'. The Piano part is marked 'f'. The time signature changes from 4/4 to 3/4 between measures 10 and 11.

Figure 8. Poulenc, Trio, Presto: mm. 9–11.

Ultimately, the solo oboe passage exhibits characteristics of bitonality, with the piano harmony finishing the phrase in A-flat minor and the oboe still clearly in B-flat minor (making the wandering in C minor simply a passing gesture). It is in this vignette that Poulenc makes use of the different instruments as narratological players. The piano represents the heteronormative discourse and narrative structure while the bassoon and the oboe struggle to fit within its fold. This introduction foreshadows what is to come several times throughout the work. The bassoon will, just as it does here, subvert the heteronormative narrative through a kind of manipulation. Here, the tonal manipulation of the bassoon constitutes as the camp action of subversive insertion into the “normal” narrative.

Aside from harmonic language, the style of the introduction is notably camp. The oboe solo in particular provides a sense of theatricality by contrasting the jovial nature of the

bassoon solo which it immediately follows. At the end of the introduction, the oboe and bassoon descend in parallel motion to the predominant sounding chord in the piano which pulls us to the actual Presto and to the tonal center of A major. Keith Daniel identifies the parallel runs in the oboe and bassoon as reminiscent of “an eighteenth-century trio sonata or operatic duet” which speaks to the neoclassical nature of the introduction.<sup>73</sup> These elements, when taken with the humorously subversive performance instructions and the harmonic deviance, particularly in the bassoon, serve as Poulenc’s signature style of camp.

Once the Presto actually gets underway, Poulenc infuses the movement with exaggerated humor, theatricality, and several more juxtapositions. The first theme area of the A section is a stark contrast to the mood of the introduction. The initial statement is choppy and plummets five octaves on the keyboard, a motion which creates a crashing effect as if to imply an uncontrolled nature to the Presto. As in the introduction, Poulenc mixes the major/minor tonality in the first two bars until the clear scalar pronouncement that A major is the tonality in the third bar, not allowing us to quite contextualize the dominant-tonic relationship nor identify the relationship between the introduction and the Presto (Figure 9).

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<sup>73</sup> Daniel, *Francis Poulenc*, 110.

**Presto** ♩ = 104

2

Oboe

Bassoon

Piano

**Presto** ♩ = 104

8va basso loco

Figure 9. Poulenc, Trio, Presto: mm. 17-20. Note major–minor–major relationships in m. 17.

The first theme area cadences on a root-position A major chord, completing the expected (heteronormative) construction, at last connecting the introduction and Presto as a traditional V-I relationship. Poulenc, in a turn to the theatrical, begins the secondary theme area in F minor—a key area slightly “off” from the traditionally expected key areas of either E major or F-sharp minor. In the transition, the bassoon and left hand of the piano attempt to set-up a dominant function to F minor through a descending C major arpeggio. This abrupt change is further humored by Poulenc’s use of a “wrong note” dissonance, here on each beat in the piano’s right hand, effectively undermining the harmonic convention the bassoon is trying to align with (Figure 10). This attempt at aligning with the heteronormative discourse amounts to the camp element of masking as the bassoon essentially “passes” as the piano part until the bassoon takes over the melody in measure 116.

The musical score for measures 103-106 of Poulenc's Trio, Presto, is presented for Bassoon and Piano. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 2/4. Measure 103 is marked with a box containing the number 8. The Bassoon part begins with a forte (f) dynamic and a 'sec' (secco) articulation. The Piano part begins with a fortissimo (ff) dynamic. The score shows a complex interplay of dissonance and harmonic progression across the four measures.

Figure 10. Poulenc, Trio, Presto: measures 103–106.

Once the oboe enters with the principal motive of the B section, it is apparent that there is something “off” with the key area. This key area, lodged firmly between what should be, pairs four very distinct lines together, blurring the lines between the traditional harmonic progression and the “wrong note” established in the transition in measure 103. The bassoon and the right hand of the piano work in tandem to create a laughing, dissonant interjection to the oboe’s line as a continuation of the idea from the transition. The oboe and the left hand of the piano work within the traditional paradigms of formal structure, moving from a tonic harmony to a dominant harmony (Figure 11). The bassoon takes over the oboe melody and eventually the two instruments play in parallel motion, simply harmonized in thirds. Though the timbre changes, the juxtaposition of flowing melody and brittle interjection remains. In this section, Poulenc utilizes the key area, juxtaposition of articulation, and exaggerated dissonance to create a camp aesthetic in the minor mode. The camp in this section does not come simply from these elements, but from how these elements interact with the previous material as well as within the expectations of the heteronormative narrative.



Figure 11. Poulenc, Trio, Presto: mm. 106–115.

The most striking example of camp in this movement comes after the second theme area, where the developmental B section should be. Daniel's analysis places the development beginning at rehearsal 12 (m. 161) and lasting through the recapitulation at rehearsal 16 (m. 192).<sup>74</sup> However, the content between rehearsal 12 (m. 161) and rehearsal 13 (m. 165) is not thematic nor is it really melodic in the same manner the other themes had been. Between these two rehearsal markings, the style is more free and recitative-like, similar to the introduction. The marking of *librement* appears again in the bassoon part. The *librement* marking appears only in the introduction and in this spot, which suggests that these areas are extraneous to the ABA structure of traditional sonata form, thus making it a transition to the developmental section rather than the beginning of the development (Figure 12).

<sup>74</sup> Daniel, *Francis Poulenc*, 111.

12

le double plus lent ♩ = ♩ précédente = 104

Oboe

Bassoon

Piano

*ff librement*

*f*

*solo*

*doux mf*

13

Ob.

Bsn.

Pno.

*solo*

*f* — *mf*

*9*

*f* — *mf*

*mf clair*

*7*

Figure 12. Poulenc, Trio, Presto: measures 161–165.

The transition between m. 161 (rehearsal 12) and m. 165 (rehearsal 13) serves to set up the development at measure 165 in a theatrical way. The recitative technique from the introduction is obvious here, especially with the way in which the key areas are presented. The oboe and piano establish an E major chord in m. 162 which serves as the functional dominant to an A-centered key area which appears at m. 165. The bassoon, as the camp element here, juxtaposes the major tonality with a *piano* motive. This *piano* is a derivation of the motive from the previous measure, but the insertion of the G-natural rather than G-sharp directly opposes the major tonality. Temporally, the section begins *le double plus lent*. The bassoon is

simply lagging behind the drive of the previous sixteenth-note motive, perhaps in a moment of self-indulgence before being overtaken by the oboe in m. 164. Here, the oboe directly usurps the bassoon's E as its own and in the process reclaims harmonic discourse thus subverting the bassoon's attempt to change it. If the E major chord in measure 162 is functioning as a dominant, then the resolution of that dominant would be to an A centered tonality which is precisely what happens in measure 165.

The development section offers short vignettes that are tonally centered and perfectly “normal.” There is mixed modality and bitonality, but the harmony is very consonant and supports the solo lines unobtrusively while the solo lines themselves are tonal reflect the kind of lyricism that would later define Poulenc's style. At rehearsal 15 (m. 185), however, something strange happens. Poulenc begins the retransition to the recapitulation by inserting material from the introduction as the melodic material (Figure 13).

15

The image shows a musical score for Bassoon and Piano. The Bassoon part is in 3/4 time, starting with a rest in measure 184, then playing a half note Bb in measure 185, followed by a half note A in measure 186. The Piano part is in 4/4 time. In measure 184, the piano plays a half note F in the right hand and a half note C in the left hand. In measure 185, the piano plays a half note F in the right hand and a half note C in the left hand. In measure 186, the piano plays a half note F in the right hand and a half note C in the left hand. The piano part is marked *mf* and features a chromatic line in the left hand. A rehearsal mark '15' is placed above the Bassoon staff in measure 185.

Figure 13. Poulenc, Trio, Presto: mm. 184–186.

The bassoon melody is exactly the same as the beginning (though with different spelling), but the piano part now has become static, syncopating F minor with a chromatically

descending bass line. Unlike the introduction, however, the bassoon is inserting itself in to a discourse which has already been established for much of the development. Here, the the F minor syncopation has been churning in the piano part for a measure already, forcing the melody to fit within the confines of the establish tonality, not inform it. This moment creates ironic tension and juxtaposes the listener's expectation with a different, less jovial style. In setting up the recapitulation, Poulenc engages the traditional dominant-tonic relationship, although this is the only simple triad to do so in the piece (Figure 14).

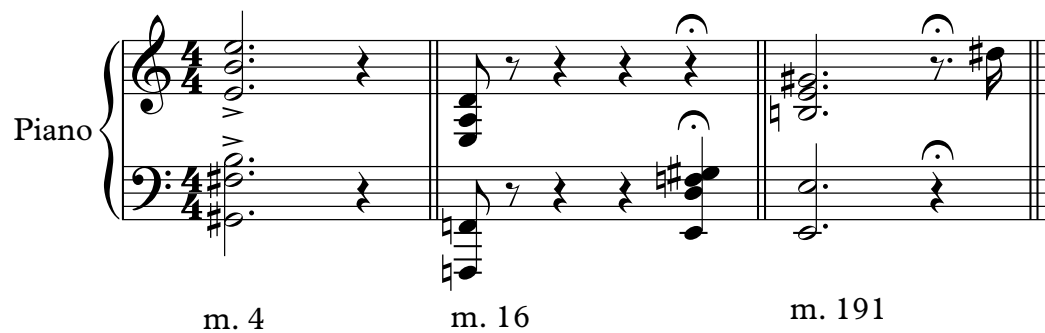


Figure 14. Poulenc, Trio: Presto.

The recapitulation at m. 192 is the closest to formulaic Haydn that Poulenc achieves in this movement. Poulenc humorously rearranges the motives, beginning with the motive found between rehearsals 4 (m. 41) and 5 (m. 55), then truly recapitulating with the first motive exactly as it appears in measure 195. In the coda, Poulenc engages in the same kind of time signature manipulation as he did in *Les Biches*. The meter changes disrupt and disjoin phrases, shifting the emphasized beats in an exaggerated manner (Figure 15).



Figure 15 shows the musical score for Poulenc's Trio, Presto, measures 219–230. The score is for Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano. Measure 18 shows the Oboe and Bassoon playing a rhythmic pattern with accents, marked *ff*. The Piano plays a bass line with chords, marked *ff* and *très marqué*. Measure 19 shows the Oboe and Bassoon playing a similar pattern, marked *ff*. The Piano continues with a bass line, marked *ff très sec*. The score ends with a double bar line and repeat signs.

Figure 15. Poulenc, Trio, Presto: mm. 219–230.

This temporal manipulation continues through the end of the coda, where the unison rhythm of the three instruments shifts from after beats to down beats, restoring sense of balance to the accents (Figure 16). The playful nature and *très sec* quality of the lines is sarcastic and humorous—most fitting of Poulenc's camp. It is in these final bars that the homonormative discourse prevails, though the bassoon's absence on the last note suggests that the gay discourse is not fully under the influence of the straight discourse.

Oboe

Bassoon

Piano

*ff*

*ff*

*ff*

*fff arraché*

*Ped.*

*\**

*8ve basse*

Figure 16. Poulenc, Trio, Presto: last four measures.

### CHAPTER 3: MOVEMENT II: ANDANTE

Where Poulenc's Presto exercises exaggeration and theatricality as attributes of camp, the Andante is the most subversive and serious of the three movements. The themes are simple and evoke a sense of operatic melisma one would see in Bellini, especially at the end of the melodic line (Figure 17).



Figure 17. Poulenc, Trio, Andante: mm. 1–4 (reduced).

This operatic theme returns in this form only twice. The first return appears in m. 15 in the piano and bassoon, though the bassoon is clearly the melodic voice, marked a dynamic level above the piano and *très chanté*. This iteration of the theme appears a minor third higher than the original, but still major until the second half of the theme which is altered slightly to tonicize E minor, albeit briefly (Figure 18).



Figure 18. Poulenc, Trio, Andante: mm. 15–18.

The second iteration is at measure 52, this time in the piano with the oboe joining in the consequent phrase. This appearance differs from the first two in several ways. Aside from the now F-major tonality, the bass accompaniment is embellished with grace notes attached to duple

arpeggiation (Figure 19). This bumbling bass line is consistent through the modal change in the consequent phrase and is the only instance of this type of humorous embellishment in the movement. This should be the return of the thematic material after a lengthy transition. It indeed is the return to the A section's material, but is now othered by means of the tonality and this subtle gesture which creates an underlying sense of instability.



Figure 19. Poulenc, Trio, Andante: mm. 52–55.

When analyzing all three instances of the main motive, it becomes apparent that Poulenc uses these melodic instances to comment in an autobiographical way on the heteronormative discourse. Since the main melodic motive appears in only the bassoon and piano, the representative roles those instruments espouse must be considered. Continuing with the idea that the piano is heteronormative discourse, the first four measures outline the “correct” narrative of the movement. The bassoon still represents the queer narrative by trying to vary the melody then being subjugated by the piano harmonically. This third instance, then, is Poulenc’s humorous commentary of the state of the heteronormative narrative. Melodically, this third instance follows the “normal” conventions as established from the beginning of the movement. However, this embellished bass line serves as a moment of backhanded, humorous criticism of the narrative—what is normal is now altered. The piano here provides a personal

outlet for Poulenc to make this commentary, just as he would do a few years later in *Aubade*.<sup>75</sup>

As in the Presto, the piano sets up the harmonic structure of what should follow. The piano establishes B-flat major as the tonality and the bassoon and oboe work within that tonal center. Any exploration of another key area is approached organically and without sudden departure or arrival. However, at rehearsal 2 (m. 15), the construction of the melody becomes queered. The melody is now present in D-flat major, the Neapolitan of B-flat major and the tonic of the previous measure's A-flat, serving in this context as the dominant to D-flat. What should happen in the consequent phrase is a move to D-flat minor (Figure 20a). However, we move instead to E minor (Figure 20b).

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<sup>75</sup> As referenced earlier, Moore points out that in *Aubade*, the piano, performed by Poulenc at the premiere, serves as an extension and representation of Poulenc. See Moore, "Camp in Francis Poulenc's Early Ballets," 323.

Figure 20a shows the musical score for measures 15-18 of Poulenc's Trio, Andante. The Bassoon part begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and the marking *très chanté*. It then shifts to mezzo-forte (*mf*) in measure 17. The Piano part remains at mezzo-forte (*mf*) throughout. The key signature changes from B-flat major to D-flat major between measures 17 and 18.

Figure 20a. Poulenc, Trio, Andante: mm. 15–18.

Figure 20b shows the musical score for measures 15-18 of Poulenc's Trio, Andante. The Bassoon part begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and the marking *très chanté*. It then shifts to mezzo-forte (*mf*) in measure 17. The Piano part remains at mezzo-forte (*mf*) throughout. The key signature changes from B-flat major to D-flat major between measures 17 and 18.

Figure 20b. Poulenc, Trio, Andante: mm. 15–18.

The fact that the bassoon does not realign with the major key, despite it being a new tonal center, others the phrase and forces the bassoon to align with the piano, representing the heteronormative discourse. This is further evidenced by the dynamic structure. When the bassoon tries to carry the tune initially, it is marked *forte* and *très chanté*. However, this queer consequent places the bassoon at the same dynamic level as the piano, which has remained unchanged, showing a shift of importance for the bassoon line. This same structural imbalance does not occur in the third iteration. The discourse changes, but is still lead by the piano and joined by the oboe which enters to match the piano's soft dynamic and eventual arrival at the major resolution.

The final bit of campiness deals with the ending tonality. While the Andante is constructed from the outset in B-flat major, modulates to the dominant and uses many of the conventions of standard tonal harmony, the final cadential phrase turns to the dominant *minor*. This shift is hinted at through the use of D-flats and E-naturals throughout the measure, specifically the juxtaposition of the piano's arpeggios and the bassoon's answer to the oboe (Figure 21). The layers of tonality are as follows: an open sixth, suggesting F major on the downbeat in the treble hand; arpeggios in the treble and bass hands of the piano spelling out a D-flat augmented triad; a G diminished chord on the downbeat in the bass hand of the piano; and a scalar motive suggesting an altered F-centered scale.

The musical score for measures 59-60 of Poulenc's Trio, Andante, is presented for Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 4/8. The Oboe part begins with a half note B-flat on the downbeat and a half note D-flat on the upbeat, both marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The Bassoon part also begins with a half note B-flat on the downbeat and a half note D-flat on the upbeat, both marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The Piano part features arpeggios in both hands, with the right hand starting on G4 and the left hand starting on B-flat3, both marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The score ends with a final cadence in B-flat major.

Figure 21. Poulenc, Trio, Andante: mm. 59–60.

The campiness of this moment comes from the ambiguity of the tonality. Poulenc troubles the listener by setting up an ambiguous tonal harmony, only to relax it with a very clear F major restatement of the theme at measure 58. Just when we expect this same tonal language to happen, the end of the phrase is obscured even further by the use of a D-flat diminished tonality (with hints of B-flat diminished) until stabilizing in F minor. The arpeggios wander slightly in the piano part, but the drones in the winds and outer voices of the piano clearly align the cadence in F minor (Figure 22).

Example 22: Poulenc, Trio, Andante: Last four measures.

This ending is a far departure from the beginning of the movement. The tonic-dominant relationship between B-flat and F does not function in a conventional way, with the dominant key area not serving as a functional dominant. This aversion to traditional functional harmony could be the result of Poulenc's serious camp throughout the movement. The subjugation of the major mode to the minor mode happens continuously, most pronounced in the autobiographical bassoon solo (rehearsal 5) and the ending. On a micro level, however, the individual phrase structures also skew minor before being "corrected." It is in this "correction" that the camp aesthetic surfaces. Instead of plainly modulating to minor for the consequent phrase or for a



secondary theme area, Poulenc aligns the primary themes with the major mode, but allows the minor mode to take over, thus altering the discourse. As autobiography is present in the movement as outlined above, it is possible then that this ending is also autobiographical. Every instance of the minor appearance in the primary theme has been “corrected” to fit the established, heteronormative discourse favoring major tonality by the end of the phrase *except* the autobiographical episode at rehearsal 5. By extension, this ending is also autobiographical in that the large level tonality is not “corrected” to F major and, further, the bassoon is the solo voice which keeps dragging the tonality to minor.

The Andante, when compared to the Presto, demonstrates Poulenc’s skill at exemplifying two kinds of camp. In the Presto, camp is humorous and frivolous, much like the *voyou* trait Rostand identifies. Musically, Poulenc uses a play on Haydn’s conventional forms to express a juxtaposition of discourse between the heteronormative narrative and the gay political commentary. In the Andante, however, Poulenc uses tonal construction and suppression of conventional harmonic functionality to express a more serious side of camp.

## CHAPTER 4: MOVEMENT III: RONDO

Poulenc told Claude Rostand that he modeled this movement after the rondo in the second piano concerto by Camille Saint-Saëns.<sup>76</sup> Keith Daniel, in analyzing the two against each other, notices that Poulenc only loosely based his rondo off that of Saint-Saëns, much like the loose homage to Haydn in the first movement.<sup>77</sup> In typical camp fashion, Poulenc's rondo is more exaggerated than that of Saint-Saëns (Figure 23). Poulenc uses more motives, but they are shorter and less developed than the motives in the Saint-Saëns.<sup>78</sup> The camp features of the movement come from a variety of printed indications, frequent style shifts, and tonal language, similar to that of the first movement.

A	B	A	C	A	CODA
abcda	efgfh	a	ig'jg''	abcdg	
mm. 1-35	mm. 36-75	mm. 76-82	mm. 83-142	mm. 143-171	mm. 172-212

Poulenc

A	B	A	C	A	B	(A)	Coda
a a' a'' b a a' a'' b	c c d	a a b	e c'	a a' a''	c c d	Suggested in horn	

Saint-Saëns

Figure 23. Rondo Analysis: Poulenc Rondo and Saint-Saëns Rondo.

<sup>76</sup> Poulenc, *Notes from the heart*, 112.

<sup>77</sup> Daniel, *Francis Poulenc*, 112.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 112.

The A section is humorous camp exemplified. Marked *très vif*, the sixteenth-note passages and sextuplet scales are wash of sound decorated with trills, which come across as backhanded sarcasm. The A section consists of four motives, all light and bouncy themes with the occasional flourish. This first A section is marked *gai, léger*, and *sec*. With these directions, Poulenc is trying to cast a markedly different mood here from the first movement, which is also constructed around short, dry articulations. Where the first movement's dry articulations are subject to the constant shift from major to minor, this light, airy, gay opening is meant to feel different. All of the motives are in a major tonality and progress rather traditionally in terms of the harmony.

The B section begins to undermine the previous section's consonant harmonic language through the use of chromaticism. This chromaticism obscures the tonal center, just as in previous movements, between major and minor (Figure 24). This frequent shift between major and minor induced an almost sea-sick progression, but all under the steadily F-minor oboe solo. The solo is then contextualized on a micro level through camp dissonance, meaning there is an established tonal paradigm, overtly presented in one voice (here, the oboe) while that same tonal paradigm is manipulated and altered without losing the fundamental quality of what it "is." Here, the piano's chromatic shifts in the bass alter the tonal soundscape between major and minor, thus "othering" the harmonic underpinning of the consonant minor of the oboe solo.

Figure 24. Poulenc, Trio, Rondo: mm. 36–41.

The listener clearly hears the passage as F minor and the oboe solo certainly suggests this. However, the chromaticism in the piano accompaniment obscures what is happening harmonically. This passage can be read two ways, either through the use of secondary dominants or through the recontextualization of the quality of the tonal center (Figure 25).

Figure 25. Poulenc, Trio, Rondo: mm. 36–41 (reduced).

Read in secondary dominants, the F-minor passage progresses  $v-V^6/iv-vii^{o6}/II-V^6/iv-v-V^6/iv-vii^{o6}/II-V^6/iv$  before moving to a  $V-I$  cadence in the relative major in mm. 40–41.

Alternatively, the passage can be read in F-minor as  $v-I^6-i^{o6}-I^6-v-I^6-i^{o6}-I^6$  before the functional A-flat to D-flat cadence. The reading with alterations to the quality of F is the more camp

reading because a V–I cadence is typical, but both the dominant and tonic are othered until the functional V–I appears in major. Functionality is suppressed in either reading, but the second analysis of the passage serves the camp aesthetic of masking: this passage is a dominant-tonic cadence, but presented in a queered state of chord quality. By recontextualizing the secondary dominants, a subversive moment in the overall harmonic discourse becomes apparent. Poulenc does not formally modulate and in fact ends the A section as the dominant to B-flat minor, as the key signature would suggest. However, the oboe solo does not tonicize but instead maintains the now minor dominant tonality in context of B-flat minor.

This only highlights to attempt of the oboe to mask the change brewing in the piano part which is trying to figure out how it fits within the new narrative, overtaken by the winds. In this harmonically unstable section, it is now the bassoon—the very embodiment of gay autobiography—which now comes to rescue, and through an ascending chromatic line, it realigns the tonality to a consonant F minor, turning the tables on what is “correct” (Figure 26).

The musical score for Poulenc's Trio, Rondo, measures 50–55, is presented in three staves. The top staff is for the Oboe, the middle for the Bassoon, and the bottom for the Keyboard. The key signature is three flats (B-flat minor). The time signature is 8/8. The Oboe staff begins with a measure number '6' above it. The Oboe part starts with a half note G4 (f), followed by a half note A4 (mf), and then a half note B4 (ff). The Bassoon part starts with a half note G3 (ff), followed by a half note A3 (ff), and then a half note B3 (ff). The Keyboard part starts with a half note G3 (ff), followed by a half note A3 (ff), and then a half note B3 (ff). The Keyboard part has a 7:6 ratio indicated below it.

Figure 26: Poulenc, Trio, Rondo: mm. 50–55.

At the end of the final A section (m. 172), Poulenc interrupts the now-familiar romping motives and inserts material from second theme area of the Presto in a markedly queer way (Figure 27). First, Poulenc's instruction here of *animez un peu* is a contrast to the *sans ralentire, très chanté* of the same figure in the Presto. The implication in the Rondo is that this quote is meant to drive toward the end of the piece, not to serve as a transitional episode as in the Presto. Secondly, the harmonic language is different. In the Presto, this same episode functions as the parallel major and is anchored by a drone in the bass of the piano. Here, though, Poulenc uses the same kind of subversive bitonality he used in the introduction of the Presto by respelling an E-major chord enharmonically, thus "othering" the harmonic (heteronormative) discourse. This chord appears as the first harmonization and it comes as a surprise to the listener, since the A-flat trill under the ascending chords in the right hand of the piano suggest an arrival in m. 173 of something tonally related to D-flat major. Instead, Poulenc alters the discourse in a gesture which places the piano as the dominant voice in the narrative. This is also apparent in the dynamic scheme which places the winds as secondary voices, softer than the piano. Reading along the heteronormative/gay discourses, it is interesting to note that the piano is responsive to the *piano, doux* dynamic of the oboe when that instrument joins the melodic line in m. 175, but is markedly louder and higher in tessitura than the (gay) bassoon. This is an episode of dominance where the piano attempts to regain control of the narrative, or at least "protect" the narrative from any sort of gay commentary. The unison bassoon and oboe indicate that the piano's narrative has dominated the discourse.



The musical score for Poulenc's Trio, Rondo, measures 174-177, features three staves: Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano. The Oboe and Bassoon parts are written in unison, with the Oboe staff in treble clef and the Bassoon staff in bass clef. Both parts play a melodic line with various dynamics, including *f sec* and *ff*. The Piano part is written in bass clef and provides accompaniment with chords and a few melodic fragments, marked with *f sec* and *très sec*. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 9/8.

Figure 28: Poulenc, Trio, Rondo: mm. 174–177.

For all of this camp theatrical drama, the Rondo ends rather unceremoniously and plainly. The piano serves as accompaniment here while the oboe and bassoon play in unison, suggesting a shift in the dynamics of the sexual narrative. It is humorous that a movement that has an exaggerated number of motives, a very complicated harmonic dialogue full of conflict, interruption, and subjugation would end with a simple, jaunty tune harmonized only by short smatterings of chords in the piano. It is as if, with the sparsity of the piano, that the heteronormative narrative matters less by the end of the Trio and the gay discourse prevails (Figure 29).



The musical score is for Poulenc's Trio, Rondo, measures 197-212. It is written for Oboe, Bassoon, Piano, and Piano (Pno.). The score is in 2/4 time and features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth notes. The dynamics are marked as *ff*, *ff très sec*, *sec f*, and *fff*. The piece concludes with a *Fine* marking.

**Measures 197-212:**

- Oboe:** Starts with a *ff* *très sec* marking. The melody is characterized by sixteenth-note runs and triplets. A measure number **23** is indicated at the beginning of the section.
- Bassoon:** Also starts with a *ff* *très sec* marking. The part features similar rhythmic patterns to the Oboe, including sixteenth-note runs and triplets.
- Piano:** The piano part is marked *sec f*. It consists of chords and single notes, providing a harmonic foundation for the woodwinds.
- Pno. (Piano):** The second piano part is marked *fff* and *sans ralentir*. It features a prominent triplet of sixteenth notes in the final measures.

Figure 29. Poulenc, Trio, Rondo: mm. 197–212.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The overarching form of Poulenc's Trio provides a setting for the elements of camp to be brought to the forefront. Throughout each movement, Poulenc infuses the work with what would become his trademark brand of humor, which masks the subversion of the heteronormative narrative, as seen in the harmonic, melodic, and episodic juxtapositions throughout the work. Particularly humorous (and campy) is the way that Poulenc asserts the Trio is modeled after revered models when, in reality, it is not. By masking the queerness of the Trio's discourse with supposed nods to Haydn and Saint-Saëns, Poulenc comments on those models as a high heteronormative standard and attempts to elevate his work publically to that level. This artifice of stature is not required of the piece and indeed Poulenc does not subject the piece to this kind of *ex post facto* legitimization. The Trio is not simply a piece of chamber music modeled after great masters, but is instead Poulenc's attempt to codify a style of chamber writing that spoke to his emotional being.

The use of camp throughout the work even questions the very constructions of chamber music as a genre. Much as *Aubade* is a "choreographic concerto," the Trio is essentially a stage work for instruments, full of similar sorts of theatrical elements as the ballets and operas. Unlike his previous pieces for winds, the Trio utilizes the instruments more as characters. Each instrument assumes a particular, functional role: the piano is read as the heteronormative narrative for the ways in which the instrument leads and "corrects" the formal structure; the bassoon is the gay commentary which alters and attempts to undermine the heteronormative discourse through a variety of means; and the oboe is the intermediary between the two, often

attempting to realign the bassoon's deviation from the heteronormative narrative in an attempt to "correct" it.

The camp elements that are present in this overall discourse serve to highlight particularly exaggerated instances of juxtaposition or humor. For Poulenc, the exaggeration comes from the ways in which the narrative is affected. In essence, the more elements that are manipulated or altered against the heteronormative discourse, the greater the exaggeration. Consider the introduction of the Presto: the piano outlines a minor, sharply accented, drawn out and lugubrious piece of narrative which is rejected by the bassoon. The minor tonality becomes major, accents become staccatos, long notes become frenetic trills and flourishes. All of this is presented in recitative style, a device which Poulenc would later use in his operas to exploit moments of gender expression, autobiographic love which can not be, and the conflict between morality and sexual desire, themes which are omnipresent in his trilogy of operas. These episodes constitute camp by virtue of their double meaning as stylistic trait and subversive alibi.

The implications of the camp elements identified in the Trio bridge two gaps. First, absolute music has been mostly excluded from the larger discourse on camp.<sup>79</sup> The foundations of modern camp scholarship rely heavily on a visual component to inform camp. Ballet and opera also rely heavily on the visual element as a crucial element of the art form. However, an alternate reading of camp, as presented in this document, presents camp as a broader

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<sup>79</sup> Susan Sontag's claim that absolute music is "contentless" and thus not applicable permeated the discourse for several decades. See Sontag, "Notes on Camp," 104.

juxtaposition and commentary of social expectation which does implicate absolute music as a potential camp subject.

Second, the Trio connects the two other major works from this period, solidifying camp as an aesthetic of Poulenc's compositional style overall rather than simply an attribute of his ballet music or his later operas. The Trio, though published and premiered in 1926, was started as early as 1924 during the time *Les Biches* was running at the Ballets Russes in Monte Carlo.<sup>80</sup> The Trio was written and premiered three years prior to *Aubade* and possesses a different kind of camp. The trajectory of camp in the latter part of Poulenc's early period also aligns with his personal experiences. By *Les Biches*, Poulenc was enjoying a successful partnership with Serge Diaghilev and the Ballet Russes, elevating his status as a composer. During the period of the Trio, Poulenc began an affair with the painter Richard Chanliere but proposed marriage to his (female) childhood friend, Raymonde Linossier. The Trio was composed at the beginning of the relationship with Chanliere and as such Poulenc had not yet had to grapple with the realities of being secretly gay in French society. The realities of his queerness are expressed through the seriousness of the camp elements in *Aubade*. The comparison of the Trio and *Aubade* parallel the emotional states Poulenc traversed during his formative period, both compositionally as socially as a gay man.

This stronger link between camp pieces in his early period as well as the camp associated with the operas of his late period suggest that camp is present as an aesthetic

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<sup>80</sup> Letters from Poulenc to André Schaeffner and Charles Kœchlin dated at various times in 1924 speak of the Trio as does an advertisement in *The Chesterian*. See Carl Schmidt, *The Music of Francis Poulenc (1899-1963): A Catalogue* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 130–131 for a complete listing.

subscription throughout Poulenc's major compositional output. By contextualizing the Trio as a camp subject, it can be understood that a reading of Poulenc's style is one that comments in a subversive way on a heteronormative narrative through the use of humor, irony, exaggeration, and theatricality. While these elements permeate the discussion of Poulenc's overall style as a composer, they are also alibis that Poulenc uses to change the conventional narrative in a queer way.

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