Reimagining the *Mélodie*: An Analysis of the Musico-Poetic Expression of André Caplet

In Two Volumes

*Volume I: Thesis*

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I confirm that the word count of this thesis is less than 100,000
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Abstract

The *mélodies* of André Caplet (1878–1925) are permeated with an abundance of intricacies and complexities in terms of tonality and rhythm. Through exploring aspects of tonal and rhythmic structures in the sets *Paroles à l’absente, Le vieux coffret, Trois fables de Jean de La Fontaine,* and *Cinq ballades françaises,* a chronological portrait of Caplet’s compositional language and his approach to portraying poetic imagery in the musical fabric of the *mélodie* is offered.

This study presents an analytical outline of the intersection between the harmonic and rhythmic structures and the expression of poetic imagery and atmosphere in Caplet’s *mélodie* sets. Drawing from the methodological principles of Harald Krebs, the study explores the ways in which Caplet translates the meaning and expression of the poetic text into an unfolding musical narrative. The potential to tell the poetic story and evoke imagery and atmosphere in different ways lies hidden within the tonal and rhythmic layers of the music. To consider this potential, each individual song-analysis offers musico-poetic interpretations of the ways in which Caplet manipulates harmonic language as governed by the poetic text, as well as perspectives on the intersection between fluid rhythmic states and unfolding narrative. Additional consideration is given to analytically-informed performance interpretation and, where appropriate, recordings are discussed. Volume II contains accompanying Structural Overview Charts for each individual *mélodie* analysed. These charts present an overview of key structural features such as harmonic rhythm, phrasing, time-signature changes and other relevant information for each *mélodie,* to add analytical support to the discussion in Volume I.

Caplet’s *mélodie* sets contain rich musical textures, embedded in a compositional language that is profoundly sensitive to the meaning in the text. The study aims to illuminate the complexity and beauty that these melodies offer the listener and performer alike, as well as revealing insight into Caplet’s acute artistic and poetic sensibilities.
Prelude

André Caplet’s *mélodies* capture a sense of adventurous spirit and profuse richness in harmonic structure and metric shape, and in many ways truly reflect Caplet’s musical aesthetic, expression, and thought. Many of the settings are texts by Caplet’s own literary contemporaries, and some of these settings reveal insights into his life experiences, such as those originating from the Great War. The common thread running through Caplet’s *mélodies* is that the settings are sensitive, nuanced, and fully evocative of the central poetic atmosphere.

The genre of the *mélodie* seems such a small medium to capture such profound and, often very moving, expression. This body of songs is written primarily for voice and piano. But Caplet’s compositional approach transforms the *mélodie* from a simple art-song duo into an embodiment of rich literary colour and atmospheric profusion that captures poetic thought and spirit in a remarkable way.

The central question that frames the thesis is a simple one. How does André Caplet reflect poetic imagery and atmosphere in the *mélodie*? Answering this question, however, is a more complex matter entirely.

Reimagining Poetic Expression in the *Mélodie*

The thesis title, *Reimagining the mélodie: the poetic expression of André Caplet*, presents an attempt to explore ways in which features of harmonic and rhythmic structure in Caplet’s compositional language express the central images and atmospheres in the poem. I use the term ‘atmosphere’ to refer to the central feelings,
emotions, and moods conveyed through the poetic text. The approach to the *mélodie*, as a form, is ‘reimagined’ because this study does not focus heavily on the specific prosodic text-setting of the vocal line. Instead, these analyses explore aspects of harmonic and rhythmic texture and alignment to seek a deep connection with poetic atmosphere and form, primarily through the piano accompaniments and details of musical alignments in the vocal and piano parts. Caplet’s piano accompaniments are wide ranging, often quite orchestral in nature, and offer much potential to explore the ways in which he embeds poetic meaning into the musical fabric. Where it is appropriate and specifically relevant, recognition and attention is given to prosody and text-setting, but the aim, within the scope of this study, is to attempt to illuminate relationships between poetic atmosphere and musical structure.

**Central Hypothesis**

This thesis builds upon – and adds to – the existing literature by reimagining Caplet’s approach to the *mélodie* through interpreting the ways in which the musical organisation reflects aspects of poetic imagery and atmosphere. Consideration is firstly given to the formal structure and harmonic language, and then an analytical interpretation is offered that demonstrates, from a primarily rhythmic perspective, strands of grouping and nonalignment that may portray poetic atmosphere and imagery in the music. The focus of the project is to offer an interpretation that attempts to capture, through rigorous musical analysis, Caplet’s expression of poetic essence through the *mélodie*. No other study to date has utilised analytical rhythmic strategies in this manner and discussed supporting recordings of performances, or

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1 For an in-depth discussion of Caplet’s approach to vocal prosody, see Spencer (1974) pp.243–51
developed structural overview charts for interpreting the formal layout of Caplet’s *mélodies* to explore his compositional language in the *mélodies*.

**Method Summary**

Exploring Caplet’s poetic expression through his musical structures requires a methodological approach that allows the freedom to fully consider aspects of harmonic and rhythmic structures in the music. To do this, approaches to illustrating the harmonic structural layout are adapted from the work of John Rink in order to demonstrate form and tonal motion, and the approaches to rhythmic organisation are modelled primarily on the work of Harald Krebs in order to reveal areas of rhythmic nonalignment and dissonance. The combined use of these methods affords insights into the ways in which Caplet manipulates, distorts, and colours the building blocks of harmonic and rhythmic design as a means of evoking poetic atmosphere and imagery, and is discussed in more depth in the Methodological Considerations chapter.

**Chapter Summary**

In order to explore a representative collection of *mélodies* from Caplet’s lifetime, this thesis selects four sets ranging from the early period to the late. This approach demonstrates not just the evolution of Caplet’s compositional style, but the dates of composition of these sets also reflect crucial points in Caplet’s life. In Chapter One,

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Paroles a l’absente can be interpreted as the first significant compositional set: the triptych of mélodies, composed in 1908, is from around the time Caplet met Debussy; he had experienced travel through the Prix du Rome; and he was establishing himself in the Parisian musical scene as a conductor and composer. Chapter Two discusses Le vieux coffret, composed throughout the Great War. These four mélodies are characterised by themes of yearning and desire and, through this expression, capture Caplet’s developing modal and rhythmic language. There is a change of pace in Chapter Three, which considers the post-war sense of drama and exuberance through the settings of the Trois Fables de Jean de la Fontaine. There are harsh moral lessons learned through the telling of these fables, and the music not only demonstrates Caplet’s dramatic and theatrical style, but his choice of setting these three fables at this time in his life also offers a glimpse into his post-war consciousness. Chapter Four analyses three of the Cinq Ballades Françaises. These mélodies could be described as an embodiment of Caplet’s mature style. The harmonic and rhythmic language is advanced, and there are examples of analogous harmonic and rhythmic conflict illustrating areas of poetic imagery.

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4 The selection process and rational for choosing three of five mélodies is outlined further in Chapter Four.
A note on Scores, Recordings, and Poetic Translations

Scores

The scores referenced in this thesis are from original Durand editions. Examples are reproduced in this text © with kind authorisation of Editions Durand.

Recordings

At the time of writing this thesis, Caplet’s *mélodies* have not been widely recorded and there are only a small number of professionally-produced recordings. Selected professional recordings have been drawn upon for the purposes of this thesis, but the availability of recordings of individual sets varies according to the chapter’s content. A total of five CD recordings were sourced for this thesis, and I list these recordings as referenced in each chapter below:

Chapter One:

Chapter Two:

Chapter Three

Chapter Four
English translations for the poetry in this thesis have been sourced from the following:

Poetic Translations

Chapter One: Paroles a l'absentee:
Hired Translator: Catherine Coffey Professional Translating Services, Belfast, Northern Ireland

Chapter Two: Le vieux coffret:

Chapter Three: Trois Fables de Jean de La Fontaine:

Chapter Four: Cinq Ballades Françaises
André Caplet and the *mélodie*

**Context, Analytical Approach, Methodological Considerations**

In the interest of situating this project and its analytical methodologies among existing literature on Caplet, it is necessary to provide an outline of the foundations upon which this project is built, and the contribution to Caplet scholarship that it offers. This chapter attempts to do that by focussing on three primary concerns: the context for the project, the analytical approach, and the methodologies drawn upon for interpreting the music.

In the ‘Context’ section, I discuss the supporting literature on Caplet’s *mélodies*, and suggest the necessity for analytical scrutiny of the songs. The ‘Context’ section also explains the basis for selecting the four *mélodie* sets that constitute the backbone of the project. This provides continuity between this project and those which have come before. Secondly, in the ‘Analytical Approach’ section, I discuss the use of a tripartite strategy that frames the interpretation of each *mélodie* in this project. This strategy – outlined in more depth later – consists of ‘Formal Overview’, ‘Aspects of Poetic Harmony’, and ‘Analytical Interpretation’. Finally, in the ‘Methodological Considerations’ section, I outline the analytical methodologies upon which my approach is founded, and discuss the ways in which these methods are useful for formulating an interpretation Caplet’s *mélodies*. I firstly consider approaches to tonality and outline the layout of structural tonal information in the *mélodies*, as this pertains to the charts presented in Volume II. I then discuss the theories of rhythm and metre that form the basis for my interpretation of rhythmic grouping and nonalignment in the analyses that follow in Chapters One to Four.
Context

Supporting Literature on Caplet’s Mélodies

Caplet’s relatively modest output of mélodies has received some attention through previous research projects, studies, and lecture-recitals featuring his music. To date, however, in-depth analytically-driven studies exploring the musico-poetic relationships within these mélodies have not been carried out. Caplet was not a prolific composer, most likely owing to his short life, his conducting and orchestrating career, and his personal perfectionism. But the mélodie is a genre with which he regularly engaged. Caplet produced mélodies almost entirely throughout his compositional lifetime. The exception to this is a lull from 1910–14 owing primarily to the demands of holding the post of musical director at the Boston Opera as well as transcribing and orchestrating works by Debussy.

Williametta Spencer’s 1984 article “The Mélodies of André Caplet” was the first publication to provide an overview of Caplet’s songs. This article, along with two others, explored the relationship between Caplet and Debussy, and Caplet’s compositional style, based on her significant dissertation The Stylisic Heritage of André Caplet in 1974. This was the first English language study of Caplet’s life and music, and

5 For example, DMA projects by Joel Harder (2015), Sanae Kanda (2002), and Aurelius Gori (1995).
8 Williametta Spencer 'The Influence and Stylisic Heritage of André Caplet' (PhD, University of Southern California, 1974).
provided a huge contribution to Caplet scholarship: not only did it catapult awareness of Caplet into an English-speaking readership, it also provided a significant overview of Caplet’s musical language, an account of his compositional output, and a cohesive assemblage of letters and documents chronicling biographical details.

The 1970s was the decade in which scholarly interest in Caplet became firmly established. In 1972, Claire Moreau published the dissertation *À la découverte d’André Caplet* which, like Spencer’s work, places the life and music of Caplet into historical context, and gives an insight into Caplet’s compositional world. Pierre Bernac’s work, *The Interpretation of French Song* (1970), offers a glimpse into the artistic relationship he shared with Caplet; and Betty Bannerman’s English translation of *Claire Coriza’s Masterclasses* (1989) recounts Caplet’s precision and fastidiousness for *tempi*. The fiftieth anniversary of Caplet’s death was 22 November 1975, and just a short time later, in January 1976, *Zodiaque* magazine published an edition devoted to the music of Caplet. This homage to Caplet, featuring an in-depth account by his close friend Yvonne Gouverné, surveys Caplet’s life, musical works, and achievements. Numerous articles and reviews of Caplet’s work exist from his lifetime and shortly after his death,

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9 Claire Moreau, ‘À la découverte d’André Caplet’ (PhD Dissertation, Conservatoire National Superieur de Musique, 1972)


two examples of which include: *Le Monde Musical*,\(^\text{12}\) and *Le Revue Musicale*.\(^\text{13}\) The wave of scholarly attention in the 1970s kept the memory of Caplet’s life and music alive, but the analytical treatment of his music from a theoretical standpoint was limited.

It was not until the early 1990s that Caplet’s music once again became the subject of research. So far, it seems that a sizeable portion of exploration into Caplet’s life and music lies in postgraduate dissertations and supporting performance recital studies. I refrain from chronicling every single work on Caplet, but those concerning the *mélodies* that support this study include dissertations by the following:

- Marie-Chrisîne Catherine Allen, who explores a selection of the wartime *mélodies* and outlines Caplet’s experience in the Great War.\(^\text{14}\)
- Jonathan Retzlaff’s work on *Le vieux coffret* that provides an introduction to the poetry of Remy de Gourmont as well as a survey of the set.\(^\text{15}\)
- Jessica Chow explores the *Trois Fables de Jean de la Fontaine* in her study *Le Bestiaire in the mélodies of Ravel, Caplet and Poulenc*, and places Caplet’s approach to the dramatic *mélodie* form amongst that of his contemporaries.\(^\text{16}\)


• Sanae Kanda’s analytical investigation into the piano accompaniments and structure of selected *mélodies*. This study also provides insight into Caplet’s life and aspects of performing his music.\(^\text{17}\)

• Joel Harder’s performance guide for the *mélodies* outlines some advice and suggestions for performers who may be studying these works.\(^\text{18}\)

The common characteristic shared by these theses is that a thorough methodological exploration concerning the way in which rhythmic and harmonic language functions as a means of conveying poetic imagery and atmosphere in Caplet’s *mélodies* remains largely undefined.

More recently, there has been a further increase in French scholarship concerning Caplet’s musical contribution and cultural position, as well as research into his time during the war. In *André Caplet (1878-1925) Debussyste Indépendant*,\(^\text{19}\) published in 2007, Denis Huneau provides an extensive two-volume edition of Caplet’s life and works. This work is hugely significant in Caplet scholarship because Huneau’s work consolidates information on original manuscripts and letters, and charts Caplet’s musical journey in detail. Huneau’s perspective is thoroughly musicological and cultural, rather than strictly analytical, and provides a chronological account of Caplet’s life. Huneau states that the purpose of his work is to find the man behind the music. With the focus on both Caplet as a man and his musical output in a musicological and cultural context, there is less detailed, deeply formal musical-

\(^{17}\) Sanae Kanda, 'The Role of the Piano in the Mélodie of André Caplet' (DMA Dissertation, Boston University, 2002).


\(^{19}\) Denis Huneau, *André Caplet (1878-1925), Debussyste Indépendant* (Weinsberg: Lucie Galland, 2007).
analyses, as Huneau explains: ‘Notre travail a pour but de la faire redevenir l’homme d’une oeuvre et d’un parcours musical, qui sut et put exister par lui-même.’

Supporting these works are significant sociological perspectives on Caplet’s position and interactions during the Great War. In 2012 Sylvie Douche, in Correspondences inédites à des musiciens françaises 1914-1918, presents a collection of letters to Caplet during the war years that underpins an understanding of Caplet’s contemporary circle. For example, from correspondence by Nadia Boulanger, there is evidence of Rose Férat’s performances of the mélodies that suggest Caplet’s music was popular and respected during his life. Two years after the publication of this edition, Florence Doé de Maindreville and Stéphan Etcharry’s book La Grande Guerre en musique presented an edited collection of essays in French exploring musical life during the first world war. Georgie Durosoir’s chapter in this collection “Faire œuvre de musique en guerre: André Caplet altiste, pianiste, arrangeur, compositor et pedagogue” and, additionally, her new article “Le sergeant Caplet”, in the forthcoming edited book Volume Caplet, situates Caplet’s army life alongside a consideration of his musical activities. This edited book by Denis Herlin and Cécile Quesney, André Caplet, is currently in preparation at the time of writing this thesis, and publication is anticipated in late 2018. This book will provide a significant and extremely valuable contribution to Caplet scholarship, and contains contributions by renowned French music scholars, including Philippe Cathé.

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20 Ibid., p.3
22 Denis Herlin and Cécile Quesney, eds., Volume Caplet (Société Française de Musicologie: Forthcoming in 2018).
Denis Huneau, Yves Rassendren, and Sylvie Douche, and others. The book will be published by Société française de musicologie.

This outline of relevant literature pertaining to Caplet has demonstrated that although there is a relatively small, but strong, repertoire of scholarly research on his life and music, there is still much scope for in-depth analyses of the musical works, all well as the way they are performed in concert halls today. A study such as this – analysing and interpreting selected mélodies – is well positioned to build upon historical musicological works by offering a theoretical interpretation of the music that can inform future performances through linking the music to the poetic expression, as well as revealing structural significance in terms of tonality and metre. The most recent work discussing elements of performing the mélodies is the previously mentioned DMA thesis, ‘The Mélodies of André Caplet: A Guide to Performance’ by Joel Harder. Building significantly on Harder’s, this work contributes to the field of Caplet research by offering analytical musico-poetic interpretations, as well as considerations of recordings of the mélodies discussed.

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Mélodie Selection

Although Caplet composed a relatively small number of mélodies, it is far beyond the scope of this thesis to consider every single one. Caplet composed individual stand-alone mélodies and sets. Additionally, he tended to avoid setting the most famous poets of his time, as many of his settings draw upon texts by lesser-known poets. The precise reason for this is unclear. The musical structures evidenced in these mélodies demonstrate deeply sensitive and expressive poetic readings that may indicate the rationale behind Caplet’s poetic choices was potentially driven by factors such as personal response and engagement with his literary peers, rather than a need for recognition or fame through setting eminent or ‘in-vogue’ poets.

As mentioned, mélodies originate during almost every stage of Caplet’s career. Caplet’s compositional life has been divided into three periods: early, middle, and late. Sanae Kanda and Joel Harder define three stylistic periods according to the following dates: Early Years (1899-1908), War Years (1914-1918), and Late Years (1919-1925).

It is recognised by both Kanda and Harder, as well as clearly evidenced in the music itself, that Caplet’s compositional approach to the mélodie matured throughout his lifetime. Kanda elaborates:

Caplet’s songs show all the different stages of both his musical development and the diverse range in style that may connect to his

24 Sanae Kanda, 'The Role of the Piano in the Mélodie of André Caplet' (DMA Dissertation, Boston University, 2002). p.4

complex personal life. In his songs, he represents a great variety of techniques and the efficient use of instruments.  

These elements – stylistic era and song type – were crucial in the selection of mélodies for this project, and the subsequent choice to explore sets rather than individual mélodies. I use the term ‘sets’ rather than ‘cycles’ because the works do not behave in a fully cyclic manner, such as in the traditional German lied. Furthermore, the mélodies in Caplet’s sets have the potential to be performed on an individual basis as stand-alone songs, without the need for the full set to create cohesion. Helen Abbott explains:

As such, the notion of a tightly knit song cycle – whether in terms of composition or performance – carries less weight in the French context, and for this reason the looser term, ‘song set’, seems more appropriate.

Because Caplet did not choose famous, often-set, poets, and because he did not repeatedly set individual texts by the same poet, the choice to build this study on the sets rather than on a combination of individual mélodies and sets was made on the basis of three primary factors discussed below.

Selected Sets Represent Each Compositional Era of Caplet’s Life

Paroles a l’absente is a good reflection of the early foundations for Caplet’s style. It is a set that, according to Harder, features songs that show ‘a marked increase in complexity and sophistication and look ahead to later songs.’ Le vieux coffret was composed throughout the war years, and potentially offers insight into Caplet’s

26 Sanae Kanda, 'The Role of the Piano in the Mélodie of André Caplet' (DMA Dissertation, Boston University, 2002). p.4


reaction to the conflict in which he was engaged. The stand-alone *mélodies* further demonstrate aspects of Caplet’s personal response to war through the selection of poetic texts and themes (for example *mélodies* such as *Détresse, Quand... reverrai-je hélas!*, and *La croix douloureuse*, deal directly with the tumult and fallout of war.\(^{29}\)

The *Trois Fables de Jean de la Fontaine* demonstrate a significant stylistic change for Caplet. Composed in 1919 in the immediate aftermath of the war, the triptych reveals a departure and development of harmonic language and poetic choice. Moving from 1919 into 1920, the final set Caplet composed was also the largest: the *Cinq Ballades Françaises* explores a range of pastoral and evocative themes, and exemplifies Caplet’s mature approach to the *mélodie*.

**Sets Allow Exploration of Multiple Settings by the Same Poet and Poetic Aesthetic**

Isolating the sets for this study allows appropriate scope for exploring Caplet’s engagement with multiple poems by the same poet. Because Caplet did not repeatedly return to the same poet again and again when composing stand-alone *mélodies*, the poetic atmosphere that runs through sets of works by one poet may potentially reveal a deeper insight into the ways in which Caplet’s musical language reflects similar themes and atmospheres through a consistent poetic voice.

**Contrasting Sets Exhibit Mélodies that Represent Different Poetic Themes and Atmosphere**

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\(^{29}\) Marie-Christine Catherine Allen devotes a dissertation to this topic: Marie-Christine Catherine Allen, 'The Wartime Mélodies of André Caplet' (DMA Dissertation, University of Arizona, 1994).
Because it is possible to find thematic contrasts between the sets in terms of poetic content, and style, taking the sets as the basis of this dissertation allows for an exploration, at crucially different points of his life, into the ways in which Caplet addresses imagery and atmosphere.

The most comprehensive approach for a study such as this would be to analyse Caplet’s entire opus of mélodies. But a study of that size would reach far beyond the limits of this dissertation. Selecting four sets, however, adequately demonstrates aspects of Caplet’s early voice through Paroles à l’absente, his war experience through Le vieux coffret, his most dramatic, operatic voice of all the mélodies through the Trois Fables de Jean de la Fontaine, and his full compositional maturity through Cinq Ballades Françaises.
Analytical Approach

In this study, I analyse and interpret the selected *mélodies* individually. Because there are varying themes and images throughout each set, a uniform approach that treats each *mélodie* in precisely the same way, therefore, is unsuitable and perhaps would not do justice to the music. For example, the poetic events and central themes and images often determine the *mélodie* structure and, additionally, atmospheric imagery and narrative govern the harmonic vocabulary. There are instances, such as in *Songe*, where Caplet tends to structure the formal layout of the music according to the unfolding events in the poetic text rather than strictly adhering to stanza layout. Quite often, but not always, the *mélodies* follow a through-composed or variation of through-composed format.

The consideration of Caplet’s compositional strategy, therefore, calls for an analytical methodology that is fluid and adaptable, in order to allow appropriate consideration of the musical structure in terms of rhythmic and tonal organisation. Drawing from theories of rhythmic analysis affords the scope for exploring some of the ways in which these musical elements, such as alignment and grouping of rhythmic structures, operate. Utilising the tools and terminology derived from rhythmic strategies can be particularly useful for revealing aspects of consonance and dissonance within layers of rhythmic structure. Similarly, in order to explore the nature of the harmonic make-up, an analytical approach that is versatile enough to allow full consideration of a functional, not fully diatonic, and quite often modal language is necessary. Finding the most suitable lens through which to study Caplet’s *mélodies* initially proved a complex process. The analytical strategy must offer flexibility and scope to fully explore and
engage with harmonic and metric schemes relative to poetic expression and melody line.

Central to the analytical approach is the need to cater to the interpretation of varying areas of rhythmic nonalignment that lie at points of heightened musico-poetic interest and, quite often, those points occur differently depending on the nature of the poetic text. For the purposes of retaining a sense of clarity and consistency of interpretation, I establish an approach that applies a tripartite method to allow consideration for three interpretative areas. These areas combine to provide a narrative for each mélodie that begins by observing the music from a large-scale perspective that becomes progressively more detailed as it unfolds. These three areas consist of ‘Formal Overview’, ‘Aspects of Poetic Harmony’, and ‘Analytical Interpretation’. Each of the four chapters is introduced and concluded with comments and observations that contextualise and synthesise each set.

**Formal Overview**

‘Formal Overview’ considers the total design and poetic reading, and outlines the large-scale form and structure of the mélodie. This provides an introduction to the mélodie, offering a framework upon which the following two interpretative areas can develop and expand.

**Aspects of Poetic Harmony**

‘Aspects of Poetic Harmony’ considers the harmonic structure as it relates to the poetic narrative. This section pinpoints key areas where the harmonic language and poetic
unfolding create a sense of structural alignment, and demonstrates Caplet’s approach to the relationship between tonal language and poetic expression.

**Analytical Interpretation**

‘Analytical Interpretation’ considers mostly rhythmic aspects, and explores states of rhythmic nonalignment, performance interpretations of these *mélodies* from selected recordings, and other points of interpretative interest. I chose to consult recorded performances of the works, where appropriate, to help illustrate the ways in which this music has been interpreted by performers. Occasionally there are instances where, in multiple recordings of the same work, the performers recognise different interpretative elements. The resulting analyses presented are not a bar-by-bar rendering of the music, and areas of each *mélodie* discussed have been chosen as representative examples.
Methodological Considerations

Approaches to Tonality

For revealing insight into the functionality of early twentieth-century French harmonic language, several, perhaps adaptable, analytical options are available including, but not limited to, Schenkerian, Motivic, Set-Theoretical, and Neo-Riemannian Theories. For interpreting the relationship between harmonic language and poetic atmosphere, however, there are fewer readily-available options. Caplet’s harmonic language is, at times, deliberately vague and ambiguous, and does not always conform to standard tonal practices. His tonal language remains inherently functional, but heavily embellished with modal colour and chromatic texture. While analytical approaches using Schenkerian methods have been applied to music of this era, most notably on the music of Debussy, applying identical approaches to Caplet’s mélodies did not yield satisfactory results for an insightful musico-poetic interpretation. As Boyd Pomeroy explains:

> Although Schenker’s influential theory of tonal music remained unrivalled in its explanatory depth and subtlety, its application or adaption to any music outside Schenker’s own select band of composers – (from Bach to Brahms more or less) – and especially to twentieth-century music – has always been highly controversial.

Pomeroy further considers the application of set-theoretical approaches, and although this method yields results of value in terms of decoding diatonic and chromatic structures, it does not stretch fully to embracing the melodic and poetic needs of this study. Pomeroy mentions that:

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While the set-theoretical approach can hardly be criticised for failing to address issues that lie beyond its scope, it must be said that its drastic negation of tonality results in a somewhat one-dimensional picture.32

The approach to revealing the tonal design in Caplet’s *mélodies* in this thesis is derived from John Rink’s analytical reading of structural and formal components in Chopin’s *D Major Prelude Op. 28 No.5*.33

In this study, Rink outlines the structural and formal components of this prelude in a manner that shows not just layers consisting of Schenkerian levels of structure, but also middleground harmonic rhythm, dynamics and sectional layout. I reproduce Rink’s design as follows:

**John Rink: Chopin D Major Prelude Op. 28 No.5: Structural and Formal Components**

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32 Ibid. p.163


16
This model forms the basis for developing the layout in which to present information concerning tonal unfolding in Caplet’s *mélodies*. By modifying this design, it is possible to illustrate the relationship between tonality and vocal-phrase contour in the overall harmonic plan in a concise way. I do not draw from traditional Schenkerian approaches for this music as Rink does in the Chopin example, but my modification of his layout presents layers of information in a similarly compact manner. This adapted tonal layout is labelled the *Structural Overview Chart*, and a chart accompanies each *mélodie* analysed, presented in Volume II. Each chart contains the following levels to demonstrate relevant structural information, as well as a brief comment section outlining any necessary information on phrase structure:

- Formal section (or stanza where applicable).
- Time signature changes.
- Vocal-melody: general phrase structure outline (inclusive of sub-phrases where applicable).
- Bar numbers.
- Harmonic Rhythm (1 bar = 1 ♩).
- Primary Tonal Area/Primary Chords (where applicable).
- Tonal relationship to given key signature (where applicable).
- Any other relevant information (where applicable).

The correlation between the harmonic rhythm and phrase contour provides significant insight into Caplet’s approach to tonal design, because the phrase lengths are often inconsistent with the rate at which the harmonic rhythm changes. The charts show the fast movement of the harmonic rhythm, a feature that contributes to the dissolution of
tonal clarity. This information is crucial in aligning the harmonic and poetic narratives.

According to Joseph P. Swain:

The fascination with harmonic rhythm is in the variety of harmonic lengths, not their consistency. If there is no "harmonic beat" other than the one coincident with the beat of the texture, then there can be no regular accented beat, except one coincident with the texture.34

Through illuminating this pacing of harmonic rhythm, or as Swain calls it, ‘harmonic beat’, in Caplet’s tonal language as it aligns with poetic imagery, it is possible to gain a perspective of both the intricacies of Caplet’s voice and the ways in which he manipulates tonality to symbolise poetic form and atmosphere. The absence of regular-accented harmonic beat, through acceleration and deceleration of harmonic movement, potentially affects the ways in which the listener tonally perceives atmosphere and poetic imagery because there are often tonal shifts or colour changes at important points in the text. This additionally demonstrates the ways in which Caplet’s modal language disguises and often elaborates upon standard tonal practices.

Caplet’s tonal language throughout the mélodies selected in this thesis mostly relies on the use of rich and complicated primary and secondary chords, that often move in unusual or unanticipated progressions. In the structural overview charts, I define these tonal chordal movements in Roman numerals in the ‘Primary chords’ layer for each individual mélodie discussed. Identifying the chords in this manner helps to better illustrate the tonal foundation with the music, and the function of these primary and secondary triads in the given key. The prevailing outcome is that the tonal centre of Caplet’s mélodies is structured around movement of chords that are relative to the key, but may not function in standard progressions. These chordal functions are especially

evident in the earlier sets composed up until and during the war. Taking an example from Caplet’s early work, *Ce sable fin et fuyant* (*Paroles a l’absente*), I interpret the underlying chordal structure as derived from a progression of A: V–ii–iii–vii–iv–V for Section A. Looking more closely at the ways in which Caplet colours these chordal structures with non-chord tones, it becomes apparent that the music can be further perceived modal and other non-diatonic tonalities that create a richer tonal atmosphere. For instance, in a three bar passage at bars 14–16, the tonality is fundamentally rooted in chord vii (G#), but Caplet chromatically alters bar 15 to suggest G# octatonic. This does not detract from the established diatonic chordal functionality of the music, but does establish a great suggestion of modal quality derived from the aforementioned chord structures.

Throughout the discussion, I observe the non-diatonic notes, and suggest the modalities they imply. My analysis for each *mélodie*, therefore, is designed to be read in conjunction with the supporting information in the Structural Overview charts, because the charts fully identify the functioning chordal layer, describe the chord in relation to the implied key, and illustrate the various kinds of modal and chromatic colour that expands from these respective chords. Although Caplet’s language develops – becoming more sophisticated as he matures – this use of this kind of chordal language could be interpreted as a feature of his style that evolves throughout his compositional life. For instance, there is a high level of quartal harmonic movement in *Cloche d’aube* (1921), composed just three years before his death. In another example from the later works, *Songe d’une nuit d’été*, chordal movement is evident in a similar manner, but more significantly coloured with modality. For instance, in the A section, I interpret bars 7–15 as fundamentally derived from chord IV (B) in the key of
F#. Caplet establishes this chordal tonality, but the addition of non-chord tones elevates the chord structure to more closely resemble a modal collection suggestive of B pentatonic (bars 7–9), then B lydian (bars 9–15).

The crux of Caplet’s compositional language lies within the premise that his approach, although part of a greater movement relative and central to historical era and compositional practice, challenges the traditionally accepted usage of tonal language.

**Approaches to Rhythm and Metre**

Metrical hierarchy, according to Fred Lerdhal and Ray Jackendoff\(^\text{35}\), exists at least on two levels of beats, and in some cases up to five or six. Within these multiple levels of metrical structures, the notated metre falls somewhere in the middle. Maury Yeston\(^\text{36}\) agrees with this analysis. His conception of metrical structure falls in distinct levels or strata. These levels are identified as foreground, middleground (with the room to expand several layers of middleground metre), and background. The difficulty lies in determining just which level most significantly reflects the meter. For Yeston, the meter arises truly from the interaction of middleground strata.

Yeston outlines the premise that ‘periodic and regular motion is metric, while irregular configurations of different time values are rhythmic.’\(^\text{37}\) Likewise, for Lerdhal and Jackendoff, the metric structure and grouping, or rhythmic structure are two separate entities, within an overall rhythmic structure of a piece. This differentiation is


\(^{37}\) Ibid. p.65
particularly relevant to investigating the music of Caplet. Often, the hypermetric structure is evasive, especially given the significant number of tempo changes and rhythmic distortions in the *mélodies*. Therefore, an examination of the rhythmic organisation can reveal irregularities such as nonalignment of layers that potentially reflects poetic meaning and imagery. Additionally, when these structures are analysed, it becomes clear that the barlines have less effect on the rhythmic shape than might first be apparent. Cooper and Meyer\(^\text{38}\) draw more attention to the barline in this sense of rhythmic organisation than do Lerdhal and Jackendoff. From their perspective, there is evidence that a strongly defined metre can and does contradict the rhythmic organisation, and this can give particularly revealing insights into rhythmic and metric structure in tonal music.\(^\text{39}\)

Yeston’s emphasis on irregular configuration of time values — or, conflicts arising between rhythmic nonalignment of layers — forms the starting point for developing an interpretative method to investigate aspects of rhythmic conflict in Caplet’s *mélodies*.


\(^\text{39}\) Exploring Lerdahl and Jackendoff’s discussion of grouping structures affords great depth and understanding of the multiplicity of ways in which processes of rhythmic grouping rhythmic and hierarchical organisation can function in music. In *A Generative Theory of Music* (1983) 43–52, Lerdahl and Jackendoff explore the ways in which musical elements are involved in grouping structures. Lerdahl and Jackendoff identify two primary forms that include elements of articulation, attack, and dynamics in the first, and wider concerns including thematic, rhythmic, and harmonic parallelism. The groundwork laid by these theories in the early 1980s provided significant scope for developments in rhythmic grouping theory that was later explored by others. For example, in the mid 1970s Maury Yeston, in *The Stratification of Musical Rhythm* (1976) expands the aforementioned grouping concepts to encompass the notion of musical metre in terms of strata that behave in “a relationship between two different strata of equal-valued [isochronous] motion that are consonant to each other.” (See Yeston: 151). The idea of simultaneous strata, or levels, of rhythmic functions was then, in turn, developed by Krebs further who reframed the idea in terms of metrical consonance and dissonance; a concept that is fully explored in *Fantasy Pieces* (1999). The roots of Krebs’ concepts of simultaneous metrical levels grouped consonance and dissonance can be traced to Lerdahl and Jackendoff as I outline here, but Krebs’ work shows significant development in that he not only considers theories on simultaneous metrical levels, but also juxtapositions between successive metres.
The choice to focus this exploration on rhythmic aspects rather than deeper metric structures is deliberate. Rhythmic non-alignment is central to the disruption of surface levels in relation to the expression of poetic imagery through mélodies; it is this aspect of Caplet’s compositional design that can potentially give the most relevant insights into links between rhythmic organisation and poetic expression.

The interpretative approach used in the rhythmic consideration of nonalignment of layers is modelled and adapted primarily from the work of Harald Krebs. In his article, “Some Extensions of the Concepts of Metrical Consonance and Dissonance”, Krebs outlines theories of metric conflict and agreement, to an extent following in the footsteps of Maury Yeston. For Krebs, the idea of metric and rhythmic consonance and dissonance is one that reveals insights into the relationship between the metric divisions in both surface and background levels of structure. This is helpful for this study, insofar as the approach may illuminate both the juxtapositions and superimpositions involved in the layering of rhythmic strands within a piece of music.

Krebs opens the discussion, in “Some Extensions of the Concepts of Metrical Consonance and Dissonance”, by acknowledging Yeston’s definition of musical consonance and dissonance, but with some modifications of his own regarding Yeston’s terminology. Krebs believes that it is more appropriate to consider applying the term metrical consonance and dissonance due to the consonances and dissonances themselves containing layers of strata as well as the concept of overall metre containing layers of strata.

Krebs also notes that Yeston gives consideration to the mathematical correlation between layers of rhythmic strata, and little to no attention to the corresponding alignment of these layers. Krebs argues that the aspect of alignment is a crucial element to understanding the ways in which these rhythmic layers (or levels, as he refers to them), operate within the metrical structure. In his discussion, Krebs defines metrical consonance and dissonance:

Metrical consonance arises from the combination of at least two levels such that each attack of every interpretative level in the collection coincides with an attack of every faster level. [...] Metrical dissonance, unlike consonance, requires the presence of at least three levels – a pulse level and at least two interpretative levels that provide conflicting groupings of pulses.41

Following the publication of this article in 1987, Krebs further developed theories of metrical consonance and dissonance, culminating in the book *Fantasy Pieces: Metrical Dissonance in the Music of Robert Schumann* in 1999. The material analysed in this study is based primarily on the music of Schumann. As a result, the approach is designed for the purposes of interpreting metre and rhythm in tonal music. In the second chapter of the book, however, Krebs ‘describes various categories of “metrical dissonance”’ and sets out a terminology and labelling system for the analysis of metrically dissonant passages.43 This terminology is particularly useful for describing the nonalignment of layers in the rhythmic organisation of Caplet’s *mélodies*, and though combining Krebs’ terminology with grouping methods founded on principles defined by Cooper and Meyer, a framework that can potentially illuminate areas of rhythmic dissonance in selected passages of *mélodies* becomes viable.

41 Ibid. p.103


43 Ibid. p.viii
The analytical aim of this study is not to adapt Krebs’ model of analysing dissonance and consonance in rhythmic and metric layers because to do so is far beyond the confines of this work. In a recent paper “‘Rhythmicized Time’ in Debussy’s Mélodies”, presented at the *Claude Debussy in 2018: A Centenary Celebration* conference at Royal Northern College of Music in 2018, Sascha Koerbler demonstrated an adaption of Krebs’ analytical approach on the *mélodies* of Debussy. Using Krebs’ methodologies, this paper offered analytical insights into rhythmic and metric distortion in the musical structures. Koerbler’s ongoing and future research aims to produce an analytical model that translates and recasts Krebs’ approaches for analysing metric consonance and dissonance in tonal music to a model suitable for the often ambiguous and elusive structures found in early post-tonal music.

The primary ways in which this study draws from Krebs’ work is through identifying the forms of rhythmic dissonance that emerge from irregular or conflicting grouping patterns. The most common forms of dissonance occurring throughout the *mélodies* in this study are displacement dissonance and grouping dissonance and, within that, indirect dissonance and subliminal dissonance. I define these terms according to Krebs:

- **Displacement dissonance**: The association of layers of equivalent cardinality in a nonaligned manner.
- **Grouping dissonance**: The association of at least two interpretative layers whose cardinalities are not multiples/factors of each other.

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44 Sascha Koerbler, “‘Rhythmicized Time’ in Debussy’s Mélodies’ in *Claude Debussy in 2018: A Centenary Celebration*, Department of Music, Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester, 19–21 March, 2018

• **Indirect dissonance**: Dissonance resulting from the juxtaposition rather than the superposition of layers of motion.

• **Subliminal dissonance**: Dissonance formed by the interaction of at least one explicitly stated interpretative layer and at least one conflicting layer that is only implied (by the content and by the notation). The implied layer within such distances is generally the primary metrical layer.

To identify these kinds of dissonance, it is necessary to group rhythmic passages. The basis for the approach to rhythmic grouping in this study is derived from patterns primarily generated by pitch: the combination of steps and leaps, for the most part, defines rhythmic shapes. Cooper and Meyer state:

> In general, groups of sounds which are similar (in timbre, volume, etc.) and near to each other (in time, pitch, etc.) form strongly unified rhythmic patterns. Difference and distance between sounds or group of sounds tend to separate rhythmic patterns. However, though similarity tends to create cohesion, repetition usually makes for the separation of groups.⁴⁶

Combining these aspects of approach to rhythmic grouping with aspects of Krebs’ approach to the study of metric dissonance provides a suitable lens through which aspects of rhythmic nonalignment in Caplet’s *mélodies* can be explored. The expression in these *mélodies* is both complex and personal, but through drawing from elements of rhythmic and tonal behaviour in the musical structure, there is potential to illuminate, from analytical and interpretative perspectives, meaningful musico-poetic connections.

The French language, however, is an accented one and this has impacts on rhythm. In the poetic rhyming scheme, there are two kinds of endings: masculine and feminine. The balance of these endings often affects the rhythmic placements of accents, and

regularly displaces rhythmic accent in the vocal line. Clive Scott discusses this further, and explains the precisions between masculine and feminine rhyme schemes in Classical prosody. He states:

In Classical prosody, no masculine word should rhyme with a feminine, even though their sounds may be identical in the rhyme (mère / amer, embaumée / aimé), nor should a pair of rhyme-words of one gender be immediately followed by a pair of the same gender; masculine and feminine pairs should alternate.\(^{47}\)

Throughout the summaries of poetic structure in the following analyses, I describe the rhyme scheme in terms of lettering to reflect rhyming words, but there when considering Caplet’s treatment of masculine and feminine endings, as well as instances of the muted e, rhythmic understanding can be perceived on a much deeper level. For example, in *Ce sable fin et fuyant*, the balance of masculine and feminine endings adheres to the following format: MFFM / FMFM / FMFM / FMMFMMF. By considering Caplet’s treatment of masculine and feminine endings on this level, it is possible to discover that the delicate balance of masculine and feminine line endings has been respected through the placement metrical and rhythmic accents in the vocal lines in the *mélodies* presented for analysis in this thesis and that syllable count and pronunciation of words in the poetic texts greatly affects musical interpretation and meaning.

Chapter One

Paroles à l’absente

Introduction

*Paroles à l'absente* was composed in 1908, a significant time in André Caplet’s musical and literary development. Having received the *Prix de Rome* in 1901, Caplet benefitted from the ensuing opportunities of travel and musical development in the following five years. He did not stay in Rome, as prescribed by the conditions of the *Prix de Rome*, rather choosing to relocate to Germany to follow the conductors Felix Mottl and Arthur Nikisch. Joel Harder explains:

> For much of 1903 Caplet lived in Hamburg, and in 1905 he was situated mainly in Berlin. In early 1906, after almost five years of an artist’s sojourn apprenticing as a conductor and living mainly in Germany, Caplet’s pension from the *Académie de Beaux-Arts* ran out, and he returned to Paris.\(^{48}\)

Soon after returning to Paris, Caplet became involved with the artistic group, *Les Apaches*. This group included musicians, artists, and painters who would regularly meet at the home of Paul Sourdes in Montemarte. The aesthetic of this group would have appealed to Caplet’s artistic sensibilities: at the weekly meetings, new musical ideas, literary themes, poetry and other theories of the arts were discussed. Florent Schmitt was a founding figure, and other members included Lucien Garban, Maurice Ravel, Ricardo Viñes, Emile Vuillermoz, Tristan Klingsor and Maurice Delage. These artists had a shared interest in painters such as Van Gogh, Whistler, and Cézanne, poets

such as Mallarmé and Verlaine, and the music of contemporary and past composers such as Debussy, Wagner, and Chopin, as well an appreciation for the Russian schools of composition. The group shared eclectic, bohemian tastes and enthused about Chinese painting and other forms of artistic creation. This group certainly complemented Caplet’s interest in the exotic. In fact, it admired the Russian style so much that they adopted the first theme from Borodin’s *Symphony No. 2* as their ‘call to arms’.

The group undoubtedly stimulated Caplet: *Les Apaches* provided a network of fellow artists who appraised and supported each other’s creative endeavours, and explored new ideas together. For instance, Williametta Spencer observes: ‘In such surroundings the group heard, for the first time, Ravel’s *Jeux d’eau*.’

*Les Apaches* was a renowned group in Parisian society, and their nickname came about in an amusing manner. Spencer elaborates further:

One Sunday afternoon, after a concert, they were walking down the rue de Rome en masse. They bumped into a newsboy who shouted. “Attention, *les Apaches*!” Ricardo Viñes picked up the slogan, and thus, the group was named.50

This could potentially be a reference to the tearaway underworld Parisian gang of the same name. Philip Blom writes,

No gang and no horror story was more beloved by the popular press than the spectacular apaches stalking the streets of Paris. A loose conglomeration of rival youth gangs, the apaches and their leaders became


50 Ibid. p.170
famous for their ruthless and violent muggings and gang fights at the heart of the French capital.\textsuperscript{51}

Les Apaches were certainly not violent, and absolutely did not look for mugging victims among the innocent citizens of Paris, but their gang-like stance moving through the streets of Paris to the theme of Borodin’s Second symphony certainly conjures up a formidable image.

Situated in this fertile creative atmosphere, it is unsurprising that Paroles à l’absente displays more substance in terms of harmonic complexity and structure, as well as a deeper exploration of modal language than some of the mélodies from preceding years. In terms of poetic choice, Caplet’s selection of texts by Jean-Aubry demonstrates his penchant for choosing works by contemporary literary figures. Jean-Aubry’s poetry is influenced by the symbolist aesthetic, and emphasis on the power of vision, dreams, and imagination is key. Furthermore, Caplet knew Jean-Aubry personally. It is possible that Caplet came into contact with him as early as 1905 or 1906, where in May of the latter, as described by Williametta Spencer, Le Cercle de l’art moderne was formed in Le Havre to support and promote modern artistic works. It was at one of its lectures that Jean-Aubry spoke about Verlaine’s musical settings. Spencer notes:

M. Jean-Aubry presented a lecture on Verlaine and contemporary music. His lecture was illustrated by selected examples among his poems which had been set to music by various contemporary composers. Those represented were G. Fauré, Chausson, Debussy, and Caplet. Green is Caplet’s only song on a poem of Verlaine, so this was undoubtedly the work in reference. The song was performed by Mlle Helène Luquiens and accompanied by Caplet at the piano.\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{51} Philip Blom, \textit{The Vertigo Years: Europe 1900–1914} (Great Britain: Orion Publishing Group Ltd., 2008) p. 371

\textsuperscript{52} Williametta Spencer ‘The Influence and Stylistic Heritage of André Caplet’ (PhD Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1974). p.165

29
Additionally, it was most likely Jean-Aubry, in the capacity of music-critic and writer, who introduced Caplet and Debussy in 1907.53

*Paroles à l’absente* consists of three *mélodies*: *Ce sable fin et fuyant*, *Angoisse* and *Préludes*. According to Denis Huneau, orchestral versions for singer-orchestra also exist. He notes that the orchestrated-version manuscripts are available for *Ce sable fin et fuyant* and *Angoisse*, but that the orchestral manuscript for *Préludes* has not yet been located.54 That the orchestral versions date from the same time as the vocal-piano versions, suggests that Caplet was perhaps already thinking orchestrally when composing the piano versions, and this view is supported by the textural density55 and orchestral-like piano writing. The piano accompaniments, as with the later *mélodies* and perhaps even as a feature of Caplet’s style, fully assimilate the entire timbre and textual capacities of the piano in a way that creates a richly orchestral atmosphere.

Joel Harder suggests that these *mélodies* can be performed in the following order:

Firstly *Préludes*, secondly *Ce sable fin et fuyant*, and finally *Angoisse*. Harder further mentions that these *mélodies* do ‘not seem to have a designated order and can be excerpted.’56 In his cataloging of the set, however, Denis Huneau outlines first *Ce sable

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53 Spencer states: ‘The exact circumstances which brought Caplet and Debussy together are not known. It is generally thought that the meeting was the result of G. Jean-Aubry, man of letters and music critic, who had connections with Caplet in Le Haver.’ Ibid. p.170


55 I refer to textural density in terms of the thickness or sparseness of notes at a given moment or passage in the music. This can also be interpreted in terms of the range and placement of notes in upper and lower registers in the piano accompaniments. These elements of texture are appropriate to each individual *mélodie*.

fin et fuyant, second Angoisse, and finally Préludes. This is the order the mélodies follow in the 1994 recording by Claudette LeBlanc and Boaz Sharon, as well as in the Durand edition of the set. As the mélodies were published by Durand in Caplet’s lifetime, it is likely that the running order as suggested by Denis Huneau, rather than Harder, is most historically accurate. Additionally, that order – Ce sable fin et fuyant; Angoisse; Préludes – creates an overall narrative that, to an extent, could outline the poet’s journey.

In situating the overall narrative of these mélodies as a poetic journey, it may be suggested that Ce sable fin et fuyant describes the poet’s memories of the beloved using images of nature and the elements. Angoisse, following this, portrays a sense of deep desolation of loss, but ends on an uncertain question. Préludes plays with the dual nature of past and present, beginning with the poet in the present-day and, falling into a reverie that looks back on the beloved, to end with the memories of their time together. The mélodies will be considered in this order, and after an exploration of the ways in which Caplet portrays poetic imagery through harmonic and rhythmic interpretative aspects, final conclusions will be drawn on aspects of musico-poetic unity in the triptych.
**Paroles a l'absente by Georges Jean-Aubry**

**Ce sable fin et fuyant (1908)**

Dedicated to Mme. Charlotte Mellot-Joubert

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Ce sable fin et fuyant</strong></th>
<th><strong>The fine and receding sand</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J'ai pris du sable entre mes mains</td>
<td>I took sand in my hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Au bord de la mer qui dans l'ombre</td>
<td>At the edge of the sea which in the shadow murmurs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>murmure</td>
<td>I took fine sand like your hair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J'ai pris du sable fin comme ta chevelure</td>
<td>In my hands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entre mes mains.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L'ombre ce soir avait une douceur humaine</td>
<td>The shadow tonight had a human sweetness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Et la mer que je ne voyais pas</td>
<td>And the sea that I did not see</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haletait près de moi comme ton haleine,</td>
<td>Panting near me like your breath,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quand je te serre entre mes bras</td>
<td>When I hold you in my arms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je faisais frissonner entre mes doigts fébriles</td>
<td>I shivered between my feverish fingers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ce sable fin et fuyant.</td>
<td>This fine and fleeting sand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le passé pesait sur ma poitrine</td>
<td>The past weighed on my chest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comme un corps défaillant.</td>
<td>Like a failing body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mais la rafale vint impitoyable.</td>
<td>But the gust came pitless.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trésor misérable et doux</td>
<td>Wretched and sweet treasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d'un peu de sable que disperse le vent jaloux.</td>
<td>Of a little sand, which the jealous wind scatters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Et j'ai senti mes mains vides et désolées Tandis qu'après de moi</td>
<td>And I felt my hands empty and desolate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La mer pleurait comme ta voix</td>
<td>While at my side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le soir inoubliable où tu t'en es allée.</td>
<td>The sea cried like your voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The unforgettable evening when you went.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.1

Formal Overview: *Ce sable fin et fuyant*

*Ce sable fin et fuyant* is an evocative homage to love lost and, like *Préludes*, the central poetic perspective is firmly rooted in a rumination of past events. In *Ce sable fin et fuyant*, a narrative unfolds where the natural elements of the sea and sand metaphorically reflect the memories of love gone by, and the ensuing pain this has upon the poet. Throughout the poem, a sense of sadness and yearning for the past is expressed through sometimes turbulent imagery and metaphors of nature and, with the tempestuous sea as a focal point, the power and mystery of nature play a significant role in revealing inner turmoil. The poet has lost his beloved; she slipped away like sand through his fingers, and his distress is embodied emblematically by the stormy gusts of wind and swell of the sea.

Joel Harder draws a comparison between the text of this *mélodie* and *Préludes*:

As in [*Préludes*], this poem is unconventional in length, metre, and rhyme scheme. It is 19 lines long, each line having different number of syllables and no defining metre, and the rhyme scheme is constructed as follows: ABBA CDCD EFGF H II JKKJ.57

Considering the overall compositional format of this *mélodie*, it could not be considered either a fully strophic or fully through-composed composition, because there is not enough recurring material, or even standard layout of verse and interlude material. Nevertheless, there is evidence of a repeating vocally-driven motivic shape that creates a sense of homogeneity within the overall song. The recurring fragmented

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motivic material prevents the *mélodie* from sitting too neatly in the true though-composed mould.

The structure of this *mélodie* unfolds in a manner that adheres closely to the poetic text; however as multiple formal divisions could be interpreted, this is not a clear cut process. Like in *Préludes*, as will be noted later, I suggest that the construction is founded on two large-scale sections: Section A and Section B. Because this *mélodie* aligns most closely to a through-composed form, I propose this division on the basis of poetic imagery combined with rhythmic and harmonic events. I illustrate more concisely in Table 1.1, showing harmonic and rhythmic events in separate strands to better illuminate their parallel relationship:

**Table 1.1: Structural outline of *Ce sable fin et fuyant***:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Poetic Imagery</th>
<th>Rhythmic Events</th>
<th>Harmonic Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A (bars 1–36)</td>
<td>The poet reflects upon the past: his lost love and memories are expressed through the metaphors of the sea.</td>
<td>The music oscillates between 9/8 and 6/8 and is compound-time centric.</td>
<td>The music travels overall from E to A octatonic. There is a stronger cadential outline in this section, and it is possible to discern a disguised or underlying dominant-tonic pull.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B (bars 37–end)</td>
<td>The poet’s state of emotional distress and agitation are expressed through heightened imagery of the elements. His deep desolation is articulated.</td>
<td>The music oscillates between 3/4 and 4/4 and is simple-time centric</td>
<td>The music travels from D locrian-natural-two to A. This section displays unconventional chordal movement. This may be interpreted as a surface harmonic motion where the tonal centres move in semitone stepwise movement, rather than through a conventional chordal plan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In her research into the role of the piano in Caplet’s *mélodie*, Sanae Kanda provides an interpretation of this *mélodie* that suggests three sections rather than two. Kanda writes: ‘I divided the sections both according to musical and textural punctuation, though these divisions can not be clear cut.’

Kanda’s interpretation of the layout suggests three sections, labelled Section 1, 2, and 3 respectively. Kanda’s Section 1 encompasses the first two stanzas: bars 1–27, Section 2 begins with the third stanza and includes the first line of the fourth stanza, describing the gusts of wind: bars 28–34, and finally Section 3 begins at bar 40 and continues to the end. Kanda’s approach to the musical division of these sections appears more focussed on the tonal motion, rather than the equally-weighted combination of underlying rhythmic motion and poetic imagery, as she includes the significant time-signature change to 4/4 midway through her second section without defining this as a divisional aspect within the metric structure. This is a good example of the possibilities for interpreting this music: Caplet’s language is complex and often ambiguous, and there are many paths that potential interpretations may follow.

These two contrasting interpretations – Kanda’s 2002 study showing a division into three sections and this study offering a division into two – certainly highlight the duple versus triple nature within the music, and the ambiguity surrounding pinpointing clear divisions. The duple (A–B) division I propose helps to show a greater thread of continuity between this *mélodie* and the last in the set: both *Ce sable fin et fuyant* and

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58 Sanae Kanda, 'The Role of the Piano in the Mélodie of André Caplet' (DMA Dissertation, Boston University, 2002). p.24
later Préludes, dealing with themes of love lost, divide into two parts. Furthermore, perhaps this duple versus triple nature, could be understood on a background level as a deliberate ambiguity that is reflected in the opening and closing mélodies of set as a way of reflecting the sense of poetic uncertainty in the music.

In Préludes, we will see Caplet manipulate the shape of the vocal contour to differentiate between the present and past states in the mélodie. In Ce sable fin et fuyant, there is a different approach to the shape of vocal contour in that it does not differ greatly between Section A and Section B. Throughout the text, there is less emphasis on the distinction between past and present states, as the sense of timeline in the narrative is very fluid. The first section is weighted in the past as the poet’s memories of the beloved are evoked through the elements. Moving to the second section, it appears the poet does become more cognisant of his current desolate status but this section, in a finely nuanced manner, is still heavily laced with past memories. It is likely that the continual thread of memories running through Section A and Section B is the reason for the greater cohesion of vocal contour throughout. This continuity of contour can be pinpointed to the presence of the recurring melodic motif throughout both sections, and will be discussed further in the analytical interpretation section.
1.2

Aspects of Poetic Harmony: *Ce sable fin et fuyant*

The tonal motion in *Ce sable fin et fuyant* appears to function differently in each section, most likely due to the nature of the poetic trajectory.

**Section A**

In Section A, the opening tonality suggests $E^7$ moving to $E$ lydian-dominant. Given the A major key signature, this $E$–centricity potentially implies a dominant tonality. As the musical narrative unfolds, however, it travels through some unusual progressions before reaching a point of closure in A octatonic at bar 32. It is likely that these progressions behave as surface tonal movements that, through quick harmonic rhythm, create a heightened sense of disorientation in the harmonic structure. Just as the poet does not find any sort of solace or resolution, the listener does not perceive a clear tonal path towards any kind of strong harmonic resolution.

Looking a little more closely at the tonal motion in the middle of this section, it is possible to suggest a correlation between the points of tonal change and development of piano texture that could potentially link the tonal and textural areas to points of poetic imagery. These analogous changes of tonality and texture could therefore reflect the underlying shifting of poetic events. For example, at bars 9–13, there is a passage of oscillating C♯-centric tonalities. Throughout this motion, the texture in the piano accompaniment is particularly dense: semiquaver motion ripples continuously in the

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59 Please see accompanying Structural Overview Chat for a mapping of this harmonic rhythm.
piano part, with an additional countermelody in the treble-clef part. The vocal line at this point declares:

*L’ombre ce soir avait une douce humaine*

The darkness this evening had a human sweetness

This imagery depicts a personification of the elements as the metaphor of the beloved intensifies. The surface tonal motion movement occurring analogously with increased textural density perhaps illustrates the manner in which Caplet embeds poetic imagery in the fabric of the musical structure.

Considering the way in which these textural patterns fit under the hands from a pianistic perspective, it appears that by moving small steps up and down to neighbour tones, new chords may be implied, such as the movement from G#m–B#5–C#7 throughout the second half of bar 11 to the first half of bar 12. This shape and movement could show Caplet’s exploration of tonality from a purely sonorous standpoint. Just changing one or two tones of a chord can open an entirely new set of sonorous and harmonic possibilities. This suggests that rather than using a predetermined tonal organisation, perhaps Caplet was exploring the potential of tonality through chordal shape, movement, and sonority.

This use of surface tonal motion to create a sense of tonal ambiguity within the language could demonstrate a harmonic representation of the poetic narrative. Caplet disguises the primary chordal movement, and offsets it by building a layer of harmonic colouration that, on the surface, appears to direct the perceived tonal impression quite far away from its centre. Despite the key signature as a starting point, the music heavily disguises its A major core.
From the perspective of tonal closure for this section, Caplet does not adhere to a traditional chord of I in the home key. It is possible that the lingering D minor tonality in bars 19–22 is a reference to the subdominant in A major, followed by the arrival at E7 in bar 23 as a dominant. The prolonged D-centric tonality through bars 26–30 could act as IV to outline a plagal closure in A. It would be natural to expect this to resolve to A major. But this motion is destabilised. The D-centricity suggests locrian-natural-two (bar 26) that passes through D lydian-dominant (bar 27), and lingers in D♯–D octatonic (bars 28–30). A resolving of sorts to A octatonic occurs at bar 32.

Not only an unstable and dark tonality built upon the tonic tone of the key signature, this A octatonic can be interpreted as pivotal in the transition from Section A to Section B. Interpreting A octatonic as a dually-functioning tonic and dominant is possible at this point because the dominant qualities – the third (C♯) and the seventh (G♮) – appear to resolve to D locrian-natural-two bar 37. This creates a sense of dominant-tonic motion in the key of D as the music moves from Section A to Section B.

In her work on this *mélodie*, Sanae Kanda identifies stepwise motion in the notes in the piano accompaniment, but on a much smaller scale. She writes:

A remarkable idea found through the song, however, comes from two notes that go down a step or half step. This idea first appears in m.1 in the right hand top notes, C♯–B. Some of the entrances of phrases throughout the piece contain this element; m.9 [A–G♯], m.6 [C♯–B], m.24 [B–A♯], m.49-50 [G♭–F], m.62 - 63 [G–f], m.65 - 66 [A♭–G], and m. 67 [G–F]. It also occurs in the very last motion at m.79, when the harmony settles finally to A minor with the inner voice moving down a step from F to E. The motion
and this kind of little, idea, scarcely perceptible at first hearing, make this piece united.\textsuperscript{60}

This is a valuable perspective. In her interpretation, Kanda shows that these tone and semitone relationships behave as motifs at specific phrase points within the piano setting, but in my analysis, I find these movements potentially further reflected on a larger structural scale, through both the the surface tonal motion and different harmonic points of rest. For example, bars 19–30 outline tonal movements in steps between D- and E-centricity, and bars 32–24 show stepwise tonal surface motion from $\text{A} \rightarrow \text{B}_b \rightarrow \text{A}$.

Table 1.2 outlines the correlation between the surface-motion tonal movements, the larger-scale structural tonal areas, and the poetic imagery. This table attempts to relate harmonic language to the key signature of A major in order to illustrate the deep-rooted harmonic structure, but additionally demonstrates Caplet’s use of coloristic harmonic motion as a means of fusing poetic imagery and tonal language.

\textsuperscript{60}Sanae Kanda, 'The Role of the Piano in the Mélodie of André Caplet' (DMA Dissertation, Boston University, 2002). pp.19–20
Table 1.2: Section A: Tonal outline of Section I of *Ce sable fin et fuyant*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unfolding Tonal Area (Showing root only; tonality unqualified)</th>
<th>Tonal Relationship to A major</th>
<th>Oscillating Surface Motion (See also: Harmonic Rhythm line on structural overview chart)</th>
<th>Connection to / Reflection of Poetic Imagery</th>
<th>Density of Piano Texture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>E lydian-dominant</td>
<td>The poet remembers the beloved. Images are <em>hazy</em>: The sand is <em>fleeting</em>. The sea is <em>shadowy</em>. It appears events are unclear and shrouded in mystery. Rather than setting up a strong dominant in E, the modal variation of lydian-dominant may reflect the merging images of the shadowy atmosphere and mysterious beloved.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B V of E (active from bar 6)</td>
<td>ii</td>
<td>F#–D–B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C# ii of B (active from bar 9)</td>
<td>iii</td>
<td>C#–G#–B–C#–D</td>
<td>Shadow imagery increases: the tonal movement combined with dense texture could reflect a heightened sense of the personification of the elements. It is as if the elements merge into the memory of the beloved. The intensity is growing.</td>
<td>Dense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G# V of C# (active from bar 14)</td>
<td>vii</td>
<td>G#–E–B Locrian-natural-two–E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D bV of G# (active from bar 18)</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>D minor centric</td>
<td>The climactic point occurs around the D tonality at bar 21, as the poet recalls the beloved in his arms, but as the image of the sand fleeing through his fingers is recalled, tonal motion moves to the darker D locrian-natural-two to reflect the sadness of his loss.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E ii of D# (active from bar 23). E tonal centre fleeing as colours unfold and D becomes prominent</td>
<td>V (E) / IV (D)</td>
<td>E–F lydian-dominant–E–D locrian-natural-two–D lydian-dominant –D# octatonic–B♭</td>
<td></td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A (active from bar 32)</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>A octatonic–B♭–A octatonic</td>
<td>The poet’s memories of the past weigh him down. There is a resolution to the tonic key, however to reflect the torment the resolution occurs in the form of octatonic tonalities built upon the tonic of the key signature.</td>
<td>Building density through additional time signature changes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section B

Section B opens with a prolonged block of D locrian-natural-two tonality, that is followed by surface tonal motion in the mid-portion. Throughout the final closing statements from bar 68 onwards however, the progressions appear to move towards ending on the tonic. In terms of the poetic imagery, this section offers vivid descriptions of gusting winds, scattered sands, and the cries of the sea. The portrayal of the elements is turbulent and stormy, a true reflection of the memories that seem to haunt the poet. The swirling piano solo textures throughout the D locrian-natural-two segment from bars 41–48 are highly suggestive of tempestuous elements and, by extension, the poet’s unrest. This tonal language is significant in that the locrian-natural-two mode contains a strongly diminished quality suited to the feeling of anguish in the text. It could be suggested that this harmonic language contributes greatly to the poet’s distress through this modal usage combined with the aforementioned piano solo texture.

It is possible to suggest that through bars 49–67 there is surface tonal movement without strong centricity. As the music moves through passages of octatonicism, it is likely that this movement is representative of the poet’s diminishing state of mind. In the narrative, the poet appears to experience a deeper sense of desolation as he reflects upon the emptiness of his hands, bereft of his beloved. Cadential movement to closure is not strong, although it could perhaps be suggested that a disguised plagal progression is implied: as the D⁹ chordal point in bar 74 moves to A in the final bars, however this is unstable and ambiguous. In the final two bars, ending on the tonic degree, the absent third leaves the listener almost hanging. A 6–5 suspension is implied over the barline, but there is no sense of whether this is major or minor. This
lack of final chordal qualifier reflects the acute absence of the poet's beloved, and his unsettled state of mind.
1.3  

Analytical Interpretation: *Ce sable fin et fuyant*

This *mélodie* is primarily concerned with themes of memory and of love and love lost, expressed through metaphorical imagery of the sea and elements. The tempestuous swell and power of nature fully reflects the turmoil the poet experiences as he recalls his beloved.

The vocal contour, as mentioned previously, differs from *Préludes* in that there is similarly syllabic prosody set throughout the entire work. According to Sane Kanda:

> The singer’s part constitutes a prose-like melodic line. [...] This results from Caplet’s setting of the text close to normal French speaking rhythm and inflection. The number of the notes for a line of the text coincide with the number of syllables. Caplet keeps to a quasi-parlando style, in which the text mirrors the spoken rhythm.

Somewhat typically for Caplet, the vocal phrases are largely non-aligned with the underling metre, and often will enter and finish on weak pulses of the bar, such as in the opening phrase (bars 2–5). This distorts the sense of regularity in the vocal phrase structure. As this *mélodie* is largely through-composed, recurring material is minimal. It is possible, however, to pinpoint a small motivic shape that appears in several variations throughout the vocal line. It appears most frequently in the first compound-time portion, and just once in the simple-time portion. Although it is possible to interpret this *mélodie* in two, or even three, sections, the presence of this motif throughout the vocal part adds a sense of unity within this overall structure.

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61 Sanae Kanda, 'The Role of the Piano in the Mélodie of André Caplet' (DMA Dissertation, Boston University, 2002). p.21
The motif consists of a small rising figuration, and is present in bars 2, 6, 12, 17, 24, 30, and 38. It is not always exactly repeated, and the final two instances could be interpreted as an augmented statement that retain a similar contour. Example 1.1 extracts these instances in isolation:

Example 1.1: Vocal motives

Although this is a small detail within the vocal part, it is significant because it helps to create a sense of homogeneity in an otherwise organically evolving contour. Comparing
the shapes of all seven extracts, strong similarities between each one may be observed. All examples are rising in contour, and all are placed at the beginning of a vocal phrase.

In addition to motivic connections, Caplet captures themes and imagery of desolation and loss of love throughout the rhythmic structure. These themes occur primarily through metre and rhythmic grouping. The following discussion will proceed to address these areas in more depth.

- **Metre: (i) Shifting compound to simple metre**
  There is a juxtaposition between the underlying metric structures of the two halves in the *mélodie*. The change from compound to simple metre potentially reflects the distinction between the beloved in the first half of the poetic narrative, and the heightened descriptions of the elements of nature in the second half; a mirroring of the poet’s tormented mind. Within these two metric states, there are further examples of instances of grouping dissonances that disguise the barlines, creating a state of rhythmic conflict themes of parallel to the conflict in the narrative.

- **Metre: (ii) Countermelody**
  There is a countermelody present in the piano part, starting at bar 9, that establishes a level of nonalignment within the textural layers. The resulting heightened intensity potentially corresponds to the poetic imagery of the poet holding his beloved.

- **Rhythmic grouping**
  In the final stages of this *mélodie*, starting at bar 53, a pattern of rhythmic grouping occurs that emphasises elements of dissonance within the metric structure. This may be attributed to the heightened sense of desolation at this stage of the poetic narrative.

**Metre (i) and (ii): Shifting from compound time to simple time and countermelody**

Perhaps one of the most outstanding features within this *mélodie* is the underlying shift from compound to simple time. This shift in metre is a significant feature in the musico-poetic relationship, because it helps underpin the temporal unfolding of poetic
narrative: from the poet's memories of the beloved and his direct involvement with her, to his feelings of desolation and loss caused by her absence at the end of the poem. Throughout the entire narrative, however, these dual perspectives are underpinned by the metaphor of the power of nature. In Section A, bars 1–37, the time signatures alternate between 6/8 and 9/8 in a compound framework. This is not unusual for Caplet, and the use of changing time signatures is a characteristic trait that is present in *mélodies* composed throughout his compositional career. It is likely that, in this instance, the apparent irregularity in the rate of time-signature changes is due to the demands of vocal prosody. The natural rhythm of the poetic text is irregular, perhaps leading to the necessity of multiple time-signature changes at a seemingly inconsistent rate of change.

Despite the apparent inconsistencies in the rate of time-signature change, in the opening bars it is possible to discern a sense of compound metre established by the arrangement of rhythmic groupings in the vocal line, as well as in the piano accompaniment. These rhythmic shapes, for the most part, align to the oscillating 6/8 and 9/8 time signatures. A greater sense of conflict occurs within this section, however, when the texture becomes more dense from bar 9 onwards. At this point, a countermelody is introduced in octaves in the outer voices of the piano accompaniment. This provides a contrasting rhythm of equal importance to that of the vocal melody, for the following reasons:

- The octave doubling enhances this line to the listener, elevating it to perhaps an equal melodic partner to the vocal melody.

- The rhythmic shape of this line differs to the vocal part, as well as the inner textural material in the piano accompaniment, in that tied notes of the countermelody in
bars 9–11 align to neither a strong 6/8 nor a strong 9/8. The placement of the tied notes distorts the impression of where the barline lies because the audible downbeat and dotted crotchet pulse become increasingly fragmented.

- The placement of the vocal phrases does not align to the placement of the countermelody phrases within the bar. This creates a sense of ambiguity and tension because, for the listener, it is unclear which line carries the strongest sense of either 6/8 or 9/8.

The combination of nonalignment in the phrasing between these layers, with the offset sense of where the strong dotted crotchet pulse placement lies, could be interpreted as a form of grouping dissonance. As Harald Krebs explains, in relation to pre-twentieth century tonal music, grouping dissonance ‘generally involves one of the metrical layers and one conflicting interpretative layer, or “antimetrical layer.”’ 62

Although this type of dissonance is considered in respect to pre-twentieth century tonal music, there is merit in using this lens to help understand the ways in which rhythmic layering at this point in the mélodie reflects poetic tension. The following example isolates and reimagines bars 9–13 in terms of rhythmic nonalignment. In the absence of the even inner textures, and with the two lines presented in rhythmic arrangements alone, it is possible to see more clearly the nonalignment between the countermelody and vocal melody, as the layout of grouping in Example 1.2 illustrates.

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In their recording, Claudette LeBlanc and Boaz Sharon recognise this conflict. In Sharon’s pianistic interpretation, there is a strong accent on the countermelody throughout this section. The octaves are emphasised, while the inner textures are more muted. In bar 9, Sharon follows Caplet’s crescendo-diminuendo direction, but rather than dropping to *pp* in bar 10, the music continues to swell as the accented countermelody line expands in tone. The dynamics chosen by LeBlanc in the vocal line appear identical to those of the pianistic countermelody shape. It is likely that the performative choice of similar dynamic shape and swell between these two conflicting melodic lines in this interpretation exists for two reasons:

- The performers chose to represent both characters appearing in this stanza – the poet and his beloved – as equal partners in the narrative, because this is the only stanza where imagery of the poet and his beloved in physical contact occurs. The poet holding the beloved in his arms is a crucially poignant scene in the narrative.

- The performers note the rhythmic nonalignment and resulting rhythmic ambiguity created by treating these two melodic lines in an equal, almost counterpoint-like, manner. This distorts the sense of downbeat and placement of the barline throughout this textural passage, and could be interpreted as a choice to deliberately heighten the sense of tension through rhythmic ambiguity, to elevate a poignant moment in the narrative.
There is a significant use of rhythmic dissonance from bars 30–8, especially when considered in relation to the poetic imagery. Throughout this section, the rhythmic motion may be a major factor, if not the only one, that forms the musical basis supporting the events in the narrative at this point. The poet’s agitation is clear: he speaks of the weight of the past weighing like a flailing body on his chest:

_Le passé pesait sur ma poitrine, comme un corps défaillant_

The past weighted on my chest, like a failing body

Turning to the rhythmic construction of bars 30–2, most likely due to the melodic contour, there is a change from 9/8 to 6/8. In bar 31, it is possible to interpret three conflicting metric layers: the groupings in the vocal line suggest one layer, and the groupings in the treble and bass-clef parts of the piano suggest something else entirely. In Example 1.3, I present a rhythmic reimagining of this bar, inclusive of groupings.

**Example 1.3: Rhythmic reimagining of bar 31**

The example shows that, due to the shape of the rhythmic grouping, the vocal line could potentially be heard in 3/4, while the accents and phrasing implied in the treble-clef of the piano part suggests a triplet motion in 4/8. The bass-clef of this piano part is the only line that clearly aligns to a typical 6/8 rhythmic pulse. This rhythmic conflict
embedded in the metric layers could be strongly suggestive of the poet’s anguish at this moment in the narrative. In the recording, this is audible. There is an emphasis on the groupings in the treble-clef of the piano part that pushes them into a feeling of four groups of three in the bar. When this grouping shape is repeated in bar 33, the absence of vocal line allows the pianist to articulate the accents within the bar even more clearly. It is likely these accents are placed on the groupings in bar 33, as well as in bar 31, as a way of gradually fragmenting the sense of pre-established pulse in anticipation of the change to 4/8 at bar 34. The text at this point (bars 30–2) conjures images of the past weighing on the poet’s chest, like a failing body, something which the deep conflict between these layers could accurately portray. This may be observed in full in the score in Example 1.4:
Example 1.4: *Ce sable fin et fuyant* bars 30–6

Le passé pesait sur ma poitrine comme un

corps défailant.

Poco rit. Animé $132\approx$

En animant beaucoup

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Caplet blurs the metric shift from compound to simple time in this part of the *mélodie*.

The rhythmic groupings such as those just mentioned accentuate conflicting time signatures, and although the simple time section (Section B) begins at bar 37, this transition does not appear entirely clear to the listener.

Easily discernible simple time groupings do not emerge until later, perhaps at bar 53. The virtuosic piano segment that enters at the beginning of the compound time section could be interpreted as offsetting a clear statement of either 3/4 or 4/4 because:

- There are several time changes in quick succession (such as bar 35: *animé* $\frac{\text{♩}}{\text{♩}} = 132$; bar 37 $\frac{\text{♩}}{\text{♩}} = 116$; bar 40 *très animé* $\frac{\text{♩}}{\text{♩}} = 130$)

- There is a tremolo figuration in the right hand at bar 38 against which the bass-clef chords are phrased over the barline, making the sense of downbeat unclear

- In the 3/4 time entry at bar 40, the treble-clef chords entering on the weak beat of the bar, especially when coupled with the tempo change, create a sense of nonalignment that potentially twist the listener’s perception of where the downbeat lies.

**Rhythmic Grouping**

Exploring areas of nonaligned rhythmic grouping can contribute to the perception of rhythmic divergence from the natural barline placement. Analytical evidence of this can help to link these aspects of rhythmic nonalignment to particular events in the poetic narrative.

53
For instance, taking the final segment of the text that begins at bar 49, there is a profuse outpouring of torment. The metaphorical elements of wind and sea are cold and unsympathetic, and the poet acutely feels desolation. Throughout bars 53–61 the music is written in 3/4, with a change to 4/4 at bar 63. In this first segment, bars 49–61, the poetic imagery describes the scattering and dissolution of the poet’s treasure:

\[
\text{Trésor misérable et doux, d’un per de sable due disperse le vent jaloux}
\]
\[
\text{Miserable and sweet treasure, of a little sand which the jealous wind scatters}
\]

The rhythmic grouping could be interpreted as a direct reflection of the wind bitterly taking and scattering away all the poet holds dear. Throughout bars 53–5 the crotchet pulses fall evenly on the beat, but the placement of the rest in bar 54 offsets the next phrase, placed over the barline, to start and finish on the weak beats. The following phrase in bar 58 begins on the third beat of the bar, which further emphasises the absence of a strong downbeat on the first beat of each bar. Caplet’s irregular phrase placement on differing beats of the bar, as well as the subsequent fragmentation of pulse could reflect the imagery of the poet’s treasured love scattered by a bitter wind.

Interpreting this kind of irregular grouping through the combined breakdown of regular phrasing and a dissolution of audible barline though the lens of Krebs’ theory, suggests that these findings could potentially be considered as an example of Caplet’s reflection of poetic imagery in terms of subliminal rhythmic dissonance. Subliminal dissonance, according to Krebs, occurs when ‘all musical features – accents, groupings etc. – establish only one interpretative layer, while the context and metrical notation imply at least one other.’

---

Considering bars 53–5, it could be suggested that there is an established rhythmic layer in the piano accompaniment phrase outlining 4/4 through the grouping of a rising pattern of eight crotchet beats within the phrase. The grouping of four crotchet beats throughout the next phrase could then be interpreted as diminution to half of that. The aspect of subliminal dissonance could emerge through the notated bass-clef layer: there are repeated tied dotted minims that imply the underlying metrical layer of the given 3/4 time signature. The conflict arises due to the placement of the 4/4 implied phrase. It begins on the second beat of bar 53 and, from there, sits evenly with a range of eight crotchet beats in total, or, two bars of 4/4. I illustrate this rhythmic line in Example 1.5:

Example 1.5: Rhythmic conflict due to implied 4/4 phrasing in bars 53–61

In the recording by Claudette LeBlanc and Boaz Sharon, this conflict is heightened. In her vocal part, LeBlanc leans into the crotchet on the first beat of bar 53, emphasising this as the downbeat in the bar. In the piano accompaniment, the weight of Sharon’s entry one beat later, and subsequent crescendo-diminuendo shaping of the phrase entry in bar 56 all suggest that that this pianist interprets the phrases in groups of four. This is an interesting image: the poet’s sense of dissolution as he becomes disconnected with his beloved is reflected not only in the shifting metric layers, but
also in the tonal motion throughout these phrases. Between bars 53 and 62, there is movement from G octatonic in the first phrase over (bars 53–5), to G# octatonic (bars 56–7), then B octatonic. The octatonic nature of this passage occurring analogously with the aforementioned instances of metric conflict exhibits a musical retelling of the anguish the poet experiences at this point.

A further example of tension arising from irregular grouping of rhythmic layers occurs in the segment that begins at bar 67 and moves towards the closure of the *mélodie*. In this instance, there are three functioning layers: the vocal line, and the treble and bass-clef parts of the piano line. The given time signature of this passage is 4/4, but with two changes – back to 3/4 at bar 71, followed by a return to 4/4 in bar 74. The two outer rhythmic layers – the vocal line and bass-clef line – move in relatively long durations which are irregularly phrased and nonaligned with one another, due to instances of overlapping, accents, and irregular starting and ending points. A heightened sense of dissonance may be discerned if the grouping of the inner textures that move in thirds in the treble-clef part of the piano line is considered analogously with the aforementioned vocal and bass-clef lines. I illustrate this in Example 1.6. This shows the score as it appears in the Durand edition, but I annotate the score with brackets to outline the groupings.
Example 1.6: Ce sable fin et fuyant groupings throughout bars 67–74

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In the score, the first half of bar 68 is notated in pairs of quavers which then change into triplets. Despite this rhythmic shift from duple quavers to triplets, however, the groupings can be interpreted as remaining in pairs throughout the subsequent bars. The progression of these triplet quavers as continued pairs is supported by the placement of a layer of crotchet F values beginning on the second beat of bar 69. This layer begins with a suggestion of emphasising the feeling of the continued duple quavers falling on a crotchet beat, as the upper note in the descending grouping shape aligns with this beat; but this is fleeting and shifts in bar 70. The grouping following bar 70 then creates a false sense of crotchet pulse placement in the bar.

Additionally, continuing the grouping at the beginning of bar 70 in duple pairs prepares for a 3 + 3 rising grouping pattern to occur over the barline, leading to a point of arrival on a B minor chord at the start of bar 71. This prevents establishing a strong feeling of 3/4 when the time signature changes, since a clear downbeat in 3/4 is absent. This grouping pattern could potentially be reflected in bars 73, where I interpret the groupings leading to an ascending 3 + 3 + 3 figure.

The basis for this grouping in pairs is that in bar 67, the texture begins with a clearly notated line of duple-grouped quavers. The changing tempo indication from *Rall.* to *Lent* at this point deconstructs the regular steady beat. Although the music appears to slow down, the use of triplet values contradicts that, and a sense of momentum begins. Reimagining the triplets as rhythmic duple groupings, creates a consistent sense of momentum that is at odds with the notated metres (4/4 and 3/4 respectively). When these groupings are considered in conjunction with the added textural density of

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64 I use ‘Descending’ here to refer to the upper tone sounding first in the pair.
the pattern occurring in chordal figuration, it appears that this layer of conflict is potentially used as a device to directly reflect the poetic meaning. For instance, at this point the poet declares:

La mer pleurait comme ta voix
Le soir inoubliable où tu t’en es allée.

The sea cried like your voice
The unforgettable evening when you went.

The poem ends with despairing imagery, as the poet is deeply affected by the loss of the beloved. The use of irregular, nonaligned rhythmic grouping at this point could reflect the inner turmoil and sense of despondency he felt. The groupings occurring in this manner potentially create a strong sense of rhythmic dissonance for the listener. In the recording, pianist Boaz Sharon’s choice to emphasise the duple nature of this passage rather than the triple, infuses a sense of unease that reflects the final poetic thoughts. In this recording, it appears that accents are articulated in a corresponding duple-grouping feeling manner to that which this analysis suggests. There is more weight placed upon the arrival of the octave chord at the start of bar 70, and the resulting duple groupings are heard continually. It appears that Sharon supports the ascending 3 + 3 grouping over the word pleurait, perhaps underlining the significance of this word in the mood expressed by text.

Ce sable fin et fuyant is a complex mélodie in that there are many rhythmic and harmonic factors working analogously to reflect the poet’s introspective story of loss of the beloved. Caplet further manipulates textural density in the piano accompaniment, as well as dynamic and tempo changes in a way that prevents the music from reaching a sense of tonal or rhythmic security. These factors result in a setting that captures the poetic sentiment deeply within the musical fabric.
**Paroles a l’absente by Georges Jean-Aubry**

*Angoisse (1908)*

Dedicated to Mlle. Hélène M. Luquiens

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Angoisse</th>
<th>Anguish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ô pensé affolante</td>
<td>O frightening thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrête-toi</td>
<td>Stop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J’ai peur ce soir auprès du phare qui tournoie</td>
<td>I’m scared this evening, alongside the lighthouse that spins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Et décrit la corolle d’une fleur mystique sur un ciel de soie</td>
<td>And describes the corolla of a mystical flower on a sky of silk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J’ai peur de ce silence et de ma solitude</td>
<td>I’m scared of this silence and my solitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Où tourbillonne le désir de ta tendresse et de ton âme claire et nue</td>
<td>Where the desire of your tenderness and of your clear and naked soul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tout mon désir ardent de vivre</td>
<td>swirls All my desire fervent to live</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le phare éblouissant et clair</td>
<td>The dazzling and clear lighthouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vire inexorable sans trève</td>
<td>Inexorably fires without a truce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lumière en vouloir de quel rêve</td>
<td>Light, desiring what dream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vers les étoiles ou la mer ?</td>
<td>Towards the stars or the sea?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Angoisse is a poem filled with torment and agony. The poetic trajectory unfolds with turbulent images of anguish as the poet becomes increasingly agitated. Somewhat similarly to *Ce sable fin et fuyant*, metaphors of the elements are used to describe the disturbed thoughts swirling through the poet’s consciousness. Although this is the shortest text, there can be little doubt that poetic brevity does not in any way impede the intense proclamation of emotional expression. Joel Harder explains:

The poet uses the imagery of a whirling lighthouse piercing the darkness to express his inner turmoil over his love. As with the other poems by Jean-Aubry, this poem has more of the rhythm and feel of prose than it does of poetry in many respects. Irregular poetic metre, syllabic lengths, and rhyme all characterise this poem. The poem is 11 lines long and the rhyme scheme AAA BCBD EFFE

The reflection of dramatic poetic events within the fabric of musical structure closely portrays Caplet’s response to the poetic imagery. Because there is no clear stanza division or ordered rhyme scheme to suggest a poetic framework from which the musical structure could evolve, this composition unfolds in a primarily through-composed format. But, there are textural elements in the piano accompaniment which recur, creating a sense of cohesion between the first and final sections. Textures play an important role throughout in reflecting the poetic narrative, and a link between unfolding textural passages and sections of imagery in the poem will be explored later.

---

Despite a prose-like structure, it could be hypothesised on the basis of the poetic imagery that there are three primary events in this narrative. The opening is fearful: the poet appears to be tormented by thoughts that unsettle him to his core. It seems that he cannot avoid his waking thoughts, as the reference to the lights of the revolving lighthouse leaves no possibility for concealment of these thoughts. The second image-based event reveals the source of the poet’s anguish: the solitude he fears ushers in the tormented desires for the beloved. It is in these quiet moments that he becomes engulfed by his deepest desires. The final image recalls the light referred to in the opening. This light, so dazzling and clear, is a key element as, not only did it initially reveal the poet’s anguished thoughts, it now may shine towards another path. The end lines of the poem suggest that the poet feels a sense of apprehension and uncertainty. Having faced thoughts of despair and deep desires, the direction for resolution is unclear, and the poem ends with a question rather than a solution:

*Lumière en vouloir de quel rêve, Vers les étoiles ou la mer?*  
Light desiring what dream, Towards the stars or the sea?

In terms of associating the overall musical layout and structure to this poetic trajectory, it is possible to explore a reflection of poetic imagery primarily though the lens of harmonic movement and texture. As the metric structure shows a greater stability than the previous *mélodies* in this set, the forthcoming discussion will focus most substantially on areas of tonality and texture. In the overview of this *mélodie* outlined in Table 1.3, I identify three sections – Section A (harmonically subdividing into two sub sections), Section B and Section C – and synopsise the primary textural and tonal areas alongside the central poetic images.
# Table 1.3: Angoisse textural and tonal overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Sub Section</th>
<th>Poetic Imagery / Central Feeling</th>
<th>Textures</th>
<th>Tonality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>(bb. 1–21)</td>
<td>(i) (bb.1–11)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The poet’s thoughts are frightening to him</td>
<td>Opening introductory rising scale like patterns give way to uneven semiquaver groupings, displacing the main crotchet beat in the bar.</td>
<td>A octatonic–C octatonic–D minor. On the basis of root tones, this implies an overall dominant - tonic movement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(ii) (bb.12–21)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The solitude ushers in thoughts of pain and anguish. The poet’s desires rage and cause distress.</td>
<td>Texture builds in density over bars 15–21 to highlight the central poetic feeling at this point. Low pedal tones drop out, thinning the texture. Rhythmic diminution at b.21 prepares the next section.</td>
<td>The C♯–F♯ reflects a new implies dominant-tonic movement, one step down from prior D-centric tonality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>(bb.22–32)</td>
<td>The emptiness in the poet’s soul has been illuminated.</td>
<td>Repetitive circular diatonic chordal motion, moving in dense demisemiquaver figurations.</td>
<td>B♭ major is outlined in diatonic chordal section. This could represent a ♭VI centre, and perhaps is the starting point for the final overall tonal progression. The move to A centricity in bb.26–7 suggests the underlying tonal structure is nonaligned to the suggested formal structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>(bb.33–end)</td>
<td>The poet is in a state of uncertainty.</td>
<td>Semiquaver figurations return with a similar grouping formation to the first section adding cohesion between this section and the first. Textures become more sparse, and prolonged chords and pedal tones conclude.</td>
<td>A octatonic–D minor reflects closing dominant-tonic movement. Within this, the music travels though surface tonal areas for coloristic reasons.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall, this *mélodie* appears less driven by rhythmic ambiguity and exhibits fewer instances of unstable groupings and conflict. As a result, the harmonic motion and blocks of textural patterns demonstrate a deeper reflection of imagery as the poetic trajectory unfolds.
1.5

Aspects of Poetic Harmony: Angoisse

The tonality is a driving force within this mélodie, through its close alignment to the poetic trajectory. Johnson and Stokes note that ‘the harmonic complexity of Angoisse suggests that Caplet was already acquainted with the work of Arnold Schoenberg.’

This observation is certainly substantiated by the significant aggregate of octatonic sections in the music. Out of the three works in Paroles à l’absente, Angoisse contains the most frequent use of octatonicism, as well as an A whole tone suggestion in bars 38–39. This shows a greater sense of harmonic adventurousness than the previous two mélodies, which perhaps is one of the contributing factors for the tonal significance in this mélodie.

As previously noted, this mélodie can be interpreted as three sections driven by the relationship between tonal motion and poetic imagery. Each section suggests a particular handling of harmonic motion: Section A (i) and (ii) outline dominant–tonic movement transitioning to octatonicism, Section B consists of principally diatonic writing within a new harmonic colouration, and Section A1 outlines a dominant-tonic system to close in D minor.

Section A

A(i)
Throughout the first section, the poetic imagery centres on the light shining on the poet’s fears. The opening key signature is D minor and, as illustrated on the structural overview chart, the tonality moves broadly from A octatonic to D minor throughout these opening 11 bars. The choice of building an octatonic collection upon the dominant tone of the minor key darkens the tonal atmosphere, mirroring the poetic character. The tonality remains functional in that there is a relatively clear dominant-tonic motion, creating a sense of tonal movement and expectation for what the poet will reveal in the next image.

A(ii)

The transition to Section A(ii) is, at first, seemingly abrupt in terms of the tonal movement: there is an extended C#m tonality introduced in bar 12. This develops into a passage of octatonicism, culminating in F#-centricity by bar 20. This movement from C#–F# could outline a dominant-tonic motion. The introduction of C# is apparently unlinked to the preceding D tonality, hence it could be suggested that Caplet uses a stepwise tonal movement to arrive in this centre. Looking at the overall harmonic scheme, there is greater evidence of stepwise surface motion throughout the tonal movement in Section A; perhaps the shift downwards by one semitone to a new tonal area is an anticipation of a similar harmonic move in Section A1, where a shift from B♭-centricity down to A-centricity occurs.67 In terms of the poetic imagery, the extensive use of octatonicism with the dominant (C#) – tonic (F#) motion is significant in relation to the poet’s emotional state. This scene in the poem conveys the poet’s tormented desires, exposed and brought to light in his moments of solitude. He seems unable to hold back his thoughts, and the diminished tonal quality fully reflects this anguish.

67 Please see structural overview chart for a clear illustration of this.
Section B

This section is significant for two primary reasons:

- It contains the most diatonic tonal portion of the work.

- It is the midway point of the music, but could be interpreted as the beginning of the move towards harmonic closure.

The diatonic portion of the work occurs at a significant point in the narrative. The poet speaks of the unforgiving nature of the dazzling light:

> *La phare éblouissant et clair*
> *Vire inexorable sans trève*

The dazzling and clear lighthouse
Inexorably fires without a truce

Perhaps the sudden tonal shift to a strongly diatonic portion evokes the brightness about which the poet speaks. The diatonic passage begins at bar 22 and, as shown by the fast harmonic rhythm on the structural overview chart, sustains until bar 25. The tonality suggested is strongly B♭ major. Interestingly, there is a shift to A centric tonality through bars 26–7. The climactic point in this texture occurs on the first beat of bar 26, where the tonality implies A octatonic. This moves to a stronger A centricity in bar 27.

This move could have a dual function. The tonal shift underpins the climactic point in the poetic text, but also could function as the beginning of the tonal move towards closure in the *mélodie.* That the tonality dramatically changes just before the section division (implied by the texture and vocal phrase placement) occurs suggests a blurring of formal layout in the overall structure of the work.
Section A1

The change to A octatonic at bar 26 marks a different tonal character aligning to the change in poetic tone as the poet’s uncertainty returns for the final say. In terms of the overall harmonic structure, this outline of root tones moving from B♭ in Section B, to A at the transition from Section B to Section A1, which then resolves to Dm could be interpreted as a disguised bVI–V–I progression. I suggest this as a disguised progression due to the tonal nature: although there is A centricity, there is octatonic colour, which then passes through surface motion progressions in stepwise movement between bars 33, where A1 begins, and 39. This does not create a strong dominant-tonic feeling in the music; however, the use of the root tones suggesting this movement creates a sense of functionality in the harmonic structure.

Taking the harmonic structure of the entire work into consideration, I suggest a broad dominant–tonic; dominant–tonic; flattened-submediant–dominant–tonic structure as the harmonic backbone of this work. This motion shows that, as mentioned, the underlying structure is functional, but the sonorities and tonal colouration arising within the structure suggest harmonic choices that reflect poetic meaning and imagery, especially through extended use of the octatonic modal collection.
1.6

Analytical Interpretation: *Angoisse*

Poetic meaning can be discovered through the textural and rhythmic structure in *Angoisse*. The structure of these rhythmic textural passages aligns closely with areas of specific poetic meaning. I refer to this as rhythmic texture, because it is through passages of alternating rhythmic-based idioms that the textural density fluctuates. The general corresponding textural, harmonic, and poetic structures have been previously noted in Table 1.3, but now the discussion will explore the breakdown and division of rhythmic-textural structures further. Although I outline three primary sections on the basis of combined tonality and texture in Table 1.3, it is possible to suggest that the three sections are built upon two primary textural ideas, inclusive of a linking triplet-based figuration. Table 1.4a uses colour to segment and illustrate these textural blocks. The table identifies a rippling semiquaver in the outer parts labelled in yellow, and an intense demisemiquaver textural shape in the middle labelled in green. Caplet uses a triplet texture as a link to and from the demisemiquaver portion of the *mélodie*.

**Table 1.4a: Rhythmic-textural structure of *Angoisse***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section A</th>
<th>Link</th>
<th>Section B</th>
<th>Link</th>
<th>Section A1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bars 1-18</td>
<td>Bars 19–21</td>
<td>Bars 22–27.5</td>
<td>Bars 27.5–32</td>
<td>Bars 33–44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rippling semiquaver</td>
<td>Triplet</td>
<td>Demisemiquaver</td>
<td>Triplet</td>
<td>Return of rippling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pattern</td>
<td>figuration</td>
<td>patterns</td>
<td>figuration</td>
<td>semiquaver pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grouped: 6+2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Grouped: 6+2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In order to situate these textural passages within the overall structure of the *mélodie*, Table 1.4b shows the rhythmic-textural structure aligned with the harmonic structure. This profiles the analogous nature of the textural and harmonic structures.

This shows that passages of semiquaver textures occur in Section A and A1, and both these sections contain dominant-tonic structures. In Section B, the area of heightened intensity and pronounced diatonicism, the textural-rhythmic passages are most dense. This provides an interesting opposition: as the harmonic language becomes more tonal, the textural density becomes more agitated. This relationship between tonality and texture suggests that Caplet continually manipulated components of musical structure to evoke the sense of strife.

Taking the rippling semiquaver texture figuration in Section A and A1, it firstly appears that the rhythmic grouping shape is even, as the semiquavers (notated in groups of four) fall within the metric structure implied by the time signature. Looking at the
melodic shape within these groupings, however, it is possible to interpret a pattern of 6+2, as shown by the red slurs in Example 1.7:

**Example 1.7: Angoisse bar 6**

![Example 1.7: Angoisse bar 6](image)

This is a minor interpretative detail, but I suggest it is due to the shape of the descending portion of the melodic line. This shape is consistent throughout the figuration and additionally is preserved in the triplet figuration later in the music; but it does not distort the metric accent falling on beats one and three in the bar, which Claudette LeBlanc and Boaz Sharon observe in their recording. Sharon correctly places the accent on the minim pulse in the bar, and a sense of rhythmic continuity is preserved throughout. Prolonging this sense of rippling continuity contrasts the uneven shape and nonalignment of the vocal line within this texture. This conflict between relatively even piano texture and non-aligned vocal textures perhaps heightens the sense of discord the poet experiences.

Approaching the diatonic segment, the poet’s anguish increases, and it is at this point that the rhythmic-textures adapt to reflect this intensity. Bar 19 is significant in this
respect. Over the climactic vivre of the vocal line, two destabilising rhythmic shifts occur in the textural layers of the piano accompaniment. There are two rhythmic layers:

- **Triplets replace the rippling semiquavers:** The 6+2 semiquaver grouping shape is somewhat preserved, and it is possible to discern a 5+1 grouping shape in the triplet figurations. This development infuses a sense of cohesion and momentum at this point in the narrative.

- **Chordal movement distorts the sense of downbeat:** The introduction of crotchet chords beginning on the second beat of the bar, and tied into bar 20, suggests an extended 4/4. This could be interpreted as an example of subliminal displacement dissonance, where the implied 4/4 time signature and this line are non-aligned. To this point, the metre has been relatively secure. These chords offset the feeling of a strong 4/4, destabilising the pulse.

Example 1.8 shows a rhythmic reimagining of these layers.

**Example 1.8: Rhythmic reimagining of bars 19–21**

The combination of these two factors creates strong rhythmic dissonance in terms of rhythmic nonalignment, but the preservation of the grouping shape in the triplet line prevents a complete breakdown of rhythmic flow at this point. This could be interpreted as use of grouping dissonance, whereby nonalignment is created by the ‘association of nonequivalent groups of pulses.’

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using rhythmic diminution to lead into the contrasting demisemiquaver texture in Section B.

As Section B is drawing to an end, the rhythmic textures reflect the triplet shapes just described. In bar 27 there is a shifting to triplet figurations that, though the passage from bars 29–32, leads to the entry of the semiquaver textures. This passage further creates a sense of cohesiveness with the earlier statement of this texture in that there is similar grouping, however this texture does not reintroduce the crotchet chordal movement.

In the recording, Boaz Sharon and Claudette LeBlanc effectively create a sense of tension through the passage at bars 19–21, and Sharon’s pianistic interpretation becomes increasingly agitated due to the heightened sense of rhythmic conflict. He places conflicting accents on the triplets and crotchet chordal motion in a manner that distorts the sense of pulse in bar 20. The combination of tied crotchets over the barline and insertion of low F♯ on the weak half of the first beat distorts the sense of metre at this point, which marks the change over of tone to the diatonic and more metrically even Section B.

Angoisse is well situated between the two larger-scale outer works in the set, and perhaps demonstrates a contrasting exploration of poetic imagery in musical structure. There is a great emphasis on blocks of texture, and harmonic colour to reflect the primary themes of anguish and loss in the poetic text. Interestingly, this *mélodie* also explores a distinctive dichotomy between diatonic and non-diatonic language to express poetic sentiment. The idea of taking blocks of tonal language to represent aspects of musico-poetic structures occurs in *Préludes*, where similarly a flat-key/sharp-
key relationship is established. This suggests that at this point in his development, Caplet was thinking in terms of harmonic sonority as an element in poetic interpretation.
Paroles à l'absente by Georges Jean-Aubry

Préludes (1908)
Dedicated to Mlle. Rose Férat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Préludes</th>
<th>Preludes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Les livres, tout ce matin, m'on parlé De pays trop lointains et d'heures incertaines, Le parfum du jardin m'est venu conseiller De délaisser ces formes vaines, Et, caressant la feuille blanche, Où s'exaspère la recherche de mon rêve, Un rayon de soleil soulève Une certitude étrange... C'est un matin, semblable à celui-ci, très doux, Je regarde négligemment par la fenêtre... Tu me souris... mon cœur a tremblé tout à coup... Je ne cherche pas à connaître La raison de toutes ces choses Je ne demande pas comment Il se fait que tu viens par le chemin des roses : Je descends vers toi, simplement, Je te prends les deux mains et tu gardes Longuement tes lèvres sur mes yeux : Puis, nous entrons dans la maison douce, tous deux, Et tu pleures, soudain, lorsque je te regarde.</td>
<td>The books, all this morning, spoke to me Of countries too far away and uncertain hours, The garden’s perfume came to advise me To leave these vain forms, And, caressing the white page, Where the search for my dream is exasperated, A ray of sunshine stirs up A strange certainty ... It is a morning, similar to this one, very mild, I look carelessly out the window ... You smile at me ... my heart trembled suddenly ... I do not try to know The reason for all these things I don’t ask how It is that you are coming along the path of the roses: I go down to you, simply, I take your hands and you keep Your lips on my eyes for a long time: Then we go into the sweet house, both of us, And you cry, suddenly, when I look at you.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Préludes is in every sense a love poem. Williametta Spencer suggests that this love poem is ‘one of mystery and dream’, and in terms of the poetic structure, Joel Harder adds:

The poem is written as a “vers libre” with no consistent poetic metre or syllable count, and contains twenty lines of text. The rhyme scheme changes every four lines: ABAB CDDC EFEF GHGH IJJI. [...] This bipartite form resembles the present-past division found in the poem.

Faithful to the vers libre style, and conjuring the dreamy atmosphere mentioned by Spencer, this mélodie unfolds in a continuous fashion, as one poetic image gives way almost seamlessly to the next. Amidst the poet’s reverie, as Harder suggests, the bipartite form of the poetic construction is evident within the musical structure. Harder further notes that ‘this bipartite form reflects on what happened with his love on a morning similar to the one he writes in.’

There are two emotive states within the poem. In the first, as the narrative begins in the present tense, the poet is situated at his writing-desk flooded with morning sunlight streaming through the open window. This part of the poem is sensory, as the swirling perfume of the garden outside actively evokes stirring memories for the poet.

A different emotive state is conveyed in the second part of the poem. The poet

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69 Williametta Spencer 'The Influence and Stylistic Heritage of André Caplet' (PhD Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1974). p.223


71 Ibid. p.55
becomes reflective, and his thoughts turn to the memories of his beloved. There is no clear indication of what happened to the beloved; the text reveals only the poet’s musings and perspectives. There is just a snapshot into this particular memory, with no offering of a wider context for the moment in time. Our experience, as readers of the text and listeners of the music, is controlled entirely by the personal experiences the poet chooses to reveal.

Caplet, it seems, is fully cognisant of the dual nature of the text, and his awareness and response to these textual images becomes apparent through musical representations of the distinction between the present- and past-tense poetic states. Caplet utilises aspects of tonality, texture, recurring motives, and contrasting vocal contour to achieve a distinction between both the poet’s reliving of the past, and the present-tense state in which he finds himself. I list these points below, and aspects of each technique will be further elaborated upon throughout the discussion.

- **Contrasting vocal contour**
  The present-tense vocal line is almost recitative-like, whereas the past-tense vocal line is far more lyrical with a wider range. The poet’s experience of the present tense is more contained through this syllabic setting, but his experience of the past is quite different through the wider-reaching lyrical vocal shape. This reveals an insight into the poet’s comparative feelings of the present and past states.

- **Recurring motives**
  There is a descending chordal motif established in the introduction that recurs in the present-tense section at the end of each phrase. This acts as a separator for the poet’s unfolding thoughts, and perhaps marks the descent into his reverie. Contrasting the chordal motif, a rhythmic motif occurs in the past-tense sections. The rhythmic motif creates an underlying sense of tension through a distortion of pulse and audible disguising of the barline. Towards the end of the *mélodie*, the chordal motif returns, adding a sense of unity as the poet’s reflections conclude.
• **Texture and expression directions**
  It could be suggested that the textures within the piano accompaniment align to specific poetic imagery, and an abundance of expression markings clearly outline Caplet’s intent for the interpretation of this *mélodie*.

• **Tonality**
  There is a duality between two primary tonal areas. It appears that Caplet associates a flat key signature with the present-tense, and a sharp key signature with the past-tense in this *mélodie*.

Perhaps a product of the symbolist poetic aesthetic where freedom of expression was central and more liberties were taken with previously-established poetic conventions, the structure of this poem is not entirely clear cut, and it does not follow a specific stanza pattern. The organisation falls into two parts. As the poet’s thoughts unfold throughout the narrative, it is possible to identify further sub-divisions within the bipartite construction. In the B section, I suggest that there are two sub-sections: B(i) and B(ii), which continue to evolve in a largely through-composed format. I use the term ‘section’ and ‘sub-section’ in the context of this *mélodie* to denote sections of poetic imagery within the narrative, rather than structural sections of poetic verse-layout. I label the sections in letters A and B, then B(i) and B(ii), because there is a binary-esque form traceable through the aforementioned bipartite structure. Table 1.5 demonstrates this interpretation and maps the alignment between musical features or events and poetic structure.
Table 1.5: Interpretative Overview of Préludes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Section</th>
<th>Sub-section</th>
<th>Poetic image</th>
<th>Distinguishing musical features / events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A (bb.1–23)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Present Tense: Morning scene unfolds with poet writing, reading, and wondering about his love as the sun rises and shines through his open window. Evocative garden scents lead his mind to wander.</td>
<td>Descending chordal motif acting as a separator between phrases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B (bb.24–92)</td>
<td>B(i) (bb.24–57)</td>
<td>Post Tense 1: The poet looks out the window and reflects upon his beloved. He does not question the circumstances surrounding the beloved’s presence, rather he focusses on how she made him feel: his trembling heart as she comes down a path of roses</td>
<td>Rhythmic motif enters, distorting the barline. Creates an undercurrent of tension as the poet remembers aspects of his love.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B(ii) (bb.58–92)</td>
<td>Post Tense 2: More active now: the poet’s memories refer to engaging with his beloved as he goes down to meet her. Taking her hand, they enter a house together. The reverie fades away as the poet remembers her cry as he looks at her.</td>
<td>Rhythmic motif continues, but chordal motif from Section A returns as the music moves towards the closing phrases. Return of chordal motif helps unity mélodie at this point. Perhaps symbolises an awakening point in his reverie that pushes him back to the present.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, this mélodie chronicles an unfolding of the poet’s thoughts from his present state to his past experiences. Caplet’s musical representation of this poetic imagery draws from both harmonic and rhythmic aspects to fully embed this narrative deep in the musical fabric of the mélodie. The following discussion considers this from an analytical perspective, and attempts to illuminate key interpretative points concerning the expression of poetic imagery through harmonic and rhythmic elements within the structure of the work.
Harmonic motion and poetic structure share close ties in *Préludes*. Connections between changes of harmonic colour and changes of poetic imagery may be signified by both Caplet’s choice of key signatures, and by the resulting tonal shifting at significant points of expressive poetic interest. This is reflected, on a large scale, by the use of a flat key signature throughout Section A, and a sharp key signature throughout Section B. Additionally, within this section, the sharp key signature is cancelled with naturals.

This sudden manoeuvre of naturals cancelling out the sharp key signature throughout bars 44–57 is a significant factor in the premise that Caplet deliberately manipulates the use of key signatures as a method of creating blocks of tonal colour that heighten certain poetic images, events, and atmospheres. At this point in the *mélodie*, the poet is in a state of ambivalence. His thoughts are vague and when his beloved appears in the garden, he does not question either why she is there or how she arrived. An element of mystery surrounds the beloved, and the reader is left questioning her significance; we know she is important, but do not know why. The tonality is central to this sense of haziness and ambiguity. With a sharp/flat key representation mimicking the present/past poetic states, the cancelling of both types of key signature at this point in the narrative could deepen the underlying state of suspension. The harmonic motion throughout bars 44–7, as represented on the chart, suggests C lydian-dominant: an ambiguous tonality. The choice of C lydian-dominant can be interpreted
as either a flat-centric or a sharp-centric key, because the significant tones that define
the mode are the sharpened fourth and flattened seventh: F♯ and B♭ in this key.

Perhaps Caplet utilised this specific tonal shift to represent not just the poet’s sense of
emotive ambiguity, but the conflict between the present and past tense heightened in
the poetic text. Throughout the sharp key section, the poet recalls his memories in the
present tense; deeply submerged in these memories, as he places himself in his vivid
past, it comes to life as if happening again. In this particular segment of text as the
poet speaks to the beloved, however he resists questioning her presence among the
roses. He simply chooses to revel in the ‘present’ moment they share. The poetic text, as
set at bars 44–57 pronounces:

Je ne cherche pas à connaître
La raison de toutes ces choses
Je ne demande pas comment
Il se fait que tu viens par le chemin des roses

I do not try to know
The reason for all these things
I don’t ask how
It is that you are coming along the path of the roses

The use of the ambiguous flat/sharp lydian-dominant mode could additionally be a
ploy on Caplet’s part to hint at these unasked questions and unspoken past events
surrounding the beloved. The lydian-dominant flat/sharp tonal area is a perfect
harmonic representation of the merging of past/present dichotomy and ambiguity that
surrounds the beloved at this point in the poetic narrative. Interestingly, this particular
lydian-dominant section is marked Animé. All the other performance directions in this
mélodie are more subdued. Since this passage of text could be interpreted as a
heightened point of ambiguous merging between past and present, the similarly
heightened and animated atmosphere further reflects this sense of unease or even agitation.

As listeners, this use of different key signatures for different poetic sections supports an audible perception of the movement between each section; the shifting tonality reflects the transitions made by the poet as his reverie begins. Given the poetic choice of present-tense writing through the entire poem, this technique significantly illustrates the distinction between the present and past states experienced by the poet. The precise reason Caplet chose a flat key signature to represent the present, and a sharp key signature to represent the past in this manner remains unclear, but it could be suggested that the brightness associated with the sharp key signature perhaps better evokes the happier times remembered by the poet, compared to the flat-key present-tense where he seems bereft of companionship.

Section A

Throughout the harmonic scheme, a layout of chordal progressions that embed a clear sense of temporal harmonic direction within the structure of the mélodie can be discovered. To explore this further, let us firstly consider Section A where the poetic imagery concerns the present tense. The given key signature is $D_b$ major; however, as the harmonic rhythm line of the structural-overview chart illustrates, the opening chordal tonality is centred in the relative minor, $B_b$ minor. I interpret the overarching tonal goal of Section A as the trajectory from the established opening $B_b$ minor tonality to its relative major, $B_b$ major, at the end of the section. Caplet achieves this through a progression of surface tonal motion movements built upon the key relationships found within these relative minor and major keys. I use the term surface tonal motion to
represent non-structural passing or transient tonal shifts, employed as a means of moving from one larger structural tonal area to the next. This is summarised in concise format in Table 1.6, where I break down and identify these tonal areas, their tonal relationships, and the tonal connections to the poetic imagery.
When considering the rationale for exploring these shifting tonal areas, I measure the areas as they relate to B♭ minor because this approach helps show a sense of temporal unfolding throughout the harmonic plan, demonstrating the tonal journey away from the given starting point. Just as the poetic text unfolds though an organically evolving series of related events, so too does the harmonic progression. Furthermore, considering these tonal areas as they relate to B♭ minor may give insight into the ways

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tonal Area</th>
<th>Tonal Relationship to B♭ minor</th>
<th>Connection to / Reflection of Poetic Imagery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B♭ minor</td>
<td>Tonic centre</td>
<td>The scene is set where the poet is presented at his desk, surrounded by his books.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D♭ major (Enters in bar 6)</td>
<td>Relative major: following chords stem from this tonal area</td>
<td>Nature and senses are evoked through the imagery of the garden scents wafting through his open window.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E♭ major (Enters in bar 11)</td>
<td>ii in major: sets up movement for subsequent tonal areas / iv in minor</td>
<td>Nature and senses are evoked through the imagery of the garden scents wafting through his open window.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lydian-dominant (Enters in bar 14)</td>
<td>Sharpened Dominant of D♭ [tritone from E♭]</td>
<td>This tonality is used through a linking passage of descending chordal movement. There is a sense of progression with this new tonal colour that leads our ears towards the next vocal phrase.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C# based harmonies built on C# pedal. Contains other chordal movements to A lydian, C#7, and C# minor but overall tonality may be viewed as C#-centric) (Enters in bar 16)</td>
<td>Possibly enharmonic (A lydian-dominant that precedes determines this sharp key). Could be suggestive of recalling D♭. The tonality is somewhat ambiguous at this point, most likely as a reflection of the text.</td>
<td>The poet’s mind begins to wander and he begins to search of his dream. The sun caressing the blank white sheet on front of him paves the way for this reverie. The move to the relative major of the opening B♭ minor key suggests that the poet has travelled to another place in his consciousness, as he reflects on past events with his beloved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B♭ (Enters in bar 22)</td>
<td>Major form of relative minor completes section.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
in which Caplet choreographs surface harmonic movement as a method to move the tonality from one deeper structural tonal point to the next.

To a large extent, there is potential to interpret the opening section as a journey the poet undergoes from his present conscious state, to the memories of his past. The opening imagery evolves as we are introduced to the alert poet at his writing-desk. Evocative, yet provoking, triggers around him provide the stimulus for the descent into reverie: the stillness of the morning, the scent of the garden, and the sunlight beaming in the window kindle the memories of the past. The tonal journey unfolds in an identical way to this scene: the opening minor colour, perhaps representative of the poet’s emotional state, the transitions through various passing surface tonal motions of different colours, finally the arrival at the tonic major, all suggest the poetic odyssey outlined by the trajectory of the text throughout the opening 23 bars.

Section B

B(i)

With the move to Section B at bar 24 the transition from present to past-tense becomes significant through the harmonic motion. The tonality arrives at the relative major (B♭ major) in bar 22 as Section A draws to a close, but there is no time to linger in this key. Caplet does not create a prolonged sense of arrival or closure in this tonality. The thinning of texture in bars 20–3, combined with pp dynamics, heighten a sense of pending mystery; this is the point where the poet slips into his reverie, and for this point in time, we do not know what will happen next.
The beginning of Section B is then suggested by the subsequent unexpected move away from the Db major key signature established at the start, into the seemingly unrelated F# key signature at bar 24. Despite this key signature, Caplet evades establishing a strong F# tonic. Throughout the lyrical piano solo introducing the section, a strong C#9 tonality behaves as a dominant. Still evasive of an F# tonic, instead of cadencing to F# at bar 28, the music arrives in A, the relative major. The arrival of a strong tonic F# is delayed to bar 67.

The piano solo at this point is significant. Not only does the insertion of a solo at this stage in the song-structure infuse a dreamy and reflective atmosphere that sets the scene and prepares the listener for the poet’s memories to unfold, the tonal direction offers a glimpse into Caplet’s understanding of the poet’s nature. The idea of a strong dominant resolving to the relative major rather than the tonic could perhaps become a metaphor for the poetic journey from one place to another. The poet’s present-tense may be unstable, so he is transported to a different area to find solace. This notion of finding solace in another place, removed from the present, is a distinguishable theme running though the poem. Perhaps Caplet’s resolution to A major, quite a distance from the preceding C#9 tonality, is a harmonic extension of this.

Conceivably, the most distinctive tonal feature of Section B(i) is the move to the lydian-dominant mode. As previously mentioned, this mode could represent the blending of past and present for the poet, due to the choice of a C major key signature and subsequent sharpened fourth and flattened seventh. The harmonic rhythm line on the accompanying chart maps the way in which Caplet manoeuvres the harmonic motion from a mostly B-centric tonal area starting at bar 35, to a linking scalar passage that suggests D lydian-dominant before moving to C. This approach is the most animated
part of the *mélodie*, and perhaps the poet’s trembling heart (bars 40–1) is depicted through this harmonic texture. As uncertainty rises, so does the harmonic motion.

As discussed, the move to C lydian-dominant here may function as a representing tonality for the ambiguity between the past and present states. But, because the poet does not linger on this imagery for long, this is not a sustained tonality. Likewise, Caplet does not tonally linger on this. The move back to the F# key signature is prepared through passing B minor harmonies at bars 53–7. At bar 58, there is a repeat of the C# tonality moving to A, but this time reaching F# at bar 67. This move to F# occurs simultaneously with the poet’s memories of holding the beloved’s hands. As the poetic imagery is stable at this point, the harmonic shape reflects that stability.

B(ii)

The F# key signature returns at bar 58, and it is this point that could be interpreted as the start of the B(ii) section and perhaps the beginning of the move towards closure. The first line of text at this point suggests movement:

*Je descends vers toi, simplement*
I go down to you, simply

Looking at the chordal progressions throughout this part, an overall motion in descending thirds may be observed. For example, The primary tonal areas of this passage outline the following:

\[C# - A - F# - E^b - C\]

Each of these is a third apart: C# occurs at bar 63, F# occurs at bar 67, E^b occurs at bar 69, C occurs at bar 76. Perhaps this chordal descent is a harmonic representation of the
poet’s descent toward the beloved. Building on this motion, the harmonic structure does outline a sense of cadential closure from bar 83 onwards; however, to reflect the sense of ambiguity surrounding the final thoughts in the text, there is a sense of ambiguity surrounding the tonal closure.

The poem reaches its conclusion with the poet and the beloved entering a house together. Whether this is a joyous conclusion or a grave conclusion is unclear. The final line of text is somewhat disturbing, as the beloved’s cry is open to interpretation: we do not know why she cries as the poet looks at her. Is it a cry of joy, or a cry of sorrow? Perhaps, given the poet’s solitary state in the present tense segments, all does not end well for the lovers.

*Et tu pleurs, soudain, lorsque je te regarde*
And you cry suddenly, when I look at you

When considering the harmonic motion throughout the final portion of the song, it appears that a sense of things not being quite as they seem is embedded into the fabric of the outlined cadential progression. Taking the implied root tones of the chordal movement from bar 81 onwards, a broadly stable IV–V–I progression in F♯ could be traced: areas of (sub-dominant) B-centricity in bar 81, (dominant) C♯-centricity in bar 86, and (tonic) F♯-centricity in bar 88.

Taking into account the full tonal language throughout this section rather than the implied root tones, it becomes apparent that the IV is built on B locrian-natural-two, the V is built on C# octatonic and the I is F#maj7. In insolation, mapping the roots of these chords suggests a strong closing cadential pattern, but the chordal qualities and
resulting tonalities built upon these roots is anything but strong. Perhaps Caplet
reflects the uncertainty within the poetic imagery through distorting and destabilising
an otherwise strong ending.

In view of all that has been outlined so far, a harmonic picture emerges that shows
Caplet’s close reading of this poetic text. By evaluating the aspects of harmonic motion
in Préludes, it is possible to suggest that Caplet valued the importance of using tonality
not only to express the present and past states, or mood and impression, but to reflect
the temporal unfolding by defining key aspects of the poetic narrative. This use of
tonality is apparent in both sections of the work:

- In Section A: the harmonic motion travelled in a manner that illustrates the poet’s
  consciousness move from alert to a reflective, daydream state, remaining mostly
  within the present-tense flat key signatures.

- In Section B: transforming to sharp key signatures as the poet relived his memories,
  there is a sense of parallelism within the tonal motion of the B(i) and B(ii)
  subsections. Both begin with the dominant C# tonality moving to A, rather than F#,
  as key points occur within the poetic narrative. This interplay, as illustrated on the
  structural-overview chart, gives a sense of balance to the subsections making up
  the B section, that complements the forward unfolding of the A section.

The conclusion can potentially be drawn that the A section evolves in a more through-
composed harmonic state as the poet drifts towards the past, and the B section
evolves in a more structured, perhaps binary, state as he recalls impressions of a series
of unfolding events.
Analytical Interpretation: *Préludes*

The primary consideration for this interpretation is rhythmic. However, before reaching that portion of the discussion, it is worth while considering two other interpretative aspects – contour and motives – in order to better understand ways in which Caplet’s *mélodie* is constructed as a nuanced musical embodiment of the imagery throughout Jean-Aubry’s text.

**Contrasting Vocal Contour**

There is a marked difference in the contour of the vocal line between Section A, the present tense, and Section B, the past tense. The primary impetus behind such a marked musical difference could be to clearly illustrate the differences between the poet’s present-self and his past-self.

To firstly consider Section A: the poet’s present self. The vocal part is almost recitativo-like in character, moving in a primarily monosyllabic, semiquaver style. Virtually every syllable has a pitch in this passage. The phrases move with fluidity, but the range is somewhat contained and subdued, and there is an absence of wide leaps throughout each phrase, or even jumps between the start and end points of successive phrases. The first prolonged note value occurs from bar 13–14, as the poet speaks of abandoning vain forms. At the end of this section, throughout bars 18–22, the melodic contour further expands through use of longer note durations and the increased presence of triplets. This aligns to the images of sunlight shining through the poet’s window. What began as a very contained, almost despondent melody line now starts...
to develop as the narrative unfurls itself and imagery expands. Interestingly, the longest pitch, the double dotted crotchet on the second syllable of ‘soleil’ at bar 20 occurs on a D♯. This D♯ is important, because it offers the resolution to the B⁷ chord outlined in the second half of bar 19. Without a third, this B⁷ chord is ambiguous, but the vocal line, on the brightest poetic word and with the longest duration, offers the resolution.

It is possible to suggest that just as the texture at the start of the mélodie is sparse, the vocal contour is as well, and is restricted to a relatively narrow range. At the end of Section A, the vocal line begins to expand more, almost as a precursor to what will follow while the poet slips into his reverie as the mélodie moves from Section A to Section B.

In Section B, the vocal contour is remarkably different. Perhaps in the confines of his daydream, the poet is allowed to fully express himself without restriction. This was possibly a happier, more joyful time for him, where freedom of expression was straightforward. In the treatment of this more expansive vocal contour, Caplet is still careful to adhere to correct prosody, and as Williametta Spencer mentions ‘manages to retain his musical liberty.’72 When considering all three works Paroles à l’absente, Spencer further notes ‘they are written in a "quasi parlando" idiom in which rhetorical emphasis is scrupulously avoided and the easy-moving flow of spoken French is imitated.’73

72 Williametta Spencer 'The Influence and Stylistic Heritage of André Caplet' (PhD Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1974). p.245
73Ibid. p. 168
The ways in which Caplet treats the vocal contour in Section B differs from Section A in the following ways:

- Intervallic shapes within phrases are wider.
- Durations of notes are more varied.
- Repeated notes occur less frequently.
- Triplets are used more frequently.
- Longer-durational notes occur more often, especially at phrase endings.

The combination of these elements within the vocal contour of Section B further underlines the differences in the poet’s feelings between the present and past states, and it would appear that the past was potentially a time where he experienced a very different set of emotions. The use of these combined elements adds a sense of animation to the music. For instance, the triplet texture occurs at a point in the narrative that highlights the sunshine, as it affects the poet’s mood. These contrasts between Section A and Section B illustrate the ways in which the passing of time has affected the poet, and underpin the differences, and perhaps transient nature, of the range of human emotion over time.

Recurring Motives

The structure of Préludes could at first appear through-composed, in that there is a sense of unfolding and continuous motion without a clear placement of verse-repetition. This might be due, in part, to the vers-libre style of the poetic text and lack of consistency in the poetic metre, as cited earlier by Joel Harder. Approaching the
poetic structure from a broader perspective, and considering the dual nature of present and past within the text, it soon becomes apparent that there is a clear bipartite form present within the structure of the *mélodie*, but it is not quite formal enough to call Binary in nature. Within this structure, it is possible to identify two recurring motives: a descending chordal motif and a rhythmic, almost ostinato-like, motif. The rhythmic motif and its significance will be discussed at a later point in relation to theories suggested by Harald Krebs. The significance of the five appearances of the descending motif will now be considered.

The descending chordal motif is the first motif to which we, as listeners, are introduced. The motif appears in its original form acting as the basis for the piano solo introduction in the opening three bars of the *mélodie*, and subsequently occurs most frequently in Section A. For most of Section B, the motif is absent, but reappears twice in the final stages of the *mélodie*, at bars 70–3, and 79–83. The motif is not repeated exactly the same way each time and in some instances occurs with a different chordal pattern; but there is enough similarity between each statement for immediate listener recognition. In Section A, the motif appears most commonly at the end of vocal statements, acting as a sort of bridge between vocal lines. Interestingly, Caplet uses a tied note and changing time signature to prolong the duration of the ending chord in the phrase throughout the first statement of the motif, and this feature is reflected in the motif’s second appearance in bars 8–10.

This second appearance of the motif is particularly noteworthy. In this instance, it is stated twice (statement in bars 8–9 and restatements in bars 9–10), and not only does it build on the use of the tie across a barline as seen in the opening bars, but this use of a tie offsets the placement of the restatement motif. The restatement begins on the
second beat of bar 9, rather than the first as in previous cases. Ordinarily, this would be unremarkable, but when we consider the sudden move to pp dynamics at bar 8, the placement of accents on the crotchet beats throughout the entire motif, and vocal pause over the rest at the end of bar 7, it could be interpreted that Caplet uses the ties as way of offsetting the placement of the motif in order to counteract the 3/4 time metre at this point. Professional recordings of this mélodie are not abundant; but in the interpretation by Claudette LeBlanc and Boaz Sharon, the crochet beats are accented very clearly in bar 9, aurally suggesting that Sharon observed this nonalignment between the placement of the motif restatement and 3/4 pulse. This could be a precursor for Caplet’s approach to manipulating rhythmic structure that will be expanded upon in more detail later in this thesis.

The third statement of the descending chordal motif is simultaneously different and similar to the two that precede it. Although Caplet chooses not to distort the 3/4 time signature as before, there is an insertion of a rhythmic pattern on E♯ in the bass part of the piano texture. This instance is the first introduction to the rhythmic motif that will frequently reappear throughout Section B. This is most similar to the final and fifth instance of the chordal motif in bars 79–83, as that statement similarly demonstrates the combination of both rhythmic and chordal elements. Because it could be suggested that the descending chordal motif is most characteristic of the poet’s present due to its presence in Section A, and the rhythmic motif is most characteristic of the poet’s past, due to its presence in Section B, the combined statement of both rhythmic and chordal motives could be considered significant for the following two reasons:

- They represent the poet’s present and past merging. Perhaps this is Caplet’s musical anticipation of the poet’s descent from his present state into reverie.
• The rhythmic motif adds an unstable metric pulse that conflicts with the stable pulse of the chordal motif in this instance. This could represent the dual conflict between present and past; the poet’s present and past memories demonstrate very different and conflicting emotional states.

Additionally, the second last instance of the chordal motif, occurring at bars 70–3, is notable because rather than occurring either in chordal movement such as in the first two instances, or as simultaneous chordal movement and rhythmic motif such as in the third and final statements, this appearance of the motif occurs in the form of chordal movement in the treble-clef of the piano part, accompanied by combined scale-like and 6/8-like left hand ascending and descending movements. This appearance of the motif is significant due to the following:

• It is the first point in the mélodie where it occurs with this kind of texture.

• It occurs directly after the rhythmic motif in the preceding bars, 62–8, therefore demonstrating a textural juxtaposition that heightened this point in the narrative.
• The syncopated 6/8 feeling of bars 71–2 offsets the sense of 3/4 pulse at this point.

• The third beat of bar 71 could be interpreted as a phrase overlap, whereby this chord acts as both the end chord of the phrase in bar 71, and the starting chord into the phrase in bar 72.

• The ascending chordal pattern in bar 72 infuses a sense of symmetry at this point that can be interpreted as a reflection of the action in the text.

Because the motif occurs at a pivotal point in the narrative, let us consider these points firstly in relation to the text. The poet speaks of a tender or intense moment shared with the beloved, after which they enter their house. The electricity of this atmospheric moment could be reflected by the textural change in the piano accompaniment, with the 6/8 rhythmic shape in bars 72–2 adding an extra layer of metrically dissonant tension into the music. Furthermore, the text refers to the action
of the couple entering the house. The only point in the poem that refers to the couple actively doing something together corresponds with the appearance of the descending chordal motif in ascending format. This, in combination with the supporting aspect of phrase overlap, may be interpreted as a musical representation of the poetic image. In the recording by Claudette LeBlanc and Boaz Sharon, Sharon observes this in the piano accompaniment. Through a clear adherence to Caplet’s dynamic markings, and distinctive *mf* moving to *crescendo*, Sharon’s pianistic interpretation supports the musical interpretation of poetic imagery at this point. Additionally, in this recording, Sharon chooses not to draw attention to the 6/8 style rhythmic values in bars 71–2. Instead, he places more weight in the right-hand chordal motion. Perhaps it is because this is a strong, recognisable motivic gesture that in this instance, ascends as well as descends, that Sharon’s interpretative decision is congruent with emphasising the ascending nature.

The question must further be asked: what does the descending chordal motif represent, and why is it descending? There are potentially many artistic interpretations and suggestions for this. But I suggest that the descending, block chordal nature of this motif is representative of the poet’s state of mind as the listener is introduced to him in the present tense. Considering the sparse texture and syllabic vocal contours, it would not be fitting for a motif associated with a low-spirited present state of mind to be elaborate or highly decorative. Perhaps Caplet felt that block chords, sombre in nature, would best illustrate the poet’s present temperament.

*Rhythmic Dissonance in *Préludes*
There are numerous examples of rhythmic dissonance within *Preludes*, so much so, that it could be suggested Caplet builds an entire motif upon a rhythmic nonalignment that deliberately creates an ambiguous layer within the overall metric texture. The most distinctive examples of this are present in areas where the rhythmic ostinato-style motif appears. Taking Harald Krebs’ definition of grouping dissonance – the dissonant type that ‘arises from the association of non-equivalent groups of pulses’\(^74\), and displacement dissonance – the dissonant type that arises from ‘the association of layers of equivalent cardinality in a nonaligned manner,’\(^75\) it is possible to illuminate heightened aspects of metric distortion that may be interpreted as Caplet’s rhythmic response to poetic imagery.

Drawing on aspects of analytical evidence supports the premise that Caplet twists the sense of time in the music to highlight poetic imagery and themes. It may be theorised that the rhythmic ostinato-style motif present in this work is representative of the theme of uncertainty surrounding the beloved. I suggest this for three reasons:

- The theme occurs most frequently in areas of the poem where the poet speaks directly about the beloved, or speaks of interacting with her.

- As readers, the circumstances leading to why the beloved exists only in the past and not the present are never revealed; the beloved is a mysterious element in the poetry. We do not know whether her presence can be found somewhere in the poet’s present state.

- As he recalls fragments of times gone by, it is possible that the poet still feels dazed by these events. A distortion or reshaping of the layers of metric pulse within the textures could contribute to a heightened sense of ambiguity and haziness of the poet’s memories.


\(^75\) Ibid. p.33
The poetic events, themes, and imagery greatly impact the musical shape of this mélodie and their impact on rhythmic structures are no exception. The first significant appearance of the rhythmic ostinato-style motif appears in bar 53. At this point in the narrative, the poet speaks of not wishing to know how the beloved came by the path of roses. He acknowledges her, but does not question her passage. The motif appears in the left hand piano line, in the form of repeated seconds on tones A and B.

A quaver offsets the first beat in the bar, which allows a tied figuration over the next barline to follow. Due to these tied quavers over the barlines, a new sense of crotchet pulse is created in this layer which does not align to the 3/4 metre. The nonalignment is established because these new ‘crotchet’ pulses occur on the offbeat within each bar. This repetitive motif in combination with the given 3/4 metre and other textural layers produces an audible distortion, as well as disguising the strong downbeat. The sense of 3/4 pulse becomes more and more distorted to the listener. In their recording, Claudette LeBlanc and Boaz Sharon observe this distortion. In Sharon’s playing, it appears that although there is an emphasis on the rhythmic motif in bars 53–4, perhaps due to long sustained chords in the right hand, the performance choice in bar 55–6 is to place more weight on the ascending chords than on the rhythmic motif. Potentially, emphasising the return of a steady 3/4 line in this layer helps to infuse a greater sense of stability that contrasts or somewhat heightens the unstable layer. In this interpretation, therefore, it is possible to perceive two different pulses: one offsetting 3/4 (bars 54–5 rhythmic motif) and another that contradicts this through its alignment to 3/4 (entry of treble-clef piano chords bar 55–6). It could be suggested that Sharon’s emphasis on the chordal alignment to 3/4 at this point increases a sense
of displacement dissonance due to this placement between aligned and non-aligned pulses in 3/4 metre.

Considering this passage further, it would be possible to interpret the action throughout bars 53–4 in terms of a grouping dissonance, as the pulses within each layer (voice, two piano lines) differ. A greater sense of similarity evolves in the chordal figuration in bar 55–6 of the piano part, however, that could equally be interpreted as a displacement dissonance. The placement of crotchets in the right-hand piano line directly conflicts with the placement of the crotchet pulses we hear in the left hand part. This is interesting on two levels:

- The rhythmic dissonance is less emphasised in bars 53–4.
- The dissonance intensifies when the crotchets are introduced in bar 55.

The reason for the increase in the sense of rhythmic dissonance at this point could be due to the poetic narrative: in the text, the poet sees the beloved among the roses, and makes his way towards her. Perhaps the rose itself is symbolic of their love; *roses* is sung through bars 55–6.

In terms of the aforementioned grouping dissonance, it is possible to trace the preparation for the entry of this motif (b. 53), as far back as bar 45. In bar 41, the texture changes to a figuration of animated rippling semiquavers. This passage continues until bar 53 where the rhythmic motif enters. For the most part, the figuration sits in two-bar phrases, but without a strong accent in triple metre. In the left hand, however, it could be interpreted that at bar 45–6, the crotchet entry on the
weak beat, and tie over the barline, a figuration that is repeated in an identical manner in bars 51–2, is an augmented version of the rhythmic shape upon which Caplet builds the motif from bar 53 onwards. The dynamic shape at bars 45–6 is observed in the piano recording by Sharon, where the crescendo-diminuendo pattern emphasises this motion across the bar to create an impression of offsetting the barline at this point.

In relation to the poetic imagery and themes, I suggest that the offset nature of two non-aligned triple metre layers occurring throughout the final part of the mélodie, throughout bars 79–92, could be further representative of the themes of instability between the poet and his beloved. For example, throughout bars 79–84, the rhythmic motif occurs simultaneously with the descending chordal motif, as well as a time signature change from 3/4 to 4/4 at bar 82 elongating this motion. The simultaneous occurrence of these motives creates a sense of conflict between aspects of the past and present states, as the descending chordal motif appeared most frequently in the present-tense portion of the work, and the rhythmic motif appeared most frequently throughout the past.

At this stage in the narrative, as the poet speaks of the beloved’s upset as he looks at her, the rhythmic motif enters once more at bar 85 in octaves at a high register, once more offsetting any sense of rhythmic stability by suggesting a triple metre that is non-aligned to the barline. The resulting sense of displacement dissonance due to the non-alignment of similar pulses perhaps hints at the imagery of instability due to the conflict created by the dual motives, past and present, occurring simultaneously. According to Harald Krebs, ‘no matter how long two identical but nonaligned
interpretative layers are associated, they can never meet; each pulse of the metrical layer is contradicted by a pulse of the antimetrical layer.\textsuperscript{76}

Perhaps the dual conflict between these metrical layers, occurring at key points within the poetic narrative, is evocative of a similar dual conflict between the poet’s past and present states within the narrative.

In summary, \textit{Préludes} could be interpreted as an unfolding narrative centred around the concept of duality, and Caplet reflects this element though harmonic and rhythmic characteristics alike. There is a central core within the poetic narrative that explores one of the deepest senses of duality: past and present states of being, and examples of this have been seen throughout the musical structure of the setting. Caplet effectively uses aspects of duality within rhythmic layers during key moments to portray the poet’s dual sense of past and present.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid. p.34
Concluding Observations: *Paroles à l’absente*

*Paroles à l’absente*, as a set, portrays images of love lost and the power the past may have upon the present state of mind. Although not cyclic in structure, there are similar themes running through the set as a whole. It was mentioned earlier that Joel Harder commented upon the potential for the individual songs to be excerpted. This is a valid point, as there is a sense of unity and completeness within each individual *mélodie* that would support stand-alone performance.

This set, as a significant starting point for exploring Caplet’s musico-poetic approach, has proven noteworthy of interpretation for several reasons:

- There is a significant exploration of modal language as a harmonic reference point for themes of darkness and despair. This was especially demonstrable in *Angoisse*.

- Rhythmic distortion as a technique for breaking down the perception of the barline is used in areas where there is a sense of unease and uncertainty. Caplet uses conventional time signatures (4/4, 3/4; 6/8, 9/8), but within those parameters he creates conflicting lines to disrupt a feeling of steady pulse. This is evident in *Ce sable fin et fuyant*.

- There is similar ambiguity in the tonal plans of the *mélodies*. It seems that the overall harmonic goals remain functional in terms of tonal direction; but non-conventional chordal movements and tonal shapes are used to evoke a wider range of colour. It is likely this approach is adopted to better reflect poetic themes and imagery. For instance, there was evidence of a correlation between key-signatures and past and present states within poetic narrative in *Préludes*, and use of contrasting diatonicism and non-diatonicism in *Angoisse*.

These themes, and harmonic and rhythmic devices, are present throughout the set and perhaps help to reflect the somewhat restless poetic journey throughout the triptych. Aspects of unity in the set such as recurring motives or themes running throughout all
three mélodies are not obvious. Rather, Caplet achieves a sense of overall unity through using similar techniques in all three songs to achieve a cohesive reflection of images and themes of past love.
Chapter Two

Le vieux coffret

Introduction

Le vieux coffret is a set of four mélodies composed over three years, stretching from just before eruption of the Great War in 1914 to 1917. Denis Huneau outlines the evolution of the set:

These mélodies cover the entire period of war, since Songe was composed in its vocal-piano version shortly before the outbreak of the conflict, the others during its unfolding, and the orchestral version shortly after its epilogue. Caplet has also wished as in La croix douloureuse to date his mélodies in their vocal-piano edition, and add the place: "Ferme Amblonville November 1916" for In una selva oscura, "Lunéville (M. and M.) March 1917 for Forêt." These precisions are a way for Caplet to mark each stage of creation in the chaos of war. The Songe edition, composed just before the hostilities, does not have any such dating effect.77

Although the output of mélodies during the war was relatively small, we may hypothesise that Caplet valued the time he could devote to musical activity in the midst of the wartime turmoil, and perhaps the creative outlet offered by composition of mélodies even became something of a mental escape from the surrounding turmoil of war. Some of the other mélodies that range from this era, such as Détresse or

77 Denis Huneau, André Caplet (1878-1925), Debussyste Indépendant (Weinsberg: Lucie Galland, 2007). p.512
My own translation from:
Quand... reversrai-je, hélas, directly address the themes of war and give insight into Caplet’s personal responses to the conflict; but Le vieux coffret is different in this respect: atmospheres of richness, beauty, and lush sentimentality are evoked through the themes of love and serenity running through the set. The first performances of the vocal-piano version of the set happened soon after the war ended, then the following year, 1919, the orchestral versions were premiered. I outline these details in Table 2.1 below:

Table 2.1: Le vieux coffret: Composition and Premiere

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date Composed</th>
<th>Place Composed</th>
<th>Vocal-Piano Premiere</th>
<th>Orchestral Premiere</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Songe</td>
<td>1914</td>
<td>Yport-sur-Mer</td>
<td>Vocal: Melle Rose Féart, Piano: A. Caplet At Société National, 19 January 1918</td>
<td>Vocal: Mme Claire Croiza At Société National, 14 May 1919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berceuse</td>
<td>1914</td>
<td>Yport-sur-Mer</td>
<td>[as above]</td>
<td>[as above]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In una selva oscura</td>
<td>1916</td>
<td>Ferme Amblonville</td>
<td>[as above]</td>
<td>[as above]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forêt</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td>Lunéville</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The set is based upon the poetry of Remy de Gourmont, and as Jonathan Reztlaff mentions:

It is impossible to say exactly what drew [Caplet] to the poetry of Remy de Gourmont ... Perhaps it was the symbolist doctrine which espoused the "musicality of words" and freedom from formal structure that drew him to the writing of the reclusive de Gourmont.78

Caplet possessed a proud sense of origin which, given Gourmont’s Normande roots, could further support a gravitational pull towards this poet’s art. Marie-Christine Catherine Allen adds:

As the leading apologist for the symbolists, [Remy de Gourmont] opposed traditionalism and defended new literary departures. He came of age at the end of the era of Romantic writers, and was influenced by the theory of Mallarmé that poetry lies more in the sound of words than in their sense.  

Both Retzlaff and Allen allude to the shape of the prosody and this, combined with the themes and imagery in the poetry, undoubtedly evoked a response in the composer. For Caplet – a musician who was highly in tune with the sonorities that arise from modal and harmonic patterns outside the nineteenth century tradition – Gourmont’s contemplation on the artistry of poetic expression through the sonorities of words was undoubtedly relatable. Jonathan Retzlaff considers this:

During much of Caplet’s life, Remy de Gourmont was one of the leading critics within the French literary world. His writings and opinions came to be known as fundamental to the symbolist literary movement. André Caplet came to musical maturity during this period and was surely influenced by symbolist writing. Gourmont’s poetry had not been set by other composers with the frequency of Paul Verlaine or Leconte de Lisle for example. Perhaps it was the obscurity or freshness of the poetry itself which Caplet found intriguing.  

Caplet’s musical response to Gourmont’s texts opens the listener and performer not only to a rich harmonic landscape, but also many potential interpretative levels: metric dissonance, uneven phrases which prioritise the vocal prosody, and piano accompaniments that though rich and colourful sonorities defy tradition in their tonal

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79 Marie-Christine Catherine Allen, ’The Wartime Mélodies of André Caplet’ (DMA Dissertation, University of Arizona, 1994) p.80

structure. The following discussion outlines the poetic relationship to the tonal language in each of the four *mélodies*, and the primary analytical interpretation emphasises aspects of metric dissonance and consonance throughout. The exploration of these *mélodies* will give an insight into the metric complexity of Caplet’s poetic response to a wistful and lush cycle of poetry, composed during a time when he was surrounded by an atmosphere completely at odds with the themes of love and lush beauty evoked in the world of Remy de Gourmont’s cycle.
**Le vieux coffret by Remy de Gourmont**

**No. 1: Songe (1914)**

**Songe**

Je voudrais t'emporter dans un monde nouveau  
Parmi d'autres maisons et d'autres paysages  
Et là, baignant tes mains, contemplant ton visage,  
T'enseigner un amour délicieux et nouveau,  

Un amour de silence, d'art et de paix profonde :  
Notre vie serait lente et pleine de pensées,  
Puis, par hasard, nos mains un instant rapprochées  
Inclinerait nos cœurs aux caresses profondes.  

Et les jours passeraient, aussi beaux que des songes,  
Dans la demi-clarté d'une soirée d'automne,  
Et nous dirions tout bas, car le bonheur étonne:  
Les jours d'amour sont doux quand la vie est un songe.

**Dream**

I would like to take you in a new world  
Among other houses and other lands  
And there, kissing your hands, contemplating your face,  
Teach you a love delicious and new.  

A love of silence, art and of peace profound:  
Our life would be slow and full of thoughts,  
Then, by chance, our hands in an instant brought together,  
Would incline our hearts to the caresses profound.  

And the days would pass, as beautiful as the dreams  
In the half-light of an autumn evening,  
And we would say very low, because happiness surprises:  
The days of love are sweet when life is a dream.
Formal Overview: *Songe*

*Songe* is essentially a love poem, where the poet dreams of taking his beloved away to a place where they can live in peaceful bliss. Joel Harder explains:

The poet beckons his love to join him in a retreat from the world, in a landscape of dreams (not unlike Baudelaire’s poem “L’invitation au voyage”). The poem is written conventionally in Alexandrine verse, with three stanzas of four lines each … where the outer rhymes are in fact repetitions of the same word.\(^8^1\)

Gourmont’s poetic structure consists of three stanzas, with a rhyming scheme of ABBA CDDC EFFE. It would seem, however, that Caplet does not strictly follow this poetic layout in his setting of the poem. Rather than dividing the music into three sections according to Gourmont’s stanza layout, Caplet groups the first line of the second stanza with the first stanza. This allows the first overall phrase to fully describe the poet’s desire to take the beloved to a place where they can explore a new kind of deep love that, as evoked in stanza two line one, is concerned with silence, art, and peace:

\[Un \text{ amore de silence, d’art et de paix profonde}\]
\[
A \text{ love of silence, art and of peace profound}
\]

Breaking up the poetic format this way suggests that in terms of structural layout, Caplet was concerned with reflecting a sense of narrative through the unfolding poetic imagery, despite this imagery-based structure resulting in a larger first stanza than second and third. Interpreting Caplet’s approach to formal construction of this *mélodie*

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in this manner affords insight into his response to, and priority for, the musical illustration of poetic events in relation to larger musical formal structures.

As a narrative structured in three primary images, this poem appears most concerned with removing oneself to another place. The poet fantasises and dreams of being in a world far away from his reality. It is unsurprising that imagery of this kind would have elicited a response from Caplet. *Songe* was composed at the start of the war, at a time when Caplet was perhaps apprehensive of what lay ahead. The poet’s yearning of a place far removed from war surely resonated with Caplet. The first stanza sets the scene for the poet to whisk the beloved away and teach her a delightful new love. The second image, as described in lines two, three, and four of stanza two, recounts the poet’s vision for a leisurely love-filled life. The final stanza concludes with the poet’s dreams of the serene future this retreat would offer. When life is a dream, the poet muses, the sweet days are filled with love:

*Les jours d’amour sont doux quand la vie est une songe.*  
The days of love are sweet when life is a dream

In light of this interpretation, the poetic imagery develops naturally where one image leads very fluidly to the next. The interpretation of this love poem is open to different readings and various explanations. However, I interpret Caplet’s grouping of the first two stanzas into separate images described in a five-line and three-line scheme in relation to the harmonic structure, large-scale phrase outline, and insertions of solo piano texture as dividing points between the verses. My suggestion outlines that Caplet’s setting divides the text into three parts reflecting poetic imagery, rather than a formal-based binary or ternary structure, and I label these parts as Section A, Section
B, and Section C. The three large vocal phrases containing the poet’s musing are separated by two piano solo points, occurring at bars 21–23 and 37–42.

Whereas Caplet divides the text into three sections based upon poetic imagery, the musical material most likely unfolds in a through-composed format, rather than strophic, because although there is a sense of unity through recurring motives, idioms of verse-repeating material do not occur. Moreover, the through-composed form is a good vehicle for Caplet to convey the dreamy state in which the poet finds himself, due to the unrestricted boundaries and freedom for motivic development. A sense of forward momentum of this dreamy atmosphere is captured through the quickly moving harmonic rhythm; the music does not settle in a single tonal centre for very long as the poet’s musing’s swirl from one thought to the next. Despite this freely-unfolding musical trajectory, Caplet does not fully abandon all sense of structural cohesiveness, as strategic placement of recurring ideas interwoven through the musical fabric creates a sense of continuity. I will address these recurring motives later in the discussion.
2.2

Aspects of Poetic Harmony: Songe

Through the poetic narrative of Songe, the poet dreams about the sweetness of a life with his beloved and he imagines taking her far away to live in a place of peace and love. The theme of the allure and beauty of the faraway place is foremost in the narrative. This is potentially captured in the underlying harmonic shape of the *mélodie* and Caplet does this in several ways:

- Quick harmonic rhythm throughout the piece offsets tonal points of rest: the continual forward movement of the harmonic language creates a sense of motion and perhaps relocation.

- Unclear tonal centre from the outset: there is a sense of distance between the notated key signature and introductory tonal motion. The opening bars suggest G minor tonality, but this is not strongly established straight away.

- There is extended use of small intervallic tonal shifts from which transitory tonal centres are constructed. This facilitates movement to different harmonic realms, perhaps a reflection of the poet travelling to another place.

The fast-paced tonal scheme in Songe results in a fragmented harmonic structure. Because of this quick harmonic rhythm, a clear tonal centre lasting for a significant number of bars is not established; however, it is possible to elucidate an overarching tonal scheme that aligns to each section:

- Section A, outlined on the chart, encompasses the first five lines of the poem. This section broadly moves from the G-centric harmony established at the beginning, shifts through various points of harmonic colour, and comes to rest in an A tonal centre by the end of the section. Following this, the linking material in the piano solo outlines a transition to F# harmony and, with a move C# minor at bar 24, marks the beginning of the B section.
Throughout Section B, a fast paced harmonic rhythm continues and a number of chordal shifts, firstly over an A pedal then a G pedal, lead this section to close with a C⁹ tonality at bar 37. The music settles into F# once again throughout bars 39–42 in the second piano link.

Section C, bars 43–60, begins with calm chordal movement circling D⁹ over F# in bar 43, but quickly travels through harmonic changes until bar 56 where the section draws to a close with a minor plagal cadence. This minor plagal cadence can be interpreted as the Dm tonality in bars 56 and 57 resolves to A at bar 58.

This overall tonal movement as it aligns to the aforementioned poetic imagery, may be summarised in Table 2.2:

Table 2.2: Tonal-Poetic Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Overall Tonal Movement</th>
<th>Poetic Image</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Given key signature: C major</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section A</strong> (bars 1–20)</td>
<td>G locrian-natural-two–A</td>
<td>The poet speaks of taking the beloved away and enveloping her in a new kind of deep love.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Given key signature: A major</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piano solo linking material (bars 21–3)</td>
<td>A–F#</td>
<td>New tonal centres offer pathway to the poet’s next thought.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section B</strong> (bars 24–36)</td>
<td>C#–Eb</td>
<td>The poet’s vision of life with the beloved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piano solo linking material (bars 37–42)</td>
<td>F# centricity</td>
<td>More extended solo, animated character creates impression of excitement and joy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section C</strong> (bars 43–60)</td>
<td>D⁹/F#–Dm–A</td>
<td>Poet imagines the beauty of a future filled with love and compares life to a dream.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The change from one key signature to the next is significant in the tonal structure, because it embeds an underlying sense of movement from one harmonic area to another. Taking the opening C key signature as a tonic, the choice of A as a new key area could be interpreted as a relative major. The opening key signature is more likely to suggest C major, because that way it is probable the introductory G minor tonality is behaving as a dominant.

**Section A**

The overall tonal motion in Section A could suggest a movement from G locrian-natural-two centricity through a series of surface motion passing tonalities, arriving at A by the end of the section. Establishing the G sonority is initially vague: repeated Db octaves offer several potential tonal avenues. As the harmonic language builds, it initially seems that the tonality is centred around Bb melodic minor, because the first established chord we see is a Bbm7 in bar 3, followed by a rising Bb melodic minor scale in bars 5–6. In spite of that, due to the root position Gmb5 chord in bar 4 and reiterated in fuller texture in bar 7 as the rising triplet figure enters, the tonality is more likely G-centric. There is also the possibility to suggest that the singular Db outlined in the opening two bars behaves as the V of this Gmb5 point in bar 4. To further support this, the placement of this Gmb5 chord as a root position is significant for Caplet, who more often favours voicing chords in inversions other than root, as can be seen by the Bbm7 chord at the beginning of bar 3.

It is also possible to suggest that some of the voicing in this Bbm7 chord behaves as a veiled suspension into the Gmb5 chord in bar 4, because the A♭ in the bass part resolves downwards to G implying a 9–8 suspension. This A♭–G movement is also
reiterated in the first two quavers, in the same voice, as the triplet figuration begins at the beginning of the next phrase in bar 5. Additionally, as the key signature suggests C major (or a minor) this suggestion supports interpreting G minor as dominant minor of this key, which in turn underpins alignment to the poetic images of distance between two connected points: the dominant-tonic distance reflects the space between the poet's reality and his dream location with the beloved.

In the first 21 bars of this *mélodie*, Section A outlines a shift from the aforementioned G minor tonality of the introduction, through a motion of fast harmonic rhythm into A major at bar 19. Perhaps the E♭ tonality (spelled in the enharmonic form) outlined briefly in bar 17–8 could be interpreted as a $\text{bV}–\text{I}$ into A, but as the voice leading is vague in this tonality it remains ambiguous. Bar 18 does offer the sustained low E♭ tone, but with an A major chord superimposed in the top register, perhaps in anticipation of the move to this key signature at bar 19. When considering this tonal motion in relation to the poetic imagery in Section A, there is a suggestion that the journey from one key signature, through several tonal centres, to an arrival point at another reflects the poet taking the beloved away to the new world.

**Section B**

As the *mélodie* continues and the poet becomes more involved in his dream of another world, the harmonic movements become quicker. Throughout this section (bars 24–36) a total of 12 chordal shifts occur, as outlined in the harmonic rhythm line in the structural overview chart. The shape of these movements at first glance seems unordered and without relevance, but it can be suggested that the surface tonal motion in Section B, perhaps for reasons of sonority and atmosphere, moves in
intervallic steps of seconds and thirds. For example, at bars 28–39, surface motion occurs in the following pattern:

\[ A\rightarrow G\rightarrow F\rightarrow G\rightarrow E_b\rightarrow C\rightarrow E_b\rightarrow F^# \]

The music settles in F\# during the piano link from bars 39 to 43. The exploration of chordal centres occurs at a point in the narrative where the poet considers the life he would have with the beloved. As the poet speaks of the closeness of their hands – “dos mains un instant rapprochés” – the tonality moves in small steps between G lydian and F lydian over an A pedal. Perhaps these close steps from G to F reflect the ties (potentially reflected by the A pedal) of intimacy between the poet and his beloved.

**Section C**

There is an audible shift in tonal colour in the final section. At this part of the narrative, the poet considers the kind of future he would have with his beloved in their world apart. Several factors heighten this coloristic shift:

- *Piano* dynamic indication.
- *Très calme* atmosphere.
- Thinner texture consisting of sustained chords.

During the preceding piano link, from bars 39–42, the tonality is heavily F\# centric. Therefore, the listener is unprepared for the D9 chordal entry at the start of bar 43. A sense of harmonic continuity is created by common-tone F\# pedal chord. This blurs the tonality at this point, as the F\# pedal occurs again in the following bar when the music moves to B9. There is a more major quality to the harmonic rhythm throughout this section. Bars 43–55 exhibit not just this major quality, but also a dominant quality due
to the high number of dominant tonalities. These two factors combined suggest not just an anticipation of movement towards closure, but also reflect the positive quality the poet attaches to his vision of life far removed from reality.

A plagal cadential structure could be elicited in the final bars, 56–60. This is not a standard major plagal cadence, however. Over the final word, *songe*, we are reminded that this is all just a dream, and perhaps reality is quite different. At this point, Caplet builds not a D major tonality from the subdominant, but rather outlines D melodic minor resolving to A. The music reaches closure in A major; perhaps leaving us with the positive affirmation that dreams can provide solace.

For the most part, the tonal plan of *Songe* can be interpreted in terms of the harmonic centres, or the areas where the harmonic language comes closest to a point of rest. The primary driving force creating momentum in the trajectory of harmonic movement can be narrowed down to two factors:

- Surface tonal movement built mainly on small-scale intervals of seconds and thirds, where evoking sonority and coloristic atmosphere are paramount.

- Ambiguity of tonal centricity. The fast harmonic rhythm and high volume of surface tonal motion throughout the harmonic structure negates a feeling of strong tonal centricity for a prolonged period of time in the structure.

Perhaps these aspects set the harmonic plan for the piece: there is a key centre established by the A major key signature, and closing cadential pattern in A major. However, different sonorities geographically closely mapped to the key centre of A, but perhaps harmonically unrelated, create a new sphere of sound and atmosphere. Given
the images of moving away, and exploring new worlds, this approach to harmonic structure complements a portrayal of these themes.
2.3

Analytical Interpretation: *Songe*

One of the fundamental elements Caplet uses to simultaneously create a sense of ambiguity as a reflection of poetic imagery is that of manipulating rhythmic structures to break down a clear sense of regularity. Elements of rhythmic dissonance as a result of nonalignment can contribute to a distortion of the perception of regular pulse in the music. In his discussion of Fauré’s musical elusiveness, Carlo Caballero cites an essay by Virgil Thompson, where Thomson considers the idea of “Frenchness” in French music. Thompson regards the quality of this music beyond the confines of the barline:

In French musical thought, the measure has nothing to do with motion; it is a metrical unit purely. The barline is a visual device of notation for the convenience of executants, but the French consider that it should never be perceptible to the listener.82

Concepts of metric fluidity such as this are used effectively in *Songe* to help evoke the atmosphere of the poet’s dreamy mindset, right from the start of the work. The first eight bars of this piece have an important impact on the musico-poetic structure, because it is here that key interpretative elements are introduced, and the barline becomes almost imperceptible. These elements, listed below, will be discussed in more detail:

- Subliminal distortion of pulse with both the given time signature and the barlines.
- Fragments of and references to the rhythmic motif throughout the *mélodie*.
- Introduction of the triplet motif that recurs in fragments throughout the piece.
- Nonalignment in vocal phrasing.

Subliminal distortion of pulse with both the given time signature and the barlines

As Harald Krebs explains in his study of metric dissonance in the music of Schumann:

Subliminal dissonance arises when all musical features – accents, groupings, etc. – establish only one interpretative layer, while the context and the metrical notation imply at least one conflicting layer.83

It is possible that Krebs’ theory can similarly help illuminate the presence of subliminal dissonance in *Songe* between the notated time signature and implied conflicting rhythmic layers arising from irregular groupings. As outlined on the accompanying structural overview chart, there are frequent time signature changes throughout *Songe*; eighteen occur after the first given time signature. Although the first time signature is 3/4, a feeling of strong triple metre is not fully established due to the crotchet rests on the first two beats of the bar. The piano entry on the third, and weakest, beat of the bar offsets a strong downbeat position, and further negates an upbeat motion, because the subsequent tone sounds on a weak part of bar 2 and is the same pitch. The listener is unaware that this piece begins in triple metre, and as a result it is very much up to the performer to create and direct the strong sense of pulse in the performance. The groupings, suggested by layers of rhythmic patterns, often do not fall within the confines of these changing time signatures. This suggests that the frequency of time signature changes throughout *Songe* could be primarily driven by the necessity to accommodate the shape of the vocal prosody, perhaps more due to this than to any deeper metric motivation.

This piano introduction is crucial in creating an appropriate atmosphere for the poetic narrative, as the music must evoke a dreamlike state not wholly rooted in reality. The

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ambiguity in the opening harmonic tones has been discussed already, and a parallel can be drawn in the rhythmic structure through the analogous approach to ambiguity.

I suggest that the opening figuration demonstrates a rhythmic distortion of the triple metre, due to the position of two 4/4 layers in nonaligned displacement dissonance. Due to the ambiguous nature of the music, and the dreamlike atmosphere described by the poetic text, it can be theorised that Caplet’s intention for the introduction was concerned with disguising the reality of the metre, in a similar manner to his initial distortion of the G minor tonality. Likewise, in the poetic text, as the poet seeks to escape from, or distort, his reality.

**Nonaligned layers due to displaced groupings in 4/4, subliminally in conflict with 3/4 notated time signature.**

For the listener, who is unaware of the first two silent beats, it is unclear whether this piece begins in 3/4 or 4/4 because the metric grouping implied by the repeated Db tones could be interpreted as three bars of 4/4. The doubling of this rhythmic layer in the bass-clef adds more weight to the line, making it more prominent to the listener.

There is another sustained layer, created by the dotted minims tied to crotchets. This suggests 4/4, but the following instance in bar 4 – the sustained minim tied to crotchet – suggests a 3/4 figure. Example 2.1 shows the conflict these layers create. On one hand, the listener hears a somewhat syncopated rhythm in 4/4 through the repeated Db tones, but the placement of weighty chords at different points in the bars offsets this. If the quaver rest in bar 3 is taken as a pause excluded from the “blocks” of groupings, a pattern emerges that outlines the suggested displacement dissonance
demonstrated in Example 2.1. This is significant, because it allows each chordal figuration to anticipate the D♭ entry that follows.

Example 2.1: Nonaligned layers due to displaced groupings in 4/4, subliminally conflicting with 3/4 notated time signature.

This rhythmic conflict can, to an extent, be viewed through a lens of displacement dissonance, because it shows two mostly analogous rhythmic patterns superimposed independently in a nonaligned manner from which conflict arises. The added distortion occurs when this 4/4 displacement dissonance is heard subliminally against a 3/4 notated time signature. The subliminal dissonance arises due to the nonalignment of the implied pulsations and groupings of the opening rhythmic motif, with that of the given 3/4 time signature. Nowhere in the opening repeated D♭ rhythmic motif are we given the sense of regularity of triple time. The dotted minim sf chord at the start of bar 3 does fall on a strong first beat and the dynamics direct the music to this harmonic point; but in spite of this, the placement of a crotchet tied to the dotted minim negates a strong three-beat note value. Furthermore, the minim situated on the second beat of the fourth bar and tied to a crotchet at the start of the fifth distorts the potential for the chordal texture to establish a triple metre feeling.

The ambiguous nature of this opening is perceptible in different recordings. For example, the treatment of this opening subliminal dissonance is noticeable in the
recording by Hanna Schaer and Noel Lee. In this instance, Lee approaches the repeated $\text{Db}$ tones with a softer than $pp$ articulation, creating a feeling of tranquility. He places a strong accent on the dotted minim, which could suggest that he does feel the opening $\text{Db}$ motif as the weak beat implied by the score, and the chordal figures as stronger “downbeats” in the phrase. The anchoring of these chordal events suggests that Lee observes the music falling more closely within the parameters of the barline.

Contrasting this, in Lionel Peintre and Alain Jacquon’s recording, the opening has a very different feeling. It is unhurried, and Jacquon places greater weight and more definition on the $\text{Db}$ figure as soon as it enters. Thus, in Jacquon’s interpretation, the impression for the listener is that the first note we hear behaves as the first beat of the phrase rather than the weak beat of the bar. As listeners, the stronger interpretation of the rhythmic figure creates more difficulty in pinpointing whether the music is moving in $3/4$ or $4/4$ time. Although there is a sense of pulse, the music remains uncommitted to steady placement within the barline. Jacquon’s performance of the rhythmic motif is played as though he recognises that the music is situated beyond the notated barlines, whereas in Lee’s interpretation, discerning a feeling of barlines is much clearer.

**Fragments and references to the rhythmic motif throughout the **mélodie**

The interplay between rhythmic groups and the arising conflict with, and distortion of, metre is interwoven throughout the fabric of this **mélodie**, though references to, and variations of the opening rhythmic idea. It is likely that since the poetic narrative explores themes of escape from the confines of reality, Caplet reflects this through the breakdown of rhythmic confines. Variations of the motif appear six times during the **mélodie** and, with the exception of the final instance, the motif is presented in textures
of single notes, seconds, or octaves. There are two characteristics that appear each time the motif is presented: firstly, at least one tie over a barline occurs; and secondly, there is almost always a quaver rest preceding the first note.

In the early parts of the mélodie, the rhythmic motif appears mostly over areas where the harmonic language is moving or changing. However in the middle parts, bars 28–34, the rhythmic motif occurs over static harmony. There does not appear to be a strong connection between the appearance of this motif with the harmonic language. However, a stronger and more significant connection between this motif and the poetic imagery could be suggested; the motif appears consistently in areas where the poet is speaking of positive and hopeful moments. Perhaps the rhythmic ambiguity captures the sense of tranquility the poet experiences in his dreamlike state. This prevails mostly in the area of the second poetic image, once in the first, and once in the third. Example 2.2 shows each individual instance of this rhythmic motif as it appears in the score, however I have coloured the note-heads red for clarity.
Example 2.2: *Songe*: Six entries of the rhythmic motif

1. Bars 8–9

2. Bars 27–28

3. Bars 27–28
This rhythmic placement across the barline illustrates Caplet’s distortion of the barline through the unfolding of the *mélodie*, but also demonstrates that despite deliberate
rhythmic ambiguity, a sense of unity and continuity is retained. Perhaps this could further be viewed as a manner of finding order through a seemingly chaotic landscape.

The introduction of the triplet motif that recurs in fragments throughout the piece

The triplet motif introduced throughout bars 5-7, like the rhythmic motif, is a significant feature. It demonstrates irregular groupings that produce a sense of displacement dissonance, and through shape and contour, potentially reflects some of the central images in the poem. The triplet motif appears in the piano accompaniment first, then three beats later in the first vocal entry, as the poet declares:

\[\text{Je voudrais t'emplorer...} \]
\[\text{I would like to take you...}\]

Firstly, taking the piano part, the phrase takes the form of an ascending scale, doubled in both hands. The insertion of a semiquaver rest in bar 6, however, offsets the unison motion, resulting in a feeling of displacement at the vocal entry point. Example 2.3 shows this motif as it appears in the score:

\[\text{Example 2.3}\]

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\[^{84}\text{A further example illustrating Caplet's sketches of this rhythmic motif can be viewed on the facsimile score of Forét in Le vieux coffret, available online on the Gallica BnF website. The score outlines pencil sketches of the rhythmic motif above the main body of the work. This may be accessed via the following link: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10315918x/f8.image.r=foret%20caplet [accessed 27 May 2018]}\]
Example 2.3: *Songe* bars 5–7

As with the rhythmic motif, the listener’s perception of where the strong beat lies is distorted due to a rest placed before the phrase begins. A suggested grouping pattern in this phrase demonstrates:

- The groupings can be interpreted as moving in twos and threes, instead of regular groups of three.

- The first three groups are consonantly aligned, as they move in unison in terms of both rhythm and pitch, but this soon breaks down.

- The octave pitches remain the same, but the insertion of the semiquaver rest in the middle of the second beat of bar 6 forces the two lines into a stage of nonalignment. This rest offsets the groupings which, although analogous to one another, create a displacement dissonance. This line then underpins the vocal entry.

Caplet introduces displacement dissonance in the rhythmic motif at the point where the vocal part enters. Perhaps Caplet’s treatment of this displacement dissonance helps to highlight the meaning of the poetic text on the following levels:
• The rising scale figuration becomes evocative of the path the poet wants to embark upon with the beloved: he would like to whisk her away to a new world.

• Displacement dissonance draws attention to the text: the music is most displaced over the words: *Je voudrais t’importer...* (I would like to take you...).

• The two non-aligned lines can potentially represent the two protagonists in the poem: poet and his beloved, or on a greater level, the contrast between reality and dreams.

In Example 2.4, I show bars 5 and 6 rebeamed into suggested grouping patterns. I have rebeamed the notated score in order to show more clearly (than with brackets alone) the ways in which these grouping patterns may be interpreted. Through careful listening and repeated piano playing, these grouping interpretations are based on combined aspects of steps and leaps between notes and the implied direction and contour within the phrase. Emphasis is placed upon the ascending nature of the vocal line, and varying interpretations of this are shown in the ways in which this is incorporated into the piano accompaniment. There are at least four alternative ways of hearing this, as follows.
Example 2.4: *Songe* bars 5-7 rebeamed four ways:

(i)

(ii)

(iii)

(iv)
Each of these interpretations shows a different way in which the ascending vocal motif can be reimagined and interpreted in the piano accompaniment. Through these regroupings, as noted in each rebeamed example, the barlines become redundant due to different stressing of pulses arising from the weight placed on the first note of each respective group. This further shows that Caplet perhaps was obscuring the regularity between groups of two and groups of three and, in doing so, strongly dismantling the metric hierarchy implied by the time signature. In each of the above interpretations, different combinations of two- and three-groups can be found. Examples (ii) and (iii) are evident in recorded performances, and examples (i) and (iv) illustrate further interpretations for this music.

There is evidence that performers acknowledge this irregularity. For example, in Jacquon and Peintre’s recording, Jacquon clearly highlights the triplet motif with groupings following the first suggestion outlined as in (ii) of Example 2.4. In this recording, we can hear the $D\flat–E\flat–D\flat$ followed by the $F–G–F$ sequence grouped in two sets of three. This grouping creates a sense of combined grouping and displacement dissonance between the vocal entry and the piano part that infuses a stronger feeling of tension and urgency to the image of the poet and his beloved escaping to the dreamworld.

A different approach is taken in recordings by Hanna Schaer and Noel Lee, and by Dominique Favat and Line Marand. In his interpretation, Lee highlights the vocal line by following the grouping pattern suggested in (iii) of Example 2.4. The similarity in shape between the bass-clef line and vocal part are strongly reinforced, and there is a forward momentum which helps to create the feeling of being carried away. Moreover,
Schaer and Lee emphasise the crescendo more throughout the ascending triplets fully animating this part. Dominique Favat and Line Marand approach the groupings in the same way as Schaer and Lee, but their interpretation of the *en animant* direction gives rise to a much faster pace and bolder dynamics.

Like the rhythmic motif previously outlined, the triplet motif presented in bars 5–7 returns in shorter variations throughout the piece, with eight occurrences after the initial statement. The common theme between these recurring motifs is that the groupings are always at odds with the triplet notation, the motif is usually a rising figure and, with the exception of bars 38–42, the poetic imagery at each of these points describes more contemplative sentiments. Table 2.3 below summarises the points in the text and music where this occurs:

**Table 2.3: Recurring examples of Triplet Motif in *Songe***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bar Number</th>
<th>Poetic Image</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Other countries: the ideal place for their love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The poet gazes at the beloved’s face and contemplates her beauty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>A chance happening</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 35         | A deep caress  
   (This occurs at the end of a section, and can also be interpreted as leading towards the piano link in the next part) |
| 38-42      | Piano link: the motif is developed and used as the basis for the linking bars |
| 56         | The poet thinks of how love is sweet when life is a dream                    |

These groupings are outlined in Example 2.5. Each time a quaver rest acts as the first note of the triplet, this silence shifts the group resulting in rising figures starting on the second note. The resulting groupings become nonaligned to the time signature, and in
that example I annotate the score with brackets to illustrate the nonalignment this grouping creates.

**Example 2.5: Nonalignment of groupings throughout *Songe***

![Example of nonalignment in *Songe*](image)
Nonalignment in vocal phrasing

The vocal phrasing in Songe is determined primarily by the design of the poetic text. The text does adhere to a rhyming scheme, but this scheme does not result in vocal phrases of equal in length and evenly proportioned in a prescribed number of bars. The vocal phrases differ in length and duration, and do not always align to the phrasing in the piano accompaniment. When these different lengths are considered in relation to
the unequal distribution of the first two stanzas (five lines followed by three lines), a somewhat improvisatory feeling to the narrative is created.

*Songe,* as the first *mélodie* in *Le vieux coffret* plays an important role in setting the tone for the three *mélodies* that follow, because it introduces the qualities of wistfulness and sonorous atmosphere that run throughout the set. The primary themes of escaping reality and existing in the dreamworld with the beloved can be recognised through the ambiguity of rhythm and harmonic motion as, throughout the *mélodie,* Caplet disguises his harmonic and rhythmic intentions by directing the listeners’ ears away from the confines of conventional progressions and metre. This is perhaps a device used to capture an expression of the light and shade of the autumn evening the poet dreams of and, in this atmosphere, all realities seem blurred and everything is a dream.
Le vieux coffret by Remy de Gourmont

No. 2: Berceuse (1914)

Berceuse

Viens vers moi quand tu chantes, amie, j'ai des secrets
Que tu liras toi-même au reflet de mes yeux.
Viens, entoure mon cou dans tes bras, viens tout près
Et ton cœur entendra des mots silencieux.

Viens vers moi quand tu rêves, amie, j'ai des paroles
Dont le murmure seul est comme une douceur.
Elles imposent l'oubli, le doute, elles désolent,
Et pourtant leur musique enchante la douleur.

Viens vers moi quand tu ris, amie, j'ai des regards
Très longs qui vont porter la peur au fond de l'âme.
Viens, ils transperceront ton cœur de part en part
Et tu sentiras naître en toi une autre femme.

Viens vers moi quand tu pleures, amie, j'ai des caresses
Qui captent les sanglots amers au bord des lèvres
Et feront de ton amertume une allégresse:
Amie, viens boire une âme nouvelle sur mes lèvres.

Lullaby

Come towards me when you sing, friend, I have secrets
That you will read yourself in the reflection of my eyes.
Come, surround my neck with your arms, come near
And your heart will hear silent words.

Come towards me when you dream, friend, I have words
whose only murmur is like softness.
They impose forgetfulness, doubt, they afflict,
and still their music enchants the pain.

Come to me when you laugh, friend, I have gazes
Very long which will bring fear from the bottom of your soul.
Come, they will pierce your heart through and through,
And you will feel rise in you another woman.

Come to me when you cry, friend, I have caresses
which capture bitter sobs on the brim of lips
and will turn your bitterness into joy:
Friend, come and drink a new soul on my lips
2.4

Formal Overview: Berceuse

Berceuse, the second setting from Le vieux coffret, was composed in the same year as Songe, 1914, and premiered in 1918. In Berceuse, the poet offers a haven of safety and comfort to the beloved, bolstered by evocations of his specific responses to the varying aspects of her character. Similar to Songe, the poem is composed in Alexandrine verse, but Berceuse is longer and, with a rhyming scheme of ABAB DCDC EFEF GHGH, divides into a clear four-stanza structure. This poem is characterised by a repeated line at the beginning of each stanza where the poet calls the beloved to his side in times of (i) joyful singing, (ii) dreaming, (iii) laughter and (iv) sadness. Each of the four stanzas is similar in design, in that after an opening line beckoning the beloved towards him, the poet’s numerous offerings of solace and comfort for his beloved’s feelings become the central expression. Ultimately, it appears that the poet’s desire is to show his beloved that, regardless of her disposition or frame of mind, his heart is hers.

While it is undeniable that the title of the poem and collective images of safety, comfort, and reassurance do evoke the kind of soothing reassurance a lullaby may express, Caplet avoids setting this poem in the style of a traditional lullaby. The characteristic feeling of a strong triple metre, long repetitions between sections, and a structure containing strong primarily consonant intervals so typical of the traditional lullaby do not strongly feature in this mélodie. The opening of Berceuse does, however, contain a doux direction appropriate for the gentle atmosphere evoked though the opening stanza and Caplet, as Spencer notes, ‘follows not only the words but their
spirit.' As the narrative unfolds, the music builds towards a climactic point in the third stanza, where changing textures, nonalignment between the vocal and piano parts, and octatonic sonorities create a more spirited mood in reflection of the beloved’s laughter and the poet’s dispelling of her fears. This would help affirm the suggestion that Caplet’s interpretation of the poem was not so much a traditionally all-soothing lullaby to a troubled beloved. Rather, it could be theorised that Caplet offers a musical exploration of the poet’s rumination upon being a source of strength for the beloved in an all-encompassing way; we see the poet responding both tenderly and zealously to parallel the beloved’s mercurial feelings. As these poetic qualities afford the composer more scope to fully reflect the different emotional contexts visualised throughout the poem, the musical material in each stanza could thus be interpreted as an individual representation of four various emotional circumstances.

Caplet addresses the recurring poetic line in his musical setting through the use of a repeated motif, as evidenced at the start of each poetic verse. This motif alerts the listener to the returning ‘come to me’ iteration in the poem. As Joel Harder remarks: ‘though Caplet is never one to compose in a traditional strophic manner, he provides an opening motif that repeats throughout the song and binds the music together, just as the opening poetic phrase binds the poem together.’

Adding to Harder’s comment – as there are four stanzas connected by linking piano material, and distinctive recurring motif – I suggest that this mélodie is constructed in a

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85 Williametta Spencer 'The Influence and Stylistic Heritage of André Caplet' (PhD Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1974). p.174
semi-strophic form. Although Caplet tends to avoid strophic setting of the mélodies, *Berceuse* offers an example where the mélodie, still evading traditional strophic form, contains a sense of unity that elevates it from a purely through-composed format. I suggest semi-strophic because there is not enough connecting material throughout the verses and linking parts to conform to a strict strophic form in the traditional sense, but the unifying motif that Caplet aligns with the repetition in the poem is evocative of elements of strophic form. The opening motif of *Berceuse* forms the basis for the connecting figuration throughout the work, and is significant for several reasons:

- It is the principal unifying motif in the work.
- The first line of the vocal part is derived from this shape.
- The recurring nature is the closest Caplet comes to a traditional strophic setting.
- We hear the motif when the poet directly addresses the beloved, which further opens the interpretation as a leitmotif style fixture in the work.

This establishes the probability that the motif acts as a leitmotif fixture in the work due to its repeated appearance at the points where the poet specifically addresses the beloved. It is directly connected to the poet’s request for the beloved to be by his side, and when the motif is heard in the piano solo part, it is often followed by the recurring vocal line starting:

*Viens vers moi…*

Come to me…

It could be additionally ascertained that the motif acts as a structural linking point in the music. Because the poem displays a regular structure with four stanzas and a defined rhyming scheme, the insertion of this motif at specific points in the *mélodie* imparts a sense of formal organisation that in turn helps to clearly signpost the vital
points in the poem. The motif draws the listener’s attention to the plea within the poetic text, as well as alerting to the unfolding of a new structural stanza.
A portrayal of four different emotional states can be determined in the overall harmonic structure of Berceuse. The broad design of this work contains four relatively balanced stanzas, separated by piano solo linking passages. There is a short coda at the end, where the poet makes one final call for the beloved’s presence at his side. This final iteration is different to the four that precede it, because in this instance the poet requests the beloved directly at the beginning of the line rather than at the end. This sums up everything that he has to offer: he will replenish the beloved’s soul:

Amie, viens boire une âme nouvelle sur mes lèvres
Friend, come and drink a new soul on my lips

Berceuse starts with an Ab tonality, but the overall scheme departs from this tonal centre throughout the trajectory of the mélodie. Similar to Songe, though, the music returns to the tonality of the given key signature at the final closure. An interesting factor considering the tonality of Berceuse, as it follows Songe, is at the end of Songe we heard a plagal cadence from D minor to A major. Berceuse begins with a tonic centred around Ab, moving to Db. This almost creates a sense of harmonic retrograde, as one mélodie ends and the next begins. It is difficult to know whether this is an intentional ploy on Caplet’s part, but as the first mélodie of the set ends, the second begins with a progression built around key centres a semitone lower but still sketching a plagal relationship.
The broad design of *Berceuse* features tonal centres that differ over the four stanzas. It is likely that this is a reflection of the poet’s response to different moods and feelings as seen through the descriptions of the beloved. To illustrate this concisely, I map this design relating to the poetic text in Table 2.4 on the following page. For *Berceuse*, I refer to the sections by their stanza numbers because in the musical structure of this particular setting Caplet adheres to the stanza layout:
### Table 2.4: Berceuse Tonal outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Overall Tonal Movement</th>
<th>Poetic Image</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stanza I</strong></td>
<td>Ab–Db</td>
<td>Beckoning the beloved when she sings: the poet offers peace and tranquility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(bb.1–12)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>Ab centric</td>
<td>[piano solo]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(bb. 13–15)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stanza II</strong></td>
<td>D–B</td>
<td>Beckoning the beloved when she dreams: the poet’s words possess a musicality that will banish upset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(bb.16–28)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>B centric</td>
<td>[piano solo]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(bb.27–8)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stanza III</strong></td>
<td>B–F♯–B♭</td>
<td>Beckoning the beloved when she laughs: the poet’s gaze carries away fears. He reaches her heart so she will find renewal as a new woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(bb.29–39)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>Whole Tone suggestion-D–Db</td>
<td>[piano solo]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b.40)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stanza IV</strong></td>
<td>Db–B</td>
<td>Beckoning the beloved when she cries: the poet will turn her bitter tears to joy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(bb.41–53)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>Eb–Db</td>
<td>[piano solo overlaps end of preceding phrase]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(bb.53–7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coda</strong></td>
<td>F–Db–Ab</td>
<td>The poet offers the beloved his soul: the most profound offering is the poet bearing his soul to soothe the beloved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(bb.56–62)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In stanza I, stanza III and stanza IV, the overall harmonic movement appears to be centred around black keys, but in stanza II the movement is centred more around
white keys. This is most noticeable in stanza II, where the music suddenly shifts from $A_b$ to D, soon followed by a shift to F lydian-dominant, at bars 20–2, in the middle of the phrase. This shift to F lydian-dominant perhaps anticipates the close in B tonality, as the lydian-dominant notes of $B^\natural$ and $E_b$ translate to the root and (enharmonic) third in B. In stanza II, the poet beckons the beloved to come to him as she dreams, and he proceeds to describe the way he will expel her fears. The imagery of the dream could be represented through this sudden shift to white-key tonalities: dreams can move us to far away places, like the sudden shift from $A_b$ to D at this point in the tonal language. In stanza IV, where the music moves towards B tonalities, there is also a simultaneous poetic image of bitterness turning into joy. Once again, the shift from black-key centres to white-key centres occurs when the poetic imagery is moving from one state to another.

There was evidence in *Préludes* of black-key and white-key centres manipulated in a manner that created blocks of tonal colour representative of the past and present states. *Préludes* demonstrated an example whereby there was a sharp/flat key representation mimicking the dichotomy between past and present poetic imagery in the narrative. Perhaps in *Berceuse*, a similar approach may be ascertained through the changing white-key/black-key tonalities to represent different emotional states. Furthermore, as stanza II is the only stanza that expresses forgetting the pain of the past, perhaps the the shift to white-key tonalities at that point could be linked to this past state. The use of harmonic colour and tonality to portray particular aspects in the poetic narrative is not a new concept in song; however, Caplet’s approach to this suggests that he was concerned with the way ambiguous harmonic motion can be
manipulated in a manner that creates sonorities faithful to the musico-poetic relationship, while simultaneously adhering to his own harmonic voice.
2.6

Analytical Interpretation: *Berceuse*

*Berceuse* stands out in this set because there is an inherent formal layout in the *mélodie*, most likely driven by the poetic structure. The repetition of the poet’s direct address to the beloved at the beginning of each stanza establishes a structural cohesion. Caplet uses this as the basis for generating musical form in a way that pertains directly to the poetic make-up. Because of this, the *mélodie* shows a balance between structure and fluidity that differs to *Songe*, in that there is a pronounced use of recurring motives in the vocal part, and similarity of melodic shape embedded in the piano texture. In an interview in 2014, François Le Roux mentions:

> Caplet finds a way to find some classical form within the free form in order to ground the listener, but also be able to be fluid around it. Form in French poetry, historically, has been an extremely important element and undoubtedly Caplet would have been taught this in school.\(^87\)

This careful and faithful approach to form is evident in *Berceuse*, and the characteristics of both fluidity and structural grounding that Le Roux discusses are central to this. The poetic narrative, set in Springtime, suggests a sense of yearning and desire for union with the beloved, as well as an offering of hope and renewal. In terms of reflecting this poetic thought throughout the musical structure, it is necessary to consider the manner in which aspects of these elements may be portrayed. There is clear formal unity through motivic continuity in both the text and music. Additional strands of harmonic ambiguity, as previously discussed, and features of rhythmic distortion add elements of fluidity to this structure. To shed some light on the ways in which Caplet treats these almost opposing features of fluidity and grounding

\(^{87}\) Ibid. p.130
throughout the *mélodie*, this discussion will consider two characteristic details in the music:

- Continuity arising from the recurring vocal motive at the start of each stanza.
- Contour and grouping in the piano part.

**Continuity arising from the recurring vocal motive at the start of each stanza**

There are qualities common to all four vocal entries throughout the *mélodie*:

- Each entry, preceded by a rest, begins on the weak part of the bar.
- There is a sustained tone over the verb of the phrase, elongating the meaning in each line.
- There is, with the exception of the third entry, a time signature change midway through the phrase.
- The dynamic contour is relatively similar each time.

Example 2.6 contains each of these vocal motives. I label each motif using the verb in the phrase, as shown in the example on the following page.
The second entry, labelled Rêves, is almost an exact repetition of the first stanza insofar as it shares the same rhythm, time signature change, and is preceded by a quaver rest. In spite of its similarities, however, there are also some differences. The vocal line is placed a minor third lower and, interestingly, the downward leap at the end of the phrase is not the interval of a seventh as in the first vocal instance; it is a tritone, landing on F#. It could be interpreted that the ending-leap in this phrase is different to the previous one, despite the other similarities, due to the surrounding harmony of the phrase. It is at this point in the mélodie where Caplet moves abruptly from black keys to white keys, resulting in Dmaj9 with F# as the third of this chord. In the previous instances of this motivic shape, such as in the piano part at bar 1 and first vocal entry at bar 4, the phrases end with a downward leap to the third of the chord. If, in the D tonality entry, Caplet continued using the leap of a seventh to align with the previous statements it would force the motif to end on a tonic note, because the note preceding...
the final F♯ is a C. The vocal phrases rarely end on the tonic of the chord; furthermore, doing so could feel either too obvious or too final given the surrounding tonality.

It would seem appropriate then, that the ending note of the motif must land on a chord tone here because in order to follow the contour of the other statements, the end note must be a chord tone rather than a non-chord tone. If Caplet ended the phrase on the fifth of the chord, an A, there would not be a wide enough leap to remain faithful to the shape of the motif. If the music landed on a C or C♯, there would be an awkward octave leap on a seventh degree. It seems that there is no other option to avoid closure on the tritone interval because the tritone leap allows the phrase to close on the third of the chord as with the previous statements of the motif, and is a wide enough interval that it keeps the characteristic intervallic drop at the end of the phrase consistent.

The third entry, labelled Ris, is different to the previous entries: it is inverted and much more animated as the poet beckons his beloved to him in times of laughter. The rising melodic contour on the word ris elevates the verb to the highest point in the phrase, and the approaching rising piano texture reflects the heightened atmosphere. It is likely that the ascending motion of the motif in this instance is to reflect the laughers described by the poet. Some features of Vocal Motif I are retained, however. These include the long note over the verb, and the wide downward leap at the end of the phrase and, considering the harmonic movement, Caplet remains consistent in that the final note of the phrase drops a wide interval onto a chord tone. Unlike the previous examples, this time the interval is a minor sixth, but it is a wide enough leap to remain characteristic and recognisable by the listener. The surrounding harmony at this point
is B locrian-natural-two. The feature where the phrase ends on a chord tone is relevant to this statement of the motif, owing to the A♯ acting as the seventh of the chord at that point in the music.

In the fourth entry, labelled Pleures, the poet outlines the ways in which he can offer comfort. This motif is significant, because it is the only instance where there is significant textural shape in the piano overlapping with the entry of the vocal motif. The rhythm of the vocal line is similar to that of the first two stanzas. Familiar features such as the shift from 4/4 to 3/4 over the barline, triplets and tied notes recall the previous motives. Additionally, there is an accent on the first note, and diminuendo towards the end of the phrase, as the music characteristically leaps downward, and the harmonic shape of the phrase remains constant with that of the previous entries. In this instance, the music is centred in D♭ lydian-dominant. The vocal phrase ends with the downward leap of a minor seventh from B ♯ down to C#. I treat the C# as an enharmonic D♭. This outlines the leap as falling onto the root tone. Perhaps Caplet chose to direct the shape of the phrase to ending on a root tone as a point of closure; this is the last appeal the poet makes.

In the recordings of Berceuse, the interpretations tend to follow the melodic contour and meaning of the text over strictly adhering to the positioning of the barline within the score. This makes the twenty-one time signature changes much less audible, because although a clear pulse can be discerned, the strong and weak beats become subsumed by the strong and weak points of the text and, in Berceuse, the two do not consistently align.
Contour and grouping in the piano part

The melodic contour of the piano introduction has a distinctive shape, characterised by similar elements to the vocal motif, including a drop of a minor third, a downward leap of a minor seventh landing on the third of the surrounding $A_b$ chord, and triplet rhythms. These elements help make this piano motif easily identifiable when it recurs throughout, because its shape contrasts other textures in the piano accompaniment, such as block chordal movements and running semiquaver figurations. The single line shaping of this motif is clearly much more melodic, a feature which helps it cohesively translate into the vocal part without losing recognisability. If the construction of this piano motif was more chordal, dense, or fuller in texture it would be harder for the listener to associate it with the first line of each stanza.

There is an opening time signature of 4/4, and the placement of minim chords in the first two full bars adds a sense of metric regularity. Within this, there is an ascending motif beginning on the second note of the triplet, and rising to the third beat of the bar. Not only is this ascending shape a characteristic part of the vocal motive, but it also recurs at the animé section at bars 39–41. Example 2.7 illustrates this ascending motif and outlines the groupings in brackets. This motif can be grouped in three, and almost always begins on the second note of a triplet, rising to the first note of the next beat. This creates a sense of arrival on the third note of the group, but distorts the sense of where the triplet lies within the bar.
Example 2.7: *Berceuse* piano introduction comparative motivic textures.

*Ascending motif bars 1–2, compared with textures at bars 39–40*

As well as embedding a sense of continuity between the vocal and piano texture, there appears to be a similarity between the placement of the ascending figuration in *Berceuse* and *Songe*. For example, there is potentially a connection between the aforementioned shape at the *animé* part, and the similarly shaped *en animant et augmentant beaucoup* section in bars 35–41 of *Songe*. Example 2.8 shows the opening two bars of each part for comparative purposes, with groupings annotated in brackets:

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Example 2.8: *Berceuse* bars 37-42 and *Songe* bars 35-41; comparative motivic textures

*Berceuse*: bars 37–42

*Songe*: bars 35–41

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Several points become apparent when these passages are compared:

• Both contain a rising triplet figuration with identical groupings, ending with the final note placed on the first beat of the bar that follows. (Bar 41 in Berceuse, and bar 38 in Songe).

• Both share the same performance indication and dynamic shape: Caplet prescribes identical instructions each time: en animant for Berceuse and animé for Songe, with both beginning loud and fading through the phrase to diminuendo.

• Both contain triplet descending groupings, with a chord on the third note in each group of three. In Berceuse, these are minims, and in Songe, these appear as crotchets.

• Both change time signature to a smaller value towards the end of the phrase for one bar then change again: in Berceuse the music moves from 4/4 to 3/4 at bar 43 then to 3/2 as bar 45 commences, and in Songe the music moves from 3/4 to 2/4 in bar 41, followed by a shift to 3/4 in bar 42.

• In both examples, the treble-clef part of the piano accompaniment suggests evidence of grouping dissonance with the bass-clef part. The ascending grouping figurations begin on the second note of the triplet which offsets the crotchet beat. The chords (minims in Berceuse, crotchets in Songe) are positioned in alignment with the metre, particularly in bars 41-42 in Berceuse and bars 39-40 in Songe. The ascending grouping figurations begin on the second note of the triplet.

In performances of Berceuse, Alain Jacquon opts to bring out this ascending shape, whereas Noel Lee places emphasis on the pairs of quavers at the beginning of bar 41 and 42 respectively. By doing this, he affirms the regularity in the metre more than Jacquon. Line Marand, like Alain Jacquon, brings out the ascending shape, but her interpretation also accentuates the diminuendo in bar 42 more than the others. The diminuendo affords more space for the rhythms of the vocal line to command the listener’s attention at this point.

The question of the significance of this ascending shape must be addressed. In the vocal motive, the ascending shape occurs repeatedly over the emotional states the poet addresses to the beloved. For example: ‘quand tu chantes, quand tu rêves’ etc.
Perhaps the repetition of the ascending triplet shape throughout the musical texture helps reinforce the poet’s hopeful acceptance of the beloved in any emotional state.

Overall, throughout Berceuse and Songe, the interplay of rhythmic nonalignment due to the placement of triplet grouping could be interpreted as a connecting figure. Having said that, these two pieces were composed in the same year, and in the same place. Between the emergence of the first two mélodies in Le vieux coffret, and the third, there was a gap of two years before Caplet revisited the cycle. Both Songe and Berceuse embraced themes of love and devotion, and moving towards In a una selva oscura, a slightly different theme emerges.
**Le vieux coffret by Remy de Gourmont**

No. 3: *In a una selva oscura* (1917)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In una selva oscura</th>
<th>In a dark forest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>La lumière est plus pur et les fleurs sont plus douces,</td>
<td>The light is purer and the flowers are softer,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le vent qui passe apporte des roses lointaines,</td>
<td>The wind which passes brings distant roses,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Les pavés sous nos pieds deviennent de la mousse,</td>
<td>The cobblestones under our feet become moss,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous aspirons l'odeur des herbes et des fontaines.</td>
<td>We will breathe in the smell of herbs and fountains.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un printemps nous enveloppe de son sourire,</td>
<td>A spring envelopes us with its smile,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entre nous et le bruit un rideau de verdure Tremble et chatoie, nous protège et</td>
<td>Between us and the noise, a curtain of verdure Quivers and shimmers, protects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soupire,</td>
<td>us and sighs,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cependant que notre âme s'exalte et se rassure.</td>
<td>While our souls grow excited and feel reassured.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O vie! Fais que ce léger rideau de verdure Devienne une forêt impenetrable aux</td>
<td>Oh life! May this soft curtain of verdure Become an impenetrable forest to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hommes</td>
<td>mankind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Où nos coeurs, enfermés dans sa fraicheur obscure,</td>
<td>Where our hearts, enclosed in its dark freshness,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soient oubliés du monde, sans plus penser au monde!</td>
<td>May be forgotten by the world, without thinking anymore of the world!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.7
Formal Overview: *In una selva oscura*

*In una selva oscura* was composed in November 1916, at a time when Caplet was active in the Somme at Cappy as a liaison officer, as well as with duties in Verdun. 1916 was a particularly difficult time of the war, as insights from Lucien Durosoir’s personal letters show. In the following extract, Durosoir writes to his mother in the summer of 1916, describing the aftermath of attacks at Fort Douamont in Verdun. General Charles Mangin was in command, and Durosoir recounts high numbers of injury and loss. He describes Caplet buried under a landslide:

*C'est un gros succès pour Mangin et sa division: malheureusement nos pertes sont grandes et le regiment a au moins 1500 hommes hors de combat, il y a beaucoup d'officiers tués. Je n'ai encore que des nouvelles peu précises. Caplet a été enfoui fois sous des éboulements, mais ce ne sera rien, il n'a que des contusions et se remettra en peu de jours.*

This is a big success for Mangin and his division: Unfortunately our losses are great and the regiment has at least 1500 men out of combat, there are many officers killed. I still have only a few specifics of news. Caplet has been buried once under landslides, but it will be nothing, he has only bruises and will recover in a few days.88

It would be impossible that this exposure to physical and emotional turmoil did not affect Caplet, thus the beautifully nostalgic atmosphere and imagery of transformation from dark to light in *In una selva oscura* would have undoubtedly held appeal. Similar to the previous two works in the set, the Alexandrine form with a three-stanza rhyming scheme of ABAB CDCD DEDF is characteristic of the poem. *In una selva oscura,*

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however, provides a striking contrast in that the Italian title could be a reference to the opening of Dante’s Inferno. Marie-Chrísine Catherine explains this further:

[Remy de Gourmont] evokes the horror of Dante's descent into hell in the title, but does not deliver on this theme. Instead, he creates an ethereal haven of beauty, colour, lightness, and light. This is a poem of transformation and resurrection ... *In una selva oscura* combines and illuminates many of the themes that we have already observed in Caplet's war songs, such as nature, nostalgia, exile, escape into an inner world that is veiled by the outer world, and death and resurrection. The poem itself is a spiritual rather than a deeply Christian poem, incorporating the powerful symbology of Christianity as an expressive rather than a religious device. Although using the image of the rose which represents Christ in Christian symbology, Gourmont later calls, not on God, but on nature personified for protection.89

Throughout the three stanzas, a world unfolds in a through-composed manner where the forest is light and pure and as the hard stones turn to soft moss the poet and his beloved are enveloped and protected by the greenery. The concluding thoughts of being locked away in the forest and unconnected to the outside world certainly would have appealed to Caplet, given his situation in the war. In light of the poem's theme of the protective powers of nature, Allen suggests that there is a possibility Caplet's strong religious faith also resonated with this theme. Caplet was devoted to the Catholic faith and it is likely that his faith intensified and perhaps provided comfort during the war. Allen deliberates that:

Caplet's deeply rooted catholicism suggests that for him the theme of death and resurrection in *In una selva oscura* held specific religious meaning. The sense of threat and betrayal evidenced in the unfulfilled rhyme scheme may serve to express his sense of the precariousness of man's existence in the face of war.90

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89 Marie-Chrísine Catherine Allen, 'The Wartime Mélodies of André Caplet' (DMA Dissertation, University of Arizona, 1994). pp.82–3

90 Ibid. p.84
Although the poetic form is structured, and to an extent this structure is mirrored through textural shapes, the *mélodie* cannot be placed as either a fully strophic or through-composed example. Because there is order and functionality in the harmonic and poetic structure, a sense of through-composition does not wholly fit this music. Likewise, the changing textures throughout prevent a completely strophic form. A sense of cohesiveness can be suggested through similarity between passages of texture in the piano part. For example, the rippling textures in the opening that reflect the dappled light of the forest are evoked in the final portion of the song when the narrative once again recalls similar imagery surrounding the greenery.

The tonal scheme of *In una selva oscura* is, to a certain degree, similar to *Songe* in that the overall tonal motion does not move through standard and expected tonal progressions. Rather, this harmonic plan can be interpreted as shifting through surface motion tonal centres, situated at relatively close intervallic distances. The music does not stay in each given tonal centre for a long period of time; potentially as a harmonic impression of the constant movements of light and shade evoked in the poetic imagery. Somewhat similarly to the previous two *mélodies*, just taking the implied roots of the following tonalities, the D–A tonal movement returns through the first phrase, followed by a stepwise movement to G tonalities leading into the next. Surface motion in thirds is evident throughout the second phrase, through centres circling G–B–D. The final stanza makes its way back to recall the opening tonality.

Now considering the building blocks of tonality these root movements produce, a strongly modal quality emerges from the outset that is exemplified through the opening phrase motion from D lydian–A lydian. Following this, the G tonal centre
reveals lydian-dominant extensions, and with the move to the third phrase the D–B motion illustrates D octatonic–B locrian-natural-two–B minor; a modal descriptor of the despairing life beyond the forest’s safety at the start of the third stanza. Linking the tonal motion to imagery in the text, the poetic narrative can potentially be chartered through the changing harmonic colour. Like Berceuse, I define the sections in this mélodie according to stanza layout. Table 2.5 shows this overview:

Table 2.5 In a una selva oscura Tonal Poetic Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Overall Tonal Movement</th>
<th>Poetic Image</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stanza I</strong></td>
<td>D lydian–A lydian</td>
<td>Light in the forest, stones softening to moss and heightened senses as smells of grass and fountains swirl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(bb.1–11)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>A9–G lydian-dominant</td>
<td>Piano solo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(bb.12–15)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stanza II</strong></td>
<td>G lydian-dominant–B</td>
<td>Enveloped by spring and protected by the dense greenery. The soul feels reassured.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(bb.16–26)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>B minor–D locrian-natural-two</td>
<td>Piano solo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(bb.26–30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stanza III</strong></td>
<td>B locrian-natural-two–F♯–Bm–D lydian</td>
<td>A suggestion of how difficult life outside the haven of the forest can be. The greenery becomes a respite for the poet and his beloved; a barrier from the outside world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(31–46)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This outlines that overall, the structure of the music is underpinned by the poetic form. The two relatively short piano solos behave as natural separators between each stanza, but are not long enough to create significantly large textural passages. A sense of unity can then be traced between the similarity of textures in the first and final portions.
An exploration of the tonal scheme reveals a connection of common tone movement between these more significant progressions, perhaps as a way of enabling smoother movement and a sense of continuity throughout the *mélodie*, such as using common tones between D lydian and A lydian in the first phrase. Moving from the end of the first phrase into the second, A lydian-dominant shares C♯ with G lydian-dominant, which also has the common tone B for linking the tonal movement at the end of the phrase. The harmonic plan through the beginning of the last phrase spells D locrian-natural-two–Bm–F♯, as bars 29–30 on the structural overview chart demonstrate. The movement outlined across bars 29–30 could be significant, because the chords Caplet uses as a harmonic basis for these ten bars are built around common tone movements that suggest the chord tones in B minor. The final chordal movement outlines a Bm–D lydian, rather than a strong dominant – tonic motion. Perhaps the shade and constantly changing light of the forest evoked in the poetry is reflected through the harmonic motion of the final five bars towards the end.

The locrian-natural-two–locrian–minor centricities at bars 29–30 is significant in relation to the text. This modal point occurs after the second phrase ends, leading into the third phrase. There is a very marked change of texture in bar 29, coinciding with the D locrian-natural-two entry. The texture becomes more sparse, then opens out to a rising piano flourish. The poet’s exasperation or disillusion with life becomes more evident at this point in the narrative, and the diminished sonority of the octatonic could represent life in the outside world. As the poet exclaims *O viel*, Caplet surrounds
it with dark tonality, The half diminished B locrian-natural-two on the *pp* piano chord on the third beat of bar 31, the rippling demisemiquaver octave figure in rhythmic diminution from the end of bar 31, and sudden rising and falling dynamic levels, as bars 30-31 move rapidly between *cresc. molto* to *sff* to *ppp*, all suggest the harshness of life outside the forest. In bar 33, as the poet speaks of the forest’s greenery and the implied peace and tranquility therein, the tonality begins to somewhat lighten as his heart lifts: the half-diminished gives way to minor as B locrian-natural-two shifts to B minor. As the poet’s thoughts move further from the turmoil of life outside, and more towards the safety of the forest, the tonality lightens more, through the lydian-dominant tonalities from the last beat of bar 33. The music passes through G lydian-dominant, D lydian and C lydian, resolving to D⁹ on the fourth quaver beat of bar 35.

It can not be a complete coincidence that *Détresse*, composed in 1915, uses a similar technique to tonally portray these moments of despair or upset. Caplet uses progressions of half-diminished moving to diminished that then transform to octatonic to illustrate points of anguish in the narrative. Although tonally reflecting themes is not a new concept, Caplet’s specific manner of linking of modal tonality to imagery to musically express and explore aspects of poetry shows a sophisticated demonstration of the portrayal of both poetic atmosphere and language in music.

The changing harmonic colours in relation to the image of the greenery within the forest is not restricted to the harmonic movement circling bars 30–3. In the second stanza there is reference to the ‘curtain of greenery’, and once again Caplet represents this through shifting tonal colour. In bars 20–2, as the poet declares:
Entre nous et le brut un rideau de verdure
Tremble et chatoie, nous protege et soupire

Between us and the noise a curtain of verdure
Quivers and shimmers, protects us and sighs

There is a sequence of alternating seventh chords, that could be representative of the movement of the leaves, or the dappling of light through the trees. As Allen suggests:

A lovely "rideau de verdure" ("curtain of foliage") is created in measures 20–2 by parallel seventh chords, typical impressionist "planing" chords, over an F pedal, with a tremolo F–G motif painting the rustling of the leaves.91

This mélodie is fully evocative of the sensory impact of the forest. The poem is built on images of shades of light dappled through the leaves, the whisper and murmur of the foliage, the feeling of the hard stones turning to soft moss, the dark freshness of the earthy-scented air, and the soul’s elated response to the protective power of nature. Just as colourful harmonic interplay can evoke these images, the texture through the mélodie does so too. Caplet utilises different textures to musically suggest the poetic atmosphere. Textural density and register appear as the two primary approaches to textural variation. Textural density occurs as the music builds to a climactic point in the final verse as the poet’s narrative reaches the conclusion that the forest could block out the outside world. High register plays a part in the first phrase, as the poet speaks of the lightness and breeze that flows through the forest. The register of the piano, through rippling semiquavers, gives an impression of light dancing through the treetops. As the work unfolds and the poet seeks protection and comfort from the forest, the texture becomes more and more concentrated, perhaps as he moves deeper into the forest’s dense foliage. This is most apparent from bar 32 onwards.

91 Ibid. p. 85
Caplet uses rhythmic diminution to help approach the climactic point in the music and that, combined with a wider register that utilises the full range of the piano, could be suggested as a way tension is increased and the need for escape from the outside world is affirmed. Overall, the themes of transformation and of light and shade are pronounced throughout Caplet’s harmonic language in this mélodie: there is much more modal colour in this than in the two preceding mélodies, and the harmonic progressions unfold with a deep sense of spiritual and poetic relevance.
2.9

Analytical Interpretation: *In a una selva oscura*

The rhythmic quality in *In una selva oscura* demonstrates aspects of rhythmic dissonance somewhat similar to those evidenced throughout *Songe* and *Berceuse*. There is a play on imagery of light and shade filtering through the trees of the forest, as well as deeper themes of escape and exile to another world. Just as Caplet used harmonic devices to create a sense of motion and, in places, modal colour and ambiguity, the rhythmic quality contributes to an expression of poetic imagery through several primary features. Additionally, there are multiple time signature changes throughout. As in previous works, this is likely due to the nature of the prosody combined with a desire to create a sense of poetic mystery and fluidity through the resulting nonalignment between the vocal and piano phrases. Two primary areas will be considered in the ensuing discussion, in an effort to interpret some of the rhythmic aspects Caplet uses to portray expressive meaning. These primary areas are as follows:

- Rhythmic grouping as a means of highlighting poetic intensity.

- Use of rhythmic grouping to create a sense of continuity between *In una selva oscura, Songe* and *Berceuse*.

**Rhythmic grouping as a means of highlighting poetic intensity**

Interpreting the second verse of *In una selva oscura*, the unfolding images of Spring envelop the poet. At this point in the poetic trajectory, the poet is deep in the forest and feels its protective powers reassure and elate his soul. This event is more intense than that of the first stanza, because the poet truly experiences the forest as a
protective entity situated away from the outside world; he feels safe there. The greater intensity of this feeling is reflected through a textural density and, arising from this, a more complex line of rhythmic grouping.

The preparation for this area of grouping could be pinpointed to the piano solo passage at bar 12. The textures change to rippling semiquavers, mostly in support of the rippling fountains of forest streams. This texture is developed at bar 14, however, and transformed in bars 15–17 to support the vocal entry of the first line of stanza two. I group this passage on the basis of a recurring distinctive downward leaping motion. I suggest downward rather than rising, because of the placement of the slurs and accents in bar 14 in the treble-clef piano part, and the descending semiquaver figuration in the bass-clef part of the same bar direct the ear in a descending pattern. Example 2.9 shows this line annotated with brackets in order to illuminate the groupings on this basis.

Example 2.9: In a una selva oscura bars 14–16

Bar 14 could potentially be interpreted as an example of displacement dissonance. Because these two layers are equivalent in that both are crotchet beat values, the
semiquaver rests either side of the groups in the bass-clef line aurally suggest a different position, displaced by starting on the first semiquaver note of the group. In bar 15, the downward motion remains grouped in quaver pairs, but a sense of anticipation emerges through the combination of quicker triplet values with a poco rit. direction at the end of the bar. As this grouping pattern continues into bar 16, a feeling of rhythmic conflict between the piano and vocal lines – that distorts the pulse at that point – arises due to the position of the vocal line. Considering this against the backdrop of poetic imagery, it may appear that as the poet is enveloped in Springtime in the forest, his emotions intensify as he experiences a sense of freedom. Perhaps this freedom is reflected rhythmically at this point.

It would appear that the displacement of pulse in bar 15 is intentional. Caplet – very precise with performance indications – requires accents on each of the chords falling on even beats in bar 14. Despite the softer dynamic in bar 15, there is an accent placed on the second offset chord. This displacement would suggest that the distorting of the beat, and subsequent blurring of the aural barline, was a means of dramatic effect highlighting the poetic tone at that point. In the three recordings of In a una selva oscura, none of the three pianists choose to give the accent in bar 15 the same emphasis as the accents in bar 14. There may be several reasons for this:

- The tied semiquavers at the beginning of bar 15 feel like quavers, and are then followed by triplet quavers with ties that feel like crotchets, giving an impression of rhythmic augmentation.

- The dynamics require specific weight change and articulation: pp is followed by a diminuendo.
• There is a significant change of tempo due to the *poco rit.* indication (combined with the aforementioned rhythmic augmentation).

• The low G♮ is the first significant low-register pitch in the *mélodie.*

At the end of the vocal line in bar 18, discerning an audible difference between the tied triplets in bar 16 and the dotted figuration in the right hand of the piano part becomes blurred. Perhaps this is due to a further aspect of rhythmic augmentation in bar 17, whereby the first descending pattern is heard in semiquavers, and the second is heard in triplets. The triplet rhythmic motif recalls that which featured in previous *mélodies*: the first note of the triplet is replaced by a quaver rest which distorts the grouping of three. In addition, this is heard against a crotchet triplet in the vocal line that further offsets the 4/4 pulse in the bar.

**Use of rhythmic grouping to create a sense of continuity between *In una selva oscura*, *Songe*, and *Berceuse***

Despite the two-year gap between the composition of *In una selva oscura* and the first two *mélodies* in the set, Caplet creates a sense of continuity in *Le vieux coffret* through use of a recurring rhythmic triplet figure. For example, in *In una selva oscura*, the figure appears for the first time in the piano part at the beginning of bar 8, as shown in Example 2.10:

**Example 2.10: *In una selva oscura* bar 8 piano part**

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The use of this rhythmic feature reappears throughout the work, such as in the vocal part at bars 9, 21, and 24, and in each instance has the same effect: the quaver rest on the first note of the triplet offsets the grouping and, in doing so, pushes the triplet pulse onto a weaker beat of the bar to create nonalignment between the vocal and piano parts. This form of rhythmic dissonance could be interpreted as a subliminal dissonance, because at these points the offset triplet grouping pulses result in the listener hearing the implied beat in a nonaligned manner with the given time signature.

A sense of familiarity is further created though the repeated use of this triplet figuration in bars 4–5, and bars 8–9. These instances occur over the first and third lines of stanza one, where both lines describe elements of the forest: the first describes the softness of flowers and purity of light in the forest, and the third line builds on this imagery with descriptions of stones turning to moss. Framed by quaver rests, both phrases outline similarly-grouped shapes. Caplet’s use of the offset triplet grouping in the second phrase is significant because:

- It represents a development of the first line in both the poetic text and the music. The poetic text describes turning stones to moss as the rhythm develops in the piano part of bar 9.

- The offset grouping of the triplet figuration could be interpreted as recalling the offset triplet grouping in the previous mélodies in the set. This helps to create a feeling of overall continuity and rhythmic flow between the works.
Example 2.11 demonstrates this grouping and shows the similarity between these:

**Example 2.11: Vocal line in bars 4–5 compared with bars 8–9**

```
4
\(\text{dolce}\)

\(\text{La lumière est plus pure et les fleurs sont plus douces,}\)

8
\(\text{pp}\)

\(\text{Les pavés, sous nos pieds deviennent de la mousse,}\)
```

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The interpretation of grouping in the vocal line demonstrates that, to the listener’s ear, Caplet evokes a feeling simultaneously familiar and different. The similarity between these is noticeable in Lionel Peintre’s interpretation because he fully emphasises the crescendo through the line. The specific use of this crescendo results in more weight placed on the A and the B of bar 8, as their position in the bar aligns with that of the longer quavers in bar 4. The outcome is an impression of symmetry between the two bars. Dominique Favat chooses a slightly quicker tempo, and places less emphasis on the crescendo. This interpretative choice gives less time for a noticeable stress on the A and the B, and as a result there appears to be more contrast between bars 4 and 8. Both of these interpretations offer different perspectives on the balance of the phrase. Favat’s slightly contrasting approach to the triplet groupings in bar 8 disguises them more and the impression is that the music is evolving and moving forward. The similarity between the phrases heard through Peintre’s interpretation suggests he is interested in demonstrating Caplet’s approach to aspects of cyclic unity of the overall set through highlighting these rhythmic groupings. Because there are multiple
possibilities of interpretation Caplet’s approach to rhythmic dissonance and grouping, there are also multiple interpretations for performing this.

*In a una selva oscura* is, above all, a homage to the restorative powers of nature. The poet dreams of escaping from all that surrounds him in order to lose himself in the protective realm of the forest world. There is a strong theme of underlying yearning, as well as celebrating the power of nature. In the depths of the war, it is likely Caplet experienced moments of yearning to escape, similar to the poetic expression in the text. The use of musico-poetic tonal reflection as well as aspects of rhythmic distortion illustrate some of the approaches from which Caplet draws to create this atmosphere.
**Le vieux coffret by Remy de Gourmont**

**No. 4: Forêt (1917)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forêt</th>
<th>Forest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ô Forêt, toi qui vis passer bien des amants&lt;br&gt;Le long de tes sentiers, sous tes profonds feuillages,&lt;br&gt;Confidente des jeux, des cris, et des serment&lt;br&gt;Témoin à qui les âmes avouaient leurs orages.&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;Ô Forêt, souviens-toi de ceux qui sont venus&lt;br&gt;Un jour d’été fouler tes mousses et tes herbes,&lt;br&gt;Car ils ont trouvé là des baisers ingénus&lt;br&gt;Couleur de feuilles, couleur d’écorces, couleur de rêves.&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;Ô Forêt, tu fus bonne, en laissant le désir&lt;br&gt;Fleurir, ardente fleur, au sein de ta verdure.&lt;br&gt;L’ombre devint plus fraîche: un frisson de plaisir&lt;br&gt;Enchanta les deux coeurs et toute la nature.&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;Ô Forêt, souviens-toi de ceux qui sont venus&lt;br&gt;Un jour d’été fouler tes herbes solitaires&lt;br&gt;Et contempler, distraits, tes arbres ingénus&lt;br&gt;Et le pâle océan de tes vertes fougères.</td>
<td>Oh Forest, you who saw many lovers pass along your paths, under your dense foliage,&lt;br&gt;Confident of games, of cried, and of pledges,&lt;br&gt;Witness to whom the souls confessed their storms.&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;Oh forest, remember those who came&lt;br&gt;One day of summer to tread on your mosses and your herbs,&lt;br&gt;For they found there ingenuous kisses&lt;br&gt;The colour of leaves, the colour of bark, the colour of dreams.&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;Oh forest, you were good, to let the desire blossom,&lt;br&gt;Ardent flower, in the bosom of your verdure.&lt;br&gt;The shade becomes cooler: a shudder of pleasure&lt;br&gt;Enchanted the two hearts and the whole of nature.&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;Oh forest, remember those who came&lt;br&gt;One day of summer to tread down your solitary grass and contemplate, distracted, your ingenuous trees&lt;br&gt;And the pale ocean of your green ferns.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.10

Formal Overview: Forêt

Forêt was - and still is - loved by many. Denis Huneau regards it as the most important in the *Le vieux coffret* collection, and mentions ‘*Forêt, la plus importante de recueil*’ It was popular amongst Caplet’s contemporaries, reportedly loved by Emma Debussy, and hailed by Pierre Bernac as an outstanding work in French vocal literature:

> This is one of the most beautiful *mélodies* of all the French concert repertoire: a perfect alloy of poem and music, the lyricism as well as the refinement of the music make its interpretation a delight for the performers.

As a respected interpreter of the French *mélodie*, Bernac studied personally with Caplet. Graham Johnson sheds light on this relationship, and explains that Caplet was swift to recognise Bernac’s expressive potential:

> Caplet was among the first to champion the young Bernac’s singing, and would have established a recital duo with him if early death had not intervened [...] Caplet was apparently an extraordinary accompanist with a magical command of tonal colour.

Indeed, Bernac’s comment on the beauty of Forêt is certainly not exaggerated: this is a wonderfully ethereal and enchanting piece of music. Bernac’s role in this vocalist-

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93 Ibid. p.513 cites a letter exchanged between Caplet and Emma Debussy dated & January 1922, where Emma Debussy mentioned how much she loved *Forêt*: “*celle qu’Emma Debussy aimait!*”


pianist relationship with Caplet furnished him with great insight into the composer’s musical intentions in terms of interpretative qualities such as tone, tempo changes, colour, and articulation. Furthermore, Bernac studied with Caplet, and ‘by dint of serious study with Andrè Caplet, Walter Straram and the German singer Reinhold von Warlich ... Bernac in the meantime acquired an utterly professional technique.’ But this raises the question: what exactly elevated Forêt to a plane worthy of such high praise by performers such as Bernac and others? As Caplet was teacher to, and recital partner with Bernac, could it be that Bernac’s respect and admiration for Caplet-the-musician transferred into the latter’s music, or is Forêt truly deserving of standing alongside other significant works in the French mélodie concert repertoire? Claire Croiza, close friend of Caplet and interpreter of his mélodies, recounts: ‘For me, Caplet’s Forêt has an emotional quality and an inner richness that are unique.’

Furthermore, Williametta Spencer explains:

> Forêt is equally notable for a concentrated warmth and intensity of unusual proportions, and with an equally harmonious and rich pianistic accompaniment. It was the only work of Caplet (in its orchestral version) chosen to be performed on October 1, 1922 on a French Music Festival in Amsterdam and sung by the famous singer Mme Croiza.

The “inner richness and emotional quality” mentioned by Croiza, and “concentrated warmth” mentioned by Spencer may stem from the marriage of poetic meaning and music: the mélodie is Caplet’s musical expression of Gourmont’s poem.

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96 Nicolas Southon and Roger Nicols, eds., *Francis Poulenc: Articles and Interviews: Notes from the Heart* (London: Routledge, 2014). Interview 8: Pierre Bernac, or the Unexpected Partner


98 Williametta Spencer ‘The Influence and Stylistic Heritage of André Caplet’ (PhD Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1974). p.177

174
Forêt was composed in March 1917 at Lunéville, at a point where Caplet had been twice wounded in the war. It is likely he was jaded by three years of fighting and trauma, so perhaps the tranquility and serenity within this poem resonated. Spencer mentions that ‘Forêt deal[s] with the mystery of nature and the relationship of man to nature. In Forêt the poet speaks to the forest.’

The poem is structured in four stanzas, with an Alexandrine rhyming scheme. But, there is a reworking of this scheme in the second verse which Allen describes:

The rhyming pattern is distorted in the second and fourth lines ("herbes" and and the standard caesura dividing the twelve syllable line into two hemistièches disappears in the fourth line. This line is instead broken into thirds, and thus becomes Alexandrine trimeter. The poem then reverts to binary Alexandrine meter.

The resulting rhyming scheme is thus: ABAB CDCE FGFG HIHI. Allen suggests the breakdown of the rhyming scheme in this way is the poet’s metaphor for the yearning of times gone past. Perhaps Caplet felt this nostalgia for happier times before the outbreak of war. Moreover, there is a nostalgic quality explored throughout the themes of this poem that builds on themes presented in In una selva oscura. Marie-Catherine Christine Allen states that:

The division of the Alexandrine meter into three instead of two parts in the second quatrain, and the dissolution of the rhyming pattern in that same quatrain, reinforces the concept of a breaking down, an increasing alienation. The nostalgia expressed in this poem is a yearning for spiritual wholeness, perhaps already experienced, perhaps ("couleur de reves") merely imagined.

99 Ibid. p.226
100 Marie-Cristine Catherine Allen, 'The Wartime Mélodies of André Caplet' (DMA Dissertation, University of Arizona, 1994). p.88
101 Ibid. p.89
Forêt can be linked to In una selva oscura through a possible theme established in the latter: that of the deeper restorative connection between man and nature. In Forêt, however, the time has passed. The poet reflects on past events in the forest, and as each verse addresses the forest, the poet reminisces on what has gone by. Allen describes:

In "Forêt" the full summer has come and gone, and only through nostalgia can the poet resurrect his beloved. He personifies the forest so that it becomes a companion to replace the one he has lost, and so that it can share in the memory and thus in the resurrection of the beloved.102

The poet recounts various memories of the past throughout the poetic trajectory and, with each stanza addressing the forest as the narrative unfolds, it becomes apparent that there is more than one character in this poem. The poet speaks to the forest, but he also speaks of past loves and time spent in the forest. As the poet addresses the forest and recalls the many lovers who have passed through the heavy foliage, more and more memories are contemplated as the poem unfolds. This infuses a strong sense of nostalgia for three characters: the forest as an entity, the poet himself, and the lovers of past times.

Like Berceuse, there are strophic elements in this setting, and it is possible to interpret the construction of this mélodie as semi-strophic form. There are combined compositional elements that could be related to both Berceuse and In una selva oscura in Forêt: use of repetition offers a sense of cohesiveness, and although not fully strophic in the traditional sense, the work unfolds and tells its story through textural variation that retains unifying features. Caplet draws on the orchestral potential of the

102 Ibid. p. 88
piano, through coloristic changes in tone and balance, and by drawing from the entire wide range of the piano to reflect the forest’s breadth.

The first line of the second stanza is repeated directly at the beginning of the final stanza, creating a sense of balance and unity in the poem, a feature that Caplet reflects musically, too. A stately chordal motif appears as each stanza enters, capturing the majestic nature of the forest. This rich descending chordal pattern could be an aural description of the tall trees in the forest: a strong and instantly recognisable event in the texture that acts as a unifying aspect in the music. In summary, this motif is significant in the musical fabric for several reasons:

• It is the principal unifying motif in the work and an integral part of the poetic imagery.

• The recurring nature of the motif in terms of its connection to the forest suggests it may be interpreted as a leitmotif fixture in the work.

• The placement of the motif infuses a structural formality to the work that allows it to develop organically, but simultaneously retains a sense of structure and continuity in terms of the overall musical structure.

Forêt, therefore, could be interpreted as a mélodie that expresses a deep sense of stillness and reverence and nostalgia, and that connects and builds on the themes and atmosphere of In a una selva oscura. Considering aspects of harmonic colour, piano texture, and interpretation of points of rhythmic grouping can help to demonstrate the ways in which Caplet effectively captures the atmospheric quality of the poetic language.
2.11

Aspects of Poetic Harmony: Forêt

The tonal plan of Forêt is slightly different to the previous three mélodies in the set in that, despite the key signature of E♭ major, the suggestion of a plagal relationship outlined in the earlier works is not clearly evidenced until the final cadential progression. Rather, Forêt begins with the descending chordal motif that strongly establishes F minor tonality. This chordal motif is constructed upon the supertonic in E♭ rather than the tonic or dominant. There could be three primary rationales for this:

- The use of the supertonic as a starting point adds an element of the mysterious to the forest. The forest has been a long-time steadfast fixture, that undoubtedly has witnessed many events and happenings. This element of mystery created by the supertonic starting point perhaps tonally suggests that the forest possesses knowledge, and holds secrets of past times.

- The construction of the chordal motif is based upon strong consonant intervals of fourths and fifths. This suggests that for its mystery, and minor quality, the strength of the forest is reflected through these intervals.

- A harmonic feature in this mélodie, as well in as others, is Caplet’s use of surface motion. This demonstrates tonal movements upwards or downwards in small intervallic distances, and the starting supertonic relationship reflects this.

If the tonal centre changed before this first invocation of the forest ended, it would perhaps undermine both the implied stability of the forest, and its lasting strength through time. Later in the mélodie we do see shifting harmonies around the forest motif, but it is possible that, from the outset, Caplet wanted to establish the majestic strength of the forest through stable and unwavering tonal point. Supporting this idea, Croiza states:
In Forêt, the marvellous vision of the opening should be quite different from what comes after the pause. ‘Toi qui vis passer...’; the pause mark after the first ‘O Forêt’ does not appear in the printed copy, but Caplet wanted a pause here. It is needed in order to separate the call from that which follows.\textsuperscript{103}

This suggests that Caplet wanted to differentiate the opening statement of the the motif from the rest of the mélodie, as well as requesting a pause in performance. Tonal separation helps to define this opening statement.

According to Joel Harder:

Caplet expertly uses the strophic nature of the poem as blueprint for his musical structure, allowing for certain repeating elements to establish a sense of recall but also allowing musical ideas to develop organically.\textsuperscript{104}

Harder refers to the manner in which the strophic-like elements in the poetic structure support the formal layout. Building on this, it can be suggested that the tonal structure further reflects these strophic elements. Caplet isolates the harmony in the opening bars, but further throughout the mélodie, the tonal plan could be perceived as two main areas: the tonality within the phrases – where one phrase covers an entire stanza, inclusive of subphrases representing individual lines within – and the tonality outlined in the shape of the chordal forest motif. Table 2.6 shows each section labelled in accordance with the corresponding stanza, because it helps define the semi-strophic nature. The B1 section could be interpreted as overlapping the end of section C, because the piano motif appears to begin as the vocal line of the Section C ends.


Table 2.6: *Forêt* Tonal Poetic Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Forest Motif &amp; Stanza</th>
<th>Overall Tonal Movement</th>
<th>Poetic Image</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong> (Bars 1–13)</td>
<td>Forest Motif (bars 1–2)</td>
<td>F minor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stanza I (Bars 3–13)</td>
<td>$D_{b}$ Lydian-Dominant</td>
<td>The memory of the lovers who passed through the forest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong> (Bars 14–27)</td>
<td>Forest Motif (Bars 12–14)</td>
<td>$A_{b}$ minor –B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stanza II (bars 14–27)</td>
<td>$B_{b}$–F</td>
<td>The memory of a summer’s day,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong> (Bars 28–48)</td>
<td>Double Forest Motif (Bars 26–27: ends Stanza II) (Bars 28–30: begins Stanza III)</td>
<td>$B_{b}$–$E_{b}$ $E_{b}$–$D_{b}$ lydian-Dominant</td>
<td>The enchantment of nature: the poet speaks of how desire bloomed in the forest, and images of flowers and greenery captivate the hearts of the lovers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stanza III (Bars 28–48)</td>
<td>$B$ minor–$F_{#}$ [piano interlude: fast harmonic rhythm] $A$ minor (with falling chromatic pattern) – D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B1</strong> (Bars 49–71)</td>
<td>Triple Forest Motif: climactic piano solo (Bars 47–53) (Bars 47–8: ends Stanza III) (Bars 49–50: begins Stanza IV) (Bars 51–6: motif development)</td>
<td>$D$–$C$ lydian-Dominant $E$–$C_{#}$ $B$–$B_{b}$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stanza IV (Bars 49–71)</td>
<td>Faster pace throughout the phrase. Overall $B_{b}$–$D$–$A_{b}$–$E_{b}$</td>
<td>Recalling stanza two: the poet remembers the lovers who passed through the forest on a summer’s day.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is possible that the movement from $D_{b}$ towards $A_{b}$ minor could be a reference to the D–A centric plagal movement as seen in various guises throughout the earlier *mélodies*. It is not fully clear, however, whether this was Caplet’s intention because the opening chords on the supertonic degree distort this. Having said that, there could be
merit in suggesting that within the given key signature of Eb, the overall movement towards Ab could suggest a move to the chord of IV in this key, thus establishing the plagal movement that way.

It is unclear why Caplet began on the supertonic of the key, but we can propose that because F minor is a stronger tonality than Db lydian-dominant, and as the forest is an element of strength within the poem, it is perhaps more appropriate to begin in the minor key for the first iteration forest motif. F minor opens a variety of paths for interpretation in relation to the tonalities which come next. For example, an alternative suggestion for the motion from F minor – through Db lydian-dominant – to Ab could be that in the key of F minor, Ab is the minor form of the relative major. As well as this, Caplet favours small-scale intervallic movement between two tonal centres. The given key signature of this mélodie, Eb, is the interval of a second away from the two opening harmonies: F minor is a second up, and Db is a second lower. This might suggest that an alternative interpretative path for the opening tonal movements is considering tonal proximity to the home key of the mélodie.

The three subsequent forest motives contain tonal movement rather than a single tonal centricity. It is possible to interpret this as a scheme of tonal progressions as shifting surface motion upwards and downwards through small intervallic steps. As Table 2.6 outlined, the forest motives in Sections B and C explore multiple chordal progressions: the forest motif chords descend through the first tonal centre but land on the next before the vocal phrase enters with a different tonal centre. This is further evidenced in Section B1, where the forest motif is heard twice in succession followed by the extended piano solo. At this point, the first forest motif outlines D moving to C lydian-dominant, in bars 47 to 48, and the second outlines E moving to C# at bars 49 to
Continuity between these chordal shifts can be traced through common-tone movement, rather than a clearly structured traditional tonal plan. Through this common-tone approach a sense of consistency and flow is retained, but there is still accessibility to explore a wider range of sound qualities through different harmonic combinations.

Common tone movement between the tonal centres in this mélodie could suggest that Caplet was interested in creating a particular sound rather than adhering to a strict tonal scheme. For instance, the surface motion between B and A in bars 51–2 increases the speed of the harmonic rhythm to potentially create a rippling tonal atmosphere akin to light and movement throughout the forest. In the following two bars, this motion moves down a semitone to B♭–A♭ surface motion that extends to one chord per bar rather than two. This example suggests harmonic augmentation as a way of prolonging the sound, but also using surface-motion chordal shifts for rippling coloristic effect. The B–A movement occurs over a B tonal centre, and when the music moves a semitone to the B♭ tonal centre, B♭–A♭ surface-motion occurs.

Caplet further uses the B♭–A♭ motion throughout bars 53–9 as a way of preparation for the final cadence in the mélodie. A movement up a fourth to D♭ in bar 61 adds a sense of symmetry between the opening phrase and the final phrase. Caplet then shifts a semitone to D, then D Lydian at bar 65, before reaching the final A♭ tonal centre at bar 68, moving through B in what could be interpreted as a sharpened fifth, or altered dominant, to settle on the final E♭ tonic in bar 70. It appears that the A♭ tonal centre in bar 68 is stronger than the B tonality in bar 69, due to the textural density. This
potentially creates an impression that the sense of plagal-cadential ending is stronger than the perfect.

It has been previously demonstrated\textsuperscript{105} that in some instances of musico-poetic relationship in these \textit{mélodies}, Caplet explores the balance of flat-key/sharp-key as a representation of the past/present tense. It is possible that there is evidence of this in \textit{Forêt} too. For instance, taking the overall tonal structure, a pattern emerges that demonstrates a predominantly flat-key structure except for the material surrounding stanza three. This is significant, because stanza three specifically evokes a sense of enchantment and wonder as desire and love blooms in the forest. The outer stanzas (I, II, IV) appear to concentrate more deeply on aspects of nostalgia and descriptive memories of the forest. Supporting this theory, there is evidence of textural alignment with this harmonic motion, because as the sharp key section comes into effect (bars 32–52), the textural density increases. This is illustrated by more activity in the bass-clef line of the piano part, and increased tremolo figurations. Additionally, the beginning of this section is marked \textit{Plus animé}, indicating more excitement and vitality of atmosphere.

Table 2.7 illustrates this through blocks of colour, and shows a tonal layout that does not fully align with the four-stanza structure.

\textsuperscript{105} Such as in \textit{Préludes}. 183
The nonalignment between tonality and structure is perhaps due to the combined textural and harmonic layout. On one hand, the music suggests a semi-strophic form, following the four stanzas and chordal forest motif. When the key centricity and textural balance is shown here, however, a slightly offset layout emerges where two forms of relatively aligned textural patterns create a tripartite form. This consists of two outer sections based on flat key centres, and a central middle section based on sharp key centres. This also aligns to poetic imagery and texture: Caplet recognises that there is bright and joyful imagery in the third stanza, framed by more nostalgia introspective outer parts in stanzas I, II, and IV. It could be suggested that Caplet portrays this imagery though use of texture and tonality; however, he acknowledges the poetic structure through recurring motives and textures illustrating strophic layout.
2.12

Analytical Interpretation: *Forêt*

*Forêt* could be interpreted as a *mélodie* that is primarily concerned with expressing the nostalgia and timeless quality of the forest. There is a sense of reverence for the constant and unchanging comfort the forest has offered those who have passed though its foliage over time, and this sentiment appears to be at the core of this work. This is a fitting ending for *Le vieux coffret* as a set, because in the preceding *mélodie, In a una selva oscura*, the narrative centred around the restorative powers of the forest and the natural world. Here, in *Forêt*, there is a sense of remembrance for those who have been restored by the forest. Nostalgia and memories of times past are strong themes throughout this *mélodie*, yet the forest is still celebrated as a living, breathing entity through the large number of tempo and colour changes, as well as harmonic and rhythmic aspects.

Throughout the set, themes have revolved around the wish to escape to a better world, and yearning for another place. In *Forêt*, there is a feeling of calmness and peace that evokes a sense of stillness, quite different to the preceding works. Caplet captures the atmosphere of memories, nostalgia, and stillness through manipulating the rhythmic quality of the music, to generate a feeling of timelessness in the music itself. This timelessness could perhaps be due to the feeling of metric pulse in the music that does not appear to feature a strong and regular downbeat. This comes about due to several factors:

- Changing time signatures and tempo changes distort the sense of a regular and recognisable downbeat.
• Textural patterns combined with phrases that move over the barlines distort the sense of regularity in the music.

• Rhythmic groupings in the vocal line direct the listener’s ear outside the barlines.

Changing time signatures and tempo changes distort the sense of a regular and recognisable downbeat

Changing time signatures and a large number of tempo changes are common features in Caplet’s *mélodies*. There is a sense that the time signatures change in order to accommodate the vocal prosody, yet they can additionally disguise the kind of underlying metre. Throughout the opening of *Forêt*, notably from bar 5–8, there are four time signature changes, as the music alternates between 3/4 and 4/4. There is not a strong sense of 3/4 established in the the first two bars. The entry of high-register chords on weak beats of the bar, combined with the vocal entry on the last beat of bar 3, suggests a distortion of the placement of a strong downbeat. When this is combined with the move to 4/4 in bar 4, and alternating 3/4 and 4/4 time signatures in bars 5–7 thereafter, a sense of motion without a basis in a steady metre is established. The syllabic contour of the vocal line and sparse chordal texture in the piano accompaniment does contribute to a sense of pulse through regular placement of the chords within each bar; however, this pulse is not clearly defined or structured in a distinct time signature.

Moving onward throughout the *mélodie*, there are further time signature changes: thirteen in total following the first bar, as well as twenty-one tempo indications. The constant pulling and pushing of momentum throughout this work helps to frame the different sections within the music. As the poem unfolds, there are different scenes
revealed, as reflected by the textures and tempi. For example, the opening stanza discusses the forest itself and all it has seen. The chordal textures are wide and majestic, and the tempi and time signature changes combine to create a timeless quality. In the second stanza, bars 16–27, there is a different sense of momentum. Here, there are fewer changing time signatures, but a change of texture to rippling semiquavers brings about a new atmosphere. In this part, the poet remembers those who have passed through the forest on a summer’s day. There is a lightness created through the high register of the piano part but, once again, a sense of strong downbeat is diffused. This somewhat intangible downbeat comes about primarily due to nonalignment between the vocal phrasing and the rhythmic groupings in the piano part, and will be discussed presently.

Textural patterns combined with phrases that move over the barlines distort the sense of regularity in the music

There is a particularly disguised sense of barline at the points in the text that outline memories of past times and address the forest directly. As in the opening, the pulse is perceptible but a regular downbeat is not always clear, for example at stanza two and stanza four: bars 16-22 and bars 57-62. At these points, there are three textural layers: the vocal line, and two distinct layers in the treble and bass-clef piano parts. To firstly address the treble-clef line. This line is grouped in sextuplets; however, the shape and contour suggest that these sextuplets could be heard in pairs. In their recording, Alain Jacquon and Lionel Peintre notice the potential for interpreting the texture this way, and articulate this line with a feeling of duplets rather than triplets within sextuplets, or even sextuplets. Hearing the line in this manner is perceptible in the recording by Hanna Schaer and Noel Lee, and also Dominique Favat and Line Marand. Favat and Marand opt for a slightly slower interpretation than the others and, due to this slower
speed, the duple groupings within the line are recognisable. Grouping the treble-clef line in this manner is significant because it infuses a constant, almost ostinato-like figuration against which the outer layers conflict.

The bass-clef line and the vocal line conflict with the treble-clef line in that the implied duple groupings are nonaligned with the placement of the rhythmic lines in the outer parts. The vocal and bass-clef lines show some alignment with each other, but not with the treble-clef line. Example 2.12 shows this passage as it appears in the score, with annotated brackets outlining the duple grouping interpretation.

Example 2.12: Forêt bars 16–19

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Interpreting the music in this manner potentially supports the proposition that there is an established pulse, but the 3/4 metre is unclear. This nonalignment could be suggested as an example of a kind of displacement dissonance because there is some equivalence of cardinality in the layers (such as the bass-clef and vocal line), but these occur in a nonaligned manner.

The 3/4 metre is further distorted in bars 18–19 where, in the bass-clef, the quaver phrase occurs over the barline. When the distortion implied by this quaver line is considered with the analogous vocal line rhythm also tied over the barline, as well as crescendo-diminuendo dynamic shape at the same point, the sense of rhythmic freedom and fluidity is enhanced. At this point, it is difficult for the listener to perceive where the first beat of the bar lies, and a feeling of being carried away into the poetic memories is amplified.

These shapes are reflected in stanza four, especially throughout bars 57–60. That Caplet associates this kind of rhythmic freedom to the part of the poetic narrative not only addressing the forest directly, but also referring to memories of times past, contributes to the distinction between perspectives on times past in the forest. Perhaps the sense of fluidity in the rhythmic structure, enhanced by the nonalignment of layers at these particular parts, substantiates the all-encompassing and lasting character that is central to the musical representation of the forest.

**Rhythmic groupings in the vocal line direct the listener’s ear outside the barlines**

Throughout Caplet’s *mélodies*, there are many examples of uneven vocal phrases, often as a result of rhythmic patterns grouped across the barlines. Phrases frequently begin
and end midway through the bar, resulting in a sense of nonalignment with the phrasing of the piano accompaniments. These uneven phrases and nonaligning layers certainly add a sense of fluidity to the music, and in some cases can create an unstable, ever-shifting atmosphere that, depending on the corresponding harmonic motion, may result in the listener perceiving a distorted sense of time. Caplet manipulates the sense of time through the *mélodies* primarily through, as we have observed, aspects of rhythmic dissonance and distortion of the barline placement. In *Forêt*, it is possible to find some examples of these rhythmic distortions, and additionally, it is further possible to find some examples of irregular triplet grouping that as well as distorting the sense of barline, create a feeling of cohesiveness with the previous *mélodies* in the set.

Taking the *Plus animé* section, stanza three starting at bar 30, for example, it is possible to observe some instances of this. The phrase following the declaration ‘*O Forêt*’ could be perceived as beginning on the quaver upbeat into bar 32, and contains a triplet motion that distorts the sense of 3/4 pulse in the bar. This is approached with the tied crotchet on the first beat of bar 32. Although the long durations on the first beat of bars 32 and 33 provide a sense of strong beat, the long durations on the last beat of bar 33 tied into 34, and the last beat of bar 34 tied into 35 distorts the potential for consistency in establishing a recurring stable pattern. Example 2.13 illustrates bars 31–35.
The ascending triplet shape of beats two and three in bar 32 gives a sense of continuity with the previous mélodies in the set. This shape was evident throughout *Songe* and *Berceuse*, as discussed and illustrated previously.\textsuperscript{106} Although not as frequent in *Forêt* as in the other mélodies, the presence of this motif, as well as creating a sense of continuity, provides a disguising of the placement of the downbeat in the bar and, in doing so, to a certain extent potentially disguises the time signature. In bar 32, the

\textsuperscript{106} See Examples 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8 for illustrations of the ascending triplet motif throughout *Songe* and *Berceuse*.
second triplet figuration is doubled by the bass-clef piano line. The first triplet, however, appears more disguised. This disguise is interesting because it creates a sense of non-alignment that could be interpreted as the bass-clef line pre-empting the vocal line. This pre-emption could create a sense of arrival onto the first beat of bar 33, but the durations and accents that follow throughout the subsequent bars negate it, and break the consistency of a strong first beat each time. This ascending triplet figuration is not restricted to just this point in the mélodie. Some other similar instances occur at bar 44 in the vocal line, and at bars 65–6 once again in the vocal line.

In terms of the poetic imagery connected to this portion, the animated atmosphere reflects the thrill of desire experienced by the lovers who passed through the forest. The text suggests a sharpening of the senses that creates a livelier atmosphere through the forest:

*L'ombre devient plus fraîche: un frisson de plaisir
Enchanta les deux coeurs et toute la nature.*

The shade becomes cooler: a shudder of pleasure
Enchanted the two hearts and the whole of nature.

The increase in textural density, as well as the introduction of trills and fast moving passages in this section describes the excitement associated with these events, and provides a contrast to the other stanzas concerning different distinct memories and events. Caplet merges these textural changes with the aforementioned aspects of rhythmic nonalignment.
Despite the flurries of activity in the texture, and aspects of both rhythmic nonalignment and the placement of the ascending triplet motif, the three recordings of Forêt seem, to an extent, to approach this passage differently in terms of conveying a sense of timeless quality. For example, in the recording by Lionel Peintre and Alain Jacquon, it is possible to discern a strong downbeat at the start of bar 32 and again at the start of bar 35. This downbeat is emphasised by the accentuation of the bass-clef chord on the first beat in bar 32, and the B♮ on the first beat of bar 35. In the recording by Hanna Schaefer and Noel Lee, there is much less emphasis on these downbeats, resulting in an enhanced sense of both metric and rhythmic ambiguity throughout the passage. It could be suggested that in this interpretation, the musicians articulate the excited atmosphere, but place it beyond discernible structured audible barlines. Dominique Favat and Line Marand pursue a different interpretation. In their recording, there is an impression that they choose to convey a stronger sense of rhythmic stability: the descending crotchets in the bass-clef line of bar 33 are more pronounced, and there is a stronger downbeat at the start of bar 35. Perhaps in this interpretation, the musicians opted for more stability in the bass line as it increases the sense of nonalignment in the corresponding vocal and treble-clef piano parts and, in doing so, infuses elements of the tension and excitement described by the poetic text into the music.

Overall, in Forêt, Caplet creates a deeply nostalgic sense of profound remembrance and sentimentality. This is a fitting conclusion to Le vieux coffret, because not only does it infuse some elements from the previous mélodies in the set, but it also conveys a timeless sense of stability. The presence and power of nature through time provides solace and relief; a sentiment made all the more poignant when it is remembered that
Caplet composed this *mélodie* during the height of wartime conflict. There is a sense of stability embedded through the sections of texture: the passages that address the forest’s memories (stanzas two and four), create a sense of balance through the repeated textures, and the contrasting material in stanzas one and three outlines two different characters: the majestic and stately quality of the forest itself, and the excitement and joy lovers experience therein. It could be suggested, then, that Caplet’s approach to conveying the atmosphere of timelessness and nostalgia central to the poetic narrative occurs through the combination of descriptive textures, motivic elements recalling earlier *mélodies* and, perhaps most significantly, embedding a sense of pulse into the music that appears to resist being pinned down to a discernible metric pulse. The ethereal quality of the forest exists in a lasting sphere.
Concluding Observations: *Le vieux coffret*

*Le vieux coffret*, as a set of poetry, seems to fall naturally into two parts. The first two poems deal with dreaming: dreaming of new things in *Songe* and dreaming of a life away with the beloved in *Berceuse*. The following two poems, *In una selva oscura* and *Forêt*, turn towards nature in a more distinct manner, yet we still find poignant themes of yearning and nostalgia within. These *mélodies* stand equally well when performed alone as when performed together; however, the performance objective in this regard is unclear. It appears that Caplet did not leave any evidence indicating whether they are intended to always be performed together. As the set can fall into two halves, extracts would work well performed in pairs or singular pieces. As a complete set, the emotive and descriptive nature continuing through all four works creates a strong sense of unity throughout. Some linking motives and figures exist throughout the set, and there is a sense of cohesion in the set on a deeper level, such as through approaches to uneven phrase lengths in the vocal line, nonalignment between the vocal and piano phrases, and rhythmic nonalignment. Connections can be made between each of the *mélodies* that suggest Caplet was thinking in terms of synthesising the music as a complete set.

According to Willimaetta Spencer,

Caplet accepted Debussy’s ideal that the music should sound like an improvisation rather than adhering to formal periods, the prepared cadences, and the developments of the accepted classical ideas of form. His treatment of poetry conforms to the French concepts of his time with his own way of finding musical expression for his forms of sensibility.107

107 Williametta Spencer 'The Influence and Stylistic Heritage of André Caplet' (PhD Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1974). p.219
A sense of improvisatory quality in music could be applied to the compositional processes at play in *Le vieux coffret*. The four *mélodies* are connected through the thread of a through-composed approach to overall structure, and through changing time signatures and elements of ambiguity in tonal structures, the music appears to unfold in a freer manner. Caplet favoured through-composed structures in his *mélodies*, infusing a sense of unfolding musical narrative that reflects that of the poetic texts. In *Le vieux coffret*, there is evidence of this unfolding, improvisatory-like nature in the music, but also of Caplet’s adaption of the through-composed model to more accurately represent poetic themes as seen through use of recurring motives in *Berceuse* and *Forêt*.

**Unity in the set**

It is possible to consider *Le vieux coffret* as a set that shows aspects of unity and interrelatedness as it develops. Considering an overview of the path taken by the four poems in the set, there is potential to interpret a poetic journey taking place. For instance, in the first two *mélodies*, the poet explores themes of yearning to leave his current place and encounter new places and experiences. The third *mélodie* continues with a consideration of the restorative powers of the forest, and the safe haven it creates for the poetic characters. Perhaps engaging with nature in this way is what the poet desires when dreaming for new places. In the final *mélodie*, there is a conclusion of sorts: here, the narrative looks back to those who have come to the forest and experienced comfort and joy there. Throughout the set, there are several areas where Caplet achieves a sense of unity:
Harmonic movement

The use of common tone movement between chord progressions allows more scope for movement to a wider variety of chordal areas, and Caplet’s use of this kind of tonal movement throughout the set suggests that he was not ruled by diatonic movement and standard tonal progressions. Although harmonically functional, Caplet’s language in these mélodies shows that he was highly concerned with creating an atmosphere and a particular sound representative of the poetic imagery. Common tone movement allows both smooth transitions between tonal areas and a way of directing the tonal motion to areas that would previously have been considered unconnected if bound by a more traditional harmonic approach. Caplet used this common tone moment to create surface harmonic movement, whereby the tonal centres move up and down by smaller intervalllic movements such as in seconds or thirds.

Plagal Relationship

There seems to be a plagal relationship running through areas of the four mélodies in the set. For instance, the minor plagal cadence (Dm–A) that concludes Songe is reflected a semitone lower in the opening phrase of Berceuse where the overall harmonic movement travels from $A^\flat–D^\flat$. The beginning of In una selva oscura then reverts up a semitone to D lydian to A lydian over the first phrase, but quickly moves to G lydian-dominant as the second phrase begins. This could be interpreted as a reflection of either chordal movement moving back up a semitone and shifting to modal quality outlining a tonic–dominant relationship throughout the first phrase, or, it could be interpreted as a reflection of the plagal distance between the starting points of the first stanza (D lydian) and the second stanza (G lydian-dominant). In Forêt, it is possible to interpret similar plagal motion, but perhaps slightly more elaborately
disguised. The notion of moving around D pitches and A pitches (i.e., Dm–A; A♭–Db; A
lydian–D lydian–G lydian-dominant) has been subverted in Forêt. The A♭ key signature
may have been retained as a nod to this earlier movement. There could be a plagal
motion interpreted between the start of the first stanza (F minor) and the start of the
second stanza (B♭). If this is the case, then it shows a parallel with the plagal
movement in In una selva oscura, whereby the chordal areas of the first stanza and
second stanza are a fourth apart.

Metric Dissonance
There are instances of rhythmic dissonance running through the entire set, evidenced
most prominently through the offset triplet motif which recurs in various points
through all four mélodies. These dissonances can be interpreted as blurring the
boundaries of the barlines and in doing so creating an ambiguity for the listener as to
the feeling of pulse in the beat and placement of the time signature. Because in some
instances it is harder for the listener to hear a strong first beat, Caplet is able to create
a rhythmic atmosphere that reflects the through-composed nature of the settings: the
rhythm unfolds in an organic way, without always clearly adhering to the structured
regularity of the barline. These irregularities are further evidenced when considering
the placement of the phrases within this musical structure. Examples of phrases
beginning and ending on weaker beats in the bar and travelling over the barline offers
an interpretation that belies regularity of evenly structured phrases within the bar. For
the most part, the phrases are aligned to the stanzas of poetry, with quick harmonic
movement allowing each line of the stanza to act as a subphrase. The layering of these
phrases with the piano textures suggests an orchestral quality that leads to metric
dissonances on several levels between the piano and vocal parts.
All in all, *Le vieux coffret* is a set that explores themes of yearning and nostalgia. Caplet reflects these atmospheres into the *mélodies* by exploring aspects of harmonic ambiguity and distorting the sense of time in the music. The set, written throughout the turbulent years of the Great War, accurately portrays ideas of escape, as well as finding solace in the peacefulness of nature, perhaps ideas and desires Caplet himself experienced during his time in the trenches.
Chapter Three

*Trois Fables de Jean de La Fontaine*

**Introduction**

Caplet started work on this set of *mélodies* just one month after his marriage to Geneviève Perruchon, June 1919. This was a time of hope and renewal after the horrors of the war, and Yvonne Governé recounts that, at this time for Caplet, a sense of peace and a blossoming of creativity abounded:

N’ayant été démobilisé qu’an début de 1919, André Caplet devait épouser en juin 1919 celle qu’il appelait toujours ‘ma petite Geneviève’. Jamais il n’avait connu dans tout sa vie une paix aussi favourable à l’épanouissement de son génie.108

*Le corbeau et le renard* was completed in July 1919 as the newlywed couple relocated to Saint-Eustache-a-la-Forêt, with *La Cigale et le fourmi*, and *Le loup et l’agneau* following in October and November 1919 respectively. First published by Durand in 1920, the premiere performance of these *mélodies* took place on 12 March 1921 at a concert held by the *Société Nationale*, performed by Henri Fabert, with the composer at the piano. Upon their publication, this set was well received, as Williametta Spencer reveals. She points out that in the *Revue Musicale, 1st November 1920* Georges Pillois remarks:

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“Having been demobilised only at the beginning of 1919, André Caplet was to marry in June 1919 the one he always called ‘my little Geneviève’. Never had he known in all his life a peace so favourable to the flourishing of his genius.”
For an artist to measure himself with the genius of La Fontaine, choosing the culminating points of his work constitutes an act of bravery. Therefore, "Le corbeau et le renard," "La cigale et la fourmi," "Le Loup et l'Agneau," these three human dramas of such perfect affabulation – an incomparable synthesis of symbol and reality – live as three masterworks in the musical adaptation of M. Andre Caplet. ... In the Fables, as in the Inscriptions champetres by the same composer, the means ... are in the service of the end. In truth, they appear to be renewed, so much taste and ingenuity preside over their setting.¹⁰⁹

The Trois Fables de Jean de la Fontaine contain of some of the better known works in Caplet’s repertoire of mélodies, most likely aided by the fame of the Fables themselves, as well as the dramatic action and characters. Joel Harder points out:

The fables are extremely well known to anyone of French origin, since Fontaine’s morality stories are a staple in French literary education. This fact, in addition to the myriad of other settings by such composers as Offenbach, Shostakovich, and Hindemith, surely provided Caplet with an unusual challenge, and one that he met with great aplomb.¹¹⁰

The Fables of Jean de la Fontaine (1621–1695) are inspired by those of Aesop, and each one of these tales offers a moral lesson for the reader. Although perhaps not as widely known as Aesop, these fables are well known in France, as ‘French school children have always learned these fables religiously, and may still do.’¹¹¹ For Caplet, this surely held great appeal.

La Fontaine’s fable, as a poetic form, can perhaps be regarded in a similar manner to a dramatic narrative portraying the interaction between characters to demonstrate a moral lesson. This poetic model offered Caplet a very different kind of text to those


¹¹¹ Sanae Kanda, 'The Role of the Piano in the Mélodie of André Caplet' (DMA Dissertation, Boston University, 2002). p.33
with which he had previously engaged, especially during the war; there was much potential for him to explore a different, more dramatic, approach to the *mélodie*. In preceding years, Caplet gravitated towards symbolist and contemporary poets. In a post war era and with the roaring 1920s just around the corner, Caplet’s choice of La Fontaine’s fables could be interpreted as not just an artistic choice that presents a new kind of poetic material for this composer, but a choice driven by the principal of not forgetting the lessons learned from the past. In turning to Jean de La Fontaine, a seventeenth century poet and fabulist, Caplet found a poet whose fables offered a very different message to the contemporary poetry with which he had traditionally engaged in previous *mélodies*. In La Fontaine, Caplet found clear analogies of moral lessons that are timeless and applicable to humanity regardless of the era. Irrefutably affected by the horrific experiences of war, we can speculate that, for Caplet, the importance of learning the lessons of the past in order to pave the way for building a new and bright future was at the forefront of his psyche. This sense of future hope suggests that the gravitation towards learning from the principles and morals of La Fontaine’s Fables was a natural development for Caplet at this point in his life. The *mélodie* offered the ideal form in which he could explore the expression of this kind of dramatic, yet moral, narrative.

The poetry of the fable, aside from teaching a moral lesson and displaying engaging imagery, does not fully conform to the tradition *vers libre* style of modern poets such a Rimbaud, and it is worth remembering that Caplet’s poetic choices primarily consisted of works of contemporary symbolists. In this poetry, uneven line lengths and areas of irregular poetic rhythm are mixed with highly regular and rhythmic poetic structures.
There is a sense of unpredictability, and surprises are infused throughout the fables; as John Hollander writes in his introduction to Shapiro’s translation of the *Fables*:

Wandering through La Fontaine’s world of fable is not in the least like going through one of the Sun King’s labyrinths, but more like a walk through an English, or natural, sort of garden. The poet’s muse, “aux boards d’une onde pure”, propounds its profusion of sorts of story shades of ironic colouring, nuances of direction, turns of allegorising strategy, and types of moral stance. [...] The very verse itself - the so called *vers libre*, of rapidly shifting line lengths and rhyming schemes [...] creates a tone which could be unsatisfactorily characterised as wry, witty, distanced - all of which are true of it - but which does more than that.\(^{112}\)

While is true that in the poetry of La Fontaine, there are instances of irregular or uneven line lengths, the syllables are counted according to Classical rules of French poetry. In terms of Hollander’s suggestion that the *Fables* are written in the *vers libre* style, by considering the specific treatment of syllables per line, albeit uneven lines, we may come to the conclusion that the *Fables* of La Fontaine are not true *vers libre*, but more closely conform to a heterometric verse pattern: where the line lengths vary, but the syllabic counts adhere to a consistent pattern. As Frank Chambers notes, ‘the juxtaposition of heterometric verses produces [...] a dramatic effect in La Fontaine’s *Fables*.\(^{113}\)

Harder elaborates further on the varying syllable counts within the fables:

As with all three fables, poetic metre and syllabic count shift throughout, using a combination of octosyllabic, decasyllabic, and alexandrine (12-syllable) lines with a predominantly anapaestic metre.\(^{114}\)

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\(^{113}\) Frank M. Chambers, *An Introduction to Old Provençal Versification* (Indiana, American Philosophical Society, 1985), p.112

In the *Trois Fables de Jean de la Fontaine*, Caplet chose to set three fables which contain the ‘powerful message of La Fontaine’s morality.’ In *Le corbeau et le renard*, we are warned of the dangers of flattery, in *La cigale et la fourmi*, we are taught the lesson that hard work is imperative to help prepare for hard times, and in *Le loup et l’agneau*, there is a darker message that, despite any kind of moral justice, the powerful will overrule the weak. Throughout the scores for these *mélodies*, Caplet is very specific on the ways in which the performers should engage with the music. There is a proliferation of tempo markings and expression markings and directions. These highly specific and precise indications offer a set of guidelines that, through sheer quantity and meticulousness, suggest that Caplet had a very clear intention of the way in which the drama should unfold throughout these narratives. Interestingly, these performance directions serve to strengthen points of metric ambiguity in the music, notably at places where the barline becomes indistinct and somewhat blurred. This ambiguity, along with reference to relevant performances, will be discussed in due course.

The *Fables de Jean de la Fontaine* have been widely set; they are popular works and hold wide appeal. No discussion about Caplet’s settings of the popular works would be complete without briefly recognising his contemporaries who set similar animal-inspired, witty and humorous works. The most natural choices undoubtedly are Maurice Ravel’s *Histoires Naturelles* and François Poulenc’s *Le Bestiaire*. There has been

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*116* Other composers who have set fables by La Fontaine include Charles Gounod, Charles Trenet, Charles Offenbach, Marcelle de Manzjarly, and Charles Lecoq.
a considerable amount of research on these works, and the aim of this thesis is not a comparative study. For the sake of contextualisation of Caplet’s Trois Fables de Jean de la Fontaine, however, a couple of points, which I attribute to the work of Jessica Chow, are worth noting that perhaps highlight Caplet’s singular treatment of this genre of poetic imagery. Chow’s comparative research project reached some interesting conclusions regarding the treatment of vocal line, selection of poetry for the three mélodies, and the ways in which each composer approaches the balance between the piano accompaniment and vocal parts. I list an outline of some general points from Chow’s findings regarding each of these features below:

**Treatment of the vocal line**

Ravel’s Histoires Naturelles consist of settings for voice that demonstrate a more speech-like prosody than Poulenc’s Le Bestiaire or Caplet’s Trois Fables de La Fontaine. Both Caplet and Poulenc approach prosody in a much more traditional way that does not break reestablished rules of prosody. Ravel’s approach in Histoires Naturelles set forth a challenge for ‘creation of a musical declamation that matches the inflection of the French language.’¹¹⁷ For Caplet, it appears the priority was to create a vocal setting that although highly virtuosic and placing extensive demands on the singer, adhered to preserving faithful portrayal of the poetic events and narrative in each of the fables.

**Selection of Poetry**

Mélodies based around images of animals offer the composer much scope in terms of embedding imagery into the song. Chow states: ‘Songs in the french tradition are often

¹¹⁷ Jessica Chow, ’Le Bestiaire in the Mélodies of Ravel, Caplet and Poulenc‘ (DMA Dissertation, The Juilliard School, 2010). p.113
image-based, unlike emotionally-filled operas or German lieder.’ The poetry with which all three composers engage offers different challenges. For example, in *Histoires Naturelles*, Ravel chose texts which did not contain a clear structure or inherent rhyming scheme. Caplet’s texts, although more structured, were well known to many and had been set before. Poulenc’s choice of text was the most modern of his time; he was in awe of their author, the poet Guillaume Apollinaire. Apollinaire and Poulenc shared similar artistic vision, and Apollinaire was one of the early writers to adopt the term surrealism in his work.

**Balance between piano accompaniment and vocal part**

The treatment of the piano and vocal roles perhaps demonstrates the largest difference between these three sets of animal-inspired *mélodies*. In *Histoires Naturelles*, Ravel bended a speech like vocal line with a very descriptive piano part. Chow states:

> The singer instead acts as an observer, as the piano takes the active role of the animal. Figurations in the piano aurally depict the actions of the animal, all the while being described by the singer in a speech like vocal line.\(^{119}\)

This is quite a different approach to the *bestiaries* Caplet and Poulenc produced. Poulenc, for instance, in general tends to interweave the piano and vocal parts creating a sense of balance between the two, whereby neither one is more elaborate than the other. According to Chow ‘with his piano score, Poulenc created not only exterior but also interior atmosphere to accompany the voice.’\(^{120}\) Caplet, in contrast to the approaches taken by Ravel and Poulenc, creates a partnership between the voice and

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\(^{118}\) Ibid. p.113  
\(^{119}\) Ibid. 114  
\(^{120}\) Ibid. 114
the piano in the *mélodie*. Both parts have individual yet descriptive roles that complement and heighten the sense of drama in the work. The setting for voice is highly virtuosic, and this virtuosity is additionally reflected in the piano accompaniments. Chow states: ‘The piano part provides further theatrics with its through-composed structure, closely following the meaning of the text with each flamboyant figuration.’

It is clear that there are a myriad of approaches to expressing the theme of animal imagery in the *mélodie*. Caplet’s approach to this genre reflects his approach to composing *mélodies* at previous stages of his life. He interprets the poem according to the layout of images and events in the unfolding narrative rather than strictly adhering to poetic stanza structure, the piano and vocal parts work in equal cooperation, great care is taken with vocal prosody, and harmonic and metric structures are used in tandem with phrasing to underpin poetic imagery.

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121 Ibid. p.115
### Trois fables de Jean de la Fontaine by Jean de la Fontaine

#### No. 1 Le corbeau et le renard (1919)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Le corbeau et le renard</th>
<th>The crow and the fox</th>
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<tr>
<td>Maître Corbeau sur un arbre perché, Tenait en son bec un fromage.</td>
<td>Master Crow perched on a tree, Was holding in his beak a cheese,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maître Renard par l’odeur alléché Lui tint à peu près ce langage: Et bonjour, Monsieur du Corbeau. Que vous êtes joli ! que vous me semblez beau ! Sans mentir, si votre ramage Se rapporte à votre plumage, Vous êtes le phénix des hôtes de ces bois. À ces mots le Corbeau ne se sent pas de joie : Et pour montrer sa belle voix, Il ouvre un large bec, laisse tomber sa proie. Le Renard s’en saisit, et dit: Mon bon Monsieur, Apprenez que tout flâneur Vit aux dépens de celui qui l’écoute. Cette leçon vaut bien un fromage sans doute. Le Corbeau honteux et confus Jura, mais un peu tard, qu’on ne l’y prendrait plus.</td>
<td>Master Fox, lured by the scent, Spoke words more or less like these: ‘Good day, my dear Sir Crow, How elegant you are! How handsome you look! In truth, if your song be as fine as your plumage, You are the phoenix of these woods.’ At this, the crow grew wild with glee; And to display his fine minstrelsy, He opens wide his beak and drops his booty. The fox snaps it up, saying: ‘My dear sir, Learn that every flatterer Depends on an audience to live at ease. This lesson is doubtless cheap at a cheese.’ The crow, shamefaced and in troubled state, Vowed to be tricked no more - a little late.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.1

Formal Overview: *Le corbeau et le renard*

*Le corbeau et le renard* tells the story of a crow who loses his cheese through conceding to the flattery of a scheming fox. The fable imparts a moral regarding the often less than honourable motivations of the flatterer, and warns us against the vices of pride. This fable contains two primary characters: the sly and cunning fox, and the vain, yet easily-deceived, crow. The other voice in the poem appears in the form of the narrator who describes the fox and the crow.

Caplet’s approach to the setting for voice and piano reflects the irregularities of the poetic text in the musical structure. A through-composed structure is potentially the best interpretation of the form of this *mélodie* and, as Jessica Chow suggests, ‘each action in the story is represented by a new musical idea.’ The nature of through-composed form allows enough freedom for Caplet’s musical choices to fully interpret and complement the poetic narrative without any kind of restriction. This presents a *mélodie* where the piano and voice can be perceived by the listener as equally balanced partners rather than the piano existing in the more traditional accompanying or supportive role.

The primary characters in the poem have two very different temperaments that are reflected through articulation, speed, and harmonic movement in the musical narrative, and it is the contrasting nature of the characters that substantially contributes to the forward motion and dramatic fluctuations of activity in the fable.

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The shape of the vocal phrases is irregular, and there are palpable differences in each character’s vocal line, such as in articulation and speed; there are instances where we hear the descriptions of the crow delivered in a clipped and quicker style, compared to the velvet tones of the fox’s smooth voice. The fox enunciates each word slowly as he draws upon all of his persuasive powers to cajole, flatter, and eventually entice the crow to open his beak in song. The piano supports this by infusing dramatic textural effects that both clearly illustrate the actions and create the atmosphere against which the exchange between the characters takes place. There is a strong feeling of theatre and drama throughout.

The Trois Fables de Jean de La Fontaine include instances of direct speech; the element of direct speech is a feature that does not occur in other poetry Caplet chose to set.

According to Jessica Chow, throughout the Trois Fables de Jean de La Fontaine:

He [Caplet] had to juggle four different voices in the fables: the voice of the first animal, the voice of the second animal, the voice of the narrator describing the action of the first animal, and the voice of the narrator describing the actions of the second.\textsuperscript{123}

Further in her discussion Chow mentions that for Le corbeau et le renard, there are three voices, rather than a full set of four. She states:

In this particular mélodie, the crow never speaks, and so Caplet is essentially responsible for only three voices: the narrator describing the actions of the crow, the narrator describing the actions of the fox, and the fox's own words.\textsuperscript{124}

In her exploration of this work, Kanda offers another perspective on the number of voices present in the mélodie. She suggests that there are only two differing voices in

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid. p.52
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid. p.55
the singer’s role, and that in the absence of the crow’s direct speech within the poetic text, the piano perhaps expresses the part of the crow more fully:

The text demands that the singer plays two roles, the narrator who explains the circumstances, and the fox’s voice who flatters and eventually sneers at the crow. That the crow has no words seems to be a central part of the joke, but the piano expresses the crow’s behaviour.\textsuperscript{125}

From these perspectives, it is suggested that, as Chow proposed, there are three voices within the singer’s part, and that the piano accompaniment illustrates these. It is possible, therefore, to interpret the number of voices as either two primary voices (the fox and the narrator), or as one singular primary voice that includes direct speech (the fox), and another primary voice is dual in quality but contains no direct speech (the narrator’s description of both fox and crow). In my reading of this text, I agree with Kanda, that there are two primary voices: that of the fox and that of the narrator. Building on this, however, I also suggest that within the narrator’s voice there is an extra component that fills out the number to three. Because the narrator describes both the fox and the crow, he takes on both contrasting personas, whose duality is a central part to the \textit{mélodie}.

\textsuperscript{125} Sanae Kanda, 'The Role of the Piano in the Mélodie of André Caplet' (DMA Dissertation, Boston University, 2002). p. 36
3.2

Aspects of Poetic Harmony: *Le corbeau et le renard*

In the opening layout of this *mélodie*, and perhaps as a traditional hallmark of Caplet’s harmonic language, the music begins with a given key signature and tonal area somewhat related to that, but throughout the course of the work, as the music develops, the harmonic language travels to tonal areas that are at first seemingly unrelated to the given home key signature. Towards the end of the *mélodie*, the music finds its way back towards the tonal area of the opening key signature, to end with a somewhat tonally based cadence in that key. Chow further notes in her study of the *Trois Fables de Jean de La Fontaine* that:

> Prior to these tonally-defined endings, Caplet’s harmonic world creates a sense of fantasy and drama. Harmony is used for effect rather than as a means of progression.  

I propose that in addition to Caplet’s use of harmonic movement for effect, it is also used as a structural building block that significantly underpins the poetic imagery and leads the listener’s ear from one dramatic element to the next. As a result, the harmonic language not only behaves as a coloristic dramatic element in the poetic narrative but, on a deeper level, the larger-scale movements between seemingly unrelated harmonic areas create structural divisions that underpin the areas of poetic imagery and poetic narrative.

A sense of duality can be interpreted in Caplet’s use of harmonic movement on a large structural scale and on a smaller illustrative scale throughout the *mélodie*. Firstly, on a

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larger scale, the movement of harmonic language from one tonal area to another supports the structure of the poetic shape and helps create a sense of motion from one section to another as the narrative unfolds. There are blocks of harmonic movement connecting each character and section of the poem. Secondly, and on a smaller scale, the harmonic language can be interpreted as offering a dramatic emphasis to the sense of theatre within the poem, creating a tonal illustration of the events as they unfold. The harmonic motion will be discussed from the perspective of these two areas as they relate to both the large-scale poetic structure and the smaller-scale dramatic account of the fable and its moral.

A perspective of the large scale harmonic structure as a reflection of the poetic structure

Caplet does not always adhere to the stanza shape of the poetic structure when organising the layout of the *mélodie* and, as demonstrated in previous examples such as throughout *Le vieux coffret*, perhaps he placed value on expressing sections of poetic imagery, or particular poetic events as sections or dividing points in the construction of the *mélodie*, rather than specifically using the stanza layout as a template for overall musical structure. In the fable *Le corbeau et le renard*, there is a sense of structure, not just from the perspective that the poetic text follows a rhyming pattern, but also in that there are distinct characters, dialogue, and specific actions happening as the narrative unfolds. As the rhyme scheme for this poem follows an ABAB CCDD EEEE FFGG HH structure, it is possible to interpret the poetic construction as falling into four four-line stanzas, ending with a two-line conclusion as the crow learns his lesson and the moral is revealed. With this poetic structure in mind, one might expect the harmonic structure to behave in a similar way, with the vocal phrases
directing the tonal motion into even four-stanza structures. The storyline in the fables unfolds in a fluid manner, however, and the descriptions of events are not restricted to a single stanza for each poetic event. It is this element that perhaps drives Caplet’s choice of utilising a through-composed approach to the musical construction. This way, there is an inherent freedom and malleability that allows the music and poetic storyline to blend as equal partners beyond the confines of poetic structure.

In *Le corbeau et le renard*, the harmonic structure can be interpreted as following the evolution of the poetic narrative. In Table 3.1 below, I suggest the sections of poetic imagery with bar numbers in the left hand column, the harmonic structure in the middle column, and the layout of the poetic events in the right column. From this perspective, it is possible to observe that there are potentially five primary tonal areas throughout the harmonic evolution, designed according to poetic events:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Harmonic structure</th>
<th>Poetic Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A (1–12)</td>
<td>E–G♯–C♯–F♯</td>
<td>Narrator sets the scene, describing the crow perched on the tree and the fox enticed by the cheese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B (13–26)</td>
<td>B♭–B octatonic– C# –C locrian-natural-two</td>
<td>Entry of the fox. More diminished tonalities perhaps signify dangers hidden within the cunning fox’s flattery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C (27–42)</td>
<td>G–D♭–G</td>
<td>Fox’s outpouring of flattery, calling the crow the ‘phoenix of the woods’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D (42–59)</td>
<td>Chromatic</td>
<td>The crow, enamoured by the flattery, opens his beak and drops the cheese. Chromaticism heightens the intensity of this event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E (60–71)</td>
<td>E over B pedal - B♭–E</td>
<td>Conclusions with the moral of the story. B♭ point references the direct speech of the fox.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This layout could underpin the suggestion that there are units of tonality that represent the large-scale poetic events which, on the surface, are unrelated to each
other and contain unanticipated changes of colour. Looking more closely at the ways in which Caplet directs this large-scale tonal motion from one poetic event to another throughout the work, it is possible to suggest that although the music travels quite a distance from the starting key signature and tonal area, there is potential to account for a sense of harmonic direction within this trajectory that aligns equally with the poetic moral. As Chow describes:

While the *mélodie* openings provide variety in presentation and in establishing the basic background to the story, the endings provide a continuity message by their relations to the home keys. All three songs end in the key of the tonic, marking a definitive closing to the tale and a concrete lesson from it.\(^\text{127}\)

The harmonic development from an opening tonic, through the narrative, to return to that given tonic can potentially be perceived as a large-scale tonic-dominant motion throughout the first full phrase as the music moves from E and over the opening bars arrives at B\(^7\) in bar 12. This tonic-dominant outline is relatively tonally stable. When the move to B\(^b\) occurs in bar 13 as the fox enters the scene, it could be suggested that this B\(^b\) is a flattened fifth in the key of E, that leads us through the following two phrases to the chromatic motion beginning at bar 38. This change of harmonic colour is pivotal in terms of the poetic narrative, as it distorts the listener’s ear and perhaps heightens the sense of unease as the fox sidles up to the crow. There is a reflection of this move from B–B\(^b\) from bar 44–55, and in addition we may note that the chromatic chord changes throughout bars 44–7 take place over a B pedal. Furthermore, at bar 67–8, there is a similar chromatic stepwise motion from B\(^b\) minim octave in bar 67 to the B\(^\natural\) octave in bar 68. A flourish before each combined with the *décidé* direction draw further attention to this shape.

\(^{127}\) Ibid. p.78
There is an outline of a tonic–dominant–tonic movement in the final phrase, as from bar 60 onwards the music moves, on a larger scale, from E–B–E. The chromatic nature that is inherent to this music is referenced again at the end through the chromatic approach chords on to E at bars 70-1. Looking at the bigger picture that encompasses the entire *mélodie*, I suggest the harmonic construction, in terms of key centres, outlines a very large scale tonic–dominant–tonic background, and within this, there is chromatic stepwise motion towards flat keys for the purposes of dramatic illustration of the poetic narrative.

In her analysis, Sanae Kanda offers a similar explanation in that the poetic events drive the divisions of sections of harmonic language into five tonal areas throughout the *mélodie*. She mentions:

> The division of sections could be coincident with the scene of the story. While the key signature of the song, four sharps, points to E major, however, the tonality of the song remains unclear because of a plethora of accidentals and the constant deviation of harmony.\(^{128}\)

While it is possible to trace some elements of stability within the harmonic motion, there is equally a significant amount of instability through surface movements up or down a small interval, such as the move from B centric harmony to B\(^{b}\) centric harmony. Furthermore, on a smaller scale, Caplet uses these areas of harmonic instability to outline the poetic narrative.

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\(^{128}\) Sanae Kanda, 'The Role of the Piano in the Mélodie of André Caplet' (DMA Dissertation, Boston University, 2002). p.36
The harmonic language can be interpreted as offering a dramatic emphasis to the sense of theatre within the poem, creating a tonal illustration of the events as they unfold.

Thus far, it has been demonstrated that the large-scale trajectory of the harmonic language is interlinked with, and potentially directed by, the plot development in the fable. On a smaller scale, it may appear that Caplet uses harmonic language as a means of emphasising specific poetic events. For example, after the B♭ chordal change at bar 13 signalling the entry of the fox, a move to B octatonic occurs as the fox begins addressing the crow. Further through the fox’s speech, there are coloristic points of E locrian (bar 16 final beat) and what could be potentially interpreted as C♯ locrian natural two in the second half of bar 18. The musical language passing through these coloristic points could portray the danger that hides behind the fox’s words. If this text was surrounded by bright harmonies rather than the diminished undertones of the octatonic mode, there would be a different set of connotations derived from the meaning in the text.

In addition to interpreting the relationship between the harmonic language and poetic text, it is possible to explore the overall harmonic shape on a much larger scale. For instance, Example 3.1, outlines the introduction, the action where the majority of events unfold, and finally the moral of the fable. The graph aims to demonstrate the relationship between these overall segments of unfolding harmonic direction in relation to dramatic events throughout the narrative. This displays some relevant information for interpreting the ways in which the large-scale harmonic motion informs the structural make-up:
Example 3.1: *Le corbeau et le renard* unfolding harmonic direction

There is a double V–I structure in the opening part that suggests the B tonally has a dual function as both I following the F# area, and V as following the opening E material. This dual function destabilises the B chord: the listener is not sure whether the music arrives at a tonic or at a dominant area within the tonality. Furthermore, the B tonal area occurs at the end of a section on a weak beat. This could potentially be interpreted as an example of harmonic and rhythmic instability occurring analogously. This point occurs just as the fox is about to address the crow, which could additionally support the unstable nature of the B tonality as a symbol for the risk the fox poses to the crow.

The harmonic motion moves in groups of tones and semitones as outlined in the diagram, and when we look closer, we can see that these groups move around areas that are geographically small intervallic steps away from B. For instance, the motion from B–B♭ is one semitone lower, and the motion from B–C♯ is a second. There is a V–I

Please additionally see Structural Overview Chart
cadence outlined in the final harmonic areas as the moral of the fable is defined. Perhaps this strong cadential movement adds closure and firmness to a lesson learned.

Tonal formations of small intervallic steps are characteristic of Caplet’s harmonic language, as demonstrated in *Le vieux coffret*. It could be posed that the somewhat stronger harmonic points at the start and end points in the *mélodie* represent the more stable areas of imagery in the fable. The middle portion of the fable is the most eventful, with the crow dramatically losing his cheese through the enticing flattery of the fox. Perhaps the surface harmonic motion of small intervallic steps away from the dominant tonal point of the given key signature helps to heighten and reflect both the drama in the narrative and heighten the sense of tension for the listener as the story unfolds.
3.3

Analytical Interpretation: *Le corbeau et le renard*

This *mélodie*, as previously discussed, marks a departure for Caplet not only in terms of his choice of poetic material, but equally in the compositional approach he adopts in the piano and vocal writing. As Chow mentions, there is an emphasis on the descriptive nature of the text. She mentions that this music is ‘most literally descriptive rather than interpretive.’ Emphasis is placed upon expressing the narrative of the fable in a clear and distinctive manner, with unmistakeable depictions of the events as they unfold. This is clearly represented in the vocal part as the singer embraces multiple roles of various characters in the fable, additionally supported by the strongly illustrative commentary in the piano part. Perhaps similar to previous works, the piano can be interpreted as an equal partner in this respect, as it remains very much interconnected with the action and dialogue happening throughout the fable.

In this *mélodie*, the rhythmic structure is potentially disguised due to a highly declamatory-style vocal part that is surrounded by often sparse, but primarily descriptive, piano statements. Therefore, instances of dense layers from which metrically conflicted passages arise are not wholly abundant at first glance and, due to the nature of these sparser textures in the body of the work, the capacity for exploring features of prominent antimetrical layering is somewhat limited. Some of the other features Caplet uses in order to manipulate a sense of ambiguity within the rhythmic structure may be explored, and I propose that several key aspects contribute to a

veiling of rhythmic pulse throughout this *mélodie*. These aspects additionally illustrate the potential advancements for compositional style that the *Trois Fables de La Fontaine* offered Caplet. The key areas, firstly listed below then discussed, are as follows:

- Highly declamatory style of vocal writing that features direct speech resulting in the vocal line subphrases placed over the barline at points of heightened tension in the text.
- Descriptive textures in the piano part.
- Constantly changing tempo markings as sections change and the narrative unfolds.

In his discussion of the involvement of the vocal part and the impacting issues that arise from declamation and poetic shape in the music of Schumann, Krebs states:

> Schumann may have felt that involvement of the vocal part in a dissonance could have posed problems of declamation; the necessity of adhering to the poetic accentuation precluded the freedom with which antimetrical layers can be established in instrumental music.\(^{131}\)

In *Le corbeau et le renard*, the story is told through the narrator’s voice, with strongly descriptive piano accompaniment. Given the often sparse yet dramatic textural layout, it is not possible to say with any degree of certainty that a strong sense of continual metric conflict was Caplet’s primary intent in this compositional process. Illustrating the drama within the narrative, however, was of central importance. Therefore, it may only be theorised whether the absence of clearly defined antimetrical layers between

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the vocal and piano parts was a conscious decision on account of declamatory poetic accentuation.

The vocal part could be described as almost recitative-like in nature due to the freely moving character of the line, and the individual subphrase structures within could perhaps negate any potential sense of evenness in the overall underlying metric structure. Harder suggests that:

The poetic metre and syllabic count shift throughout, using a combination of octosyllabic, decasyllabic, and alexandrine (12-syllable) lines with a predominantly anapaestic metre.¹³²

In his advice to performers of this music, Harder highlights the spoken style of this vocal line, and further comments that due to the declamatory nature of the vocal writing, ‘it will be a great asset to have practiced reciting the text apart from the music’.¹³³ When combined with the textural changes in the piano part this emphasis on a declamatory, spoken style of singing – one that almost is recitative-like in its nature – underpins the suggestion that the natural speech-like quality of the vocal line is a strong factor in the rhythmic shape of this mélodie.

Taking into account the combination of the fragmented yet dramatic and descriptive piano accompaniment and a vocally-driven melody line with irregular subphrases, it appears that within this highly dramatic mélodie, the direction Caplet’s veiling of rhythmic regularity takes is more likely that of irregular subphrases of uneven durations that begin and end over the barline than remaining within the bar. There are several examples of this throughout the work, which shall be considered presently.


¹³³ Ibid. p. 97
Furthermore, to support the suggestion that a sense of rhythmic ambiguity can be derived from irregular subphrase placement overlapping the barline, it could be suggested that Caplet uses this specific device as a way of heightening tension at crucial points in the drama.

For instance, taking the material in the opening stanza where the narrator sets the scene and introduces the characters, as follows, as an example:

---

*Maître Corbeau sur un arbre perché,*  
*Tenait en son bec un fromage.*  
*Maître Renard par l’odeur alléché,*  
*Lui tint à peu près ce langage:*

---

Master Crow perched on a tree,  
Was holding in his beak a cheese,  
Master Fox, lured by the scent,  
Spoke words more or less like these:

The first four lines of poetic text are set as four relatively even subphrases comprising the wider overall phrase that encompasses the first stanza. The vocal part’s note values are reasonably even, moving smoothly between quavers and semiquavers and as listeners, despite the *Rit.* and *a Tempo* indications that end the second and begin the third lines, we can perceive a sense of regularity throughout this introductory vocal motion. This sense of regularity may derive from the relatively fluid and even rhythms that are supported by freely moving quavers in the piano accompaniment, and the placement of the subphrases that mostly remain within the two-bar shapes. The regular motion dissipates as the fox enters, as there is a dramatic shift in the following bars (bar 12 onwards). It is at this point where the tension in the poetic text begins to heighten, and Caplet’s immediate response is to reflect this in the rhythmic shape of the music. This section of the fable includes direct speech as the fox addresses the crow
and, in the music, the rhythmic instability and imperceptible nature of the barlines potentially heightens the expression of unease that represents the fox’s malicious intentions.

These rhythmic events offset a sense of regularity, or security, as the fox enters, and as they occur from bar 12 to bar 13, may be interpreted as follows:

- Time signature changes to 3/4.
- Tempo change to *En retenant* distorts the sense of pulse.
- Insertion of *Lent:* \( \frac{4}{4} = 48 \) confuses the listener further in terms of hearing the new triple metre.
- New dotted rhythmic shape that is elaborated by arpeggiated figurations on the last beat of bar 12. Second rhythmic figuration on the first beat of bar 13.
- Subphrase begins on weak part of beat number 2 and continues across the barline.
- The second subphrase includes a glissando in the vocal part over the barline between bars 15–16.

The combination of these events over bars 12–17 creates a seismic shift in the metric feeling in the *mélodie*, and offers an example of a metric ambiguity created through use of phrasing to disguise the placement of the barline. Through listening to four different recordings of this *mélodie*, François Le Roux and Jeci Cohen, Dominique Favat and Line Marand, Lionel Peintre and Alain Jacquon, and Céline Ricci and Daniel Lockert, it is apparent that all of the artists remain wholly faithful to Caplet’s interpretative markings and suggestions throughout the score. Each vocal and piano duo firstly emphasises the differences in tone between the characters in the fable by use of dynamics and articulation, but it is through observation of expressive effects such as
accents and tempo fluctuations that the sense of rhythmic ambiguity is achieved. In these recordings, there appears to be less interpretative variation from artist to artist, and this could be due not only to the copious amount of descriptors in the score, but also to the nature of the setting itself. There is a clear blueprint within the fable, and the characters are predetermined: for instance, the flattery of clever and cunning fox should be articulated in buttery and enticing tones, with glissandi and accents strongly over the barline, something which all of the singers clearly do in the recordings. From the number of directions in the score, it is evident that Caplet had a very specific plan in mind concerning the manner with which interpreters should approach this music.

**Descriptive textures in the piano part**

In *Le corbeau et le renard*, the textures presented throughout the piano part have a significant impact on the rhythmic shape of the *mélodie*. As established earlier in the discussion, the piano parts contain highly descriptive elements that are closely related to the poetic text. In this *mélodie*, Caplet fully involves the entire spectrum of colour and illustrative qualities the piano can offer in portraying the events between the crow and the fox, such as flourishes, passages of contrasting density, and contrasts in staccato and legato articulation.

When considering the placement of these elements of word painting within the piano part, it is possible to perceive an agreement between the uneven quality of the most rhythmically vague subphrases: i.e., those that overlap the barline and diffuse a sense of rhythmic strength, and changing piano textures that contain elements of ambiguity. From the opposite perspective, however, it is also possible to interpret instances of the piano texture behaving in a more structured manner which, interestingly, align with the
subphrases that perhaps display a more regular sense of placement within the barline. This placement could suggest that Caplet deliberately used more evenly-structured piano textures to establish a stronger feeling of rhythmic stability within the music.

An example of evenly-structured piano textures representing rhythmic stability occurs throughout bars 21–5. At this point in the music, the fox directly addresses the crow with an outpouring of lavish flattery:

\[\text{Vous êtes le phénix des hôtes de ces bois} \]
\[\text{You are the Phoenix of these woods} \]

The vocal phrase falls more or less into two equal parts, which align mostly to the barlines. The piano texture is made up of dense and warm minim chords, a resplendent character perhaps reflective of the flattery the fox bestows on the crow. The minim chords fall on the first beat of the bar throughout this segment, and the 3/4 time signature can be felt in the passage.

Contrasting this, the areas in textural patterns in the piano can further be interpreted as a means of creating a more disguised sense of where the barlines lie could be suggested at the passage running through bars 29–32, shown in Example 3.2.
In this area, the narrator describes that at crow’s joyful response to the flattery, the crow opens his mouth to sing. As listeners, we know the cheese is in the crow’s beak, and should he open up his mouth, he will lose his dinner to the crafty fox. The textural passages in the piano are unevenly balanced and contrasting. For instance, single repeated notes, followed by a descending chromatic chordal figuration, that is then followed by alternating chords and single notes before changing to a demisemiquaver flourish. The placement of these textural sections overlaps the barlines, and due to a combination of dynamic accents and contrasting dynamic levels as these textural patterns shift, a stronger sense of irregularity is produced. These elements also affect
the listener, in that through functioning in tandem with irregular vocal subphrases, a sense of heightened tension, and perhaps confusion, is created. The listener anticipates the crow losing his cheese due to the unstable musical elements surrounding this point in the narrative.

Another example of rhythmic uncertainty evoked through the piano textures occurs as the crow drops his cheese. We hear the piano announce the cheese falling to the clutches of the fox at bars 36–7. This is particularly unsettled for the listener for several reasons:

- A stable rhythmic three bar ostinato-like future is established as a device for creating tension in bars 33–5. This demisemiquaver movement happens on the beat, and although intended to heighten drama, is incredibly rhythmically balanced in 2/4. We can perceive a beat.

- In bar 36, anticipating the text announcing the crow’s loss of his cheese, the music illustrates the cheese falling. This appears as a ff chord, but this chord occurs on the second beat of the bar rather than on the first, and with a sudden time signature change to 3/4 in bar 37 that lasts for one bar, the sense of strong rhythm previously established is now absent.

- In addition to this, the piano textures now completely thin out in the following passage, as the time signature returns to 2/4. The sense of rhythmic direction in the piano accompaniment is now much harder to perceive, and despite the return to 2/4, the suddenly thin texture can be destabilising for the listener. This is further reflected in the subphrases throughout this passage (bars 38–45) as they do not fully sit within the barlines.

**Constantly changing tempo markings as sections change and the narrative unfolds**

In her study of this *mélodie*, Jessica Chow draws the reader’s attention to the number of tempo markings Caplet uses throughout *Le corbeau et le renard*. This is certainly a feature of Caplet’s style, as evidenced in some of the earlier *mélodies* discussed in this
thesis, where there have been numerous examples of many tempo fluctuations through single compositions. Due to the through-composed nature of this *mélodie*, it can be suggested that Caplet uses tempo markings to further designate sections of new musical material, or to differentiate between musical events, textures, or ideas. Chow suggests that ‘each action in the story [is] represented by a new musical idea.’\(^{134}\) In her thesis, Chow provides a chart listing the tempo markings and bar numbers, which I integrate into the first two columns of table 3.2 to help illustrate the manner in which I build upon and add to this work.

Expanding Chow’s interpretation of the poetic events that happen at each tempo change, I propose that within tempo changes correlating to poetic events, we can find instances of rhythmic (and harmonic) ambiguity that are representative of the poetic narrative. The tempo changes are potentially a means of both separating the poetic images within the narrative, and additionally distorting the listener’s perception of where the barlines lie. In addition, the constantly changing tempi throughout the work infuse elements of surprise and heighten the drama within the fable.

In her dissertation, as mentioned, Jessica Chow assimilates the tempo changes in *Le corbeau et le renard* into a two-column chart. Using Chow’s tempo marking chart as a starting point to highlight some of the aspects of rhythmic and harmonic ambiguity occurring as the music changes from section to section, Table 3.2 synthesises these aspects by adding three additional columns to correlate these changes with poetic events: Poetic Event, Ambiguous Rhythmic Character, Ambiguous Harmonic Character:

\(^{134}\) Jessica Chow, 'Le Bestiaire in the Mélodies of Ravel, Caplet and Poulenc' (DMA Dissertation, The Juilliard School, 2010). p. 54
Table 3.2 *Le corbeau et le renard* tempo changes and poetic events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bar Number(s)</th>
<th>Tempo Markings</th>
<th>Poetic event</th>
<th>Ambiguous rhythmic character typical to this poetic event</th>
<th>Ambiguous harmonic character typical to this poetic event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1–12</td>
<td><em>Modéré</em> (<em>J</em> = 138)</td>
<td>The narrator sets the scene</td>
<td>Stable: perhaps neutral as narrator describes both fox and crow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13–4</td>
<td><em>Lent</em> (<em>J</em> = 48)</td>
<td>The fox begins speaking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15–21</td>
<td><em>Extrêmement lent</em></td>
<td>The fox’s outpouring of flattery</td>
<td>Unstable: subphrases offset the sense of beat and barline is disguised</td>
<td>Unstable: diminished harmonies heighten sense of foreboding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22–6</td>
<td><em>Bien Lent</em></td>
<td>The fox’s key sentence: ‘Vous êtes le phénix des hôtes de ces bois’</td>
<td>Stable: perhaps lulls the crow into a false sense of security</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27–43</td>
<td><em>a Tempo 1</em></td>
<td>The narrator describes the crow’s joy at hearing such flattery, and opens up his beak to sing</td>
<td>Aspects of rhythmic diminution combine with uneven vocally driven groupings to create a sense of the crow’s feverish excitement</td>
<td>Quickly changing chords passing through modal and chromatic points heighten anticipation for the crow to open his beak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44–8</td>
<td><em>Lent</em> (<em>J</em> = 52)</td>
<td>The fox returns to deliver the moral of the fable</td>
<td>Subphrases flow over the barlines disguising the sense of beat</td>
<td>Changing chords over a B pedal distort a clear sense of B as dominant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td><em>Un peu vite</em></td>
<td>Caplet inserts aspects of his own wit and humour</td>
<td>Rhythmic diminution catches the listener by surprise</td>
<td>Sudden burst of C lydian-dominant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50–71</td>
<td><em>Très à l’aise</em></td>
<td>The conclusion affirms that the crow learned a valuable lesson, at the cost of his cheese</td>
<td>Time signatures change quickly to accommodate the nature of the text. The vocal line drives the rhythmic shape in a free manner</td>
<td>Mixture of chromaticism before revealing E as the final statement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Throughout this *mélodie*, it has become apparent that Caplet’s musical expression of a dramatic narrative is highly focussed on portraying the story in the most faithful...
manner possible, while preserving the natural line of the voice. Le corbeau et le renard shows Caplet’s preoccupation with the concept of the voice as an expressive instrument. Chow notes that:

In composing the vocal lines in an instrumental manner, Caplet demands from his singer techniques such as awkward leaps, glissandi, chromatic scales and bleating. [...] Caplet frequently writes glissandi on the voice to highlight certain words and ideas.\textsuperscript{135}

To further Chow’s observation, not only does Caplet articulate the vocal parts of the \textit{mélodie} in a manner to accurately portray a much higher form of drama than we have previously encountered, but he also translates this dramatic character to the piano parts. Interestingly, as the vocal and piano parts become more descriptive and demanding on the performers, the aspects of rhythmic ambiguity within the \textit{mélodie} are transformed from the inner body of piano and vocal parts combined, to an emphasis on uneven vocal phrasing, supplemented with programmatic and descriptive piano textures. In the following portion of this chapter, the discussion will explore these elements within the remaining two fables in this set.

Overall, Le corbeau et le renard, explores an unfolding dramatic narrative in a fast-paced manner. Through tempo fluctuations, texture, and points of harmonic and rhythmic ambiguity, Caplet expresses both the contrasting characters of the fox and the crow, as well as portraying the moral of the fable.

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid. p.70
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French Text</th>
<th>English Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>La cigale et la fourmi</td>
<td>The grasshopper and the ant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La cigale, ayant chanté</td>
<td>The grasshopper, having sung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tout l’été,</td>
<td>All summer long,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Se trouva fort dépourvue</td>
<td>Found herself most destitute,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quand la bise fut venue.</td>
<td>when the North Wind came.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pas un seul petit morceau</td>
<td>Not a morsel to her name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De mouche ou de vermisseau.</td>
<td>Of either fly or worm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elle alla crier famine</td>
<td>She blurted out her tale of want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chez la fourmi sa voisine,</td>
<td>to her neighbour Mistress ant,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La priant de lui prêter</td>
<td>And begged her for a loan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quelque grain pour subsister</td>
<td>Of grain to last her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jusqu’à la saison nouvelle.</td>
<td>Till the coming spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Je vous paierai, lui dit-elle,</td>
<td>‘I shall pay you’, were her words,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avant l’août, foi d’animal,</td>
<td>‘On insect oath, before the fall,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intérêt et principal’.</td>
<td>Interest and principal.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Fourmi n’est pas prêtuse;</td>
<td>Mistress Ant is not a lender -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C’est là son moindre défaut.</td>
<td>That’s the last thing to reproach her with!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Que faisiez-vous au temps chaud?</td>
<td>‘Tell me how you spent the summer’,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dit-elle à cette emprunteuse.</td>
<td>Was what she asked the borrower.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuit et jour à tout venant</td>
<td>Night and day, to every comer,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je chantais, ne vous déplaise.</td>
<td>I sang, so please you ma’am.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Et bien! dansez maintenant’.</td>
<td>Now off you go and dance!’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4

Formal Overview: *La cigale et la fourmi*

In *La cigale et la fourmi* we are introduced to two characters: the gregarious grasshopper who sings all summer and lacks the foresight to prepare for winter, and the pragmatic and sensible ant who works hard throughout the summer to prepare grain for the colder more sparse times ahead. As the fable unfolds, the grasshopper finds herself cold and hungry in the depths of winter. She approaches the ant and asks for a loan of some grain and, through the ant’s refusal to help, the grasshopper learns an important lesson surrounding the virtues of hard work and preparation. The fable ends with the ant’s declaration that since the grasshopper sang all summer, she may continue to dance all winter; the moral within highlighting that the one who continually indulges in frivolous behaviour without much thought for the future is most likely to lose out in the long term. It is a hard lesson for the grasshopper to learn.

There is a relatively steady poetic metre within this fable, and according to Joel Harder:

> The poem is set more regularly than the previous, written in trochaic septa metre (7 syllables), and 22 lines long. The rhyme scheme is: AABB CCDD AEEFF HIIH KKKJ.

Similarly, and traditionally for Caplet, the *mélodie* broadly follows a through-composed format. There is an instance of recurring material in the vocal phrase, however, where the grasshopper is characterised by long and lyrical phrases. The vocal phrase over bars 21–7, as the narrator reveals that the grasshopper sang all summer: ‘*La cigale, ayant...*”

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chanté tout l’été’, returns towards the end of the mélodie when the grasshopper herself affirms that night and day she sings: ‘Nuit et jour à tout venant je chantais’. In her work on this mélodie, Sanae Kanda recognises this, and labels it the ‘cicada theme’. This thesis is in agreement with Kanda. She further mentions that the theme is somewhat like a leitmotif. She states:

In this song, he [Caplet] associates a particular theme or tonality with a specific character, like a leitmotif. As Section II and V share the same tonality, they also have the same melody that seems to be the cicada theme in the first part of both sections on a text relating to the cicada.137

This feature is one that appears, as Kanda notes, throughout ‘Caplet’s pieces towards the late and middle late periods of his stylistic development.’138, and an earlier example of this characteristic was considered in the rhythmic motif in Songe.

By way of contrast, Caplet highlights the differences between these two characters. For instance, throughout the vocal part the ant’s phrases tend to be shorter with a much more crisp, and sometimes staccato, articulation. It appears that Caplet assigns the narrator the most neutral kind of articulation. As the narrator describes the circumstances in which the grasshopper finds herself, the corresponding two phrases from bars 28–33 are relatively evenly balanced in terms of size and shape, follow a pattern of crotchets moving in thirds, and are constructed primarily of chord tones from the underlying harmonic movement.

137 Sanae Kanda, ‘The Role of the Piano in the Mélodie of André Caplet’ (DMA Dissertation, Boston University, 2002). p. 41

138 Ibid. p.41
La cigale et la fourmi contains a lengthy 20-bar piano solo introduction. There is a clear undulating shape within the motion of the piano, evoked through ascending and descending movement throughout the phrases. Joel Harder suggests this reflects the grasshopper’s song:

Here, the rhapsodising of the cicada is portrayed to great effect through syncopations, polyrhythms, and swirling rhythmic figures that never allow the music to land or cadence. The subdivision of the beat into alternating duplet and triplet figures (sometimes simultaneously) is a technique employed by Caplet to subtly guide rhythmic and musical flow.¹³⁹

Harder’s perspective on the piano solo opening material can be further substantiated by observing similar shapes in the vocal line. It might be suggested that this undulating figuration in both the piano and subsequent vocal phrases capture the breadth of the grasshopper’s song throughout the summer months, and provides a strong contrast to the more clipped phrases of the ant later in the music. Because of the shorter, sometimes speech-like phrases, the structure is differs somewhat to mélodies from sets previously discussed, in that it is possible to interpret seven sections, two of which contain recurring cicada-theme material. The structural division as it relates to the poetic narrative is further considered in the following section.

3.5

Aspects of Poetic Harmony: La cigale et la fourmi

The harmonic structure in *La cigale et la fourmi* could be interpreted in a similar manner to *Le corbeau et le renard*, in that the tonal centre does not settle consistently in the home key until the end of the mélodie. *La cigale et la fourmi* is housed within a key signature of A major, and the music does reach an A centre at certain points throughout, as well as at the ending where the moral of the fable is expressed.

In her analysis of this mélodie, Sanae Kanda suggests six tonal areas that align with her breakdown of the mélodie into sections relating to the text. For reference, I replicate Sanae’s interpretation in Table 3.4 below:\(^{140}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Number of Measures</th>
<th>Tonal Areas</th>
<th>Key Relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A I</td>
<td>1-20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>uncertain</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B II</td>
<td>21-41</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>A major</td>
<td>I cicada theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C III</td>
<td>42-54</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>F# minor</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D IV</td>
<td>55-69</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>unclear</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A' V</td>
<td>70-85</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>A major</td>
<td>I cicada theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F VI</td>
<td>86-98</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>A minor</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This interpretation reveals that Caplet uses the tonic key-centre, A major, as a harmonic reference point for the grasshopper, and shows the areas in the overall tonal plan where Caplet moves the music to the relative minor and tonic minor. In my analytical

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\(^{140}\) Sanae Kanda, ‘The Role of the Piano in the Mélodie of André Caplet’ (DMA Dissertation, Boston University, 2002). p.40
reading of the *mélodie*, I build on this evaluation of the mélodie by suggestion two additional points:

1. **It is possible to identify a further division within sections in the latter half of the *mélodie*, according to the blending of tonal areas and phrase motion**

In Table 3.4, I offer another interpretation of the relationship between the tonal centres and the poetic unfolding throughout the *mélodie*. My interpretation is similar to Kanda’s in that I am in agreement with the opening five sections, but differ on the final sections. I suggest a division between the final sections that creates a conclusion Section based on material that appears at the end of Section C. Additionally, the table builds on Kanda’s further by including an interpretation of the poetic imagery for each tonal centre, and pinpointing the tempo markings that apply to the section. Caplet’s fastidious attention to tempo markings infuses a sense of movement that, through the pushing forward and pulling back motion of these fluctuations, perhaps emphasise the natural divisions of the music into dramatic events:
Table 3.4 *La cigale et la fourmi* structural outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Bars</th>
<th>Tonal centre</th>
<th>Poetic imagery</th>
<th>Tempo marking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1–20</td>
<td>B–F</td>
<td>Piano solo introduction establishes motives.</td>
<td>♩ 92 going to en cédant très légèrement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>21–41</td>
<td>E pedal–A</td>
<td>Grasshopper’s theme.</td>
<td>a tempo going to poco rit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>42–54</td>
<td>stepwise movement to F♯</td>
<td>Narrator’s description of grasshopper’s plea</td>
<td>a tempo going to plus lent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>55–69</td>
<td>G–F–D [E] (tonal overlap at the end of this section)</td>
<td>Narrator’s description of the ant’s character: she is not prepared to offer anything to the grasshopper.</td>
<td>Précis ♩ = 76 moving through en revenant - lent to en revenant au tempo du début</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>70–8</td>
<td>E–A–[B] (tonal overlap)</td>
<td>The grasshopper’s theme returns in full song, reflective of how she spent the summer.</td>
<td>a tempo 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>79–90</td>
<td>B–E–A</td>
<td>Unimpressed, the ant’s refusal teaches the grasshopper a hard lesson.</td>
<td>♩ † moving to très lent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F (C1)</td>
<td>91–end</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Descending sorrowful theme reflects the grasshopper’s feelings.</td>
<td>légèrement plus lent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. **Looking at the larger scale harmonic movements, it becomes apparent that the harmonic structure functions primarily to portray the drama central to the story**

Taking an overall impression of the large-scale harmonic movements throughout the structure of the work, it is possible to perceive a harmonic narrative that fully reflects the unfolding of the storyline of the fable, through a duality between tonal areas representative of the grasshopper, and ambiguous combinations of chromatic tonality that represents the ant. The given key signature is A major, and in the more tonal areas, there is a clear tonal structure evident in this key. For instance, in bars 21–8, and again in bars 70–7, there is a dominant-tonic tonal outline as the grasshopper themes...
enter the narrative. In areas where the ant appears, such as at bars 55–69, there is a much less clear sense of tonal direction. The chords implied by the texture are not wholly atonal, but the context in which the chordal movement appears suggests a non-tonal outline. This reflects the harsh attitude of the ant towards the grasshopper, and creates a stark contrast between the two characters.

Additionally, there is a use of harmonic movements to portray events unfolding in the narrative, as well as the previously mentioned tonal characterisations. For instance, in the grasshopper’s section, she appears surrounded by A tonality at bars 25–28 as her singing during the summer is described in the text. As her empty cupboards are described, however, there is a change in tonality.

*Se trouva fort de pourvue*
*Quand la bise fut venue.*
*Pas un seul petit morceau*
*De mouche ou de vermisséau.*

Found herself most destitute,
when the North Wind came.
Not a morsel to her name
Of either fly or worm.

The music shifts from A major to A minor at this point, and then over an A pedal, to B locrian. This move from the stable A major tonality, to its minor counterpart with added tension and distress of the locrian mode based on the supertonic tone, suggests the panic of the grasshopper as she realises she does not have any provisions for the winter. Additionally, to heighten the sense of despair, bar 38 demonstrates a contrary-motion chromatic movement between the treble and bass-clef of the piano line combined with a monotone vocal entry. This harmonic distortion occurs at the point where the text declares: *pas un seul petit morceau, de mouche ou de vermisséau*, and
is shown in Example 3.3. Perhaps the chromaticism in contrary motion fully depicts the
grasshopper’s grim situation.

Example 3.3: *La cigale et la fourmi* bars 38–9 chromatic contrary motion

![Example 3.3: *La cigale et la fourmi* bars 38–9 chromatic contrary motion](image)

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This chromaticism is developed further at bars 42–54 where the grasshopper pleads
with the ant for help. The chromaticism could be interpreted from the perspective that,
although the grasshopper pleads, her pleading is in vain. The ant is unrelenting and
unsympathetic towards these pleas. Furthermore, this part of the fable is told from the
narrator’s perspective: there is a sense of rhythmic stability in the texture throughout
the passage that relays the matter-of-fact statement in the narrative.

In the final passage of the *mélodie*, the drama is fully embraced. The ant has the final
say, and thus the tonality fully reflects this. The textures are sparse, resulting in limited
potential for long sweeping tonal statements. Instead, the harmonic language outlines
a collection of chromatic and chordal figurations without strong tonal centricity. It is
only in the final bars that, through a blending of chromatic and chordal movements,
the home key of A is defined. Interestingly, throughout the *mélodie*, the A tonality
revolves around the grasshopper. Caplet’s dramatic humour appears in the final four bars, as the music does indeed return to A major, but the very final notes, low in register and in staccato articulation, state an A minor third. Perhaps this turn from A major to A minor reflects the grasshopper’s unfortunate ordeal.
Through exploring the ways in which Caplet uses elements such as tempo markings, contrasting piano textures, and tonal centres, it appears that he draws collectively from these elements in order to fully convey poetic imagery as the storyline within the fable unfolds. For instance, there are generally quicker tempo markings for the ant’s scenes, compared to the slower, perhaps more expressive scenes in which we encounter the grasshopper. This can potentially reflect the fastidious work of the ant during the summer to provide for herself over the winter, compared to the languorous singing of the grasshopper all summer. Similarly, the contesting nature of the protagonists within the fable can be further reflected in the textures articulated by the piano accompaniments through each section. Examples of dense, yet clipped, staccato chords in the ant’s part help create a sense of energetic and bustling activity, such as throughout the piano solo segment in bars 55–9 of Section D just before the vocal line enters. This contrasts with the more lyrical qualities that appear throughout the grasshopper’s themes, where the piano entries are fuller and more flowing to reflect the cantabile nature of the vocal line. Through harmonic movement, the shifting surface tonal motion helps to create a sense of tension and suspension within the fable.

In *La cigale et la fourmi*, it is possible to address the primary interpretative areas in a similar manner as *Le corbeau et le renard*. Because Caplet’s compositional approach to *Trois fables de Jean de La Fontaine* differs to that of previous and later works on account of the distinctly dramatic and descriptive character of the fables, the analytical and interpretative approach differs from previous works to accommodate a reflection
of that, as this set of *mélodies* explores the more theatrical side of Caplet’s language. As with *Le corbeau et le renard*, perhaps Caplet’s approach to setting the fables became more weighted in the illustrative expression of events unfolding in time, than in catering to the ambiguous multiplicity of meanings found in the works of poetry by writers steeped in the symbolist aesthetic. Just as the poetic meaning is different in these fables, musical meaning and compositional approach is different.

There are three key areas that may be explored in *La cigale et la fourmi* in order to gain insight into Caplet’s musical interpretation of the imagery within the fable:

- Highly declamatory style of vocal writing that features direct speech resulting in the vocal line subphrases placed over the barline at points of heightened tension in the text.
- Alignment of metric consonance and dissonance to the two characters in the fable.
- Descriptive textures in the piano part.

Highly declamatory style of vocal writing that features direct speech resulting in the vocal line subphrases placed over the barline at points of heightened tension in the text

In *La cigale et la fourmi*, the vocal phases are very much directed by the shape of the poetic text. Krebs discusses this in relation to the music of Schumann\(^\text{141}\) and deliberates that the presence of the poetic text could significantly impact the formation of antimetrical layers within the musical fabric. The piano’s role is distinctly descriptive, the perfect foil for the vocal part. As demonstrated in the previous setting,

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\(^{141}\) *Schumann may have felt complex metrical superpositions would distract the listener from the text. Furthermore, the involvement of the vocal part in a dissonance could have posed problems of declamation; the necessary of adhering to the poetic accentuate precluded the freedom with which antimetrical layers can be established in instrument music.* From: Harald Krebs, *Fantasy Pieces: Metrical Dissonance in the Music of Robert Schumann* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). p.157
and will further be shown in the third *mélodie* to follow later in this chapter, the unfolding of a dramatic narrative is key. The primary drama in the fable arises from the dichotomy between the characters and what they represent: the ant who is industrious and resourcefully plans for the winter, and the carefree grasshopper who sings all summer without a care for the future.

The declamatory, almost recitative-like nature of the prosody appears to be a primary driving force behind the contour of the vocal line. A distinction may potentially be found between the phrase lengths and structure, relative to the poetic imagery. For instance, from bars 42–54, Section C, the regularity in the first phrase throughout the opening two bars of this section creates a very different character to that of the previous phrases. The quaver movement in the vocal line, ascending and descending through these two bars, occurs as the narrator describes the grasshopper’s tale of want. Perhaps this regular quaver motion and even two-bar phrase underpins the distinct change of circumstances in which the grasshopper now finds herself. The long, sweeping songs she sang in the summer months, represented through the wide intervals and long phrases of Section B (bars 21–41) have passed, and a new turn of events unfolds as she realises she will be faced with harder times ahead. The musical character becomes more contained, and far less rhapsodic as the carefree gives way to the serious. Interestingly, as this section continues, the phrases gradually become more fragmented. In the text, the grasshopper’s desperation becomes more apparent as she begs for a scrap of grain, and promises on insect oath to repay the ant:

*Quelque grain pour subsister*  
*Jusqu’à la saison nouvelle,*  
*Je vous paierai, lui dit-elle,*  
*Avant l’aôût, foi d’animal, Intérêt et principal.*
Of grain to last her
Till the coming spring.
‘I shall pay you’, were her words,
“On insect oath, before the fall,
Interest and principal.’

There is a significant distortion of the vocal phrases, due to the placement of rests and crotchets, which break up the previous feeling of regularity that occurred in bars 42–3.

It could be further suggested that in this section, it is possible to find a deliberate placement of metric conflict between the piano part and the vocal part, to increase the feeling of tension and hopelessness the grasshopper experiences as she pleads with the ant for assistance. For example, in the piano part, there is a steady motion of crotchet movement established from the beginning of bar 42, continuing as far as bar 49. In addition to this crotchet movement, sequential minim-movement occurs in the treble-clef piano line in bars 45–7, accompanied in bars 46–7 with a rising minim-configuration in the bass-clef piano line. The inclusion of these minim layers with the crotchet movement helps to stabilise the piano part firmly in 2/2 time, and creates a strong sense of pulses throughout the section. If we consider the evenness in the pulse layer of the piano against the offset nature of the phrases as the grasshopper beseeches the ant, we can potentially interpret this as an example of grouping dissonance used to illustrate the drama within the narrative.
In Example 3.4, Caplet potentially offsets the vocal line and creates a strong sense of dissonance between the piano and vocal parts several ways:

- The opening phrase of the section is very rhythmic, with a sense of evenness that creates a sense of stability on the listener’s ear.

- The second phrase begins evenly, but ends in the middle of bar 45: by shortening the length of this phrase to 1.5 bars, Caplet is able to place the beginning of the third phrase on the weak half of the third crotchet beat in the bar. With a 2/2 pulse in mind, this beat is a very weak point in the bar for the phrase to begin. This in turn offsets the following phrase to begin and end in the midpoint of the bar rather than situated on a strong beat.

- There is use of different note values as the phrases begin to fragment. Addition of triplets into the vocal part could function for reasons of declamation, as well as distorting the previously established evenness of the vocal part in bars 42–3. This fragmentation could further highlight the desperation the grasshopper feels as she pleads with the ant.
• The shape of the dynamics throughout these phrases supports this suggestion and further conflicts with the phrase shapes in the piano part.

• As the section progresses, the phrases become smaller in duration. For example, the phrase ‘Avant l’oùt foi d’animal’ is short and passes over the barline. This phrase is in direct conflict with the phrasing in the piano part, and with the en retenant peu à peu direction, it fully illustrates the grasshopper’s plight. Furthermore, the tonality suggested at this bar (49) is E locrian natural two, and this half diminished harmony contributes to a sense of desperation.

Alignment of metric consonance and dissonance to the two characters in the fable

Comparing the metric balance between the piano and declamatory, recitative-like vocal parts in other areas of this mélodie, it appears that there is a direct link between use of metric dissonance and expressing poetic imagery in the fable. This conflict potentially arises through the recitative-like aspects of the vocal line layers in conjunction with the descriptive piano textures. For example, throughout the first half of Section B, bars 21–7, where we are introduced to the grasshopper singing her song all summer, there is a lesser sense of conflict between the vocal line and piano part. The poetic imagery at this point in the fable is positive: the summer days are bright as the grasshopper cheerfully sings her song. The metric relationship between the piano and the vocal part displays a stronger sense of stability than in Section D when the ant displays her displeasure.

For example, in the beginning of Section B, encompassing a lyrical nature, the vocal phrases contain relatively even rhythmic values, with a rising melodic contour that reflects her song. The piano accompaniment at this part contains a strong minim pulse in the left hand, with a rippling figuration in the treble-clef line that creates a full texture. Perhaps this fullness of texture is a reminder of the bountiful nature of the
summer. It is possible to suggest that there is an element of stability in the piano accompaniment here, because looking at the rising minim line in the bass-clef piano line, there is a very even pulse. The rising contour is reflected in the vocal and treble-clef parts and, furthermore, Caplet offsets the treble-clef line in bar 21–2 with quaver rests and accented dotted crotchets that double the tones in the vocal line. I suggest that Caplet offsets these lines in order to emphasise the rising minim line in the bass-clef part, as this minim line is very rhythmic, and its stable rising nature supports the overall rising shape of the vocal line. The tones which occur as dotted crotchets in the treble-clef line are the same tones present in both the vocal and bass-clef lines, emphasising the ascending figuration.

Although the accented dotted crotchet pulses occur on weaker beats of the bar, they do not detract from the stability established in the regular minim beats. It is possible that Caplet accents this line to prevent it from becoming completely passive within this textural line. In their recording of this mélodie, François Le Roux and Jeff Cohen seem to observe this regularity, as Cohen distinctly brings out the minim ascent in the piano part, giving the impression of stable rhythmic pulse at this point, that in turn supports Le Roux’s even vocal line. Lionel Peintre and Alain Jacquon’s interpretation similarly observes this rhythmic stability created by the minim line, and likewise take a brisk tempo. Claudette LeBlanc and Boaz Sharon, however, set a slightly slower tempo overall for the mélodie, and in Sharon’s piano line, there is more balance between the right-hand left-hand parts. This balance creates a different rhythmic impression: Sharon places more weight on the accented right-hand notes, which somewhat lessens the effect the minim pulse. Although there is still a strong pulse in this particular interpretation due to the weighting and placement of the minims in the lower register,
the pianistic choice to evenly balance the hands creates a different rhythmic impression to the other two recordings where the pianists make the choice to bring out the stability created by a strong minim pulse.

Comparing the depiction of the grasshopper in Section B with the depiction of the ant in Section D that starts at bar 55, it appears there is a much more dissonant metric relationship between the piano and vocal parts at the point where the music refers to the ant’s responses to the grasshopper’s plea. Overall, the music in this section appears driven more by the vocal part, on account of the sparse texture in the piano parts. Although the ant is the more secure character in the fable as she possessed the foresight to work through the summer in preparation for the winter, her entries of direct speech are very fragmented as she prickles with indignation towards the grasshopper’s plea. Perhaps the lack of lyrical piano accompaniment in the ant’s part reflects her lack of engagement with frivolity and her strong work ethic. This contrasting imagery between the characters can be demonstrated through a much stronger sense of dissonance in the ant’s parts in the mélodie. The dissonance in Section D becomes apparent when we consider Caplet’s piano solo description of the ant throughout bars 55–8, and the interaction between the vocal and piano parts of the following bars.

Bars 55–8 outline a strong 2/4 section where sharp clipped staccato containing marcato accents appear on the first notes of each bar, as well as on both quaver beats at the start of bar 56. The articulation through this passage is significant. It is the first substantial description of the ant, and provides a very sharp contrast to the grasshopper. There is little lyrical quality, harsher articulation, a quicker tempo
direction, and narrow range. The rhythmic quality is very regular, and is most clearly articulated in the recording by Francois le Roux and Jeff Cohen. Cohen’s approach to the accents is very marked, and he emphasises the quaver beats in bar 56, which further heightens the dissonance between the C♯ and D tones. Interestingly, in Lionel Peintre and Alain Jacquon’s interpretation, Jacquon chooses a much faster pace. This pace leads to emphasising the accents in the first beat of each bar, but the accented quavers in bar 56 are far less clear. By taking the faster pace, it is harder for the listener to discern the sharpness of the accents, and as a result these dissonance between the C♯ and D is lost. In Cohen’s piano part, the clearer articulation of accents creates the impression of much stronger placement of pulse in the bar.

The resulting dissonance created in Section D might be interpreted as a form of indirect dissonance. The piano solo at bars 55–8 establishes a rhythmic and even pulse that the listener can immediately perceive. The vocal line at bar 59 continues this pulse at a slower tempo due to the retaining of syllabic staccato semiquaver entry, and this tempo helps the listener continue hearing the 2/4 pulse. At bar 60, a single piano semiquaver chord falls on the second beat of the bar, and with the subsequent thin piano texture the vocal line directs the rhythmic direction. The dissolution of semiquavers to quaver triplets in combination with the en retenant direction conflicts with the established pulse in the previous bar creating a sense of indirect dissonance in the following ways:

- The phrase starts and finishes outside the barline distorting the listener’s sense of where the first beat lies.

- The position of the chord on the second beat of the bar, in the piano part, could distort the listener’s perception of the barline, because it emphasises the weak beat in the bar rather than defining a strong first beat.
• The first triplet contains a rest in the centre. This rest, perhaps a product of prosody, prevents the listener from fully experiencing the triple nature of this bar, especially when combined with the sudden tempo change.

• The *poco accel. - Retenu* at bars 62–3 could reference both the ant (staccato bar 62), and the grasshopper (lyrical descending octaves bar 63). This contributes to the sense of dissonance in the section in that the pause over the quaver rest at the start of bar 63 distorts the sense of where the first beat of the bar actually lies. It is becoming more difficult for the listener to perceive the 2/4 metre at this point.

• In the following vocal entry, marked *Lent*, in bar 64 there is a strong sense of freedom in the rhythmic structure of the phrase. The phrase starts and ends over the barline rather than on the first beat of the bar, and despite the time signature change to 4/4, there is not a strong sense of pulse in the music at this stage. The layout of the phrase as the ant addresses the grasshopper is unsupported by the piano, as the tied notes do not offer any kind of rhythmic stability.

There is a further instance of metric dissonance when the ant returns in Section E, beginning at bar 79. There are three successive time signature changes: 2/1 in bar 79, 3/4 in bar 80, and 4/4 in bar 81. It is not fully possible for the listener to easily perceive the metre throughout this part for several reasons:

• The music does not settle in a singular time signature for a long enough duration to create a stable sense of pulse within the bar.

• The staccato semiquaver clusters begin on the weak beat in 2/4 and the strong beat in 3/4 and, as a result, the placement of the strong beat with this phrase is ambiguous.

• As the ant’s direct speech returns, at bars 81–2, the *très lent* tempo direction, combined with the vocal placement on weaker beats of the bar once again distorts the sense of 4/4 time signature at this point.

In interpreting the characters in the fable, Francois LeRoux even adopts certain vocal intonations for each. His depiction of the ant possessed a much more nasal vocal timbre, compared to the fullness of tone that the grasshopper displays. In the ant’s direct speech, LeRoux uses slightly more rubato. This is most noticeable at bars 64–6
and 81–2. Due to this rubato, his interpretation suggests a greater sense of metric ambiguity. The lack of steady piano accompaniment combined with an element of rubato in the vocal delivery infuses a sense of ambiguity and uncertainty into the underlying metre and position of the barline.

The metric distortion present in Section E is particularly effective when we consider the precluding section, B1. In the B1 section, the grasshopper’s fuller and more stable textures return one more. The listener experiences a much stronger pulse throughout. The two characters possess very different natures, and Caplet illustrates this by assigning not just opposing manners of articulation for each one (rhapsodic and lyrical versus sharper staccato), but by also distorting the sense of underlying metric structure.
Descriptive textures in the piano part

Out of all three *mélodies* in this set, *La cigale et la forumi* has the longest piano solo introduction. Throughout these opening twenty bars, the piano part moves in ascending and descending figurations that set the scene for the drama to follow. These rising and falling patterns have been described by Jessica Chow as an illustration of the contrasting personalities of the grasshopper and the ant, as well as suggesting the doomed fate that awaits the grasshopper. Chow outlines:

The alteration between ascent and descent depicts the unsteady nature of the cicada, her ecstatic approach to life coupled with her lack of responsibility. It also foreshadows the cicada’s eventual downfall and death, by preparing the audience for the final slow descent in m.91 of the piano postlude. The introduction to this *mélodie* showcases the virtuosity of the pianist by depicting the cicada’s own flashy performance. [...] The contrast between the two animals comes about through the distinct figurations, as well as the implied abundance of pedal in the cicada’s introduction and lack of pedal in the ant’s.142

Building on these judgements, it could be further suggested that the changing piano textures as an illustrative tool for the differing characters in the fable is not just restricted to this opening material, but occurs throughout the entire work. Chow notes the use of pedal performance to enhance the rich textures associated with the grasshopper in contrast to the lack of pedal throughout the sharper textures representative of the ant. At the beginning of Section D, starting at bar 55, there is a four-bar passage consisting of mostly staccato and inclusive of heavy accents. This section prepares the listener for the ant’s entry in the vocal part at bar 59. The textures that follow throughout this section differ greatly to those of the grasshopper in Section B. Here, the music moves in sparse, choppy staccato phrases made up of short bursts

of staccato (at bar 62) and long tied notes (bars 64–6). This sharply defined change in texture as the characters interact underpins the contrasting of their situations.

These piano textures potentially offer a significant contribution to the underlying metric structure in the overall mélodie. The shape and placement of the vocal phrases reflect this, too; there is more regularly in the grasshopper’s phrases, and more irregularity in those of the ant. The piano textures largely support this, in that the piano parts could be suggested as a driving force behind the creation of a sense of metric stability upon which the vocal phrases are situated. Where the piano textures are full, the vocal phrases contain more regularity and where the piano textures are sparser, there is more ambiguity in discerning the metric pulse throughout the vocal phrases.

That the overall metric shifting between areas of more and less dissonance perhaps come about due to a combination of factors, all derived from the two contrasting characters in the fable. These factors can be identified as follows:

- **Textural Density**
  Density in piano textural patterns helps to create a stronger sense of pulse from which more even vocal phrases emerge.

- **Changing Time Signatures**
  Frequent changing of time signatures can prevent the music from settling into one given pulse for a duration of time. This is most notable at bars 79–81.

- **Abundance of Tempo Changes**
  Frequent tempo changes within each of the sections and at vocal entry points heightens ambiguity. The speeding up and slowing down between sections, although effectively portraying distinctive images throughout the unfolding of the narrative in the fable, permeate a sense of vagueness into the certain points of the metric structure, as seen through bars 79–82.
When these factors combine, the metric structure evolves to reflect two very distinct identities. This *mélodie* displays Caplet’s engagement with underlying metric conflict as a means of expressing poetic imagery and unfolding narrative. The metre shifts as the characters enter, but the ways in which Caplet achieves this is through not just one element, but the combination of several.

There is an interesting balance of metric conflict as it applies to each individual character. The ant is portrayed in the fable as hard-working and prepared for the winter, yet when her character appears musically, the metre seems to become more irregular with greater passages of dissonance, ambiguity and conflict. The grasshopper, on the other hand, is facing destitution as the winter approaches and she is unprepared. When her character appears, the metre contains less conflict, with more occurrences of stable motion and clearly perceptible pulse. Surely, one would expect conflicting, uncertain metre to better represent the state the grasshopper is facing, and stable metre to represent the ant’s fortunate position. It seems counter-intuitive, and we can surmise Caplet’s choices for this. It is possible that in the musical interpretation of this fable, Caplet views the unfolding events in the past: the summer was a good time for the grasshopper, thus her metric identity is stable. The summer for the ant, however, was full of hard work without time for joy and merrymaking. Imagining the ant scurrying in a frantic and hectic manner as she busily prepares for winter could support the sense of stress or conflict in the music as this image is portrayed, and perhaps is a contributing factor to the ant’s very fragmented metric identity. It could additionally be speculated that Caplet perceived the ant as harsh and unhelpful to the carefree grasshopper, and portraying the harshness of her character in this way could go towards a metaphor for the unkindness and lack of compassion of which humanity is capable.
# Trois fables de Jean de la Fontaine by Jean de la Fontaine

## No. 3 Le loup et l'agneau (1919)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Le loup et l'agneau</th>
<th>The wolf and the lamb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| La raison du plus fort est toujours la meilleure :  
Nous l'allons montrer tout à l'heure.  
Un agneau se désaltèrait  
Dans le courant d'une onde pure.  
Un loup survint à jeun, qui cherchait aventure,  
Et que la faim en ces lieux attirait.  
Qui te rend si hardi de troubler mon breuvage ?  
Dit cet animal plein de rage :  
Tu seras châtié de ta témérité.  
Sire, répond l'agneau, que Votre Majesté  
Ne se mette pas en colère ;  
Mais plutôt qu'elle considère  
Que je me vas désaltérant  
Dans le courant,  
Plus de vingt pas au-dessous d'elle ;  
Et que, par conséquent, en aucune façon  
Je ne puis troubler sa boisson.  
Tu la troubles ! reprit cette bête cruelle ;  
Et je sais que de moi tu médis l'an passé.  
Comment l'aurais-je fait, si je n'étais pas né ?  
Reprit l'agneau : je tette encore ma mère. --  
Si ce n'est toi, c'est donc ton frère. —  
Je n'en ai point. -- C'est donc quelqu'un des tiens ;  
Car vous ne m'épargnez guère,  
Vous, vos bergers et vos chiens.  
On me l'a dit : il faut que je me venge.  
Îa-dessus, au fond des forêts  
Le loup l'emporte, et puis le mange,  
Sans autre forme de procès. | The mightiest are always right,  
Which we shall now set out to prove.  
A lamb was slaking its thirst  
In the waters of a limpid stream.  
A famished wolf arrived to try his luck  
Drawn by hunger to this place.  
‘Who made you so bold to foul my drink?’  
Said this animal full of rage:  
You shall be punished for such cheek  
‘Sir’, said the lamb, ‘so please your Grace  
Do not fly into a rage;  
Consider, rather, first,  
The stream where I assuage my thirst  
Is twenty yards downstream,  
Below your place,  
It can in no way therefore be the case  
That I am fouling your drink.’  
‘You foul it all the same’ the cruel beast went on,  
And last year, I know that you slandered me.’  
How can that be if I wasn’t yet born?’  
Replied the lamb, ‘My mother still suckles me.’  
If it isn’t you, it’s your brother then.’  
‘I have no brother.’ ‘Then some relation:  
For you are always plagueing me,  
You, your dogs and shepherds too.  
They tell me I should wreak revenge.’  
Whereupon the wolf dragged him through  
The forest’s depths and ate him up  
Without further ado. |
Le loup et l’agneau is by far the darkest of the Trois Fables de Jean de La Fontaine.

Telling the story of a docile lamb eaten by a hungry wolf, this fable explores the moral that the strongest will survive, irrespective of their moral alignment. According to Joel Harder, ‘the poem is similar to Le corbeau et le renard in terms of its free mixture of syllabic metre and rhyme, giving it the feeling of prose. It runs 30 lines long, and the rhyme scheme is complex: AABA ABCC BBDD EEF GGF BBHH IJHJ KBKB.’

The vocal line of this mélodie is highly intricate and, as each character in the narrative has a distinctive voice, is technically demanding on the singer. Williametta Spencer notes that this mélodie contains the ‘most direct association with the text of any of Caplet’s songs’, and Harder further draws a comparison between this and the sprechstimme style used by Schoenberg. He explains:

This approach in fact borders on the Sprechstimme technique used to create effect by Arnold Schoenberg in works such as Pierrot Lunaire, written seven years earlier in 1912. There are many expressive markings that act almost as dramatic talking directions, such as “in a puny and pointed voice” in m.34 and “through gritted teeth” at m.73.

Additionally, Caplet includes tremolo parts in the vocal line that emulate the bleating of the lamb in order to fully emulate her character. It is unsurprising that Harder draws a

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144 Williametta Spencer 'The Influence and Stylistic Heritage of André Caplet' (PhD Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1974). p.230

comparison to the style of Schoenberg at this point, since Caplet was an advocate of modern music. Just two years after the composition of the *Trois Fables de Jean de La Fontaine*, Caplet would go on to conduct the French premiere of Schoenberg’s *Five Pieces for Orchestra*.146

There is a sharp contrast between the characters in the *mélodie*, much like the contrasting manner detailed in the preceding two of the set. Speed, articulation, and texture combine to create the differing personas of the lamb and the wolf. The lamb is characterised by warmer descriptive textures, instances of longer phrase lengths, and gentler dynamics. The wolf’s volatile character, on the other hand, contains shorter, more clipped phrase lengths, and louder, somewhat harsher dynamics. The narrator, who sets the scene in the introduction and provides concluding comments at the end of the *mélodie*, appears with a combination of long and short, clipped and even phrase lengths, perhaps demonstrating a more neutral stance.

Overall, the textures are relatively sparse, and the piano is used to full orchestral effect in order to add a sense of theatre to the narrative. The addition of repeated pedal tones in the lamb’s passages, at bars 11–18, bars 43–58, and again at bars 73–7, adds a sense of warmth and motion that perhaps helps suggest the innocence and trusting nature of the lamb.

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146 According to Spencer, this was a daring move for Caplet. She reveals: ‘He dared to perform works which other composers would attempt. In 1922 the Five Pieces for Orchestra by Arnold Schoenberg were given their first French performance under his leadership. The reception of the public was something of a disaster’ (Williametta Spencer ‘The Influence and Stylistic Heritage of André Caplet’ (PhD Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1974). p.51)
In terms of the structure, this *mélodie*, in a similar way to *La cigale et la fourmi*, is characterised by a greater number of small sections, primarily defined by the characters in the narrative, rather than fewer large sections concerned with the expression of a singular mood. In her interpretation, Sanae Kanda suggests a structural interpretation according to tonal layout, and devises a plan of nine overall sections driven by large-scale tonal change. To build on this, I suggest the structure can be interpreted according to the combination of characterisation as well as tonality because it appears that Caplet uses tonal areas to represent the characters in the drama. Interpreting the structure in this manner affords insight into not only the changing harmonic colour, but also the ways in which Caplet manipulates the tonal structure to portray the contrasting characteristics of the lamb and the wolf. This results in eight sections, as Table 3.5 illustrates:
### Table 3.5: *Le loup et l'agneau* structural outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Tonal Area / Centricity</th>
<th>Primary characterisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A (bars 1–10)</td>
<td>Ambiguous: Possible $A^b$ octatonic. Exhibits chromaticism and points of non-diatonic writing</td>
<td>Narrator introduces the moral of the fable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B (bars 11–21)</td>
<td>$A^b$ centricity</td>
<td>Lamb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C (bars 22–33)</td>
<td>E locrian-natural-two – chromatic – $A^b$ octatonic</td>
<td>Wolf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1 (bars 34–53)</td>
<td>$G$ tonality moves through a passage of chromaticism that develops into $A^b$ centricity</td>
<td>Lamb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D (bars 54–64)</td>
<td>Passages of chromaticism and octatonicism</td>
<td>Wolf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E (bars 65–72)</td>
<td>Mostly chromatic and fast changing • 65–9: lamb - shows some $G^#$ centricity • 70–1: wolf - octatonic • 71–2: lamb - $E^b$</td>
<td>Lamb and wolf enter into a quickly-paced dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F (bars 72–85)</td>
<td>Chromaticism moving to octanicsm</td>
<td>Wolf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G (bars 86–102)</td>
<td>C centricity with fragments of octanonicism</td>
<td>Narrator concludes the fable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, the structure functions as a reflection of the poetic narrative. Caplet captures the characters in the fable and, through using tonality, texture, phrase contour, and articulation, the setting portrays the underlying harsh moral that the strong survive over the weak.
Harmonic structure and dramatic events are strongly interconnected in *Le loup et l'agneau*. Caplet uses tonality to set forth the unfolding drama of the fable, and both personalities in the narrative are portrayed through the use of both diatonic and non-diatonic colour. The lamb appears most frequently in $A_b$ centricities, and the wolf is characterised by mixtures of chromaticism and octatonicism. This results in a more extended use of octatonic and chromatic passages as the wolf is fully characterised throughout the *mélodie*. Caplet’s use of the octatonic in this way has occurred in past *mélodies* as a way of expressing the darkest sentiments throughout the settings. For instance, during the war, songs such as *Détresse* (1915) and *La croix douloureuse* (1916–17) grapple with themes of anguish and the torment of war, and demonstrate aspects of octatonicism and chromaticism in the portrayal of despairing circumstances. Although a different subject matter and poetic choice to those settings, in this *mélodie* the overt dichotomy between tonal and non-tonal centricities, as representative of morally just and unjust, demonstrates a similar use of octatonic and chromatic tonalities for purposes of intense poetic expression. Therefore, it is likely that in the tonal structure, Caplet draws from and builds upon similar methods for manipulating harmonic language in the portrayal of poetic atmosphere and imagery in his post-war *mélodies*, as for those composed during the war. The darker the subject, the more likely it is that Caplet will incorporate not just octatonicism, but will approach this diminished mode tonally by drawing from the half-diminished qualities of the locrian-natural-two mode.
There are several outstanding ways in which the tonality expresses the features of dramatic tension, uncertainty, and agitation so central to this dark narrative. These include:

- Defiance of the key signature.
- Tonal colouring of the lamb and the wolf.
- Unprepared jumping to tonalities situated harmonically far apart.

**Defiance of the key signature**

There can be little doubt that from the very outset, the atmosphere of this *mélodie* is established through the use of harsh tonality. Jessica Chow notes that:

> The delay of a tonic arrival persists in *Le loup et l’agneau* with a key signature consisting of three flats. The opening piano octave is an A♯, standing in defiance of the key signature. Caplet seems to be demonstrating that the wolf stands in opposition of all matters just, and that his power wins above the sound reasoning of the other party. The piano octave’s blatant rebellion against the key signature powerfully illustrates this point.147

Chow’s observation is significant because, as she points out, the sense of conflict between two entities is established even before we meet the central characters of the fable. This use of non-tonal language presents a dark sound world to the listener; the implication of the moral described by the narrator in the opening lines is that it is neither just nor fair in essence. Throughout the opening passage, the tonality could be interpreted as highly diminished, through passing from areas suggesting the locrian-natural-two mode, to octatonic, to chromatic. The G7 chord in bar 9 is the first sense of tonality we receive and, even then, it is harmonically unstable due to the non-

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resolution of the seventh. The listener is left tonally hanging before the entry of the lamb in bar 11. The sense of harmonic discord and clear defiance of the key signature not only reflects the representation of the wolf’s opposition to moral justice and fairness, but it contrasts the innocence and benign qualities the lamb possesses and illustrates the differences between the characters. Through this stark tonal juxtaposition right at the beginning of the mélodie, Caplet’s choice to portray the polarity between just and unjust establishes an atmospheric sense of foreboding. We know the lamb will meet a nasty end and the weak, but perhaps morally fair, will lose out to power and corruption. The $A_b$ key signature potentially, though its connection with the lamb in harmonic structure of the mélodie, represents justice and moral good. The clashing tonal defiance of this in the very first bar perhaps shows the power that the corrupt will wield in the pursuit of their own interest.

**Tonal colouring of the wolf and the lamb**

Colour is the essence of the harmonic make-up in this mélodie. As mentioned, the wolf and the lamb have very different characters and represent opposing moral forces. This work potentially becomes less about the survival of the fittest in nature, and more about the corruption of justice in humanity. That Caplet chose such a stark tonal language to characterise the opposing forces of the morally good and morally evil suggests that perhaps through the impact of his WWI experiences, he held a powerful outlook on the darker side of mankind. The instances concerning the lamb are generally surrounded by $A_b$ centricities, but still inclusive of points that suggest chromaticism at the areas in the narrative where the lamb anxiously interacts with the wolf. Contrasting this tonality, the colouring of the wolf displays use of the locrian-natural-two mode, octatonicism, and chromaticism. The pull away from diatonic
representation for the wolf, in addition to characterising the fable, sharpens the
audience’s perception of tension and expectation throughout the unfolding of this
dramatic narrative. The use of non-diatonic writing for the wolf’s character distorts our
perception of harmonic motion because the pull of tonic-dominant, as well as
stabilising qualities of major/minor third in the chordal language, are much less
perceptible. Since it is difficult to anticipate the direction the wolf’s harmonic
movement will take, the sense of fear and unpredictability associated with this
character is increased.

**Unprepared jumping to tonalities situated far apart**

Part of the feeling of quick pacing and fast tonal movement of this *mélodie* could be
due, not only to the quick harmonic rhythm, but also to the fast-paced exchange that
occurs between the lamb and the wolf. Because their exchange builds in intensity and
speed as the narrative unfolds, the rate of tonal jumping and shifting similarly
increases. For example, after the first significant description of the lamb, the narrative
then turns to introduce the wolf arriving at the stream. At this point, there is a sudden
jump from A♭ major tonality in bar 18, to AmM7 at the start of bar 19. There is sudden
dynamic shift to *pp* at this point, perhaps expressing the deadly stealth in the wolf’s
calculated movements. Although the tonal action from A♭ to Am is just one semitone
step down, harmonically these areas are very far removed from one another. It is with
this sudden, unprepared harmonic jolt that we first experience the wolf’s character in
the fable. Example 3.5 illustrates this. It is further worth noticing the wolf’s arrival is
characterised by a chromatic scale in bar 17. This serves as a good introduction to the
tonalities in which his character is situated throughout the narrative.
Example 3.5: Tonal jolt from Ab to Am at bars 18–19

Another sudden jolt such as this occurs over bars 42–3, but the context for this is prepared in the text from bar 34, as the lamb enters with a speech beseeching the wolf to consider, with good reason and rational thought, that he could not have possibly fouled the wolf’s drink. The text outlines:

Sire, répondez l’agneau, que Votre Majesté
Ne se mette pas en colère;
Mais plutôt qu’elle considère
Que je me vas désaltérant
Dans le courant,
Plus de vingt pas au-dessous d’elle

Sir, said the lamb, ‘so please your Grace
Do not fly into a rage;
Consider, rather, first,
The stream where I assuage my thirst
Is twenty yards downstream

Perhaps the lamb experiences fear as she addresses the wolf initially, because the harmonic language, as well as a very timid ppp dynamic, exhibit more areas of chromatic and (at bar 41) potentially octatonic writing. This passage, bars 34–42, surrounds the point in the text where the lamb asks the wolf not to fly into a rage. It is
possible that through drawing on rational reasons, the lamb becomes more confident because at bar 42–3, the harmony suddenly changes from chromaticism to an A♭ chord. This happens as the lamb informs the wolf that her place at the stream was twenty yards away. There is a strong interplay between areas of non fully functioning tonality leading up to this point, and the strong statement of A♭ tonally as the lamb speaks with reason. The register supports this tonality too, because the low A♭ at the start of bar 43 strengthens the sense of tonal arrival at this point.

Another way to interpret this, however, is that the areas of chromaticism and ambiguity in the harmonic language throughout this passage disguise a sense of diatonic tonal structure. Taking the sff chord in bar 33, and interpreting it as an F minor chordal point, there is a potential to recognise this functioning as the relative minor to A♭, thus further representing the lamb’s unease as she addresses the wolf as transition from a minor tonal centre, through patches of chromaticism, to the relative major as she gains confidence in his dialogue. The quaver movement in bar 39, in the treble-clef part of the piano could further imply F7 through the A–F–E–E♭ movement, and is followed by B octatonic in bar 41. Perhaps this is a form of dominant-tonic motion, but the music does not rest in these centres long enough to expand or create a stability. Example 3.6 isolates these chordal points:
Example 3.6: bar 33, followed by bars 38–43
There is a possibility that this play between the suggested F centricity and the Ab centricity outlined in this section was a deliberate ploy by Caplet to anticipate the interplay between Ab and F during bars 47–52, as the lamb further interacts with the wolf. This destabilises the tonality, further impacting the lamb’s agitation. Once more, there is a tonal jolt as from bar 55 the wolf enters with a passage of chromaticism that, from bar 61, alternates with octatonic interjections.

The harmonic language in *Le loup et l’agneau* is simultaneously highly complex and highly descriptive. The contrasting characters of the wolf and the lamb are portrayed through the tonality, even right up to the very end of the work. Taking the final passage, beginning at bar 85–end, the narrator has the final say on the lamb’s doomed fate. Interestingly, as the narrator enters, the given key signature returns to Eb. Unlike the opening (bb. 1–10) when this key signature previously occurred, this time there is an implied C centricity. Two bars of C octatonic give way to rapid chordal movement over a C pedal. An ending in C is suggested, and the chordal movement over the final bars, bb.96–102, potentially suggests Dm–G7–C octatonic. In the final *ppp* chord, the absent third closes the *mélodie* in a state of unrest.

Looking beyond the high degree of non-tonal language, in terms of its broad-ranging tonal centres, it is interesting to note the overall harmonic scheme of this work. The introductory key signature is Eb, followed by the main body of the work taking place within an Ab key signature, followed by the return to Eb for the concluding passage. This implies a large-scale tonic–sub-dominant–tonic key relationship. The concluding tonality, however, is centric to the relative minor, C minor, rather than Eb major. The introductory tonality, on the other hand, is ambiguous, and it appears to defy the
gravitational pull of tonality. Furthermore, the use of a different key signature for the
narrator’s parts implies that he could be perceived as a separate entity, detached from
the action taking place in the work.
3.9

Analytical Interpretation: *Le loup et l'agneau*

*Le loup et l'agneau* shares some common characteristics with the preceding two *mélodies* in this set, in that there are aspects of textural contrast between characters, nonalignment of phrases leading to a distortion and potential breakdown of rhythmic structure, as well as numerous tempo changes that, through generating a feeling of push and pull, disguise the metre. These features add a somewhat improvisatory quality to the music, equivalent to the sense of unpredictability in the narrative. Jessica Chow elaborates:

*Le loup et l'agneau* offers the greatest number of tempo changes in the set. The fierceness of the message, and clear opposite natures of the wolf and the lamb allow for the most dramatic delineation of sections thus far. [...] *Le loup et l'agneau* gave Caplet the opportunity to exploit the extremeness of his theatrical and dramatic compositional nature. With such a stark message of power winning above all else, regardless of due process or justness, Caplet depicted the wrath of power through abrupt changes between sections of music.\(^{148}\)

From the outset, there is a sense of tension in the music due to the uncertainty created by the unstable harmonic motion: the listener knows the end will not be positive for the lamb, and the wolf’s waspish behaviour is unpredictable. He could pounce at any minute, and this nervous anticipation courses through the musical structure.

In terms of rhythmic organisation, it could be suggested that the lamb is characterised by a destabilising ostinato-like pattern that recurs in the bass-clef piano part, throughout the passages in which she features. This pattern is significant, because

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through the resulting rhythmic nonalignment, it is possible to interpret a sense of impending doom surrounding the lamb. This occurs primarily in two places throughout the narrative: bars 11–18, and again at bars 43–52. Further references to the figuration occur at bars 55–9, and from midway through bar 72–6. The two significant occurrences of this feature – bars 11–18 and bars 43–52 – happen at points where the lamb features prominently in the text: at bars 10-17 the narrative introduces and describes the lamb, and at bars 43–53 the lamb reasons with the wolf. Taking the first significant placement of this pattern, bars 11–18, Example 3.7a illustrates the bass-clef line:

Example 3.7a: *Le loup et l’agneau* bars 11–18, bass-clef line illustrating ostinato

There are several points to note about this passage:

- The recurring rhythmic pattern produces a dominant pedal.
- The semibreves at the start of each bar provide a repeated ‘anchor’ tonic tone through this passage, that though their placement on the first strong beat of each bar, conflicts with the dominant pedal figuration.
- The surrounding rhythmic movements in the treble-clef piano line and in the vocal line are all relatively even.
• The triplet motion is confined to occurring within a singular crotchet beat in the bar, such as in bars 13 and 14 of the vocal line.\textsuperscript{149}

• There is a “jumping” rhythmic shape in the treble-clef part in bar 16 that characterises the frolicking of the lamb through the fields, but does not rhythmically align to the bass-clef.

• Every bar in this passage contains quavers tied across the barline.

Looking a little closer at the rhythmic shape of this ostinato, it appears that this singular line is the one that contributes to a distortion of the regularity implied by the surrounding patterns. It is possible to find regularity within this, however, but it is also possible to suggest a reason behind Caplet’s choice to distort this regularity. Firstly, if this rhythm is rhythmically reimagined, and the first quaver regarded as functioning as a form of upbeat, supported by the dotted crotchet ending at bar 17, this rhythmic layer transforms into a perfectly even passage in 4/4. Example 3.7b illustrates this:

\textbf{Example 3.7b: Rhythmic reimagining of dominant pedal ostinato in bars 11–18}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{Example3.7b.png}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{149} In previous works, triplets have been split across the beats to dissolve the rhythmic pulse in the respective bar. That the triplets occur within a singular crotchet pulse is significant in light of the substantial amount of splitting of triplets that has been found in previous works, such as throughout the \textit{mélodies} of \textit{Le vieux coffret}.\textsuperscript{272}
I interpret this as a form of displacement dissonance because it is possible to consider this passage as two lines of relatively equivalent cardinality, in that both are situated in 4/4, but displaced through nonalignment. In Example 7b, I include the layer of repeated tonic semibreves because this contextualises the original 4/4 position.

In the recordings, it becomes apparent that the performers observe this conflict. Lionel Peintre and Alain Jacquon opt for the quickest speed, and this movement, combined with even balance between the treble and bass-clef lines, draws attention to the nonalignment. Likewise, in the recording by François LeRoux and Jeff Cohen, there is a clear balance between the hands, and the conflict between the treble and bass-clef lines is recognisable. Additionally, in the recording by Claudette Leblanc and Boaz Sharon, there is initially an identical approach, but from bar 16 onwards, there appears to be more emphasis on the right hand, lessening the sense of conflicting nonalignment at this point. This is likely due to characterisation of the lamb frolicking presented in the rhythmic motives at this moment in the music.

The distinctive sense of conflict embedded into the lamb’s part could anticipate the underlying doom awaiting the lamb. If the lamb, and all that this character represents, was to triumph, it is likely that there would be less tension and more celebration in the music. This is perhaps reminiscent of the political context in the music of Shostakovich, where an almost grotesque sense of stilted happiness is embedded into the music. In bars 15–8 especially, the opposition between the uneven off-beat dominant pedal tones and the relatively even frolicking motives creates a sense of unfortunate, doomed happiness.
It appears that the rhythmic dissonance and conflicted atmosphere return at the point where the lamb attempts to reason with the wolf, portraying two features. Firstly, it alerts the listener to the entry of the lamb: there are more aspects of stable rhythmic structure, as well as more diatonic, tonal writing. Secondly, the dissonance suggests that although the lamb speaks the truth, the wolf, is disbelieving and the lamb’s destiny will remain the same. The lamb is a lot weaker, and unable to change her fate. Example 3.8a illustrates this point from the score. Once again, the bass-clef of the piano line outlines a rhythmic ostinato-like feature, on a dominant pedal tone. There are anchoring points, in the form of long durational notes, on the first beats of each bar that function in a similar way to the semibreves in the previous example.

Example 3.8a: Le loup et l’agneau bars 43–52, bass-clef line illustrating ostinato

The placement of the quaver rest offsets the entry of the dominant pedal rhythmic ostinato, and the ensuing conflict between these layers once again might suggest displacement dissonance. Example 3.8b illustrates a rhythmic reimagining of this:
Example 3.8b: Rhythmic reimagining of dominant pedal ostinato in bars 43–52

Distortion of the rhythmic structure is not restricted to passages concerning the lamb’s character. There are aspects of rhythmic dissolution surrounding the characterisation of the wolf that create an even greater sense of ambiguity in the music. The wolf is characterised tonally by passages of chromaticism and octatonicism in the harmonic structure and, likewise, in the rhythmic structure there are similarly irregular features. The textures in the music contribute to this. The wolf’s passages are, quite often, constructed with thinner, more sparse textures. This allows more freedom in the vocal line to generate an often syllabic, declamatory style that is potentially more akin to the Sprechgesang style that rests between singing and the spoken word. The resulting rhythmic pulse is highly disguised. Caplet does not abandon rhythmic structure completely, rather it appears that he uses rhythm for dramatic effect.

An example of the dramatic effect of rhythm may be found in bars 22–3. This contains a piano solo passage inserted between the poetic description of the wolf ending at bar 21, and the first entry of his direct speech in bar 24. The ferocity of the wolf is introduced by one bar of rhythmic diminution followed by a time signature change and
one bar of off-beat rhythm with accents on weak beats of the bar. These combined rhythmic events are supported by extremely contrasting dynamics that range from pp to ffz to f to pp sub. This increases the sense of power and drama in the narrative, and characterises the wolf as a mighty entity. Furthermore, the feature of rhythmic diminution could potentially create an impression of the wolf suddenly pouncing on the lamb, with force. The feeling of fast movement combined with extreme dynamics leading up to his vocal entry could suggest his dominance.

Additionally, in this mélodie, Caplet requests the singers to fully personify the characters in the narrative, and the full range and potential of the instrumental qualities of the voice is harnessed. There is a marked distinction between the vocal mannerisms through which the wolf and the lamb should be portrayed. For instance, directions such as, calme, tranquille; d'une petit voix chètive et pointe (in a small, choppy and pointed voice); and comme un léger bêtement (like a light bleat) all characterise the meekness of expression that the singer must bring to the lamb’s character. There are similar requirements for personifying the wolf: directions such as brutal, and the specific placement of a trill over the word rage demonstrate the power and fury with which the wolf’s character should be expressed.

Overall, Le loup et l’agneau imparts a powerful message that reflects deeply on the moral core of humanity. Caplet fully embraces the differences and opposing natures of the wolf and the lamb to metaphorically express the conflict between just and unjust, and convey the core meaning that only the strong survive. Adventurous compositional strategies are called into action throughout this work, such as the use of opposing tonal and rhythmic forces creating layers of distortion that reflect the unfolding
narrative. In her work on the music of Chopin, Alison Hood describes central elements in the relationship between rhythmic ambiguity and tonal development in Chopin’s Prelude Op. 28 No. 12. She explains:

Rhythmic ambiguity heightens tension during tonal development or prior to a point of arrival, and relative metric stability marks points of tonal resolution.²⁵⁰

The analogous behaviour between areas of tonal and rhythmic conflict and resolution can, to an extent, be considered in the interpretation of rhythmic and tonal characteristics in the two opposing forces in Le loup et l’agneau. For example, in Caplet’s approach to portraying the lamb’s character, a sense of tonal stability through use of A♭ centricities containing dominant pedal points is combined with structured rhythmic elements that are distorted by a layer of displacement dissonance. The combination of this rhythmic uncertainty with the sense of security that is presented in the tonal structure, creates an underlying tension in the music that could be interpreted as a foreboding feeling that hangs above the lamb’s flocking around the stream.

Concluding Observations: *Trois Fables de Jean de la Fontaine*

The *Trois Fables de Jean de la Fontaine* stand out in Caplet’s repertoire of *mélodies*, in that this set exhibits a distinctive range of compositional features, as well as poetic texts that contrast to Caplet’s more habitual choices of works by contemporary poets. The choice of fables by Jean de la Fontaine potentially suggests that through exploring the moral lessons of the past the future may be improved. Perhaps in the early aftermath of the Great War, Caplet was eager for these atrocities to be remembered as a lesson from which humanity could improve and never again repeat. The themes in these fables observe difficult lessons that, often, are painfully learned.

This material offered Caplet a wide palette of characters, atmospheres, scenes, and narratives to evoke through rhythmic and tonal structures. According to Jessica Chow:

> With so many different characters, Caplet had the opportunity to create a diverse palette of timbres, harmonies and rhythms. He took this opportunity to write *mélodies* with humour and theatrics, a feat never tackled by his mentor Debussy in his own songs. If Caplet had continued in this vein of writing, his *mélodies* might be compared today to Hugo Wolf’s *lieder* in the nineteenth-century German canon. [...] In his *Trois Fables de Jean de la Fontaine*, André Caplet appropriated a classic seventeenth-century French text, and interpreted it within a twentieth-century musical framework.¹⁵¹

For Caplet, the expression of a seventeenth-century French text into twentieth century musical language shows his modern perspective on poetic interpretation. Caplet reinterpreted these texts through situating the poetry in contemporary musical structures. For instance, the use of opposing tonal forces to represent characters,

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founded upon the intermingling of diatonic and non-diatonic writing, infuses a high level of colouration that characterises drama and intensifies the theatrical nature of the music. Additionally, a disruption of rhythmic structures as a means of reflecting the dramatic trajectory is embedded into the metric framework of all three mélodies in the set.

Furthermore, Caplet manipulates the phrase structures, especially in the vocal lines, in order to represent the contrasting polarities of the characters. For instance, in La cigale et la fourmi, long sustained and lyrical phrases characterised the singing of the grasshopper, while shorter clipped phrases characterised the ant. In Le loup et l'agneau, this is further explored. Longer phrase lengths characterise the lamb, while the wolf’s phrases, somewhat similar to the ant, are choppier and shorter. Jessica Chow explores this concept further. She explains:

Caplet uses contrast in phrase lengths once more to dramatise the situation and give his opinion on the plight of each animal. [...] Like the cicada, the initial description of the lamb is a sustained phrase. [...] The wolf’s entrance in m.18 is marked by shorter fragments. Caplet’s first priority in setting La Fontaine’s texts was an adherence to their original vers libres classiques phrase structure. He composed his musical lines correspondingly, juxtaposing long phrases with short ones and long held notes with quick rests and short pick up notes. These differences in rhythmic values create the contrast in character and circumstance that define these morality tales.152

Building on this observation, when considering these phrases alongside the contrasting textures that occur throughout the piano accompaniments, it becomes apparent that Caplet fully embraced all the dramatic characteristics in the portrayal of his characters in these mélodies. Numerous instances of nonalignment between phrasing in the piano

parts, arising from textural patterns, and the inconsistent vocal phrases create a sense of unpredictability and suspense in the music. These textural effects are infused in both the piano and vocal lines in order to fully express the narrative. For example, there are instances of vocal effects such as as *glissandi* and rapid chromatic runs, combined with directions such as ‘bleating like a lamb’. The exploration of vocal texture such as this marks a departure from previous *mélodies* such as *Le vieux coffret* and some of the other wartime *mélodies*. Although orchestral pianistic textures are a characteristic feature in the *mélodies* of Caplet, the elaborately contrasting passages of descriptive textures in *Trois Fables de Jean de la Fontaine* combined with theatrical vocal style demonstrates a new and forward-looking departure in style and thought. Paradoxically, the *Trois Fables de Jean de la Fontaine*, set to archaic seventeenth-century texts, epitomises all that is new and modern in Caplet’s approach to poetic expression through the lens of the *mélodie* at this stage of his compositional career.

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153 For example, in *Le corbeau et le renard* bars 15–16, and in *Le loup et l’agneau* bar 18.
Chapter Four

*Cinq Ballades Françaises, Nos. 1, 4, 5 (1919-1920)*

Introduction

*Cinq Ballades Françaises* is a set of five *mélodies* composed over a two-year period immediately after the Great War ended. Mary Catherine Schwab notes that this set was composed for the singer Claire Croiza, with whom Caplet had developed a close professional relationship. Schwab explains:

She [Croiza] owned a copy of Caplet's *mélodies* signed, "*pour Madame Croiza ces Cinq ballades françaises (de Paul Fort) écrites pour elle, avec toute mon admiration fervente*". André Caplet, 1921.\(^{154}\)

Joel Harder asserts that through these compositions, it becomes apparent that Caplet felt an incentive to move in new musical directions; perhaps even motivated by positive connections with singers such as Croiza, and outlines:

The five songs that make up this set are firmly within Caplet’s mature compositional style, and (along with *Trois Fables de Jean de la Fontaine*), were written immediately following the end of World War I and the death of Debussy. These two important events seem to have provided an impetus for Caplet to move in new musical directions.\(^{155}\)

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Evidenced throughout the *Cinq Ballades Françaises* is an advancement towards what could be described as a more mature and perhaps more programmatic approach to poetic setting. Caplet’s affinity with poetic imagery abounds through these *mélodies* in terms of his approach to texture and interplay of harmonic and rhythmic language, especially in the piano accompaniments. Potentially evidenced through the bolder, more dramatic elements seeping into his style of *mélodie* composition, it is apparent that Caplet was moving into a new and more positive phase in his life. This was a time of post-war hopefulness and opportunity. Yvonne Gouverné mentions:

> Les *Cinq Ballades de Paul Fort* proposent au musician des paysages qu’il fixe chacun dans sa propre lumière comme un painter fait une étude en travaillant d’après nature.

The *Cinq Ballades Françaises de Paul Fort* offer the musician landscapes that he sets in his own light, as a painter makes a study by working from nature.\(^{156}\)

Newly married and having relocated to Saint-Eustace-la-Forêt in anticipation of the birth of his son in October 1920, it is likely that Caplet was inspired and stimulated by both his surroundings and the poetry of Fort. It is likely that Caplet would have been in a different state of mind, and given the combination of peaceful surroundings and pleasant family life, it is without doubt that his artistic response to poetic stimuli post-war was different to the response to poetic stimuli during the war. This is tricky to pinpoint for certain, however, because the poetry of Fort is quite different to the collective poets Caplet engaged with during the war.

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It can be suggested the resulting *Cinq Ballades Françaises* demonstrate a descriptive, and at times more daring, approach to setting poetic imagery that is different to some of the previous works composed during the war years for several reasons:

- The maturing and evolving style evidenced in the *mélodies* from this period results from the culmination of new inspiration.

- There is different tone in Fort’s poetry compared to previous poetic choices: perhaps Caplet was drawn to Fort’s advocacy for the dramatic arts. Caplet engaged in dramatic expression through the *Trois Fables de Jean de la Fontaine*, and was developing an interest in a more rousing and striking form of compositional approach.

- A post-war sense of hope for the future may have further stimulated Caplet’s attraction to experimental and modern musical expression.

- Caplet’s own personal family circumstances: he was newly married with a newborn son at this time. There would have been an atmosphere of joy surrounding Caplet’s personal life.

There is, as Graham Johnson notes, an “extraordinary confidence”\textsuperscript{157} to the works. Elaborating further, Johnson continues: “the beautiful and succinct poems encourage a pithy musical response, no less luxuriant in terms of pianism, but almost more concentrated than *Le vieux coffret*.”\textsuperscript{158}

The set, outlined in its entirety in the following table, was almost completely composed in St Eustache-la-Forêt. The first performance was in January 1921, with Caplet at the piano and Claire Croiza singing.


\textsuperscript{158} Ibid. p.55
In the premiere, the set was performed as *Six ballades françaises*, with the inclusion of *Hymne à la naissance du matin*. This composition is the only other setting to poetry by Fort and, as Spencer explains further:

Exists in its original form for voice and orchestra and is published in piano reduction. This hymn is a harmonious and powerful composition. Nature always inspired Caplet, and here everything is limpid and flowing in a very tonal scheme, with virtually no attempt at bi-tonality. Nevertheless, his harmonic vocabulary is rich and audacious while painting the rising light over a sleeping earth.\(^\text{159}\)

Respected by his peers as a symbolist poet, Paul Fort’s poetry was popular in his lifetime, yet his poems were not widely set by his contemporary composers. Fort was heavily involved in artistic life at the turn of the twentieth century, though, and according to the *North American Review* (1914):

His name was familiar to literary circles before the age of twenty, and as the founder of the ‘*Théâtre d’Art*’ in opposition to the ‘*Theatre Libre*’, where the young naturalist writers of the day performed their plays.\(^\text{160}\)

\(^{159}\) Williametta Spencer 'The Influence and Stylistic Heritage of André Caplet' (PhD Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1974). p.192

It is difficult to discern the precise reasons Caplet was attracted to the poetry of Paul Fort at this point in his compositional career. Perhaps it was Fort’s advocacy of the theatre and promotion of dramatic arts, or perhaps it was the strong symbolist nature in this work. Schwab explains that Paul Fort delivered a lecture at the Théâtre Vieux-Colombier in 1918. Caplet was involved with this theatre, through his professional relationship and friendship with Jeanne Bathori. Bathori was a strong advocate of modern literary and musical arts at this time, having organised the regular presentation of concerts and recitals. It is likely Caplet either attended, or was aware of the lecture by Fort, because it was just one year later, in mid-1919, that Caplet set the first of his *Cinq Ballades Françaises*. Schwab points out that:

Paul Fort presented a lecture at the Vieux-Colombier on January 21, 1918, called "The Theatre of Art and the Heroic Times of Symbolism". His talk was followed by the recitation of *Ballades Françaises*. Fort may have been chosen to give this lecture because of his collection of prose poems entitled, *Ballades Françaises*. Five of Fort’s *Ballades Françaises* were later set to music by André Caplet.\(^{161}\)

Perhaps Caplet even caught glimpse of his own artistry reflected in the sentiments in this poet’s opus. Fort drew inspiration from nature and the world around him in the same manner as Caplet. In addition, Caplet possessed a strong sense of faith, something perhaps common to the art of Fort. J.T. Rooker explains this in his account of Fort’s nature poetry:

> The attitude of Paul Fort toward the natural world is not simple pantheism; his conception is that of the human soul mingling with nature, and then together rising toward the Soul of All. God is the magnet which attracts everything to Himself. Nature and Man in one chant of joy mount to lose themselves in the Infinite.\(^{162}\)

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The poetic voice of Fort by contemporary reviewers at the turn of the century was received as a new kind of style in French literature. J.T. Rooker further mentions:

The rhythmic prose with the irregular rhymes, in which form the *Ballades Françaises* are written, claim for Paul Fort the merit of introducing a new style into French literature. [...] This system of meter lends itself with wonderful ease to every change in the poet's thought and feeling; and in the verse of Paul Fort the rhythm of the music is always in close harmony with the motif of the poem.  

In her exploration of influences on Fort’s poetic style in the ballades, Amy Lowell recognises a freedom in the verse which she refers to as “Polyphonic prose”. She explains:

Polyphonic prose is the freest, the most elastic of all forms, for it follows at will any, and all, of the rules which guide other forms. Metrical verse has one set of laws, cadenced verse another; ‘polyphonic prose’ can go from one to the other in the same poem with no sense of incongruity. Its only law is the taste and feeling of the author. [...] Fort began very early to write in this manner. He gave his form no name, merely stating that it admitted of both prose and verse in the same poem, He based his verse parts entirely on the classic alexandrine.

Indeed, it could be a sense of freedom in verse, a spiritual meeting of faith and nature, or any combination of preoccupations with post-war feelings of regeneration, but Caplet was clearly drawn to the poetry of Fort. He set a total of six of Fort’s poems, which, for Caplet, is a significant number of settings from the work of one poet: the *Cinq Ballades Françaises* and also *Hymne à la naissance du matin* (1920). *Hymne à la naissance du matin* was not included in the final publication of the set of *Ballades*.

\[163\] Ibid. pp.607–8

although similarly on the theme of nature, and Williametta Spencer suggests the reason for this exclusion:

Caplet does not give this poem the rhythmic treatment of the *Cinq Ballades*, but takes great care with prosody. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that this poem is in a more polymorphic verse with irregular rhyme scheme.\(^{165}\)

The following discussion will explore three selected *mélodies* of the *Cinq Ballades Françaises*: *Cloche d’aube*, *Songe d’une nuit d’été*, and *l’Adieu en Barque*. Exploring this set in its entirety is beyond the scope of this thesis, and these three representative *mélodies* were carefully selected on the basis that they demonstrate the following aspects:

- *Cloche d’aube* is unique in that it demonstrates an extended structured piano introduction. This provides a good representation of what I label as a prelude-like introduction that sets the scene before the poetic narrative begins.

- *Songe d’une nuit d’été* is significant because it demonstrates aspects of analogous rhythmic and tonal distortion central to expressing the central theme of desire for freedom.

- *L’adieu en barque* illustrates the ways in which Caplet manipulates antmetrical layers to portray themes of nostalgia that surround the core theme of emigration and the sense of yearning it entails. Many of the settings previously discussed consider the desire for places elsewhere, such as in elements of *Le vieux coffret*. *L’adieu en barque* is different in that it expresses the pain of leaving, and is one of the few settings that characterises these thoughts.

The remaining two *mélodies* from the set, *La Ronde* and *Notre chaumiere en Yveline* were omitted for the following reasons:

- *La Ronde* is composed in a folksong style, and explores the positive themes of world friendship and post-war joy. Because it is, as Graham Jonson described, ‘less

\(^{165}\) Williametta Spencer 'The Influence and Stylistic Heritage of André Caplet' (PhD Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1974). p.233
perfumed that the other songs in the set', it shows Caplet’s forthright approach
to setting a merry tune. It demonstrates less complexity and depth than the other
mélodies in the set; perhaps its presence among the others is to infuse a sense of
lightness and air of respite.

- *Notre chaumière en Yveline*, as Graham Johnson notes, ‘is the least individual of the
set; the title refers to the département outside Paris which includes Versailles and
Saing Germain –en-Laye.’ This mélodie features considerable presence of the
piano, and Sanae Kanda goes as far as to state that this piece ‘may be best
described as a piano concerto with vocal accompaniment’ and Joel Harder
agrees that the ‘vocal line is essentially subservient here.” Because of the strong
weighting of the piano combined with the brevity of the mélodie, the scope for
discerning Caplet’s poetic expression for the purposes of this study in *Notre
chaumière en Yveline* was perhaps more limited in comparison to that of the three
chosen examples.

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Press, 2000).
p.55

167 Ibid p.55

168 Sanae Kanda, 'The Role of the Piano in the Mélodie of André Caplet' (DMA Dissertation,
Boston University, 2002). p.52

169 Joel Harder, 'The Mélodies of André Caplet: A Guide to Performance' (DMA Dissertation,
The Juilliard School, 2015). p.111
**Cinq Ballades Française by Paul Fort**

**No. 1: Cloche d’aube** (1919)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cloche d’aube</th>
<th>The Bell of Dawn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ce petit air de cloche, errant dans le matin, a rajeuni mon coeur à la pointe du jour.</td>
<td>This little bell tune, drifting at morn, has rejuvenated my heart at daybreak.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ce petit air de cloche, au coeur frais du matin, léger, proche et lointain, a changé mon destin.</td>
<td>This little bell tune in the fresh heart of morning, light, near and distant, has changed my destiny.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quoi! vais-je après cette heure survivre à mon bonheur, ô petit air de cloche qui rajeunis mon coeur?</td>
<td>What! shall I, after this hour, survive my happiness, Oh little bell tune that rejuvenates my heart?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Si lointain, monotone et perdu, si perdu, petit air, petit air au coeur frais de la nue, tu t’en vas, reviens, sonnes: errant comme l’amour, tu trembles sur mon coeur à la pointe du jour.</td>
<td>So distant, unvaried and lost, so lost, little tune, little tune, in the fresh heart of the sky.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quoi! la vie pourrait être monotone et champêtre et douce et comme est, proche, ce petit air de cloche?</td>
<td>You depart, return, ring out, drifting like love, you tremble on my heart at daybreak.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douce et simple et lointaine aussi, comme est lointain ce petit air qui tremble au coeur frais du matin?</td>
<td>What! could life be unvaried and rustic and sweet, and near as this little bell tune?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sweet and simple and distant too, as distant as this little tune that rambles in the fresh heart of morning?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1

Formal Overview: *Cloche d’aube*

*Cloche d’aube* was composed in June 1919. Beginning with the sound of bells at dawn, this poem is infused with lightness and glistening imagery as the ringing of distant bells summons the poet’s memories of the past. The unfolding poetic narrative is descriptive and highly evocative, as the bells take the poet on a journey of contemplation that blurs the boundaries between the past and present stages of his life. The poem concludes with the poet’s meditation on living in the present day yet remaining cognisant of, and true to, the past. This poem is structured in seven two-line stanzas. Each stanza follows a clear syllabic pattern of twelve syllables per two line group, without a definitive rhyming scheme. Joel Harder elaborates that ‘even within the regular syllabic groupings, Fort often inserts commas or irregular accents in order to give the impression of free verse.’

It is possible to interpret this poem in three sections according to the way in which the narrative evolves.

- **Section A:** stanzas one and two (bars 1–27)
- **Section B:** stanzas three, four and five (bars 27–53)
- **Section C:** stanzas six and seven (bars 54–74)

Section A potentially concerns the poet’s rekindling of the past. The sound of the bells at dawn trigger memories of past times or events, but the poet does not reveal exactly...

---

what these events are. The memories are significant, however, as the poet discloses that the past changed his fate. In Section B, it becomes clear that the memories are precious to the poet, as he ruminates on what sort of future could possibly be better than these memories:

Quoi! vais-je après cette heure survivre à mon bonheur, ô petit air de cloche qui rajeunis mon cœur?

What! shall I, after this hour, survive my happiness, Oh little bell tune that rejuvenates my heart?

Introspection takes over, as in stanzas four and five, the poet speaks of the distance, or passing of time, between his present state and his rich memories. In Section C, it appears that the poet reconciles the memories evoked through the bell sounds with his current stage in life. It could be interpreted that although his memories are in the distant past, present events such as the chiming of the bells, will help him to live a life that is content yet fully enriched with his memories.

It appears that Caplet does not adhere to the seven-stanza structure in the formal construction of Cloche d’aube, as the mélodie does not divide into seven separate verses interspersed with solos. As with previous works, Caplet’s interpretation of the poetic meaning is of paramount importance in the large-scale construction and design of the musical layout. Cloche d’aube can be interpreted as true to a through-composed musical layout, in that musical texture unfolds in an organic and almost improvisational manner. But the placement of text in relation to piano solo sections faithfully aligns to poetic structure, as Section A, Section B, and Section C function as individual larger-
scale phrases. I suggest these particular divisions as three poetic sections on the basis of two factors:

- There are distinct images evoked in each section, as the poet’s thoughts are revealed.
- The piano interludes function as natural separators for this structure. This gives both a sense of direction and establishes musical preparation for the imagery evoked by the poet’s changing thoughts in each section.

Caplet’s through-composed approach incorporates the freedom to musically develop textural patterns evocative of imagery in the text, while simultaneously creating a sense of unity by the insertion of highly descriptive themes and motives. Caplet assigns tonal areas to these sections of the poem as it unfolds. I outline this in Table 4.2:

### Table 4.2: *Cloche d’aube* tonal overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Overall Tonal Movement</th>
<th>Poetic Image</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong> (bars 1–23)</td>
<td>$A_b\rightarrow B$</td>
<td>The bells chiming at dawn are presented. The poet’s memories of the past are stirred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piano link (bars 23–27)</td>
<td>A lydian-dominant</td>
<td>[piano solo]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong> (bars 27–53)</td>
<td>$G\text{ lydian-dominant} \rightarrow B_b \rightarrow A\text{ lydian-dominant}$</td>
<td>The poet ponders on his fate and happiness. He wonders if there is anything better than the memories, and contemplates that although they’re in the past, his memories are also relevant in his present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piano Interlude (bars 48–53)</td>
<td>A lydian-dominant–$E_b$</td>
<td>[piano solo]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong> (bars 54–74)</td>
<td>$G_b \rightarrow A_b$</td>
<td>Poet’s thoughts turn to his present. It is a simpler time for him now, but the past, which is simultaneously distant and near, will always enrich the present.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While most poetic material is found in Section B as it contains the largest volume of text, it appears that Caplet retains a sense of balance in the size of the three sections. Each section is almost the same size in terms of bar numbers, as all three comprise just over or just under a twenty-bar range as follows: Section A: bars 1–23, (23 bars) Section B: bars 27–48 (21 bars) and Section C: bars 54–74 (20 bars).
4.2

Aspects of Poetic Harmony: *Cloche d’aube*

The harmonic plan is more clearly defined in *Cloche d’aube* than in earlier works. There is a pronounced sense of a central home key, $A^b$ that forms the backbone for the overall tonal scheme. Sanae Kanda observes this in her outline of this *mélodie*, explaining that ‘the tonal centre of each song remains coherent with the given key signature while his predecessor songs tried to avoid a clear tonal centre.’\(^{171}\)

This is true for *Cloche d’aube* insofar as it does remain relatively faithful to an $A^b$ tonal centre throughout. The direction outlined by the chordal plan potentially contains stylistic echoes of previous works through Caplet’s use of surface, coloristic tonalities shifting upwards and downwards in small intervalllic steps. This type of surface-motion – coloristic tonal movement that is not necessarily part of a deeper-functioning structural harmonic progression – is a key component in the music. Although the core harmonic structure remains $A^b$ centric, surface-motion appears as Caplet, perhaps as a product of his time, embodies the French aesthetic of a preoccupation with evoking a sonorous atmosphere through adventurous harmonic choices and quartal harmonies. This, in turn, unveils a fuller range of tonal-modal potential unrestricted by either more traditionally-styled past idioms or customary Germanic convention.

For instance, this may be interpreted through observation of the overarching movements of the primary chords from the beginning to the end of each section. In the tonal scheme, my interpretation suggests a movement from $A^b$ passing through

\(^{171}\) Sanae Kanda, ‘The Role of the Piano in the Mélodie of André Caplet’ (DMA Dissertation, Boston University, 2002). p.49
coloristic surface stepwise movements that undulate harmonically around $A_b$–$B_b$–$G$–$G_b$ (bars 14–22) to arrive at B throughout the first section, followed by G lydian-dominant moving through various $B_b$ tonalities arriving at A lydian-dominant at bar 48. When the music moves into section C, these large chordal shifts follow a more functional tonal pathway in the home key of $A_b$. This final section sets up a more traditional outline of a dominant-tonic movement in $A_b$, with movements shifting between $E_b$ and $A_b$ from bar 56 onwards. This kind of tonal movement between different coloristic areas could evoke the poet’s inner narrative fleeting from memories of the past to the present. This will be explained further in relation to the structural-overview chart presently.

There is some equality of duration between the larger phrases, but the number of sub-phrases within each is not uniform. I interpret three large-scale phrases that embody poetic imagery and tonal structure, and create a sense of balance between the vocal entries and piano solo insertions. The sub-phrases can be interpreted as aligning with the seven stanzas within the poetic text. Through each two-line stanza, a short segment of tonal movement from one area to another may be observed, and it is through the tonality of the sub-phrases that the surface-motion tonal movements occur. I illustrate this in Table 4.3:
To build on the suggestion that the three larger-scale phrases reflect the unfolding imagery and thought in the poetic text, the harmonic language could be interpreted as unfolding in a similar manner, reflective of this poetic imagery. For instance, the tonal shape of the opening phrase is, for Caplet, relatively straightforward: with a given key signature of $A_b$ major the structural-overview chart outlines the main areas of exploration. These areas are: F minor (bars 3–8), $A_b$ minor, $B_b$ minor and G minor. These areas outline a tonal pull to the relative minor of the home key (F minor), the tonic minor ($A_b$ minor), and the $B_b$ minor centre could be interpreted as the chord of ii in the home key ($A_b$), or the chord of IVm in the relative minor. G minor following $B_b$ could then be perceived as the relative minor to $B_b$.

The text throughout this phrase is pastoral, with the bell ringing at dawn in the distance. The poet perhaps speaks of the bell as it helps him recall the past, referring to the ways it has changed his fate he reflects on the distant past and nearer future. The
harmonic language moves frequently giving the impression of the thoughts in the present and near future, as well as the far past, but the tonality does not move significantly away from an $A^b$ centricity until the end of this phrase. At the line:

...léger, proche et lointain a changé mon destin.
...light, near and far, has changed my fate.

The harmonic language illustrates this image of change through a move to G aeolian at bars 20–1 followed by a progression of $G^b$ (enharmonic F#) to B. G aeolian is the first outstanding modal inflection in the harmony and Caplet carefully uses this shift to illustrate the text just at the point where the poet speaks of far away distances; G aeolian is quite a distance from $A^b$. The substantial texture, tempo, and rhythmic changes over bars 22–3 are used to bring the phrase to a close through a disguised perfect cadence into B major, with the added extensions of seventh and ninth creating further tension. Overall, this phrase uses a harmonic motion that helps to underpin the poet’s thoughts of bells in the distance and memories of past and present through the movements between the home key and tonal centres that are both near (in the case of relative minors and tonic minor) and far (such as G aeolian and B major).

The second phrase contains insight into the deeper meaning of the poet’s memories as he considers their value and ruminates on what could be better than the happiness these memories bring to him. Although the memories are in the distant past for the poet, the evocative nature of the bell brings them nearer. As Table 4.3 illustrated, there are three poetic stanzas contained within Section B. It can interpreted that the poetic meaning within each is described harmonically through the surface-motion within each sub-phrase. For instance, the first sub-phrase in this section aligns with the text from
stanza three of the poem. At this point, the poet is ruminating on whether anything in
his present or future could make him as happy as his past memories:

_Quoi! vais-je après cette heure survivre à mon bonheur, ô petit air de cloche_ 
_qui rajeunis mon coeur?_

What! Life could be monotonous and rustic and gentle, just as is, nearby, 
this little air on the bell?

The rising motion of the harmonic language from G lydian-dominant to A lydian-
dominant could be interpreted as a reflection of his rising happiness as the bell brings 
his memories to the forefront of his consciousness. Likewise, in the second subphrase 
of this section, the poet recognises that the memories are far away and in turn the 
harmonic movement transitions from B♭ lydian established in bar 34 to the more 
sombre B♭ minor at bar 36. Interestingly, it could be suggested that in the final 
subphrase of this section, Caplet uses whole-tone stepwise surface motion through the 
tonal centres [G]–D♭–C♭–A–G throughout bars 42–51 respectively. This descending 
tonal movement could be a harmonic representation of the poet’s moving thoughts 
from past to present. The poet’s memories circle around the past and present state, 
and as this surface-motion begins on a G7 at bar 41 and steps through a series of whole 
tones to return to a G tonality at bar 51, the harmonic plan follows a similar journey.

The final phrase begins the descent towards closure, and Caplet achieves this through 
an overall movement from G♭ travelling to E♭ which then allows a dominant–tonic 
movement to close the mélodie. The modal quality is less pronounced throughout this 
phrase, as the poet’s attention is turning to thoughts of a more peaceful and simpler 
present day. There is an unexpected move to A minor in bar 57, as the poet speaks of 
the monotonous and rustic way of life. The move to this centre is preceded by E♭7 at
bar 56. This opens up the A minor tonality in two potential avenues: firstly, the move could be perceived as a $\text{bV - I}$, or it could be interpreted as a tritone relationship to highlight the change of tone in the text as the poet begins to focus on the present. Caplet merges these tonal centres through common tone relationships. For example, in bars 60–1 the vocal line C$\#{}$ is tied to its enharmonic D$\flat{}$. The C$\#{}$ is the third of A and D$\flat{}$ the seventh of E$\flat{}$; important chord tones in both keys which add a strong element of fluency to the transition from one tonal area to the next. This could be evocative of the merge between the past and present, as the present is enhanced with the memories of the past. As the poet speaks of the bells at bar 63, there is a shift from E$\flat{}$ to D$\flat{}$ which perhaps like in the previous phrase, as a surface motion stepping back one tone helps illustrate the imagery of the past. Perhaps this is just for colourist effect, as in bar 65 there is a move towards E$\flat{}$ as the poet looks to the future again. Caplet sets up a cadence with the seventh included at bar 67, but releasing this straight away at bar 68 before moving to resolve into the home key of A$\sharp{}$ thereafter.

One of the key aspects to the harmonic language in this *mélodie*, marking a stylistic move away from the previous period, is the use of a root tone as a building block for different tonal and modal colours. There are instances in this work where Caplet will centre the music on one root tone, but explore the ways in which different tonal spheres can be built from that given centre. For example, throughout the B$\flat{}$ passage at bars 34–40, the tonal area firstly outlines B$\flat{}$ lydian for two bars (bb.34–5). Following this, there is a move to B$\flat{}$m$^6$. A 3–2 suspension in the bass part of the piano line (D$\flat{}$–C) occurs in bars 36–7, which then moves into a 9–8 suspension over bars 37–8 that allows B$\flat{}$ in the bass to establish the minor tonal centre. B$\flat{}$m continues for two more bars, with a change of texture and the dominant in the bass in bar 39. This technique
happens further along on a smaller scale over bars 42–3 where there is an established $D^b_9$ morphing to $D^b$ lydian. This is not restricted to modal or major and minor qualities. There are instances where there will be a shift from a minor key to its major counterpart, and this duality of movements is especially relevant in terms of the near/far duality in the poetic imagery. The bell sounds, just like the memories they evoke, are constantly moving between states of distance and nearness in the poet’s consciousness. For example, over from bars 9–10 there is a move from $A^b$ minor to $A^b$ major, which is reflected in bars 58–9 with a move from $A$ minor to $A$ major, then again repeatedly throughout the final bars: the music ripples between $A^b$ minor and $A^b$ major during bars 69–74.

In addition to the modal/minor/major chordal extension exploration from a root tone, Caplet uses a chromatic approach and a fusion of modal harmonies at the climactic point in the *mélodie* to heighten drama in the narrative. Perhaps the fusion in the tonal centre at these points is evocative of the bells sounding simultaneously near and distant. The climactic point occurs throughout bars 48–53 as the piano solo part enters with chordal ascending and descending patterns. It is possible to interpret $G$ lydian disguised within $A$ harmonies at bar 51, where the preceding $A$ lydian-dominant tonal centre begins to move towards $E^b$-centric tonality in bar 52. It is difficult to pinpoint whether the tonality in bar 51 leans more towards $A$ lydian-dominant or $G$ lydian-dominant, because at the start of the bar there is a vertical $G$ lydian-dominant chord; however, the placement of the two dotted minims in the bass part of the piano accompaniment could either act as a root tone for $G$ or a root tone for $A$. The lydian-dominant features a lot throughout this *mélodie*, and considering the formation of this mode with its extensions of $\#4$ and $b7$, there is another potential harmonic
interpretation that aligns with the ambiguity in bar 51. The lydian-dominant chord may be described as a construction from two chords: chord I and II of a given key. In this instance, if G major represents chord I and A major chord II, the resulting lydian-dominant includes the equally weighted tones from both: G B D F♯ from G and A C♯ E G♯ from A. Given the placement of the minim chord at the start of bar 51 outlining G lydian-dominant within the surrounding A lydian-dominant tonalities, this harmonic point could be interpreted as G lydian-dominant disguised in A lydian-dominant. A veiling of chordal movement at this point could be evocative of the blurring between the past and present the poet experiences as his memories of the past mix with his present state.
4.3

Analytical Interpretation: *Cloche d’aube*

This *mélodie* is possibly more tonal than those of earlier examples in that, overall, the music remains more centric to the same key signature throughout. This centricity could perhaps be a sign of Caplet’s maturing style, or tonal response to different kinds of poetic texts. Additionally, Williametta Spencer notes that there is further evidence of Caplet’s evolving style through this *mélodie*’s orchestral nature, describing it as:

‘Very diffuse, but might be said to reunite the dominant qualities of Caplet himself. Paul Fort’s poetry is somewhat aquarelle and Caplet was required to enhance them [Fort’s *Ballades*] with his most subtle language. In the *Cloche d’aube* one finds ... orchestral painting.’¹⁷²

There is indeed a strongly descriptive element in the varied textures and patterns in the piano accompaniment that develop throughout *Cloche d’aube*, as Caplet musically paints a pastoral scene evoking the distant bells chiming at dawn on a fresh morning, as well as evoking the poet’s rumination on his memories. The bells are a strong feature in the poem as their chiming stirs a deep response in the poet. The image of the bell becomes a musical fixture within the textural patterns at selected points through the work, symbolised through two primary musical gestures:

- As a recurring motif that rings through the vocal line creating a sense of continuity through the trajectory of the narrative.
- Through a lilting piano idea embedded into the textures stated in the opening and closing parts that frame the work.

¹⁷² Williametta Spencer ’The Influence and Stylistic Heritage of André Caplet’ (PhD Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1974). p.189
In addition to the frequently changing textures throughout, ambiguous rhythmic grouping offsets the main pulse within the bar and adds a sense of fluidity to the unfolding story within the music.

As I will demonstrate, from the opening of the work alone, there is evidence that Caplet immediately establishes a sense of rhythmic ambiguity. This introduction is a lengthy eleven bars before the vocal entry and, interestingly, the piano part is in itself significantly representative of what is to follow in terms of destabilising the sense of time signature through groupings in the bar, and conjuring up the pastoral landscape into which the poet enters as he speaks of the bell. This ambiguity aligns with, and supports, the diffuse nature of the poetic imagery; the poet ruminates on his memories and it is unclear to the reader what he is remembering and the bell’s significance to this. In addition, the poet does not reveal the past event that changed his fate. The reader is presented with a perspective on the poet that suggests his past impacted him greatly, and bells are pivotal in that. The poem could be suggestive of different things and the reader many interpret it in different ways: perhaps as memories from the far past reimagined in the present, or as a reminder that the past still impacts the ways in which we experience the present.

The bell motives and a diffusion of rhythmic patterning through piano textures play a central role in the piano parts in this *mélodie*. The piano functions as equal partner to the vocal line through its evocative textures and prolonged solo passages. This elevates the piano considerably, and it becomes more than a supporting role for the voice. This balance between melody and accompaniment in this *mélodie* perhaps challenges the conventional song structure, in that the piano behaves as an essential interpretative
element for conveying poetic meaning and imagery, rather than existing in the more traditional supporting role. As Graham Johnson remarks:

*Cloche d’aube* is perhaps more of a piano piece with vocal obbligato than a song (complete with the composer’s familiar pianistic mannerisms) but the music is wholeheartedly in the service of the poem.’

Through evocative piano motives and textures interweaving with the vocal line, Caplet uses the piano to its fullest potential in evoking a sense of flow that both supports and enhances the vocal melody yet, as Johnson noted, remains in service of poetic intent. There are several aspects throughout the *mélodie* that highlight the elevation of the piano in Caplet’s approach to the translation of poetic imagery to music, and the following discussion will focus on three primary areas:

- Consideration of the impact of the introductory piano solo.
- The changing textures and bell motif as the narrative unfolds.
- Caplet’s approach to rhythmic grouping and distortion of the pulse for reflecting poetic imagery.

**Consideration of the impact of the introductory piano solo**

The piano introductory passage is a lengthy eleven bars. There are several key elements that support interpreting this section not just as a simple piano introduction, but rather as a finely condensed piano prelude which sets the scene for the material that follows. These elements involve the following aspects: (1) Structure and (2) Rhythmic conflict in establishing the metre of the work:

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(1) **Structure:**

- A potential ABA form layout is suggested through the following factors:
  - **harmonic scheme:** $A^b$–$Fm$–$A^b$
  - **rhythmic structure and layout of motives:** Dotted motives vs. even scalar movement
  - **expression and timing indications:** Rit. - a Tempo

(2) **Metric conflict:**

- To convey the sense of rhythmic diffusion, it is possible to interpret points of grouping dissonance between both lines of the piano parts as well as potential subliminal dissonance in the opening bars primarily between the pendulum-like nature of the music swinging between 3/4 and 6/8.

(1) **Structure:**

Firstly, to address the ABA nature of the piano part. There is a relatively evenly balanced ABA plan harmonically outlined through the use of the given key signature ($A^b$ major) and the relative minor, whereby bars 1–2 outline $A^b$ major, inclusive of extensions of seventh and ninth, and a move to $F$ minor throughout bars 3–8 constitutes the B section. Caplet cleverly prepares the return to the A material with a link passage through bar 9 in the tonic minor ($A^b$ minor) before returning to the major from bars 10–11. To further support these movements, the A material each time evokes the clear timbres of the bell’s chimes through dotted rhythmic figurations that contrast with the scale-like material that follows. The A material, in $A^b$, consists of rhythmic shapes which, although not fully developed throughout the body of the *mélodie*, do return in the final closing statement of the work as the poet hears the echo of the bells in the distance. Perhaps the alteration of $A^b$ and $F$ minor suggest duality between the poet’s present where he hears the distant bells ($A^b$) and the saturation of past memories triggered by the bells ($F$ minor). This structure is mapped on the score as shown in Example 4.1:
Example 4.1: Cloche d’aube bars 1–11 ABA form:
Throughout his career, Caplet was consistently specific with his tempo indications and this work is no exception. In these opening eleven bars, there are seven tempo indications mostly consisting of *Rit.* and *a Tempo* directions at the opening and closing of the ABA parts. This adds motion but also negates the establishing of a strongly-defined rhythmic pulsation at the beginning of the work. From the very outset, regularity of pulse is somewhat disguised through these varied speeds in combination with a blurring between simple and compound metre.

**(2) Metric conflict**

The time signature of the opening A section is 3/4, but this pulse is not clearly determined; due to the semiquaver upbeat, an impression of uneven distribution of pulse is created. For instance, due to the accents on the left-hand chords it is possible to hear the first bar as two dotted crotchet beats but, for the listener, their placement in the bar is unclear. Instead of three crotchet pulses in the bar as a traditional 3/4 time would outline, there are accents on the two dotted crotchet values in the bar. These dotted crotchets fall on beat one and the second half of beat two; a placement that gives the impression of the duple dotted crotchet grouping of 6/8 rather than 3/4. This continues into the second bar where the triplet combined with the *poco rit.* tempo indication suggests compound rather than simple time. This can be interpreted as a form of subliminal dissonance, due to the conflict between the accents and grouping in the bar suggesting a compound duple time signature, and the notated time signature of simple triple time. I outline the 6/8 pulse in the score in Example 4.2:
The texture of the first two bars is representative of the sonorities of the bells chiming, as perhaps Caplet aimed to capture the pendulum-like motion of the bells swinging from side to side as they ring out. This motion is more accurately conveyed through a duple metre than a triple. Through use of the tied quaver to offset a strong second beat, as well as accents on the weak beat in the middle of the bar, Caplet evokes a sense of duple metre that conjures the swinging motion of the bells. For instance, in their recording Lionel Peintre and Alain Jacquon approach this aspect of grouping dissonance through placing full emphasis on the accented crotchet chords in the first bar. This gives the impression that the strong beat in the bar aligns to the placement of these chords. The accented chords are preceded each time by a staccato chord. The use of pedal in this recording gives the impression of a more muted staccato, which in turn appears to stress the accented chords more. In contrast, pianists Line Marand and Boaz Sharon opt for a lighter pedalling, thus adding greater emphasis to the contrast between staccato and legato articulation in the first bar. Both of these pianists adhere to the accents as noted in the score by Caplet, but their use of staccato with a lighter touch of pedal, in contrast to Alain Jacquon, creates a different balance with the accented chords. The staccato deflects the depth of the accent, and although as
listeners we are still presented with the impression of duple metre rather than triple, it is slightly more blurred due to the weighting between the sharper staccato and accents in these two recordings. Although all three pianists – Sharon, Marand, and Jacquon – convey the same fundamental sense of pulse in the opening bars, it is their treatment of articulation and pedalling that affects the level of pulse the listener experiences.

There is not a sudden shift into 3/4 metre as we move into the B section of this piano part; rather, the metre shifts gradually. The groupings in bar three are fluid in that although the notation on the score suggests 3/4 more clearly than in the first two bars, there is still not a clearly defined triple pulse in the bar. Three factors contribute to the ambiguous feeling of pulse in this bar. These are:

- The speed at which the semiquavers move does not allow space for the pianist to draw significant attention to any particular accents in these groupings; however, this is an important bar as it supports the transition from the feeling of 6/8 in the bell motif of the first two bars to the more stable 3/4 semiquaver patterns of the bars that follow.

- There is potential for the semiquavers at bar three to be interpreted in two ways: in the groups of three triplets as notated on the score or, alternatively, as a rising duplet motive that helps emphasise the Eb crotchet.

- The added grace note embellishments to an extent distort the feeling of strong pulse, due to their placement on the first, second, and last quaver beats in the bar. Embellishing the notes on these beats adds weight, and makes it difficult to discern similar weighting on the actual beats.

There is a strong first beat due to the F in the bass-clef, and strong third beat as the music reaches the crotchet Eb in treble-clef at the end of the bar. The strong first and third beats are interesting, because they are the root and flattened seventh of the new key. The ties connecting the quaver to semiquavers prevent a strong second beat that
in turn negates a clear triple feeling in the bar. It is interesting to note that even though the actual rhythm of the bar is not clearly defined, Caplet still chose to define important harmony notes in order to create a sense of harmonic security in the music. The sense of grouping in relation to reaching the $E_b$ crotchet is most prominent in the interpretation by Lionel Peintre and Alain Jacquon. Here, Jacquon groups the rising figure as duplets rather than triplets. Other interpretations, such as those by Claudette Leblanc and Boaz Sharon, and Dominique Favat and Line Marand opt for grouping the semiquavers in this bar as the triplet shape in which they are notated. Grouping in this way potentially provides more rhythmic stability, but does not emphasise the $E_b$ in quite the same manner as evidenced in Jacquon’s duple grouping. This potentially is because in duple the $E_b$ is on the weak beat, and in triple it is on the strong beat. I demonstrate the interpretation of duple groupings in brackets in Example 4.3:

Example 4.3: Cloche d’aube bar 3

As the music moves into bar 4, there is still a resistance to clearly defining 3/4 time due to the positioning of the ties offsetting the downbeats in the bar in the treble-clef line. Although the layout of this bar is closer to 3/4 in terms of notation, the listener’s ear is most likely still expecting two strong pulses in the bar due to the 6/8 nature of the preceding material. We do not reach a clearly defined triple metre until bars 6–7, as
the two preceding bars could be interpreted either as leading more towards 3/4 or 6/8 due to the reference to the first bar in bar 4. This reference occurs at the staccato C followed by the tied G. In the left-hand part of the opening, there is a staccato G followed by a tied C. In bar 4, the pitches are reversed, but the effect is similar when articulated in the same manner; I show this in Example 4.4:

**Example 4.4: Similarities in articulation between bar 1 and bar 4 that negate a strong 3/4 time for bar 4**

![Example 4.4: Similarities in articulation between bar 1 and bar 4 that negate a strong 3/4 time for bar 4](image)

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In Example 4.5 I show, through use of brackets, that there is not a strong sense of 3/4 pulse due to the ties over the crotchet pulses in the bar:

**Example 4.5: Groupings in bar 4:**

![Example 4.5: Groupings in bar 4](image)

© With kind authorisation of Editions Durand
The descending line of quavers in bar 5 is a useful way of transitioning between the two time signatures and this fluidity opens several avenues for interpretation. Depending on the emphases given by the pianist, these quavers can be interpreted in either metres: as two groups of three, or as three groups of two, or even as a fluid scale without particular emphasis in order to create a more ambiguous impression. All three pianists respond to this in the same manner, whereby they opt for a fluid line throughout this bar, without emphasis on either form of grouping, thereby allowing for a greater sense of fluidity. Perhaps this is why Caplet uses the same quaver rhythm – this time inclusive of triplets and in the the key of Ab minor – in bar 9 to approach the return to the feeling of 6/8 as the bell motif in Ab major reappears. Interestingly, in bar 12 as the vocal line enters, the piano figuration could be interpreted as an echo of the rising material in bar 3. Bars 3 and 12 share a sustained F in the bass, Ab approached by its seventh as a grace note, followed by a rising pattern.

The rhythmic contour of bar 10 suggests 3/4 time due to the strong crotchet groupings in the left hand. The balance between the opening A section and this A1 section is important in terms of the poetic imagery. Perhaps the blurring of pulse at the start of the mélodie evokes the distance between the poet and the bells as they chime from far away. As the poet’s thoughts become clear and more developed throughout the B section, represented through the establishing of 3/4 time, the A1 section thus repeats the bells in a more clear 3/4 manner, too. Perhaps at this stage the bells have come into closer focus for the poet, as reflected in the establishing of pulse in bar 10. The material is identical to the first two bars but, this time, at bar 10, it is more suggestive of 3/4. Even though there are no accents on the G–C fourths in the left hand part, their placement evokes a stronger sense of triple metre in the bar. This appears to be
recognised in Line Marand’s interpretation, whereby we hear a stressing on the fourths with the left-hand. The two other interpretations follow Caplet’s markings closely, accenting the fourths in the treble-clef part as indicated on the score. The firmer accent on the right-hand part, as opposed to on that of the main beat in the left, places the feeling of pulse into the off beat in 3/4. This could potentially create an impression of displacement dissonance through the pulses falling on two different layers.

The overall prelude-like nature of this opening section is summarised in Table 4.4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.4: Cloche d’aube bars 1–11 Prelude-like nature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harmonic Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main metric pulse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression &amp; Timing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The bell motif as it recurs throughout the vocal part

The chiming of the bells is not restricted to the piano parts throughout this mélodie. Caplet creates a motif within in the vocal line to evoke this imagery as it recurs throughout the poem. Kanda explains:

In the vocal part, a landmark idea appears right away at m.12, ‘Ce petit air de cloche.’ Every time the word ‘Ce petit air...’ appears, the phrase consists of successive sixteenth notes on the same pitch. This figure appears every time the text involves the bell and its sound: m.12, m.18, m.64, m.68.174

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174 Sanae Kanda, ‘The Role of the Piano in the Mélodie of André Caplet’ (DMA Dissertation, Boston University, 2002). p.51
Caplet’s use of repeated semiquavers on the same pitch to evoke the bell as it appears in the poem is significant in that it makes it immediately recognisable in the vocal line as a rhythmic motif. Almost every time this occurs, the repeated semiquavers are either grouped into sextuplets, or surrounded by similar groupings in the piano part.

**Areas of defined and less-defined pulse potentially underling poetic imagery**

Throughout this piece, there is a marked contrast in the underlying defined metre of textural patterns centred around poetic imagery that suggests the poet’s past memories, and the patterns that are centred around poetic imagery and thoughts of the present or future. This contrast may be observed most clearly through dividing the *mélodie* into these respective sections of ambiguous pulse and defined pulse in order to gain insight into the contrasts:

**Table 4.5a Poetic imagery and pulse definition**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poetic Image</th>
<th>Pulse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The bell evokes memories of the past</td>
<td>Ambiguous: bars 1–22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The poet grapples with these memories and considers their meaning</td>
<td>Defined: bars 23–53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poet’s thoughts turning to the present</td>
<td>Ambiguous: bars 53–end</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When considering the differences in areas where the sense of metre is vague and where it is more clearly defined in relation to the harmonic structure, the following pattern emerges:
### Table 4.5b Poetic imagery, pulse definition, and harmonic motion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poetic Image</th>
<th>Pulse</th>
<th>Harmonic Motion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The bell evokes memories of the past</td>
<td>Ambiguous: bars 1–22</td>
<td>$A_b–B$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The poet grapples with these memories and considers their meaning</td>
<td>Defined: bars 23–53</td>
<td>G lydian-dominant–A lydian-dominant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poet’s thoughts turning to the present</td>
<td>Ambiguous: bars 53–end</td>
<td>$G_b–A_b$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the harmonic motion becomes more modal in the central section when the poet considers the memories themselves, the metre appears to become more clearly discernible. In the outer sections, where the harmonic motion is less modal, the metre is more diffuse. This balance between metre and tonality underpinning the text may suggest that a stronger definition of pulse adds weight and importance to the gravity of the memories.

**A further feature whereby Caplet uses pulse to reflect poetic imagery may be found at bar 57**

Having just moved into Section C at bar 54, the music travels through two bars of 2/4 time (at bars 55 and 56), and with the *Lent* direction, there is a change in texture and for the duration of bars 57–60. The poet is speaking of the monotonous and rustic nature of the gentle ringing bell nearby as he considers the manner in which his life could find similar sense of gentle contentedness. Caplet reflects this musically through the use of a dominant pedal point ($E_b$ in A minor for this passage), in the left hand of the piano part from bars 57–60. The insertion of a quaver rest at the start of this figuration, however, creates a distorted sense of pulse due to the first crotchet of bar 57 sounding on the offbeat rather than on the first strong beat of the bar. Through the
use of tied quavers, Caplet creates a false sense of where the barline lies in the passage. Given that the preceding bar is in a different time signature, combined with the Rit. - Lent tempo directions, the placement of the quaver rest combined with ties over the barline offsets a strong feeling of 3/4. The vocal line enters, on the line 'Monotone et champêtre', in bar 57, and we may observe that the phrase starts on the last beat of the bar. This device of starting the phrase on the upbeat further contributes to the displaced sense of where the barline in 3/4 time lies, because the beats within this vocal phrase that carry more weight are nonaligned to the pedal points in the bass part of the piano.

The treble part of the piano at this point adds another layer of dissonance due to the phrase starting on the second beat of the bar. This dissonance occurs when we compare the treble-clef part of the piano line with both the bass and vocal parts. This line could be interpreted as providing a sense of stability that counteracts the dissonances of the other lines. The rhythmic shape of this line is stable in the sense that 3/4 time is more clearly mapped out in this part. These lines combined give rise to a very diffuse sense of metre throughout this passage that considers the poetic imagery as it reflects the monotonous simplicity of the present life through the use of pedal points. Furthermore, the nonalignment could be interpreted as a musical reflection of the poet’s thoughts of the past: his memories are fragmented, as Caplet captures them in the structure and shape of this passage.

_Cloche d’aube_ is unique in that the piano introduction functions in a different manner to previous examples discussed. The rippling, pastoral atmosphere evoked through register, ascending and descendant rippling textures, and pulse fluctuations create the
atmospheres suggested in the poetic text, before the vocal narrative begins to unfold. This is a departure for Caplet because in the previous sets discussed – those composed during the war and immediately after – the piano openings are a lot shorter and function in a more traditional introductory manner. The only exception is in *La cigale et la forumi*. This function is somewhat different as Caplet uses the piano introductory passage to evoke the grasshopper’s song of summer.
**Cinq Ballades Française by Paul Fort**

**No. 4: Songe d’une nuit d’été** (1920)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Songe d’une nuit d’été</th>
<th>A summer night’s dream</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>La rose libre des montagnes a sauté de joie cette nuit, et toutes les roses des campagnes, dans tous les jardins, ont dit: ‘Sautons, d’un genou léger, mes soeurs, par-dessus les grilles. L'arrosoir du jardinier vaut-il un brouillard qui brille?’ J'ai vu, dans la nuit d'été, sur toutes les routes de la terre, courir les roses des parterres vers une rose en liberté!</td>
<td>The free rose of the mountain leapt for joy tonight, and all the roses of the plain, and in every garden, cried: ‘Let us leap with a light spring, over the gates, my sisters. Is the gardener’s watering-can a match for gleaming mist?’ I saw, in the summer night, along all the roads on earth, roses running from their beds towards a rose now free!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4

Formal Overview: *Songe d’une nuit d’été*

Composed in 1920, *Songe d’une nuit d’été* has been described as an “ecstatic nocturne” and, as Kanda mentions, ‘represents some of the most brilliant piano writing in Caplet’s songs.’ Capturing a vibrant and spirited atmosphere, this *mélodie* expresses themes surrounding the desire for freedom and liberty. The poem is structured in three stanzas, with each line containing seven syllables. Joel Harder suggests that this structure is ‘closely resembling trochaic heptameter [and the] rhyme scheme is as follows: ABAB CDCD CECE.’ Looking more closely, however, it is possible to pinpoint instances of striking originality in Caplet’s treatment of the poetic rhythm in this setting. For instance, Caplet sets the words *cette* and *toutes* in the opening stanza as single syllabic count. In Classical rules, the ‘e’ would be enunciated, however in Caplet’s setting of Fort’s text, it appears that a new way of counting syllables is used. Caplet’s treatment is modern in that the syllabic treatment closely resembles the style of everyday conversation, rather than strict adherence to classical rules of prosody.

Composers of the *mélodie* at this time would have been aware of these rules, and as Clive Scott elaborates, the accepted use of the mute “e” in French versification had rhythmic consequences on accent:

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176 Sanae Kanda, ‘The Role of the Piano in the Mélodie of André Caplet’ (DMA Dissertation, Boston University, 2002). p.53

The regular alexandrine has two obligatory accents on syllables 6 and 12, and usually two other accents, mobile and optional. [...] Above all, [the caesura] acts as a fulcrum for the line, a rhythmic pivot encouraging relationships of symmetry, chiasmus, antithesis, complementarity, parallelism, between the two half lines (hémistiches).  

Caplet undoubtedly understood these rules of prosody. His unusual treatment of the poetic rhythm in this instance disrupts the traditional rhythmic junctures in the line, and the implication of this on the rhythm leads to seven syllables per line in the setting. Caplet’s choice to set the rhythmic accents in this manner is thoroughly significant, and demonstrates ways of text setting that went beyond standard conventions, placing him as an innovative song-composer unafraid to explore new approaches.

The poetic narrative unfolds quickly and is full of imagery that Caplet musically reflects in abundance throughout the setting. From the opening stanza, it appears that there is a form of duality between the two kinds of roses: those in the mountains, and those situated in the country and gardens. The mountain roses are free and wild and their counterparts, confined in gardens, wish to join them to share this sense of freedom.

There are three stanzas: each contains four lines which, in the first two verses, further subdivide into pairs describing a particular element of the poetic dialogue. The final verse contains imagery of the flight to freedom embarked upon by the country and garden roses. It is possible to interpret both the phrase structure and unfolding textures of the piano accompaniment as closely aligning to the poetic imagery and, similarly, the vocal phrases can be aligned to the same imagery-driven divisions within the structure of the poem. For example, in the melody line throughout the first stanza,

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the wild roses are described with wide leaps between tones, whereas the melody line in the second half of this stanza, referring to the roses from the countryside and gardens, exhibits much smaller intervallic shapes. Perhaps the use of leaps in the melodic line is a reflection of the expanse of the mountains and sense of open freedom available to the wild roses compared to the more restrictive and perhaps captive nature of the gardens.

Textural changes abound in the *mélodie* as a means of creating both a sense of drama and forward-momentum in the narrative. In order to clearly outline these descriptive elements in each stanza, I propose that stanza one behaves as an A section, stanza two as a B section and stanza three as a C section. An exploration of the balance between the poetic layout and the changing textural patterns in each section, in terms of register and density, will help illuminate both Caplet’s musical response to the notion of a desire for freedom, and the manner in which the subsequent unfolding narrative portrays the garden roses’ escape.

**Section A**

Throughout this section, Caplet uses a combination of contrasting registers and textural densities to illustrate the differences between the roses who are free in the mountains and those who are confined. Contrasting register in the piano accompaniment is one of the most striking aspects in Section A. Two treble-clef lines in the piano part underpin the reference to the roses in the mountains, alluding to the airy expanse of space afforded to these roses. In the second subphrase, attention is drawn to the roses in the lower gardens and countryside. Here the register dramatically changes to two bass-clefs in the piano part and perhaps reflects the lowlands these roses find themselves
restricted to. The lower register is more ominous and suggestive of feelings of gloominess and unrest. When combined with the density, the contrast between the roses of the mountains and their counterparts becomes even more perceptible. The airy lightness of the mountain roses is captured through undulating semiquaver-demisemiquaver texture where small intervals in the accompaniment highlight the wide leaps in the vocal line. The section begins with a descending demisemiquaver flourish upbeat that is echoed ascending in bar 10 as the imagery depicts the merry dancing of these roses in the mountains. Rhythmic diminution highlights the upbeat as, from bars 13–15, even quavers move to triplets to a final descending *rapide* flourish in bar 15. Sustained chordal moment in the right hand of the piano part combined with triplets moving to semiquavers creates a darker atmosphere that fully contrasts the merrymaking of the mountain roses.

**Section B**

In the second stanza of the poem, the narrative quickly reveals that there is an imminent break for freedom. The county and garden roses declare their intent to jump over the railings that hold them captive and run to freedom. The second subphrase of this stanza reaffirms their reason to escape: there is much better opportunity and more favourable conditions for them outside the confines of the garden. This is especially noticeable in the reference to the gardener’s watering can compared to nature’s mist, as the poem declaims:

*L’arrosoir du jardiniere vaut-il un broulliard qui brille?*
Is the gardener’s watering-can a match for gleaming mist?
Once again, as per the first stanza, there is a significant difference in register and textural density. Throughout bars 28–36, two treble-clef staves filled with jaunty triplets and elements of staccato articulation in the piano part enhance the dialogue in the text. The roses express their intent to jump, and Caplet reflects the imagery of the roses’ excitement and jumping through this register and texture. The reference to the gardener’s watering can perhaps symbolise a more ominous and repressive feeling of captivity for the roses, as chromatic tremolos in a lower register enclose the text throughout bars 40–49. This creates a strong sense of tension and feeling of confinement in the music. There is a building crescendo throughout this piece which increases this sense of tension and builds an expectation for release or arrival further in the music. This stanza is pivotal in the narrative in that it illustrates excitement and courage in a restrictive and confined environment. It shows the bravery of the garden roses as they take a risk to embrace a better future. Given that Caplet composed this just one year after the end of WWI, there is a likelihood that these themes of risking danger to liberate from oppression and embrace freedom resonated with the composer.

Section C

The final stanza of the poem is presented from the poet’s perspective as he describes the sight of the roses running to freedom on a summer’s night. Unlike the previous two sections, the third does not divide into two clearly contrasting textural parts with two poetic ideas. This stanza is more unified, perhaps because the captive roses have united with the free roses of the mountains.

The entire mood is now concerned with perspectives of the roses’ liberation. The textures are relatively evenly balanced throughout, as from bar 67 there is a
combination of rising chordal and scalar movements that build in a dramatic crescendo towards a spirited descending flourish at bars 90 to the end that echoes that of the opening.

Overall, the formal layout of this mélodie follows the drama in the poetic narrative very closely. Caplet highlights the unfolding of the story through texture and register, filling this setting with a strong sense of drama. The piano part behaves as an equal partner to the vocal part, and the contrasts between the two characters: the free roses, and those which are restrained but break for freedom, is made clear. There is much movement in the mélodie but, surprisingly for Caplet, there are no time signature changes. Texture, register, directions noted on the score, and dissonant rhythmic groupings provide a sense of movement that often belie the 2/4 time signature. Claire Croiza, in her description of Caplet’s mélodies mentions:

Caplet, we must always remember, came from Normandy – and characteristically in order to be slow, ‘it is not slow’ and in order to be fast ‘it is not fast’. Always there is some juggling with the music, but also a touching sensibility on which any interpretation of his music must be based. So be sure to establish a plan, a frame of characters. Like Toscanini, Caplet respects the ‘plan’ of sonorities.\(^{179}\)

Croiza’s account suggests that Caplet, fastidious as ever, not only sought to evoke impressions of narrative and drama, but retained a strong sense of structure and direction amid this balancing act of apparent rhythmic and harmonic ambiguity.

4.5

Aspects of Poetic Harmony: *Songe d’une nuit d’été*

Throughout the myriad of textural changes, unfolding in a manner as dramatic as the poetic subject itself, the underlying harmonic scheme aligns to and underpins the structure of the narrative. Caplet perhaps uses the harmonic language in this *mélodie* as a means of weaving a feeling of suspense and drama into the narrative, thoroughly operating in concert with the textural and register changes of each image.

The harmonic plan in *Songe d’une nuit d’été* is stable in the sense that there are longer tonal points of rest throughout that give the impression of a more structured plan. The tonality of these sections is predominantly modal, however, and, at times, evocative of the poetic imagery. The given key signature is F# major or D# minor, but the tonal plan does not unfold in a traditional chordal sequence in these tonalities. There is a strong modal quality to this work, and in some places multiple avenues for harmonic interpretation. The tonal plan aligns mostly to the structure of the poetic imagery in each stanza and, to give a broad overview of this, I outline the relevant tonal contour in relation to the poetic imagery in Table 4.6:
Table 4.6: Songe d’une nuit d’été structural outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Stanza</th>
<th>Poetic Image</th>
<th>Tonal Centre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>The wild roses of the mountains jump for joy</td>
<td>[F# pentatonic flourish] G lydian-dominant–B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The garden roses responses</td>
<td>C# locrian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>II</td>
<td>Garden roses announce their intent to break free</td>
<td>G lydian-dominant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The shining mist of freedom is better than the oppression of the gardener’s</td>
<td>Chromatic movement – G lydian-dominant leading to F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>watering can</td>
<td>whole tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>III</td>
<td>The roses run away through the paths to freedom late on a summer’s night</td>
<td>G lydian-dominant–D minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B7–Am–[F# pentatonic flourish]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As this table demonstrates, there is a strong G lydian-dominant quality present throughout this mélodie. The ominous and oppressive mood that has driven the roses to flee the garden is captured through the chromatic and mysterious whole tone harmonic language at the point in the text describing the L’arrosoir du jardinier. The mélodie is framed by the F# pentatonic scalar flourish, and at first glance the centres of F# pentatonic, G lydian-dominant and F whole tone appear thoroughly disconnected. This discussion will explore the manner in which Caplet treats these quite different tonal centres to create a sense of proportion and balance within the harmonic language of the mélodie. Caplet’s processes for creating tonal unity throughout this mélodie can potentially be interpreted in three ways:

- Placement of strong chord tones within the vocal line throughout the entire work.
- Ascribing certain tonal areas to certain poetic images as the narrative unfolds.
- Blending tonalities to fully reflect poetic imagery as the final stanza progresses.
G lydian-dominant is, despite the given key signature of six sharps, a main tonality throughout the *mélodie*. This tonality seems to be a primary driving force in the harmonic language because this mode appears as the prevailing tonality in areas of the narrative that describe the free roses, such as in the first subphrase in Section A and the first subphrase in Section B. Throughout these sections, Caplet constructs a vocal line that can be interpreted as based on strong chord tones from this mode. Therefore, it is likely that this mode is representative of the imagery of the free roses as it returns throughout the structure.

Similarly, in the second subphrase of stanza one, there is a move towards a tonal centre based around tonalities originating from a C♯ root. For example in bar 16, where this subphrase begins, the tonal centre is situated in C♯ aeolian, followed by C♯ locrian at bar 18 moving to C♯ locrian natural two with the insertion of D♯ in bar 24, which then moves towards C♯ lydian-dominant at bar 25. This modal interchange between C♯ aeolian and C♯ locrian is particularly interesting, since the locrian modal collection facilitates the inclusion of half-diminished tonalities, bringing a darker, more foreboding element to the music. Also, to heighten the sense of foreboding further, the move to the locrian occurs in bar 18 as rhythmic diminution takes place between the triplet quavers and semiquavers.

Perhaps Caplet makes use of this diminished tonality combined with rhythmic diminution to draw the listener’s attention to the roses’ plan to escape to the same freedoms as their mountain counterparts, and the challenges this plan entails. There is little difference between the use of the locrian and the use of the locrian-natural-two that follows at bar 24, as the second degree of this scale does not affect the half-

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diminished quality. It is difficult to pinpoint the exact reason for this locrian/locrian-natural-two interchange other than Caplet favoured the D♭ in the vocal line. Additionally, supporting Caplet’s choice of D♭ at this point, it could be suggested that this D♭ brings a sense of continuity between the vocal line at this point and the vocal line of the previous sub-phrase. The D♭, like the G♮ in the same bar is then active as a common tone between the G lydian-dominant and C# locrian tonalities.

The third stanza could be interpreted as a fusion of components of the first and second, in that it describes both the elements of liberty (as expressed by the mountain roses at the start of the first stanza), and the country roses’ escape to freedom (the intent of which was expressed in the second stanza). As a result, it could be suggested that Caplet uses the two tonal centres of G lydian-dominant and C# simultaneously in the harmonic representation of the poet’s view of the country roses running free through the summer night. For example, at the beginning of Section C, there is a strong G lydian-dominant quality in the vocal line throughout bars 66–80, also reflected in the chordal movement in the piano parts. There is an insertion of a C# pedal tone, however, which – given that it is the lydian tone – is an unusual choice for a pedal tone.

There are potentially two ways of interpreting this harmonic motion. Firstly, it could be a harmonic representation of the two aforementioned entities coming together: the G-centric tonality that depicts freedom and the C#-centric tonality that depicts the actions to reach freedom. The placement of the C# pedal – initially offset from the opening chord in bar 66 and building in sustaining power due to the more sustained C# tones from bar 70 onwards – displays the treatment of this tone in a completely different manner to the G-quality chords heard above it. It is heard in different note
values, at a much lower register, and also from bars 66–9 does not occur in the chordal part. These elements could suggest aligning, but not unification, of two separate entities or images in the poem.

Secondly, another suggestion for the function of this C# is that it is behaving as a dominant pedal tone. Given that there is a key signature suggesting F# major, the placement of the C# as a dominant pedal is possible in terms of this harmony. In the absence of any strong F# or even D# minor harmonic motion, however, this is unlikely. The C# pedal further facilitates a brief move into C# locrian at bar 72, possibly as a reference to the second subphrase of Section B, where the first reference to the captive country roses occurs. This strengthens the case for the C# pedal behaving as an aural image or reference point to the captive roses. When considering this tonal motion in light of the text –

\[ J'ai\ vu,\ dans\ la\ nuit\ d'été,\ sur\ toutes\ les\ routes\ de\ la\ terre\ \\
I\ saw,\ in\ the\ summer\ night,\ along\ all\ the\ roads\ on\ earth\ \\
\]

– We see this reference of captive roses breaking free: the two images in the first two stanzas of poetry have reached a culmination at this point, which, as described, Caplet reflects harmonically through pedal and chordal movement in two representative tonal centres.
4.6 

Analytical Interpretation: *Songe d’une nuit d’été*

Given that there are strong themes illustrating freedom – in the depiction of the mountain roses – and the desire for freedom – in the country roses – throughout the *mélodie*, there is a case for suggesting that aspects of rhythmic dissonance behave in a similar pattern-based manner. These aspects of rhythmic dissonance can be interpreted as aligning with areas of varying textures and register patterns. There are no time signature changes, and a clear sense of pulse is established from the first full bar following the F♯ pentatonic flourish. As there are a lot of relatively quick changes in atmosphere through this unfolding narrative, it is possible to propose that through various states of rhythmic dissonance, an underlying tension is created in the music in response to the points of poetic intensity as the storyline unfolds. Exploring this musical response to Paul Fort’s poetic concepts in *Songe d’une suit d’été*, might shed light on Caplet’s approach to rhythmic distortion in the framework of one consistent time signature. Exploring aspects of the ways in which Caplet creates a veiled sense of rhythmic structure demonstrates that even though there is a sense of consistency in non-changing time signature, the rhythms used create quite a different and more changeable narrative.

Unlike previous works, the steady nature of the 2/4 pulse could be interpreted as a point of reference for consonant and secure imagery in the poem. For example, through the opening description of the roses free in the mountains during the first stanza, and again where the direct speech by the captive roses declaring their intent to break for freedom takes place, the 2/4 pulse is strongly defined and falls more regularly
within the framework of the barline than other more inauspicious points, such as the
description of the somewhat oppressive gardener’s watering can. The watering can
could be regarded as the unfavourable imagery of captivity, and perhaps the
irregularity in pulse at this point reflects that, in order to fully contrast with the hopeful
themes of freedom. For instance, the tremolo in the piano accompaniment combined
with the tied crotchets over the barline distorts the strong 2/4 feeling we experienced
in earlier parts of the *mélodie* creating a sense of unease and tension.

It is possible to find aspects of indirect dissonance used as a deliberate contradiction
the established 2/4 metre in order to reflect poetic meaning in *Songe d’une nuit d’été*.
When the layers of metric motion in the musical structure are dissonant in succession,
rather than simultaneously, indirect dissonance can occur. According to Harald Krebs:

Indirect dissonance exists because of our tendency as listeners to maintain
an established pulse for a short time after it is discontinued in actuality. When two non congruent interpretative layers x and y, or two nonaligned congruent layers are juxtaposed, the listener inwardly continues the first
layer as the second begins, so that there arises a brief but clearly perceptible conflict between the mentally retained first layer, and the
actually sounding second layer. The actual duration of indirect dissonance
varies from passage to passage and from listener to listener.\textsuperscript{180}

Throughout the opening nine bars of *Songe d’une nuit d’été*, there is a fairly strong 2/4
metric pulse running through both the piano and vocal parts. The listener may discern
regularity and evenness in the pulse throughout these parts, and although there is a
ripping polyrhythm evident in the four-over-three figurations in the piano
accompaniment throughout bars 3–6, this polyrhythm does not disrupt or interrupt
the sense of strong downbeat in the music. The listener’s ear is drawn into a sense of

stability as the combination of regularity of the repetitive motion in the piano 
accompaniment and evenness in the rhythmic shape of the vocal line create an 
atmosphere of security and safety.

Perhaps these elements of stability and evenness could be a reflection of the feelings 
of certainty the mountain roses in the poem experience in their position of freedom.
Caplet specifies a metronome marking of \( \frac{\text{bpm}}{\text{bpm}} = 92 \). With this speed established, the 
combination of rhythmic diminution and \textit{en accélérant} direction through bars 11 to 15 
temporarily increases, but does not detract from, the sense of the established 2/4 
pulse. A short crotchet rest combined with the \textit{a tempo} at the start of bar sixteen 
marks the point that an indirect dissonance potentially emerges.

With an expectation for the \textit{a tempo} to reestablish the strong 2/4 pulse, the listener’s 
pre-established sense of pulse is anticipating regularity. The poetic text refers to the 
country roses captive in the gardens, however, and with the presence of the harmonic 
change outlined earlier in this discussion, the rhythmic state shifts considerably. Still in 
2/4 time, rhythmic groupings and phrasing in the piano parts create an irregular sense 
of pulse which to the listener’s ear is dissonant with the material of the previously 
stated part. This rhythmic dissonance is achieved in two ways which I have listed 
below:

- The three metric layers – vocal and treble- and bass-clef piano lines – 
simultaneously non-align with 2/4.
- The phrasing and motion of chordal movement creates offsets the strong sense of 
downbeat due to the placement on the second beat of the bar rather than the first.
The three metric layers – vocal and treble- and bass-clef piano lines – simultaneously non-align with 2/4

There are several isolated factors that firstly, on an individual basis, create a sense of dissonance with the notated metre. When these arrive in conjunction as seen in the score, a significant rhythmic shift occurs creating a contradiction between the pulse in this subphrase and that of the preceding subphrase. I outline these factors individually first, from the lowest line first, then I shall demonstrate the ways in which together they create a strong rhythmic dissonance, echoing the dissatisfaction of the captive garden roses in the poem.

**Triplet grouping layer (bass-clef stave on piano part)**

In the line of triplet groupings, it is possible to interpret pairs of duple-grouped quavers within these triplets, due to the repeating G♯–C♯ intervallic pattern. Example 4.6 illustrates this passage as it appears in the score, annotated with brackets outlining the resulting duple groupings. It is possible to see that the triplet grouping reinterpreted as duple quavers reveal a pattern that both continues in the semiquavers that follow, and is further reflected in the shape of the actual notated pairs of quavers at bar 22. This offers a feeling of rhythmic consistency, as interpreting this layer in this manner allows a pattern of alternating duple quavers to frame the inner duple-grouped semiquavers. Despite the sense of consistency this grouping reveals, the pattern creates a sense of dissonance with the 2/4 time signature, in that if we reimagine the rhythm grouped, as illustrated by brackets in Example 4.6, the barline and triplets become redundant.
Crotchet chord layer (treble-clef on piano part)

The next line up, or top line of piano accompaniment, consists of crotchet chords. These chords outline a tied pattern throughout bars 16–20. This pattern, starting on beat number two, creates a sense of minim pulse that starts on the weak beat of the bar, creating a false impression of the position of beat number one. This pattern is reinforced throughout the following three bars, and at bar 20, changes into a rising chordal figure. It is possible to group this as a figuration of three rising chords, followed by a figuration of four rising chords. The group of three rising chords over bars 20–1 begins on the weak beat of the bar, but the following group begins on the strong beat...
of the bar. This lack of consistency could be confusing for the listener, and distorts their impression of where the strong beat lies.

**Vocal layer**

The vocal line could be interpreted as the most consistent factor because the placement of the words *roses*, *-pagnes*, and *dit* all constitute longer note values and fall on the first beat of each respective bar (19, 20, 24). This placement does conform more closely to the 2/4 metre, but the groupings may be interpreted in a manner that does not align to regular grouping in this time signature. Referring back to Example 6, the vocal line is grouped in brackets. I suggest these groupings due to the placement of four descriptive elements, or actions, outlined by the text:

i. *et toutes les roses* – *and all the roses* [*poetic subject*]

ii. *dans campagnes* – *in the countryside* [*qualifies the subject & differentiates to mountain roses*]

iii. *dans tous les jardins* – *in all the gardens* [*placement of the subject*]

iv. *ont dit* – *say* [*action of the subject*]

Each grouping reflects an element in the phrase, and Caplet avoids setting these four elements of poetic text evenly within 2/4 time, resulting in the absence of a strongly 2/4 metric shape in the vocal line.
The phrasing and motion this chordal movement creates offsets the strong sense of downbeat due to the placement on the second beat of the bar rather than the first.

When hearing these three lines simultaneously, the resulting dissonance to 2/4 metre is created through the nonalignment of the vocal phrase, the tied crotchets’ nonalignment to the downbeat and resulting minim-like durations, and the irregular groupings spreading from triplets-as-pairs, to semiquavers to regular quavers. This is not to say, however, that Caplet abandons all sense of pulse or regularity within the metric flow at this point. When observing the points in the piano accompaniment where the tied crotchets, or ‘false minims’ occur, the downbeats where the two points combine gives rise to an interesting rhythmic combination: for each ‘false minim’, there are three groups of ‘pairs’ within the triplet line. Example 4.7 illustrates a rhythmic reimagining of this figuration, to show conflict between the treble and bass-clef piano parts:

**Example 4.7: Rhythmic reimagining of bars 16–23**
In his discussion on metric displacement, Yonatan Malin states:

Now, if a syncopa8on or any new “dissonant” layer is sustained for a time, and if the original layer is not reinforced, then we typically shift our attention to a new layer. This is a form of metric modulation, and it functions like a tonal modulation. The new layer becomes primary in our perception, like a new tonic. Krebs uses the term “subliminal dissonance” for such situations. It is as though the dissonance continues, but at a level below our conscious awareness.181

It is possible to interpret the form of metric displacement in this passage of Songe d’une nuit d’été, bars 16–23, in the manner that Malin suggests: as a metric modulation. But, it can also be interpreted as an insertion of metric displacement aligned to the poetic imagery at that moment in the mélodie. There is a case for both interpretations. If considering this in terms of metric modulation, functioning in a similar manner to a tonal modulation, this section could be understood as a temporary modulation, behaving for coloristic or programmatic effect, but not a complete shift away from the metre established at the beginning of the work because of the return to regularity in the following phrase (starting at bar 28). Potentially, it is more likely that this section behaves as a contrasting displacement functioning as a reflection of the poetic imagery.

It might further be suggested that Caplet wanted this section to contrast fully with the previous, because the rhythmic displacement occurs analogously with the harmonic shift to C♯ centric tonality. The duple-within-triple groupings of bars 16–17 are centred around C♯aeolian, and as the movement turns into semiquavers, the modality also changes to the darker C♯ locrian mode. Throughout this section, Caplet uses distortion of both metre and harmonic movement to reflect the tension in the poetic imagery.

181 Yonatan Malin, Songs in Motion: Rhythm and Metre in the German Lied (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). p.56
In their recordings, all three groups of artists – Lionel Peintre and Alain Jacquon, Dominique Favat and Line Marand, and Claudette Leblanc and Boaz Sharon – all recognise this rhythmic displacement. In all three recordings, it is possible to hear the groupings in the left-hand piano accompaniment articulated as pairs, and emphasis placed on the “false minims” to offset the feeling of 2/4 metre. It could be interpreted as a recognition of the duple nature of 2/4 metre, but a distortion of the placement of this metre within the traditional barline.

*Songe d'une nuit d'été* contains not just highly colourful pianistic texture, but advancements in rhythmic and harmonic displacement occurring analogously. The aligning distortion of these elements creates a heightened sense of tension in the music that fully reflects the poetic imagery of the roses’ break for freedom. This perhaps reveals that Caplet’s approach to poetic expression was maturing and becoming more experimental at this point in his career.
Cinq Ballades Française by Paul Fort

No. 5 L’Adieu en barque (1920)

‘A song that is full of poetry and the call of the night’¹⁸²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L’adieu en barque</th>
<th>Farewell from a boat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C’est l’heure où le château s’endort, l’heure où les rames sont si belles, où l’hirondelle entraîne l’or du soir jusqu’au plus bleu du ciel.</td>
<td>This is the hour when the castle falls asleep, when oars are so lovely, when the swallow bears the gold of evening to the bluest sky.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Où je cache le paysage à mes yeux tout remplis d’amour. Je m’en vais, pleurs de mon visage. Quittons ces rames pour toujours!</td>
<td>When I conceal countryside from my eyes that brim with love. I take my leave with tear-stained face. Let us leave these oars forever!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.7

**Formal Overview: L’Adieu en barque**

There is a consensus among scholars that *L’adieu en barque* is an enchanting setting.

Pierre Bernac refers to it as a:

> Beautiful piano piece on which the vocal line expressing the mysterious poem is laid. The perfect blending creates an extremely poetic atmosphere.\(^{183}\)

Graham Johnson shares this opinion, and refers to this *mélodie* as “an extraordinarily ornate barcarole”\(^ {184}\), Sanae Kanda simply states that “this song is absolutely beautiful”\(^ {185}\) and Joel Harder notes that “this final song is truly the gem of the set... [and] really belongs in a category with other great songs of oceanic departures, including *L’invitation au voyage* by Duparc and *Les berceaux* by Fauré.”\(^ {186}\) Needless to say, *L’adieu en barque* has received much recognition and acclaim for its beauty of both atmosphere, poignancy, and more specifically, the balance of lyrical pianism and vocal parts.

This *mélodie* is perhaps outstanding to critics and researchers of Caplet’s work, because its structure breaks the traditionally accepted design of vocal line with the piano in a principally accompanying role. In this work, similar to aspects of the previous


\(^{185}\) Sanae Kanda, ‘The Role of the Piano in the Mélodie of André Caplet’ (DMA Dissertation, Boston University, 2002). p.53

mélodies in the set, the piano plays a remarkable role: not just subservient to the vocal line, the piano is crucial in evoking atmosphere and setting up a backdrop for the vocal part that fully reflects the poetic meaning and imagery. This is the shortest work of the Cinq Ballades Françaises, at just forty-four bars long, but that does not detract from either its beauty or the analytical value of the set. The poem is equally short; just eight lines long. The rhyming scheme, as Harder notes, ‘is very simple – ABAB CDCD’.187

The theme of the poem is that of farewell and melancholy. The poem is highly evocative of the sights and colours of an evening where a sorrowful farewell is said as the poet sets sail for new shores. The colours of the sky and swallows are evoked right from the outset. We are not given any information about the poet’s departure, why he is taking this journey, or any sort of unfolding storyline in the narrative. Instead, this poem offers a snapshot of a moment and, as readers, we witness just one scene. The imagery of the swallows is particularly poignant. The migrating swallow makes a remarkable journey across the globe, and perhaps the reference from gold evening to blue sky reflects the time this journey takes, as the poet mentions:

\[\text{Où l’hirondelle entraîne l’or du soir jusqu’au plus bleu du ciel}\]

When the swallow takes the gold evening to the bluest part of the sky

Perhaps the swallow’s monumental journey is a reflection of the voyage upon which the poet is embarking. The poem is divided into two primary descriptions: the land that he is leaving behind and his love of it and, in the final two lines, the deep sense of loss he feels at the onset of his journey, elements that can perhaps be interpreted as a simultaneous thought as opposed to an unfolding narrative. Although music is

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187 Ibid. p.115
temporal and a sense of forward direction is an essential component of the *mélodie’s* structure, it might be proposed that Caplet captures this sense of both descriptions simultaneously though the poignant atmosphere evoked in the piano part, as the vocal line relates the poet’s feelings.

The evocative nature of this poem elicited a musical response that is as emphatic as it is atmospheric. The musical setting captures the stillness of the evening tide, through textures in the piano part that offer a partnership with the vocal line that describes the poet’s journey from the land he dearly loves, and a shifting harmonic language that supports the poetic narrative. Given the number of long-haul Atlantic crossings he undertook throughout his time as conductor of the Boston Opera, Caplet was no stranger to lengthy voyages and departures. Although Caplet’s sea voyages were not for reasons of emigration or seeking a new life in North America, it is certain that he was witness to the sorrow many passengers felt at the prospect of leaving their home country for good. Additionally considering Caplet’s war experiences, it is likely he understood the poignancy and deep emotion of leaving one’s home country to face the unknown without knowing whether return would ever be possible.
4.8

Aspects of Poetic Harmony: *L’Adieu en barque*

*L’adieu en barque* is a short *mélodie* compared to its counterparts in the *Cinq Ballades*. But despite this, the harmonic structure is carefully crafted and aligns to the poetic trajectory. Overall, this *mélodie* can be considered more tonal in that, for the most part, it stays within the confines of the given key signature. I interpret the harmonic structure as an alignment to three primary poetic images in the poem. These descriptive areas are not quite separate structural poetic sections, but they could be interpreted as unfolding circumstances in the poem to which harmonic colour is associated. This is demonstrated in Table 4.7:
### Table 4.7: *L’adieu en barque* harmonic colour and poetic imagery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Lines in text</th>
<th>Poetic Image</th>
<th>Harmonic Movement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>Piano solo in high register of piano conjures atmosphere of ethereal and serene beauty</td>
<td>[Piano Solo Introduction: C♯–A–B]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong> (bars 1–30)</td>
<td>C’est l’heure où le château s’endort, l’heure où les rames sont si belles, où l’hirondelle entraîne l’or du soir jusqu’au plus bleu du ciel,</td>
<td>Lush and evocative images of the evening countryside and perhaps the home of the poet. Rich languages: “Gold evening”, “Beautiful oars”. The poet is capturing the poignant beauty of the place he is leaving when it is at it’s most beautiful.</td>
<td>C♯–G♯–B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>du soir jusqu’au plus bleu du ciel, où je cache le paysage</td>
<td>The poet can hardly look at the landscape, for his eyes are so full of love. He is blinded by emotion</td>
<td>A♭–B (B lydian followed by B locrian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong> (bars 31–end)</td>
<td>Je m’en vais, pleurs de mon visage. Quittons ces rames pour toujours!</td>
<td>The poet is making his final farewell and embarking on the voyage</td>
<td>E♭–B Major over F♯–B minor–A–B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Section A

There is a key signature of five sharps suggesting B major or G♯ minor, and given the B pedal suggested by the repeated octaves in the opening textures, it is likely B major can be interpreted as the overall tonal centre of the piece. Throughout the opening five
bars of the piano introduction, however, the strong chordal points suggest harmonic movements outlining C# tonalities. For example, bars 2, 3, and 4 contain strong chords of C#♯7–C# locrian–C#♯7, with bar 4 further outlining elements from a C# major scale in the bass-clef piano part. Following this, the strong chordal points from the second chord of bar 6 through to bar 8 all suggest A7 tonality. The opening tonic pedal texture moving to chordal points an interval of a second or third away from the tonic could be a characterising harmonic motion for Caplet. In previous works, there are numerous examples of similar shifting surface-motion tonalities related to a central tonality by the distance of a second or third. In *L'adieu en barque*, this motion suggests tonalities a major second above and below the given key signature.

As with so much of this music, ambiguity is a central feature, and there is more than one way of interpreting this tonal colour. For instance, it is also possible to consider the significance of the chordal centres to which the music moves in relation to the given tonic key. In the C# triad, B acts as the seventh, and in the A triad, B is the ninth. There is also the potential for interpretation of this tonal motion as an exploration of common tones within chords through the position of B as seventh and ninth respectively. When considering this in relation to poetic themes, it becomes apparent that Caplet aims to evoke the imagery of the moving water on which the boat will begin its journey. The harmonic movement to intervals that can be interpreted as either movements in seconds, or as ninth and seventh relations, however, suggests that on a rippling surface, all is not quite as settled as it seems. The slight unsettling feeling that arises from the unstable tonal movements perhaps illustrates the underlying upset the poet feels at leaving all that is familiar to embark on an unknown
journey. This could be further supported by the movements that circle around B. The very first B chord we hear is in bar 6, and is not B major, but B diminished.

Caplet further builds on B as a root tone though bars 9–15. If the harmonic motion travelled into B major, it could perhaps feel too secure against the melancholy nature of the poem. Instead, the music, still centred on a B tone as a tonic note, moves through the B locrian-natural-two (bar 9), B lydian (bar 12), and B locrian (bar 14). There is a reference to B major in bar 11 throughout the tremolo textures, but it is fleeting. Perhaps because the poet’s sense of “home” is no longer stable due to his departure, the lack of strong B major could be interpreted as a reflection of this unstable feeling of “home”. The B tonalities rooted on B tones could be a deliberate distortion of the home key.

The tonal movements appear connected further as the mélodie progresses. A pedal F♯ enters at bar 16, where an a tempo moves the music along in anticipation of the vocal entry in the following bar. This F♯ in the bass part of the piano is significant in that it is the lowest pitch heard up to that point, and its placement gives a sense of arrival, perhaps because it is the dominant of the given key signature. Caplet offsets this F♯ pedal with continued C♯ harmonies moving to G♯ minor as the poet’s thoughts move towards the image of oars gliding through the water.

With the reference to the bluest part of the sky, the music moves into the strongest statement of B major (with added sharpened fifth) at this point in the mélodie, almost as a closure to this poetic image. Throughout this passage, the harmonic rhythm is at its most steady: there is a regular crotchet chordal pulse arising from bar 12 that moves
at a steady rate of change until the statement of this B major tonality at bar 24. In consideration of the poetic structure, the poetic imagery discusses the ethereal evening atmosphere and gentle surroundings of the poet. The descriptions are lush: the evening is described as gold, and the oars are beautiful. The steady harmonic rhythm and closure in B major could be interpreted as an illustration of this poetic description.

Still part of Section A, the following two lines of poetic text could be interpreted as a separate poetic image because at this point in the poem, the poet is so overcome by emotion and love for the landscape he is leaving that he has to hide it from his tearful eyes. In this phrase, the harmonic language outlines a clear move to A♭ tonalities. This colour change adds emphases to the meaning in the text as the move from sharp to flat key centres could be interpreted as a representation of the lowering of the poet’s spirits and heightened emotion as his departure looms. As the vocal line drops out at bar 28, the tonality shifts dramatically back to B, and once again, B lydian followed by B locrian. Following the A♭ tonality with these modal points adds instability and uncertainty to the harmonic flow. It is perhaps possible to interpret the A♭ tonality as preempting the next section in that the flat key tonalities return as the poet’s emotional state increases and becomes more sorrowful.

Section B

This section, starting at bar 31, is shorter than the previous material. There is a change of feeling with the introduction of E♭ tonalities, combined with changes in texture and a change from simple to common time at the start of bar 31. These factors can be interpreted as establishing the beginning of Section B. There is a change to very thin
texture as the poet describes the tears falling from his eyes throughout bars 33–5, but the E♭ tonal centre that surrounds this is clearly stated. Once again, this centricity shows an example of using flat tonalities in connection with sorrowful poetic imagery.

As we are approaching the end of the *mélodie*, Caplet does begin to prepare to return to the home key given at the start; B major. The use of the sharpened fifth in E♭ chord at bar 35 could be suggested as a way of starting this transition. The music returns to B major⁸ in bar 38, a brief passage through B minor followed by A recalls the opening tonal shifts throughout bars 39–40, and by bar 42 Caplet establishes the full return to the tonic, giving a sense of closure to the *mélodie*. 
4.9

Analytical Interpretation: *L’adieu en barque*

*L’adieu en barque* is full of expressive imagery with a strong feeling of melancholy as the poetic imagery portrays the sadness of the emigrant leaving his beloved country. It could be suggested that this feeling is embedded into the rhythmic structure as the opening unfolds. There is a lengthy piano introduction of sixteen bars before the arrival of the vocal part, and during this opening the piano is used to create an atmosphere of muted tones, perhaps evoking the calm of the sea and quiet evening that swirls around the traveller as he gets ready to embark on his journey. Harder posits that “the main goal of the piano in the introduction is to provide a sense of suspension and stillness.”

Building to Harder’s suggestion, it could be additionally suggested that although a sense of crystalline stillness is evoked through the register and repetitive nature of the rippling semiquavers, the piano at this point portrays an underlying sense of unease and uncertainty of the future, expressed through an uneven rhythmic pattern and unclear sense of beat. Caplet uses time signatures in a meaningful way throughout this *mélodie*. Compound time signatures are used throughout Section A, with multiple changes between 12/8 and 9/8. The second section contrasts this with a change to simple time signatures as the music passes between 4/4 and 3/4. When further consideration is given to the rhythmic shape of aspects of the vocal line in conjunction with the metric layers in the piano parts, it can be observed that there are aspects of direct dissonance present in the music that, for the listener, create a distortion of the

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188 Ibid. p.116
given time signature. In his discussion of performance of metrical dissonances, Krebs notes:

The placement of weight or stress, and the amount of stress that you allot to individual notes or chords in such passages, will to a large extent determine how the listener perceives the metre. [...] Robert [Schumann] generally associates his “antimetrical” layers with accents of various kinds: hence it is rarely necessary for the performer to stress these layers.189

In this mélodie, Caplet infuses these “antimetrical” layers with accents, or stresses of some kind, in order to create a sense of rhythmic dissonance in the music that can perhaps be interpreted as a reflection of the poetic themes. These aspects of dissonance will be explored in the following manner:

- Function of antimetrical layers in the piano introduction as a means of creating tension in anticipation of the imagery described in the poem.
- Transformation of compound time to simple time as the poet’s melancholy deepens.

**Function of antimetrical layers in the piano introduction as a means of creating tension in anticipation of the imagery described in the poem**

The opening of this mélodie is sixteen bars long, and within that it is possible to suggest that through emphasis on the repeated B tones, there is an accent created that gives an impression of quaver groupings that are dissonant to the standard dotted crotchet groupings we regularly see in 12/8 time. It can be suggested that this is dissonant to the standard groupings in 12/8, because these groupings do not occur in even groups of three, nor do they fall regularly within the barline. This grouping

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structure could be interpreted as a form of grouping dissonance, because these layers are not cardinalities of each other. To help illustrate this rhythmic dissonance, in Example 4.8 I illustrate a rhythmic reimagining of way in which this kind of dissonance occurs a result of the irregular groupings.

Example 4.8: Rhythmic dissonance due to irregular groupings

\[
\begin{array}{c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c}
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 \\
5 & 5 & 5.5 & 2.5 & 4 \\
B & B & B & B & \text{C#7 arpeggio (LH) offsets dotted crotchet pulse through rests and tie}
\end{array}
\]

Here, I demonstrate the accented points whereby the low B tones in the bass-clef stave occur on quaver beats. In the first set of groupings, it can be seen that there are two groups of five quavers, followed by a group of three quavers. This uneven grouping can be interpreted throughout the duration of the first three bars until the texture changes to include the rising staccato figuration in the left hand of bar four. In the recording by Lionel Peintre and Alain Jacquon, there is an emphasis on the B tone throughout this passage. It makes it difficult for the listener to discern the exact placement of the dotted crotchet beat in the bar and, in turn, the time signature. There is a pulse created by these B tones: the repeated notes are the lowest register heard throughout
the first bars and, with the emphasis given in Jacquot’s playing, a sense of tension below the atmospheric rippling textures is created. This could align to the poetic imagery in that although there is a calm and serene quality to the waters upon which the poet will set sail, his melancholy and broken-hearted state at the prospect of departure adds a sense of tension to the otherwise calm atmosphere. This sense of tension could thus be reflected through the irregular grouping patterns created by the repeated B tones.

The emphasis on the repeated low B tones as a means of creating a sense of pulse is also highlighted in the recordings by Dominique Favat and Line Marand and, interestingly, in this interpretation the repeated B tones are given the same weighting on the piano as the rising staccato figure in bar four. In the interpretation by Claudette Leblanc and Boaz Sharon, perhaps due to their choice of a slower tempo, there is less emphasis on the B tones. This interpretation offers less in terms of strongly conflicting metre, and makes 12/8 time clearer to the listener. This is an interesting contrast in interpretation, and demonstrates that by emphasising the same recurring tonic pitch, the discernible metre is significantly distorted. Caplet does not request accents or any other kind of specific direction to emphasise this line, but the semibreve B tied at this pitch does suggest that it is a significantly important line in the texture.

When considering this quaver grouping with the placement of the chords in these opening bars, it seems that there is a further distortion of regularity in the textures. The chords are placed on points where even dotted crotchet beats occur in 12/8 time, and their regularity serves to accentuate the uneven groupings of the quaver beats in the bar. This is most noticeable in the recording by Dominique Favat and Line Marand,
where Marand chooses a moderately quick tempo with strong accents on these groupings.

According to Krebs, as cited earlier,

The placement of weight or stress, and the amount of stress that you allot to individual notes or chords in such passages, will to a large extent determine how the listener perceives the metre.\footnote{190}

The choice to accent the B in recordings by Lionel Peintre and Alain Jacquon, and Dominique Favat and Line Marand could suggest a conscious interpretative decision, on the performers’ part, to stress the irregularity in this layer. Interpreting the irregularity in the layers in this manner draws attention to the nonalignment between the given time signature and rhythmic groupings at this point in the music and adds a more unsettled dimension to the otherwise calmly rippling texture. It might be suggested that this alerts the listener to the melancholy that later unfolds through the storyline.

Given the conflict between the implied irregular quaver groupings and the 12/8 metre, it is further possible to consider this motion in terms of where this conflict ends or changes through the introductory passage. Harald Krebs explains: ‘In order to play metrically conflicted passages properly, you must know precisely where they begin and where they end.’\footnote{191}

Perhaps it is through the placement of the rising figuration in bar 4 that Caplet alters the sense of where the beat falls. During the first three bars, the listener perceived a

\footnote{190} Ibid. p.179
\footnote{191} Ibid. p.178
beat through the placement of the strong B tones in comparison to the surrounding textures. The same articulation is given to the rising quaver figuration, and it is this rhythmic shape which perhaps interrupts the sense of beat in the line. The rising figure is, in addition, irregularly grouped because the placement of the D♯ falls on a weak beat in 12/8, and the tied G♯ tones negate a sense of dotted crotchet pulse in the bar.
Transformation of compound time to simple time as the poet’s melancholy deepens

In Section B, there is a shift from simple time to compound time. The time signatures, which throughout Section A shift between 12/8 and 9/8 are transformed to shifting between 4/4 and 3/4. At this point in the poem, the poet speaks of his departure:

*Je m’en vais, pleurs de mon visage. Quittons ces rames pour toujours!*  
I take my leave with tear-stained face. Let us leave these oars forever!

It could be suggested that this shift in time signature occurs as a response to the shift in tone of the poetic imagery. Despite the changing time signatures and implied common time pulse, however, the rhythmic gestures remain fluid in that throughout the passages from bar 31–end, and it is possible to reinterpret this in compound time due to the large number of triplet values in the piano accompaniment.

The triplet figuration throughout the phrase starting in bar 35 could be interpreted as an augmentation of the textures stated in the opening piano solo portion of this *mélodie*. The repeated B motif occurs in a higher register and, through use of longer note values, evokes a feeling of distance. Perhaps in consideration of these changes – augmentation, register, and time signature – it is possible that in this passage, Caplet recalls the distance between the poet and his homeland at the end of the *mélodie*, now becoming wider than compared to at the start. At the start of the *mélodie* the poet considered the beauty of his surroundings from the perspective of not having yet departed, but throughout the unfolding of the text, it appears that the poet’s departure becomes more imminent and he becomes more despondent. The shimmering beauty that he was once close to, as described in the opening textures, is now turning into a distant memory, as suggested in the final portion of the *mélodie*.
In each of the three recordings, the musicians choose to emphasise the _en revenant –a tempo –rit. –a tempo_ performance directions throughout bars 31–7. These fluctuations in speed add a sense of vagueness to the common time metre. For the listener, the slower tempi combined with phrasing moving across the barlines rather than remaining within, makes it difficult to discern where the hypermetre lies at this point. Perhaps the vagueness created in the musical atmosphere at this point reflects the transition of the landscape in the poet’s consciousness as it moves from a tangible thing to a distant memory.

Williametta Spencer discusses reviews of _L’adieu en barque_, and cites a review from the _Concerts Pasdeloup_. Spencer cites a review by G. Allix that appeared in _Le Monde Musicale_ of the performance that took place on 11 November, 1922, where Claire Croiza performed an orchestral version of this _mélodie_. The review states:

> At first hearing also, ‘_L'adieu en barque_’, a little masterpiece, through which Mme Croiza, enveloped by an orchestra of singular eloquence, expressed the moving poetry. This is Caplet in his best compositional form.192

There is little doubt that throughout this set, there are examples of what could arguably be suggested as Caplet in his best compositional form. In _L’adieu en barque_, the sheer simplicity of a moment captured through the union of text and music shows Caplet’s sensitivity and capability for conveying nuance and emotion. The powerful emotional quality is demonstrated through not just the beauty of the vocal line, but also the piano accompaniment. Although the piano texture creates atmospheres of serene and glistening water, aspects of irregular grouping and harmonic tension capture the underlying nostalgia and sadness the poet feels as he sails away from his

192 Williametta Spencer 'The Influence and Stylistic Heritage of André Caplet' (PhD Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1974). p.191
homeland. This is a fitting final *mélodie* for the set, because although it captures a deep sense of connection to the homeland, it also perhaps holds a tentative ray of hope for horizons still to be discovered.
Concluding observations: *Cinq Ballades Françaises*

*Cinq ballades françaises*, shows a change of tone in Caplet’s musical language. This set contains *mélodies* that display a strong sense of harmonic unity, and an approach to balance between the voice and piano that is more distinct from the previous sets. In *Trois Fables de Jean de La Fontaine*, there is evidence of more intensely dramatic approaches to song-setting, but with the *Cinq ballades Françaises*, Caplet’s maturity and continually growing sophistication are strongly perceptible. These two sets were composed in close succession (1919–1920 respectively), and display very different modes of poetic expression. The drama and intensity and moral backbone running through *Trois Fables de Jean de La Fontaine* is an interesting foil for *Cinq Ballades Françaises*. In this set, there some distinguishing features that place this set apart from the others: poetic choices, textural development, and aspects of analogous rhythmic and tonal tension all contribute to a set of *mélodies* that gives a deeper impression of maturity. As Graham Johnson these works are ‘more concentrated.’

Although this set was not considered in its entirety, the three selected *mélodies* demonstrate some key features in Caplet’s post-war compositional voice and approach to poetic expression. In *Cloche d’aube*, the substantial piano introduction suggested a different approach to establishing the opening premise for the introductory material in the *mélodie*. Previous examples contain, for the most part, introductory passages that are much shorter. That *Cloche d’aube* features a substantial piano introduction – in structure as well as in length – perhaps suggests that Caplet was fully considering ways to evoke the atmosphere implied by the poetic text and, through the piano part,

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perhaps created an impression that distorted the listener’s sense of pulse in the music. This aural distortion effectively blurred the boundaries of the barline, infusing a sense of haziness that the themes of memory and past times would reflect in the text. *Songe d’une nuit d’été* is a strong example of clear alignment between tonal and rhythmic distortion as the roses break for freedom. Caplet continually manipulated the areas of rhythm and tonality throughout his compositional life, but in this example, there is a deliberate distortion that clearly enunciates the meaning behind the poetic text. *L’adieu en barque* is particularly interesting in that, as the final *mélodie* in the set, it also contains an extended piano introduction. It is unclear whether this similarity is a deliberate move on Caplet’s part to add balance to the set as a whole entity; it may be unlikely, however, as these works have the potential to stand alone as well as in a set. The piano introduction has an identical role to *Cloche d’aube*, in that it sets the scene and prepares the listener for the narrative about to unfold.

Register and density are areas that are continually utilised in this set to express meaning and create atmosphere. Caplet draws upon the full range of the piano’s expressive capabilities to act as an equal partner to the voice. The accompaniments are often highly orchestral in nature, and create highly colourful sonorities as well as both anchoring and destabilising rhythmic pulse throughout. The lush richness resulting from these aspects places *Cinq Ballades Françaises* in Caplet’s repertoire as mature and forward looking. The poetic choices additionally contribute to this maturity because throughout the set, there are not just themes of yearning for another place that were so prevalent though *Le vieux coffret*, but themes that celebrate world friendship (*La ronde*), the happiness of home (*Notre chaumière en Yveline*), as well as themes of liberty and freedom (*Songe d’une nuit d’être*), and emigration and journeys far away
(L’adieu en barque). These poetic choices perhaps reflect Caplet’s intellectual engagement with contemporary literary artists, and by extension, his attraction to modern and new modes of artist expression.
Reimagining the mélodie:  
An Analysis of the Musico-Poetic Expression of André Caplet

Conclusions

I began this thesis by describing Caplet’s mélodies as follows:

“The mélodies of André Caplet capture a sense of adventurous spirit and profuse richness in harmonic structure and metric shape, and in many ways truly reflect Caplet’s musical aesthetic, expression, and thought.”

My conclusions, drawn from embarking upon a study that endeavours to chronologically explore poetic expression in Caplet’s mélodie sets, bring me back to this original thought. I wholeheartedly believe that in Caplet’s mélodies there is profound profusion of progressive musico-literary expression. Throughout these interpretations, I have attempted to cultivate, by means of methodologically considering the ways in which aspects of rhythmic and tonal structures behave, a strategy for exploring the aspects of poetic atmosphere and imagery in Caplet’s mélodies.

Caplet’s output, as previously recognised by other scholars,194 has long since been divided into three primary periods. I carefully selected sets that represent each of these three periods: Paroles à l’absente is representative of Caplet’s early stages of development, Le vieux coffret is illustrative of the furtherance in Caplet’s voice as he experienced the Great War, and Trois Fables de Jean de La Fontaine and Cinq Ballades

194 Such as Kanda, Harder, Spencer, et al.
Françaises accurately portray advancements in Caplet’s dramatic compositional voice and his post-war mature style respectively. A few distinctions can be drawn between these works, in terms of the ways in which Caplet’s poetic voice in the *mélodie* evolved during his creative life. Additionally, having explored these, I propose another way of thinking about these generally accepted period and stylistic divisions. I suggest that there could potentially be just two primary compositional stages in Caplet’s life, rather than the more traditionally established three.

Taking firstly *Paroles à l’absente* and Caplet’s early style. This set is perhaps the first considerable set that Caplet composed195 which potentially foreshadows the maturity that would become apparent in later works. For example, in *Ce sable fin et fuyant*, a *mélodie* that draws on themes of love lost and engages metaphorically with elements of nature and the sea, there is a distinctive sense of movement and perhaps restlessness in the music achieved through shifting metric structures: compound and simple time are juxtaposed as the poetic narrative reflects the poet’s distressed state. The juxtaposition of metric states, between compound and simple time as reflection of torment and unrest, is a technique that resurfaces in Caplet’s late works. In *L’adieu en barque*, a relatively similar theme of regret is expressed as the text revolves around the central protagonist’s farewell to his beloved land. Once again, images of the sea and nature embrace the narrative. Rhythmic conflict, and the addition of compound time moving to simple time contributes to a feeling of movement in the music that, like *Ce sable fin et fuyant* composed twelve years earlier, portrays the progression of poetic events by creating an atmosphere that, to the listener, is perhaps intangible through a potentially indefinable and disguised metric pulse.

195 Excluding the set *Le livre rose* (1898-1901) which to my knowledge at time of writing, remains unpublished.
But there is a sense of progression between the treatment of metric instability in these two examples; rather than drawing directly from his past works, Caplet develops and refines his approach, as the later example shows. For instance, in *L’adieu en barque*, there is potentially a more sophisticated approach to transition from compound to simple time, in that there is less preparation and shifting of pulse through multiple time signatures. In *Ce sable fin et fuyant*, the shift in metre was more aurally prepared through accents and groupings, but in the later works this preparation is less apparent. Perhaps flow between rhythmic and metric states shows a confidence and maturity in Caplet’s language. The dissolution of one metre into the next in *L’adieu en barque* creates a deeper sense of ethereal atmosphere without the same extent, or necessity, of aural preparation through regrouping and shifting of accents.

On a human level, it is beyond doubt that the Great War affected Caplet, and his deepening Catholic faith throughout his life surely corresponds with this impact. Exploring Caplet’s religious music, and the accompanying themes of faith and reverence were beyond the scope of this thesis, but the manner in which the war impacted his compositional language and approach to poetic expression can be perceived through both the poetic choices and the advancements in approaches to tonal and rhythmic distortion. During the years of the Great War, Caplet’s poetic choices appeared to revolve around texts that either reflected the turmoil of war (such as *Quand, reverrai-je, hélas*.... and *Détresse*), seeking solace through faith (such as *La croix douloureuse* and the setting of religious texts in the set *Les Prières*), or themes of yearning for another place or removing the self from reality (such as *Le vieux coffret*). In terms of further context for Caplet’s activities during the war, in an article in *La
Grande Guerre en musique, Georgie Durosoir artfully explores the intersection between Caplet’s artistic and wartime life and affairs, Durosoir recounts that though the war, Caplet faced incredible difficulties of circumstances and dangers. But Caplet produced a leanly cultivated set of mélodies that, despite the surrounding turmoil, never compromise artistic quality:

The wartime work of André Caplet is altogether lean and admirable. [...] His undeniable willingness to compose was expressed through tricks that forced him to adopt incredible wiles with unrelenting obstinacy, scathing irony towards all that was mediocre around him, and hence his most beautiful mélodies.

Through the set Le vieux coffret, Caplet’s approach to poetic expression appeared more concentrated on harmonic distortion to portray emotional depths than previous mélodies from the earlier, pre-war set. The wartime compositional stage bore witness to a pushing of harmonic boundaries in the pursuit of sonorous atmosphere. Caplet was unafraid to shift tonal centres to areas of modality to create atmosphere and ambience. For instance, in In a una selva oscura, there are example of tonal shifting


198 Ibid. p.116 Extract taken from the original full passage, as follows:

Il est très difficile d’évaluer l’empreinte de la guerre sur les oeuvres écrits par Caplet durant quatre années. On peuvent mesurer l’empreinte en creux, en négatif, puisqu’elle fut cause de lenteur, d’abandons, de déconcentration, de renoncements successifs. Sans doute un grand découragement a-t-il souvent présidé aux séances de travail amorcées dans les zones de repos, dans les logements de fortune, entre deux missions aux dangers latents ou imminents. La mélodie Quand reverrai-je, hélas... prend tout son sens dans le contexte de l’éloignement incommensurable, tant dans le temps que dans l’espace. Les Prières, si elles reflètent la spiritualité bien connue de Caplet, s’imposaient dans ce monde où tant d’hommes mouraient.

Le bilan de l’œuvre de guerre d’André Caplet est tout ensemble maigre et admirable. [...] Sa volonté d’écrire, jamais démentie, lui a dicté d’incroyables ruses, une opiniâtreté sans mélange, une ironie cinglante envers tout ce qui, autour de lui, était médiocre, et, partant, ses plus belles mélodies.
through lydian modes, to lydian-dominant through the first two stanzas of the setting. As the poetic narrative became darker, and the tone changed, Caplet manipulated the harmonic motion towards a transition to the octatonic and locrian-natural-two modes. Interestingly, in this set, it was possible to trace an element of tonal unity, as well as aspects of motivic unity. I discussed this in more depth in Chapter Two Concluding Observations, but from a larger-scale perspective, there was less recurring evidence of this kind of unity in the other sets. Paroles à l’absente, Trois Fables de Jean de La Fontaine, and Cinq Ballades Françaises show connections through the unfolding poetic themes and approach to mostly through-composed structures, but there was more evidence concerning recurring figures or motives in Le vieux coffret. Motivic connections such as the ascending triplet motif and instance of rhythmic motifs distorting the sense of barline appeared through the set. This sense of continuity through Le vieux coffret was additionally significant given that this set had the longest composition date: these mélodies were composed over the course of 1914–1917, whereas the other sets were composed within shorter, more condensed periods of time.

In terms of approaches to expression through phrasing, texture, and structure, Caplet’s approach appears very predetermined by the central meaning at the core of the poetic text. There were instances, such as in Songe, where it is possible to interpret division of poetic lines in the mélodie as based upon the poetic imagery and events rather than on the formal poetic stanza layout. This could perhaps support the suggestion that Caplet was as faithful as possible to the core meaning and true expression of the meaning of the text.
In the *Trois Fables de Jean de La Fontaine*, Caplet explored a different and more experimental approach to the portrayal of dramatic characteristics in the *mélodie*. He drew upon elements of texture, dramatic contrasts in tonality, phrasing, and vocal range to create an artistic approach completely different to the *mélodies* composed during the war. The year 1918 was a significant year for Caplet; not only did it mark the end of the conflict, but also the death of Debussy. The loss of Caplet’s friend and mentor came at a time of intense personal growth and change. In the *Trois Fables de Jean de La Fontaine*, we were presented with, as Johnson and Stokes mention, ‘something Debussy never did - a cycle of humorous songs’. It is as if Caplet emerged from both the war and, to an extent, the shadow of Debussy, with a clear and newly defined, yet continually evolving, compositional language and poetic sensibility.

Caplet’s compositional voice differs in his portrayal of drama and clear storyline compared to the evocation of atmosphere: in the portrayal of drama, Caplet draws upon a full range of theatrical effects including, but not limited to, more expressive use of vocal effects, sharply changing tempi, range and register, and orchestral effects in the piano parts. These expressive contrasts can be observed more in light of the *Cinq Ballades Françaises* emerging from the same time. Both of these sets were composed between 1919 and =1920; but one is filled with drama and theatre, and the other explores themes of nostalgia, hopefulness, freedom, and sentimentality. There is some thematic similarity between the poetic choices throughout *Cinq Ballades Françaises* and *Paroles à l’absente* and *Le vieux coffret*, although in *Cinq Ballades Françaises*, there is a maturity and confidence in the expressive writing that clearly places this set at a different point in Caplet’s stylistic growth.

It is for this reason that I suggest that Caplet’s sets of *mélodies* can be categorised into two primary areas, rather than three: those composed before and including the war, and those composed after the war. His poetic choices, manner of portrayal of atmosphere and central feeling, tonal and rhythmic treatment share similar qualities. In the *mélodies* explored in pre-war and wartime sets in this thesis, these qualities include: use of surface motion, sudden departures to tonal areas that are harmonically far apart, rhythmic distortion though dissolution of the sense of barline through grouping distance and displacement dissonance, a myriad of tempo changes that destabilise the sense of continual metric pulse in the bar, constantly changing time signatures, and widely ranging dynamic effects.

It is undoubtedly true that no composer is an island, and certainly cross-fertilisation occurred between Caplet and his contemporaries such as Debussy, Ravel, Fauré, and Woollett, to name a few, and a number of Debussy-isms could be found in Caplet’s early works. For example, I note an especially marked similarity between the *mélodie*, *En regardant ces belles fleurs* (1914) set to a text by Charles de Orléans, and Debussy’s *Arabesque No. 1*. In the post-war works, however, the poetic choices, mature writing style, more daring demands on both pianist and singer alike, as well as a further pushing of tonal and rhythmic boundaries suggests that the biggest change, in terms of structure, poetic expression, and tonal and rhythmic language for Caplet’s *mélodie* came about in 1919 with the composition of *Trois Fables de Jean de La Fontaine*. Perhaps it was through his personal and professional closeness to Debussy and comprehensive knowledge of the latter’s musical language, that Caplet was artistically better equipped to develop his own autonomy in this era.
This thesis only looked at thirteen of Caplet’s *mélodies* and, at that, was restricted to sets. To achieve a fuller understanding and more in-depth insight into the portrayal of poetic expression in Caplet’s language, a study encompassing all of the *mélodies* would be incredibly fruitful. This thesis also did not explore Caplet’s detailed approach to text-setting and prosodic style in the *mélodie*. A study devoted to detailed analytical scrutiny of Caplet’s text setting and declamatory style of writing, would undoubtedly yield deeper insight into this composer’s treatment of the relationship between words and voice in the French *mélodie*. For a study such as this, future research and deeper analysis of the poetic rhythm of the works Caplet chose to set, combined with posing questions considering the ways in which poetic lines and rhythms interact with various aspects of metre and rhythm in the piano parts and background musical structure, would help to provide considerable understanding of Caplet’s relationship with song from a metric perspective. As Alison Hood mentions: “rhythm is the lifeblood of music and its realisation in performance. It is also one of the main ways that music communicates meaning and emotion.”

Additionally, there is large scope for future research to explore the phrase structure in these *mélodies*. Caplet’s phrases are uneven in length and, as this thesis has demonstrated, there is often nonalignment between the vocal and piano parts. Future research modelled upon the approaches to phrase rhythm established by William Rothstein would give extensive insight into the levels of phrase structure of the *mélodies*. Caplet’s phrases – in the vocal line and piano accompaniment alike – are often uneven in length because he tends to adapt the phrase shapes according to poetic thoughts, events, and textures, as well as the

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prosodic structure. Building on this thesis, future analyses concerning phrase rhythm in Caplet’s mélodies would illuminate the relationship between musical and poetic structures.

This study just offers a glimpse onto the surface of an area that is rich with potential for further artistic research and creative practice. These mélodies are not widely performed and recorded. The music is highly complex and perhaps not as easily assessable to the amateur performer as the professional. Focussing more on ways in which rhythmic profiles of these mélodies can be interpreted would potentially lead not just to a deeper insight into Caplet’s compositional treatment of rhythm which, given the abundance of time signature changes and tempo directions in his mélodies, is an area worthy of further investigation; it would also offer valuable insight into this music for performers. Future analyses of Caplet’s mélodies would, though making the work more accessible and offering more support and guidance for performers, help to raise even more awareness of Caplet’s name as a distinguished composer of songs.

Caplet died at a very young age. He was only forty-six. He left behind a young wife and son, and losing him was not just devastating to his family and loved ones, but also a severe loss to French artistic life. I believe that had Caplet lived a long and fruitful life, his compositional voice, moving into the late 1920s and early 1930s potentially could have foreshadowed that of Messiaen. Comparisons may be drawn between Caplet’s late mélodies, and the early works of Messiaen, such as the Trois Melodies, and further research considering this, and perhaps placing Caplet as a ‘Post-Debussyan’ composer could give future insight into Caplet’s distinctive late voice. Indeed, to place

Caplet in the context of his peers, and the wider socio-cultural and literary environment, it is my belief that he is very much a post-Debussyan composer. Caplet was unafraid to experiment with the wider possibilities of tones beyond those within chordal collections, seeking rich and imaginative realms of sonority. His adventurous use of rhythmic structures and tonal advancements situate his contribution to artistic life beyond the pillar of Debussy to a musical period that anticipated the advancements of Messiaen. For example, in the setting of *Songe d'une nuit d'été*, Caplet’s innovations in the setting of poetic text in terms of contemporary vernacular significantly pushed the pre-conceived boundaries of convention. We can surmise that had he lived a longer life, Caplet’s approach to prosody and his strikingly novel approach to text setting in this manner would have situated his status as a composer of *mélodies* in a context to other, perhaps debussyste-centric, peers.

In this thesis, I have discussed Caplet’s poetic choices and highlighted his preference for selecting poetry of his peers and, in the significant case of *Songe d'une nuit d'été* deliberately breaking the conventions of prosody to set the text in a modern and novel manner, well as illustrating examples of his approaches to rhythmic and harmonic a primarily theoretical and analytical perspective. This approach has given musical insight into Caplet’s place as a creative artist who was unafraid to challenge aesthetic norms and advocated for new musical direction in his own composition, and through advocation for premiering new music in his role as a conductor. To build further on the analyses and musical interpretations presented herein, a thorough consideration Caplet’s precise connections with his literary peers and the wider literary socio-cultural scene during this time in Paris from a historical perspective, however, would be a particularly fruitful area for further musicological research. For example, Caplet engaged with contemporary singers such a Claire Croiza and Rose Féart, and exploring
these cultural connections would provide significant insight into his role in contemporary society. We must remember, however, that Caplet died in his compositional prime, and we can only speculate upon the musical achievements and historical connections that would have unfolded had he lived a full compositional life. Through future exploration of the historical and cultural elements such as biographical concerns including the significant wartime experiences, and his immersion and proactive associations with avant-garde figures from literature and art as well as music, such as *Les Apaches* and *Les Six*, a historical portrait of Caplet as a significant artist deeply connected within the tapestry of early French musical modernism could potentially be established. The analyses in this thesis have demonstrated that Caplet played an essential role as an innovative song composer. Caplet was a minor composer in a rich, creative, and innovate period of musical history. He did not concern himself entirely with adhering to preconceived aesthetic norms and, although he took inspiration from the artistic world around him and his creative Conservatoire heritage, his elevated compositional language afforded significant and musico-poetic connection, in terms of his rich chordal language, his literary choices, his incredibly rich pianism, and his striking approach to prosody. In song repertoire, Caplet stands as an innovative and significant composer of *mélodies*. His contribution to the genre lies within his qualities of meticulous attention to detail, combined with extraordinary individuality, and it was perhaps because he ‘refused to make concessions to public taste’ that Caplet’s music can be appreciated for its qualities of experimentation and originality.

It is my hope that the methodologies presented throughout this thesis can help to support succeeding projects on *mélodies* in terms of exploring the complex and

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fascinating relationship between poetic atmosphere, imagery and its expression in music. Furthermore, I hope that through the analyses presented in this thesis I have offered, to some extent, an illumination of the captivating synthesis of music and literature in Caplet’s work.
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