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Response to Norris Review of Rosemary Hamilton Yeoland; with a foreword by Guy Ducrey, *La Contribution littéraire de Camille Maclair au domaine musicale parisien*. Lewiston, N.Y.: The Edward Mellen Press, 2008. xxii + 331 pp. Notes, bibliography and index. \$119.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 0-7734-4860-8.

Response by Rosemary Hamilton Yeoland, University of Tasmania

*La Contribution littéraire de Camille Maclair au domaine musical parisien* is the published integral form of my doctoral dissertation entitled more fully “La Contribution littéraire de Camille Maclair au domaine musical parisien à la fin du dix-neuvième siècle ». The retention of the longer title for the book would have admittedly alerted the reader to the specificity of the time period examined.

As stated in the introduction of the book, it was my love of music that drew me to examine why Camille Maclair (1872-1945), a music lover with no formal background in music, had made such a contribution to the fin-de-siècle Parisian musical domain. Thus my entire perspective to this study was through a musically-orientated approach. It is an intertextual monograph across the domains of literature and music, however as I am neither politically nor religiously motivated, I kept discussion in these two particular areas to a minimum.

Norris opens her criticism with the statement that it is “regrettable that the book offers little more than synopses of selected texts” (p. 2). The object of my study was to present to the reader the considerable gamut of Maclair’s musical texts whilst commenting on his musical style of writing. This involved close examination of his *Éleusis*, *causeries sur la cité intérieure*, *Couronne de clarté*, *Sonatinas d’automne*, *Les Clefs d’or*, *L’Orient vierge*, *Le Soleil des morts*, *L’Ennemie des rêves*, *Les Mères sociales*, *Le Sang parle*, *La Ville lumière*, *La Magie de l’amour*, *Schumann*, *Histoire de la musique européenne de 1850 à 1914*, *La Religion de la musique* and *Les Héros de l’orchestre*.<sup>[1]</sup> Given the corpus of work to present and the confined time restriction allowed for a doctoral dissertation, there was little leeway for “meaty analysis and contextualization” (p. 2). However, Norris has chosen, for example, to ignore my analysis of such musical passages that were taken from *Couronne de clarté*, (pp. 87-90 in my text) and *Le Soleil des morts*, (pp. 102-107, my text). Nor does she make comment on the other numerous examples I have given which relate to music elsewhere in his fictional works. Neither does she appear to appreciate any of the extensive musicological points raised throughout my monograph. For example, how does Maclair describe musical events: operas, symphonic performances, salon or chamber music? How does he tackle music in his non fictional texts such as his biography of Schumann? How did he analyse the composer’s music: his songs, symphonies, musical dramas? What type of musical articles did Maclair write for reviews? How well abreast was he with the state of music in France or Europe generally? Perhaps Norris’s interest does not extend to this area. The comment of “incomplete scholarship and weakly supported positions” (p. 2) is therefore, in my view, a sweeping and subjective statement.

It is true that Maclair’s poetry is imbued with musicality and this was well appreciated in his time.<sup>[2]</sup> Indeed, Ernest Chausson amongst other composers set several of his poems entitled *Lieds* to music. The reference that Norris makes concerning Maclair’s poems: “Yeoland considers the musicality of repeated sounds in his poems but ever so briefly” (p. 3) is a fair comment. Again the time restriction in place for

producing my dissertation, did not allow for much elaboration on this. However I developed ideas related to his literary style of musicality into a paper, later presented at the Institute of Musical Research, London.[3] It was evident as well that Simonetta Valenti had already in 2003 devoted a substantial section of her book to analysis of Mauclair's poetry which I did not intend to duplicate.[4]

Norris also criticises my use of bibliographical sources (p. 3). The utmost endeavour was undertaken on my part to find all relevant information relating to Camille Mauclair and music, including my making a trip to Scotland to read a text on site at the University of Edinburgh.[5] That university would not permit the thesis to be taken off site. During my three month research stay in Paris, I accessed innumerable sources—many of which remain unpublished—in several libraries and the Paris Archives and continued my research on returning to my home base in Tasmania where all material had to be accessed via a sometimes lengthy interlibrary loan service. Indeed, it was on the recommendation of Professor Guy Ducrey, University of Strasbourg, that I had my dissertation published so that my documented references were easily accessible to other scholars.[6]

Let us return to the points raised by Norris in her review. With respect to Stéphane Mallarmé's position on music, it is claimed that I have concentrated too much on his intellectual approach to art. Whilst Mallarmé may have been "profoundly influenced emotionally by Wagner's music" (p. 3), I maintain that his primary focus was an intellectual one.[7] From my readings, it is evident that Mallarmé continually fought against the domination of music in the arts with respect to poetry. I put it to the readers. Why did Paul Valéry make the comment: "Mallarmé came out of the concerts full of a sublime jealousy. He was desperately searching the means by which to regain for our art, that which the all powerful music had stripped of its wonders and importance"?[8] Why was Mallarmé seen at concerts to be bent over a notebook scribbling during Wagnerian performances?[9] If emotionally involved with the music, would he not have been sitting still and in a meditative state? Why did he make no attempt to hear the full operatic rendition of Wagner's works? Why did he only attend the Lamoureux concerts?[10] Why did Camille Mauclair state: "I am not sure that [Mallarmé] was really a music lover"?[11] Why did André Gide, himself an accomplished musician, make the comment on the philosophy reigning at the famous Tuesday gatherings held at Mallarmé's apartment: "It appeared to me that Mallarmé himself and all those who were there, were still searching for literature within music"?[12] These incidents point to the omnipresent intellectual challenge that music presented to Mallarmé.

We shall now move on to the lack of political positioning of Mauclair's work in my text. I reiterate that my motivation for writing the monograph was from a musical angle. The novel *L'Orient vierge* was included for musical consideration only, to complete the gamut of Mauclair's fictional novels. (pp. 92-96, my text) I did not wish to explore its political overtones. However, I make the comment now that despite being taxed as a "racist" novel, *L'Orient vierge* to me is more a comment on the absurdity of war. Wrongly convinced of their superiority intellectually and physically, the three European protagonists lead an ill founded, ill-prepared invasion of the East. During the course of the story, the main character comes to appreciate the value of Oriental thinking. The climax of the tale is a symbolic failure of the Occident on the battlefield, two of the protagonists, one representing mathematics and economy, the other music and poetry are killed in battle. The third, who survives, representing science, is a traitor. There seems hardly evidence here of a "racist" text. It is a book that must be translated into English to be available to a wider corpus of readers.

Passing to the criticism of a "lack of a social context for Mauclair's work" (p. 3), I argue the following. The social perspective of my book was to posit the Parisian public's attitude to music at the dawn of the twentieth century. What held my interest was to which section of the public music was addressed, what the musical preferences of that public were, how music was presented, and what the public's reaction was to various types of music.[13] Indeed, as indicated in my text, Mauclair's "internationalism" at that time was counter to the overwhelming nationalism in France. The comment that his history of music is not "truly pan-European" (p. 4) appears to be an attempt by Norris to "Germanise" Mauclair. However,

amongst the fin-de-siècle French musical critics, he was not alone in placing an emphasis on German composers. In the same period of time, another internationalist French author Romain Rolland who later became a pacifist, wrote his *Musiciens d'Aujourd'hui*[14] and one notes that the chapters of this book include only the Germans Richard Wagner, Richard Strauss, the Austrian Hugo Wolf, the Italian Don Lorenzo Perosi and another chapter deals only with the “musique française et musique allemande”. Musicians from countries such as Spain, Russia and England seemed not to be worthy of Rolland’s consideration. As Marc Reinhardt said of Rolland: “England does not exist for Rolland, the Spanish get no mention, nor the Hungarians [...] Sibelius and Grieg hardly gain his attention. The glorious Czechs, hardly a question. And the Russians: “Good people, small brains.”[15] French and German composers still appeared to be considered as the musical giants of Europe. However, it may be noted that following the first world war, in contrast to Mauclair and Rolland (whose texts were written prior to the war), the French music critic Émile Vuillermoz wrote a text *Musiques d'aujourd'hui* which makes no reference at all to German composers.[16]

Apparently, Norris would prefer that my book had taken a different perspective and had concentrated on Mauclair’s anti-Semitism (a stance he acquired much later than in the time period covered by my book). She infers that Mauclair singled out the composers Giacomo Meyerbeer and Jacques Offenbach for criticism because of their Jewish origins (p. 4) despite the fact that he referred to them as “Germains francisés”. I disagree with the idea that his criticism was based on race. It was the style of music of these composers that he was referring to and he was not alone in considering their operettas as “puerile”. There was a general feeling at the time in Paris that their works were frivolous. Romain Rolland was another critic not impressed by their works. One of his protagonists in *Jean-Christophe* speaks of the music of Meyerbeer, Gounod and Massenet (Offenbach’s comic opera does not rate a mention!) in the following terms: “this impudent music, this swooning of young women, these artificial flowers, this perfume boutique”.[17] Thus to emphasise here the Jewish origins of Meyerbeer and Offenbach in connection with Mauclair seems to be begging the case with respect to Mauclair’s later anti-Semitic behaviour.

A large section of my book is devoted to Mauclair’s role as musical critic and musicographer and examines his non-fictional texts in this field. To emphasise his literary approach to musical criticism, his comments are compared to the more specific music theory criticisms of his contemporaries and those of a representative sample of present day musicologists. The limitations or successes of his musical comments are thus brought to light. The last chapter deals with a public crossing of swords between Mauclair and Louis Laloy who had obtained his doctorate in music at the Sorbonne in 1904.[18] This debate, via the reviews *Le Mercure musical* and *Le Courrier musical* was over the works of composers Alfred Bruneau, Gustave Charpentier and Claude Debussy. Norris dismisses this as a minor literary scuffle (p. 2) but does not appear to appreciate that by detailing this interaction, my text brings to centre stage the difficulties a litterateur like Mauclair faced in attempting to maintain his role as a music critic and, if, in fact his position in the musical domain was truly justified. This is therefore a significant chapter bringing my book to its conclusion.

I thank Professor Norris for taking the time to review my book. It is a great pity that she did not publish her dissertation “The Early Writings of Camille Mauclair: Towards an Understanding of Wagnerism and French Art 1885-1900” to add to the corpus of work publically available on Camille Mauclair.

## NOTES

[1] Mauclair’s texts mentioned: *Éleusis, causeries sur la cité intérieure* (Paris: Perrin, 1894), *Couronne de clarté* (Paris: Ollendorff, 1895), *Sonatinas d’automne* (Paris: Perrin, 1895), *Les Clefs d’or* (Paris: Ollendorff, 1896), *L’Orient vierge* (Paris: Ollendorff, 1897), *Le Soleil des morts* (Paris: Ollendorff, 1898), *L’Ennemie des*

*rêves* (Paris: Ollendorff, 1898); *Les Mères sociales* (Paris: Ollendorff, 1902), *Le Sang parle* (Paris: Maison du livre, 1904), *La Ville lumière* (Paris: Ollendorff, 1904), *La Magie de l'amour* (Paris: Ollendorff, 1919), *Schumann* (Paris: H. Laurens, 1906), *La Religion de la musique* (Paris: Fischbacher, 1909), *Histoire de la musique européenne de 1850 à 1914* (Paris: Fischbacher, 1914), *Les Héros de l'orchestre* (Paris: Fischbacher, 1921).

[2] See Henri de Régnier, *Le Mercure de France*, January 1895 pp.109-110 : « Dans ces 'Historiettes au crépuscule', j'ai vu des scènes de mimique ou de musique, elliptiques de drame ou de légendes, tragédies réapparues en chansons, vignettes coloriées d'un livre perdu ». "In these 'Historiettes au crepuscule', I saw scenes of gestures, music, ellipses of drama, or legends, tragedies, reappearing in songs, coloured vignettes of a lost book." Stéphane Mallarmé in a letter dated 4 November 1894, *Correspondance VII* (Paris: NRF Gallimard, 1982), pp. 87-88, wrote to Mauclair saying: « Riche et vive acquisition du clavier d'aujourd'hui en sa porté ou tous ses sens [...] La merveille que vous mettiez le doigt si légèrement ou si aisément et le sentiment résonne avec nette plénitude ». "Rich and lively acquisition of the keyboard of today in its entire range or all its senses [...] The marvel is that your touch is so light or so comfortable and the sentiment resonates with a clear richness".

[3] Rosemary Yeoland, "The Musical Style of an homme de lettré: Camille Mauclair" Words and Notes in the Nineteenth Century conference, Institute of Musical Research, London 2-3 July 2007.

[4] Simonetta Valenti, *Camille Mauclair, homme de lettres fin-de-siècle* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2003).

[5] Alan Marchbank, "Camille Mauclair : Life and Works (1890-1909)" Ph.D. dissertation, Edinburgh University, 1973.

[6] Guy Ducrey in *La Contribution littéraire de Camille Mauclair au domaine musical parisien*, pp. xv-xvi : « The undertaking of this study has been based on an impressive collection of resources that would be sufficient alone to make Rosemary Yeoland's monograph a precious tool for future researchers. This collection must have been difficult to gather, as it includes innumerable articles written by Mauclair [...] manuscript texts and diverse correspondence".

[7] Mallarmé searched continually for « la corrélation intime de la Poésie avec l'Univers ». Henri Peyre, *La Littérature symboliste* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1976) p. 49. His obsessive life long ambition was to write *Le Livre*, an explanation of the Universe through a poetic interpretation. As Peyre puts the question: "Mallarmé a-t-il été la dupe de ses chimères, a-t-il trop présumé de sa puissance intellectuelle?" *Ibid*, p. 46. For Mallarmé's perception of music, see also Suzanne Bernard, *Mallarmé et la musique* (Paris: A.G. Nizet, 1959), p. 39 « C'est parce qu'il la voit comme un monde de rapports abstraits et intemporels que Mallarmé se fait de la musique une conception architecturale », "It is because he saw it as a world of abstract and timeless relationships that Mallarmé formed an architectural concept of music". See also Jean-Michel Nectoux, *Mallarmé peinture, musique poésie* (Paris: Société nouvelle Adam Biro, 1998).

[8] Paul Valéry, "Au concert Lamoureux en 1893" in *Pièces sur l'art* (Paris: NRF Gallimard. 1934), p. 84 : « Mallarmé sortait des concerts plein d'une sublime jalousie. Il cherchait désespérément à trouver les moyens de reprendre pour notre art ce que la trop puissante musique lui avait dérobé de merveille et d'importance. »

[9] In *Le Soleil des morts* in which the main character Calixte Armel represents Stéphane Mallarmé, Mauclair describes the audience at the Lamoureux Sunday concerts, p.48 : « Il pensa tout à coup à Calixte Armel, leva les yeux, le vit penché, maniant discrètement un carnet. » "He suddenly thought of Calixte Armel, raised his eyes and saw him bent over, discretely using a small note book." This

observation by Mauclair of Mallarmé's behaviour is also made in *Mallarmé chez lui* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1935) p. 80.

[10] See Suzanne Bernard, *op.cit.*, p. 24.

[11] Camille Mauclair, *Mallarmé chez lui*, p. 80: « Je ne suis pas sur [...] qu'il fut réellement un mélomane. »

[12] See André Gide, *Si Le Grain ne meurt* (Paris : NRF Gallimard, 1955), p. 259 : « Il me paraissait que Mallarmé lui-même et tous ceux qui le fréquentaient, recherchaient dans la musique encore de la littérature. »

[13] See comment by Anne Louyest, Université Paris Ouest, Nanterre La Défense, in <http://www.fabula.org/actualites/article28115.php>, 16 August 2010 : « L'étude de Rosemary Yeoland se distingue par une structure nette et détaillée qui reflète les divers aspects de l'intérêt de Camille Mauclair pour la musique ainsi que la spécificité de l'attitude du public envers les productions musicales au croisement de deux siècles. » "Rosemary Yeoland's study distinguishes itself by a clear and detailed structure which reflects the diverse aspects of Camille Mauclair for music as well as the specificity of the public's attitude towards musical productions at the crossover of two centuries."

[14] Romain Rolland, *Musiciens d'aujourd'hui* (Paris: Hachette, 1908).

[15] Marc Reinhardt, « Romain Rolland et la musique » in *Romain Rolland* (Neuchâtel : Éditions de la Baconnière, 1969), p. 69.

[16] Émile Vuillermoz, *Musiques d'aujourd'hui* (Paris: Crès, 1923).

[17] Romain Rolland, *Jean-Christophe* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1950), p. 687: « [...] cette musique impudente, ces pâmoisons de filles, ces fleurs artificielles, cette boutique de parfumeur. »

[18] Louis Laloy (1874-1944), musicologist, received his Docteur ès Lettres from the Sorbonne for his thesis « Aristoxène de Tarente, disciple d'Aristote, et la musique de l'Antiquité » in 1904.

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